

I. Review SOTM

A. Beatitudes - Jesus starts this Sermon by exhorting us to cultivate eight heart conditions that He carries. These are given as the purpose and context of the rest of the sermon. (Ex. 34:6-8; Matt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 2:6-16)

1. Poor In Spirit
2. Mourning for the Kingdom
3. Meekness
4. Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness
5. Merciful
6. Pure in Heart
7. Peacemakers
8. Enduring Persecution

“Encountering God” is when the Holy Spirit reveals truth about God to your spirit. In turn, this truth must be understood or comprehended by you through the work of the Holy Spirit to the level that it moves and transforms your heart in love. (Jhn. 16:14-15, 17:20-26; 1 Cor. 2:9-14)

If you position your heart, God will release His presence – Mike Bickle

II. Positioning for encounter through Fasting

A. Each one of the positioning activities--that Jesus set before us in this sermon as a lifestyle--have aspects of voluntary weakness which accompany them. To the world, and even to us sometimes, it seems incredibly foolish to embrace a lifestyle where we voluntarily fast our time, energy, and resources. God invites us into a paradox of faith in which we exchange strength in the realities of this age to gain eternal and spiritual strength in the realities of God's kingdom. (1 Cor. 12:9)

B. A great lie that we all wrestle with in the culture of christianity in the west is that this fasted lifestyle is radical, and goes above and beyond what's necessary to a healthy life of faith in Jesus. No one has a problem with the activities themselves being seen as radical, but rather the frequency. If there was an entire group of individuals who daily or weekly walked out this lifestyle, this group would commonly be perceived by most believers as radical, super-spiritual, and over the top.

C. This is probably the most true when considering the modern day view of fasting. For most people, fasting is something that is done because of special circumstances or special

traditions. Fasting in our culture ventures into the realm of radical when it is done weekly or monthly. However, no one can argue that Jesus and the early church presented fasting as a normal and very regular practice in the lifestyle of the believer as a positioning activity to increase relational intimacy with Jesus. (Matt. 17:21; Lk. 2:37; Acts. 13:2-3, 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:5, 11:27)

D. Biblical Fasting - In its original form, the theme of fasting only had to do with abstinence from food for spiritual purposes. It is not wrong to think of fasting as abstinence from other things as well but here in the SOTM, abstinence from food is clearly the meaning of the word.

1. Mankind was created as a three-in-one being. He is a body, soul (mind, will, and emotions), and spirit. Even though we can distinguish these parts from one another we must always uphold their unity and interrelationship. The physical body affects the soul and spirit and vice versa; the same can be said for each part of mankind. Fasting, then, can be understood as something that is done in the physical body that greatly affects the soul and spirit and positions them in a greater capacity to encounter and be encountered by God. (Lev. 16:29-31; Ps. 35:13, Ezra 8:21; Is. 58:3)
2. Focuses - The scriptures present us with a few different types and focuses for days and seasons of fasting. The purpose of this list is not to hedge you in to choosing one over another but rather to give you a fuller understanding. There is nothing wrong with fasting with multiple focuses in mind or fasting different ways during a season of fasting.
 - a. Repentance of Sin - (Jonah 3:5-10; Dan. 9:20, 10:12; Acts 3:19)
 - b. Contending for Breakthrough - (1 Sam. 1:7; 2 Chr. 20; Joel 1:2-18, 2:1-15; Mat. 17:15-21)
 - c. Contending for Promises - (Dan. 9:1-3, 10:1-4; Acts. 10:1-4, 30-31)
 - d. Seeking Understanding - (Dan. 1:7, 5:12-14, 8:16-17; Is. 26:9; Jer. 5:4-5, 23:20, 30:24)
 - e. Seeking God's Leadership - (Acts 13:1-2, 14:23)

E. **Seeking to Encounter His Love** - Jesus established the new covenant by his death and resurrection, in which the Spirit comes and dwells in every believer. Jesus told us that the primary work of the Spirit in the heart of the new covenant believer would be to reveal the depths of God to you for the sake of love. In light of this new covenant, fasting takes on a whole

new and primary dimension. The new covenant believer fasts out of desire for encountering our bridegroom God's love. (Matt. 9:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:10; Heb. 10:19-22)

1. Jesus is very intentional with His words in speaking about His identity as the Bridegroom and was clear that the fasting (voluntary affliction of the soul) that would happen in light of the Bridegroom being taken away would be done out of longing for His return and coinciding wedding and the full implementation of His Kingdom in partnership with His bride. The vastness of revelation of the knowledge concerning His coming and His Kingdom that He wants to give us is to the level that it causes us to be so undone we refuse to eat.
2. Jesus does not suggest that *some* of his disciples will be so moved by longing for His Kingdom. Rather, He promises that *all* of those who are His disciples will participate in a lifestyle fasting out of longing for return when they see and understand His identity as the Bridegroom. (Lk. 5:33-39; SOTM Mat 5-7 *Blessed are those who mourn for the Kingdom, Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for the Kingdom*)