

SPIRITUAL FORMATION | PRAYER + MEDITATION | **FASTING** | SIMPLICITY | WORD | CONFESSION | SOLITUDE + SILENCE | WORSHIP + CELEBRATION | SABBATH | SERVICE

RHYTHMS



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- 3 FASTING**
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“Spiritual Formation is: (1) the process (2) of being formed (3) in the image of Christ (4) for the sake of others.

We fail to realize that the process of spiritual shaping is a primal reality of human existence. Everyone is in a process of spiritual formation! Every thought we hold, every decision we make, every action we take, every emotion we allow to shape our behavior, every response we make to the world around us, every relationship we enter into, every reaction we have toward the things that surround us and impinge upon our lives- all of these things, little by little, are shaping us into some kind of being. We are being shaped into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horribly destructive caricature of that image - destructive not only to ourselves but also to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them.”

– M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*



God's work (transformation) and **our work** (obedience).

“I cannot transform myself, or anyone else for that matter.

What I can do is create the conditions in which spiritual transformation can take place, by developing and maintaining a rhythm of spiritual practices that **keep me open and available to God.**”

– Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual*



FASTING

Fasting & Culture

Instant self-gratification

Unhealthy relationship with food

Often fasting is viewed as an extreme form of:

1) Political Protest

To display public non-violent disapproval to earn favor from power

2) Religious Ritual

To display public routines of appeasing/earning favor from a deity

3) Personal Image

To display an ideal body image to earn favor from self and others



How to **not** fast like Jesus



Political Protest

starving in hunger strike
against God

Religious Ritual

starving for affection
from God

Personal Image

starving in self help
without God





Followers of Jesus fast to
**delight in God's presence,
depend on God's provision,
& partner in God's purposes.**



Food, Flesh, & the Devil:

disordered desires
damaging behaviors
distorted lives

Evil, sin, and death enter the human experience during a meal.

“Unrestricted freedom does not exist. Humans are called upon by God to exercise restraint and self-discipline in the gratification of appetite. This prohibition (Gen 2:17) is the paradigm for future Torah legislation relating to the dietary laws.”

- Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary



What is fasting?

A way to pray with your gut

Fasting is the **grace and practice of:**

abstaining from food

for a **specific time** and **purpose**

as an act of **worship** and **prayer**



Who practices fasting & why?

Jesus & a bunch of people
journeying with God

Jesus // to be strengthened in overcoming temptation (Matt. 4:2)

Moses // to sit with God (Ex. 34:28)

Israelites // to repent and return to God (1 Sam. 7:6)

Soldiers // to express grief to God (1 Sam. 31:13)

David // to weep and plea with God (2 Sam. 12:16)

Jehoshaphat // to seek God's deliverance (2 Chron. 20:3)

Elijah // to walk with God through crisis (1 Kings 19:8)

Nehemiah // to express concern for the work of God (Neh. 1:4)

Daniel // to confess and seek God's guidance (Dan. 9:3)

Ezra // to humbly seek God's protection (Ezra 8:21)

Anna // to spend extended time in devotion to God (Luke 2:37)

Disciples of Jesus // to pray for others' deliverance (Mark 9:29)





Abstaining from food to
**delight in God's presence,
depend on God's provision,
& partner in God's purposes.**

**Is there a wrong
way to fast?**

Yes.

Isaiah 58:1-3a ^{NLT}

“Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! ² Yet **they act so pious!** They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. **They act like a righteous nation** that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, **pretending they want to be near me.** ³ ‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!’”



**A fast without love
for God & neighbor**
unloving, unjust, unrepentant

Isaiah 58:3b-5 ^{NLT}

“I will tell you **why!**” I respond. “It’s because **you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers.** ⁴ What good is fasting when **you keep on fighting and quarreling?** This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. ⁵ You humble yourselves by **going through the motions of penance**, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? **Do you really think this will please the LORD?**”



