

MATTHEW

Heirs of the Kingdom

Matthew 6:16-18

And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Outline

1. What is fasting?
2. Why does it matter?
3. How do we practice it?

1. What is fasting?

Matthew 6:16-18

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES
HANDBOOK

Practices That Transform Us

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

A definition of fasting:

Fasting is the self-denial of normal necessities in order to intentionally attend to God in prayer.

1. What is fasting?

Matthew 6:16-18

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Fasting is an opportunity to lay down an appetite—an appetite for food, for media, for shopping. This act of self-denial may not seem huge—it's just a meal or a trip to the mall—but it brings us face to face with the hunger at the core of our being.

1. What is fasting?

Application

- Don't limit fasting to food. There are other applications of these principles to your life.
- Consider fasting from TV, your phone, social media, gaming, shopping, etc.

2. Why does fasting matter?

Matthew 6:16-18

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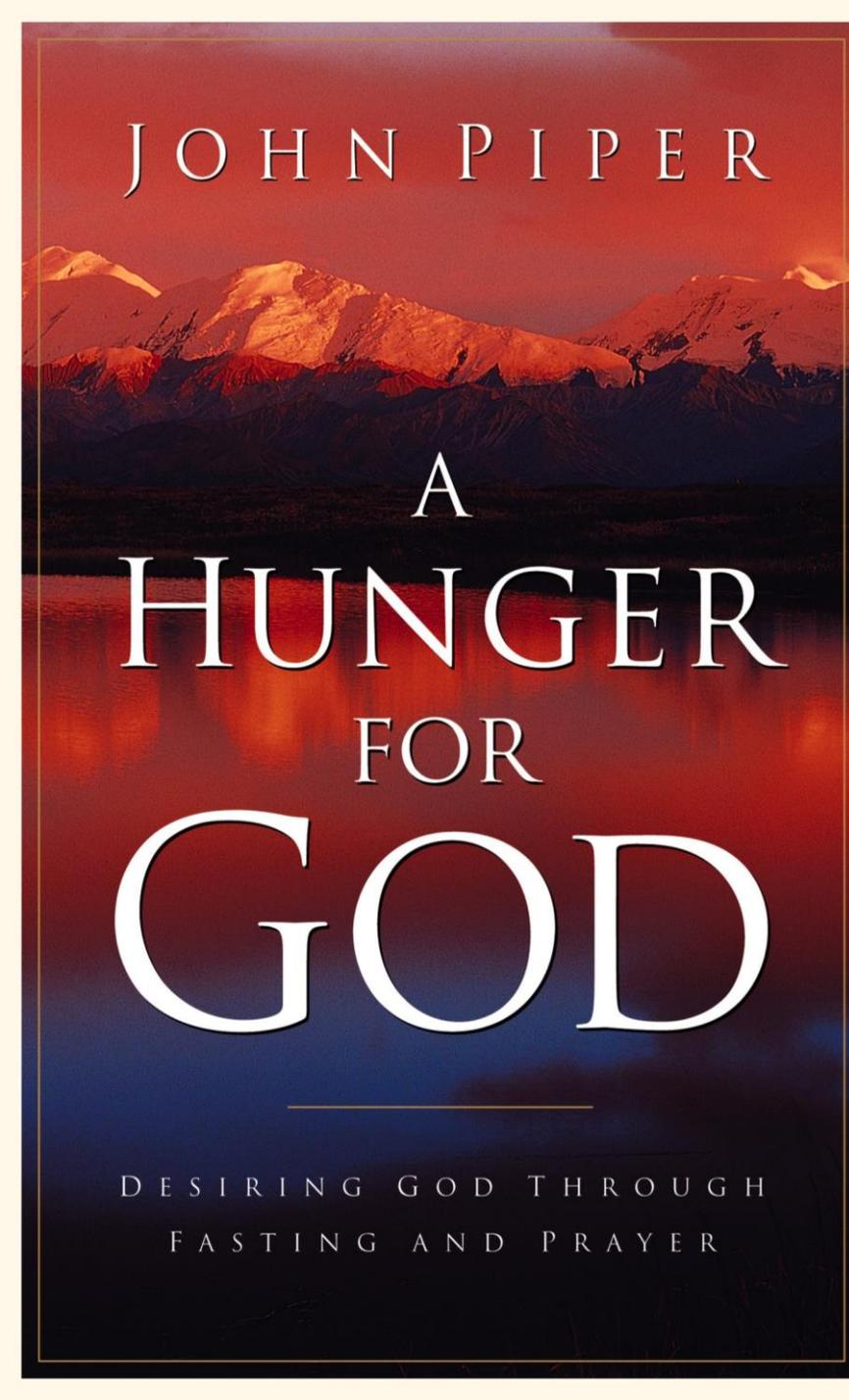
Application

- Not all fasting is good

2. Why does fasting matter?

Application

- Not all fasting is good
- Fasting is commended in Scripture



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DESIRING GOD THROUGH
FASTING AND PRAYER

The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world . . . The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts.

