

**ICE BREAKER:**

What's your favourite food?

What's the longest you've gone without food and why?

Baptism classes start next week. Anyone want to go along and find out more about baptism?

**ENCOUNTER:**

Read through The Parable of the Great Banquet Luke 14:15-24

Once you have read it, sit in silent reflection and prayer. Thinking about and bringing to God the things that have distracted us from Him as Lord in our lives.

These things can be great in themselves, family, home, job, relationships, food etc. As good as these things can be they are but gifts from God and not to be worshipped. Pray that we might not be like the first few guests invited to the banquet, too busy and consumed by these 'things'. But instead like the humble, knowing our absolute reliance and need for God our saviour.

After some time of personal reflection and prayer. Take time to pray for liberation from any and all idolatry, might want to do this in twos praying for each other.

**FOCUS: Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15**

**Q1: Do you think fasting is one of the most misunderstood and neglected spiritual practices? If so why?**

**Q2: Matthew 6:14a- 'When you fast...'**

Have we lost a sense of expectation around the practice of fasting? What's contributed to this?

**Q3: What do you think of the question posed to Jesus in Matthew 9:14-17 and his response:**

<sup>14</sup> Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

<sup>16</sup> "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. <sup>17</sup> Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

**Discuss these thoughts on fasting:**

Hunger for God more than all else

Forfeiting immediate satisfaction for a greater satisfaction, a deeper satisfaction

Our desire for God, being greater than our desire for food

Our passion for God driving out all other passions

What are some misunderstandings of fasting?

**Q4: Why did Jesus call those making their fasting obvious and clear to all 'hypocrites'?**

**Q5: Jesus promotes keeping our fasting private, what aspects of your private spiritual life do you struggle with most?**

**ACTIVATION:**

Get your diaries out and chose a date / time to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. This could be a partial fast, like Daniel or full day fast. Whatever suits you medically physically, spiritually.