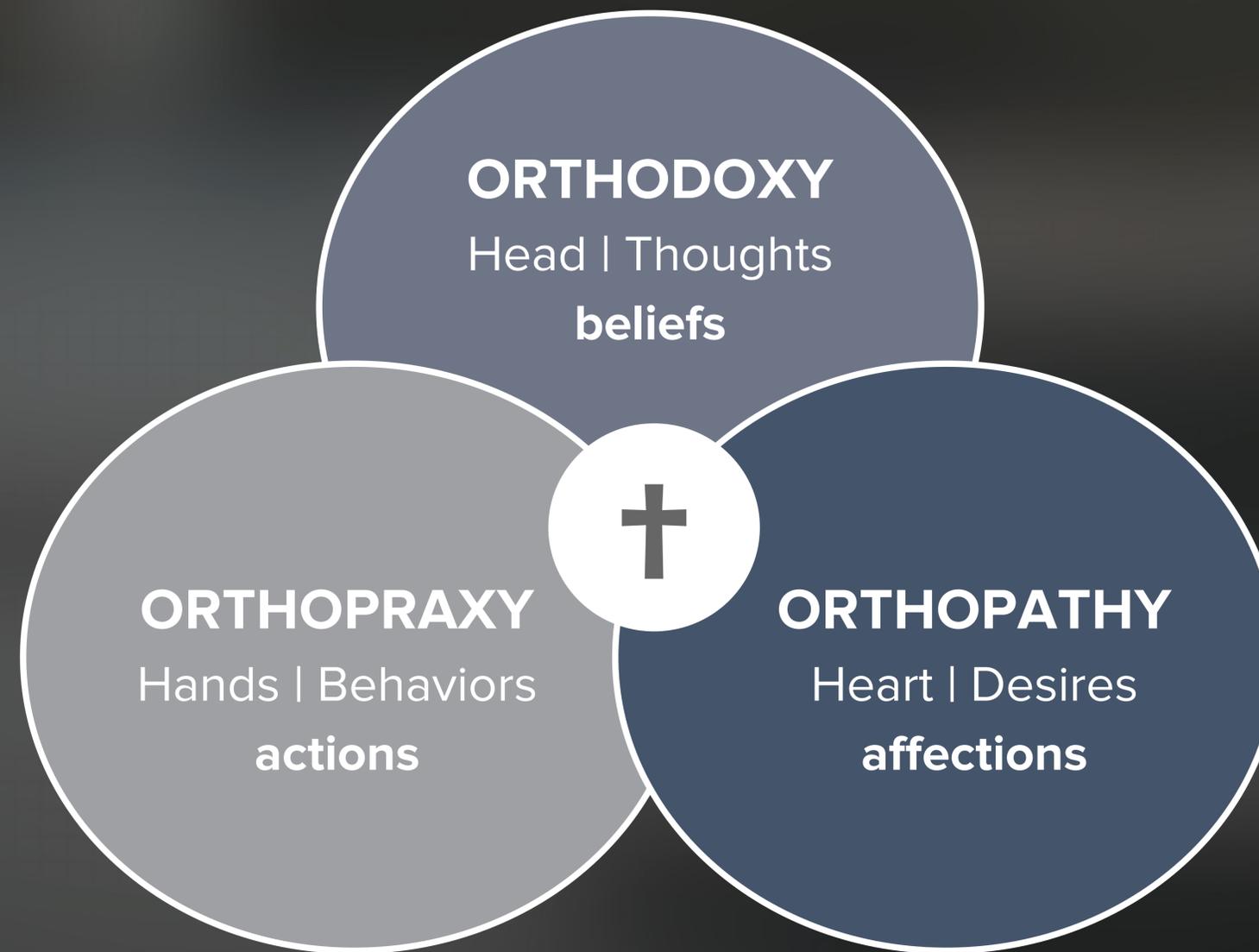
Isaiah 58:6-9 ^{NLT}

“No, this is the kind of fasting I want:

Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. ⁷ Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. ⁸ Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. ⁹ Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!”



Holistic Transformation
submitting desires, thoughts,
& behaviors to Christ



Jesus expected disciples to:
give, pray, & fast
with love for God & neighbor

Matthew 6:2a, 5a, 16-18 NIV

“So **when you give** to the needy...”

⁵ “And **when you pray**...”

¹⁶ “**When you fast**, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But **when you fast**, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”



Jesus expected disciples to:
give, pray, & fast
with love for God & neighbor



Becoming a person who
partners with & depends on God

Isaiah 58:10-12 ^{NLT}

“**Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble.** Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. ¹¹ **The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength.** You will be like a **well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.** ¹² Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a **rebuilder of walls and a restorer of homes.**”





Followers of Jesus fast to
**delight in God's presence,
depend on God's provision,
& partner in God's purposes.**



Let's fast together
an invitation to fast & pray

Our goal is **practice & progress** not performance & perfection

Personal Practice:

choose a time/meal, choose a purpose, and pray (*Jesus Prayer*)

Corporate Practice:

Friday, June 16, Lunch, to pray and:

- 1) delight in God's presence - **give thanks to God**
- 2) depend on God's provision - **ask for God to provide**
- 3) partner in God's purposes - **pray for those without Christ**

