

## **Memorial OPC Adult Sunday School - Westminster Shorter Catechism - 2010-2011**

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*WSC Q. 58 What is required in the fourth commandment?*

*A. The Fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy sabbath to himself.*

### **Last time:**

1. In Matthew 6:16-18 we found a seeming assumption that fasting is to be a part of the Christian life.
2. We saw numerous examples of fasting in both the OT and the NT that were consistent with God-pleasing piety. These included both personal and corporate examples of fasting.
3. We considered three proposed statements concerning what fasting is - namely:
  - a. Samuel Miller: Fasting is abstinence from food arising "from religious principle, and with a view to spiritual benefit."
  - b. Donald Whitney: "Fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes."
  - c. It should be noted that fasting is not an end in and of itself. Rather it is an auxiliary to devotion and not devotion itself.
4. We were challenged to learn more about fasting, namely, its appropriateness and its practice.

### **Why Fast? What Are the Benefits?**

Illustration: The "pointlessness" of fasting - D. Whitney, p. 164.

1. Fasting is a significant accompaniment to our **sorrow** and **penitence for sin** before God.

Consider Joel 2:12-17

What are we saying and expressing when we fast in light of being deeply convicted of our sins?

S. Miller: "Fasting is also a proper expression of penitence, inasmuch as it carries with it an implied confession that all our comforts, even to a morsel of bread, are **F**\_\_\_\_\_ by sin; and that we might be justly **D**\_\_\_\_\_ of them all, if a holy God 'should deal with us after our sins, or reward us according to our iniquities.'"

See also 1 Samuel 7:6, Ezra 9:3-6, Ezra 10:6, Nehemiah 9:1-2, Daniel 9:3-4, and Jonah 3:5.

2. Fasting is a significant accompaniment to our grief before the Lord **when overwhelmed** with adversity.

In time of bereavement - 1 Samuel 31:13 (2 Samuel 1:12)

In time of danger - 2 Chronicles 20:3

In time of bewilderment - Judges 20:26, Nehemiah 1:3-4

What are we saying and expressing when we fast in the face of overwhelming adversity?

3. Fasting is a significant accompaniment **when specifically petitioning God in earnest prayer** about something very important.

Ezra 8:21-23

Esther 4:16

Psalm 35:13-14

What are we saying and expressing when we accompany our earnest petitions with fasting?

4. Fasting is a significant accompaniment to earnest prayer **when one embarks upon an new and great work** for God.

Matthew 4:2

Acts 13:2

Acts 14:23

What are we saying and expressing when we fast in the face of new labors for the Lord?

5. Fasting is a significant accompaniment to growing in **self-control, self-denial** and mastery over bodily/sensual appetites.

1 Corinthians 9:27

What are we saying and expressing when we fast purposefully in this way?

6. Fasting is a significant accompaniment to **extending mercy and charity to the poor.**

Isaiah 58:6-9

What are we saying and expressing when we fast for this reason?

7. Fasting is a significant accompaniment to **expressing satisfaction in and love to God.**

Luke 2:37 and Philippians 3:19

1 Corinthians 7:5?

2 Corinthians 6:5?

What are we saying and expressing when we fast in this context?

### **So What?**

Last week we said that the practice of fasting was something that would only be engaged in **on occasion**. As you look at the above seven "occasions" for fasting can you say that these are things that you actually encounter from time to time in your life? If so, then are you willing to consider that there are times in your life when fasting is appropriate?

Are you still willing to learn more that you might consider putting this into practice?

*Next time, April 24: The proper method of fasting and the corresponding dangers of fasting.*