2. Why does fasting matter?

Application

- Not all fasting is good
- Fasting is commended in Scripture
- Fasting exposes what controls us

3. How do we practice fasting?

Matthew 6:16-18

3. How do we practice fasting?

Application

- Start small: skip one meal
- Replace, don't just remove
- Let your hunger point you to God

3. How do we practice fasting?

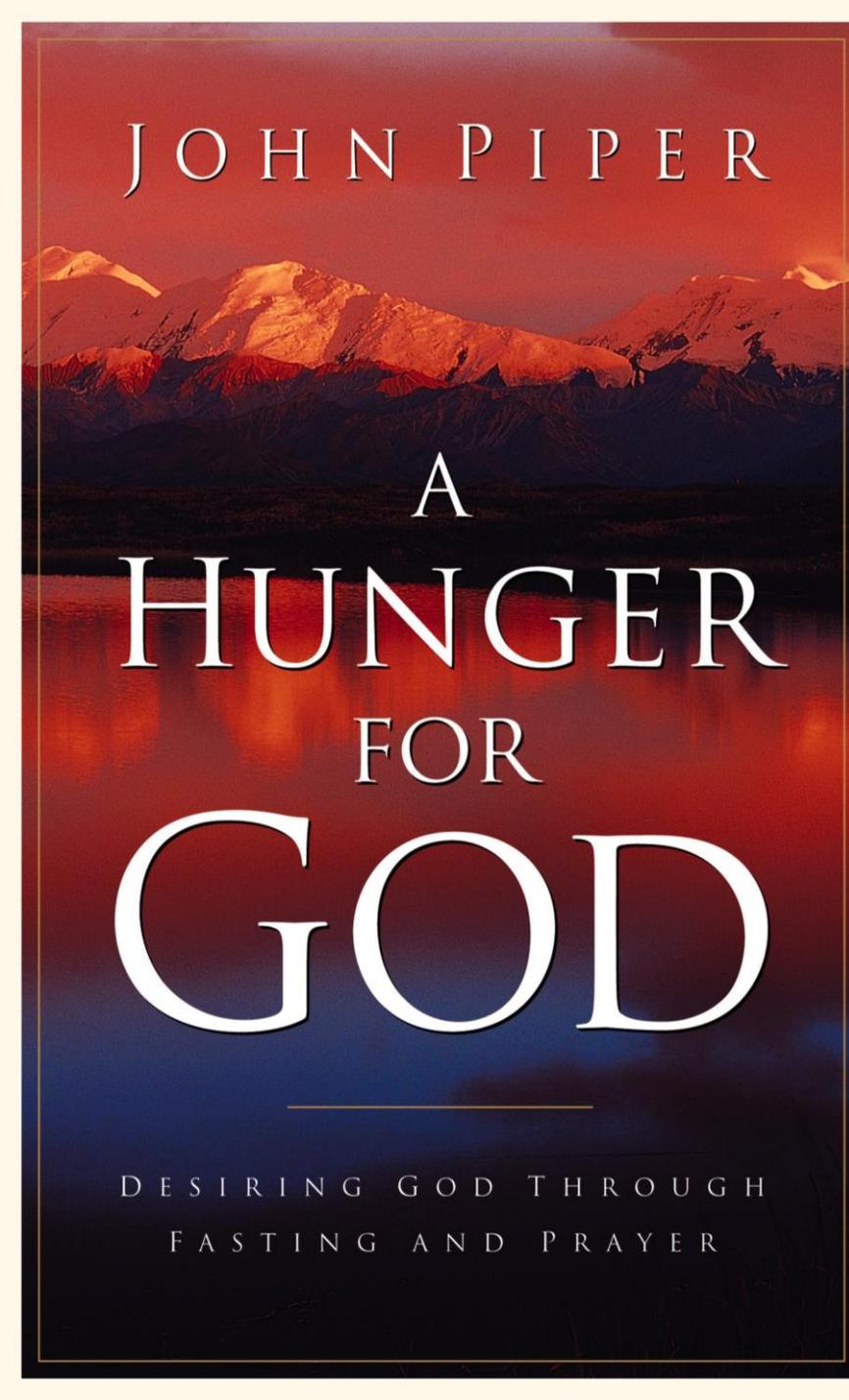
Action step

- Sometime between now and Easter, skip one meal and use that time to seek the Lord.

Matthew 9:14-17

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

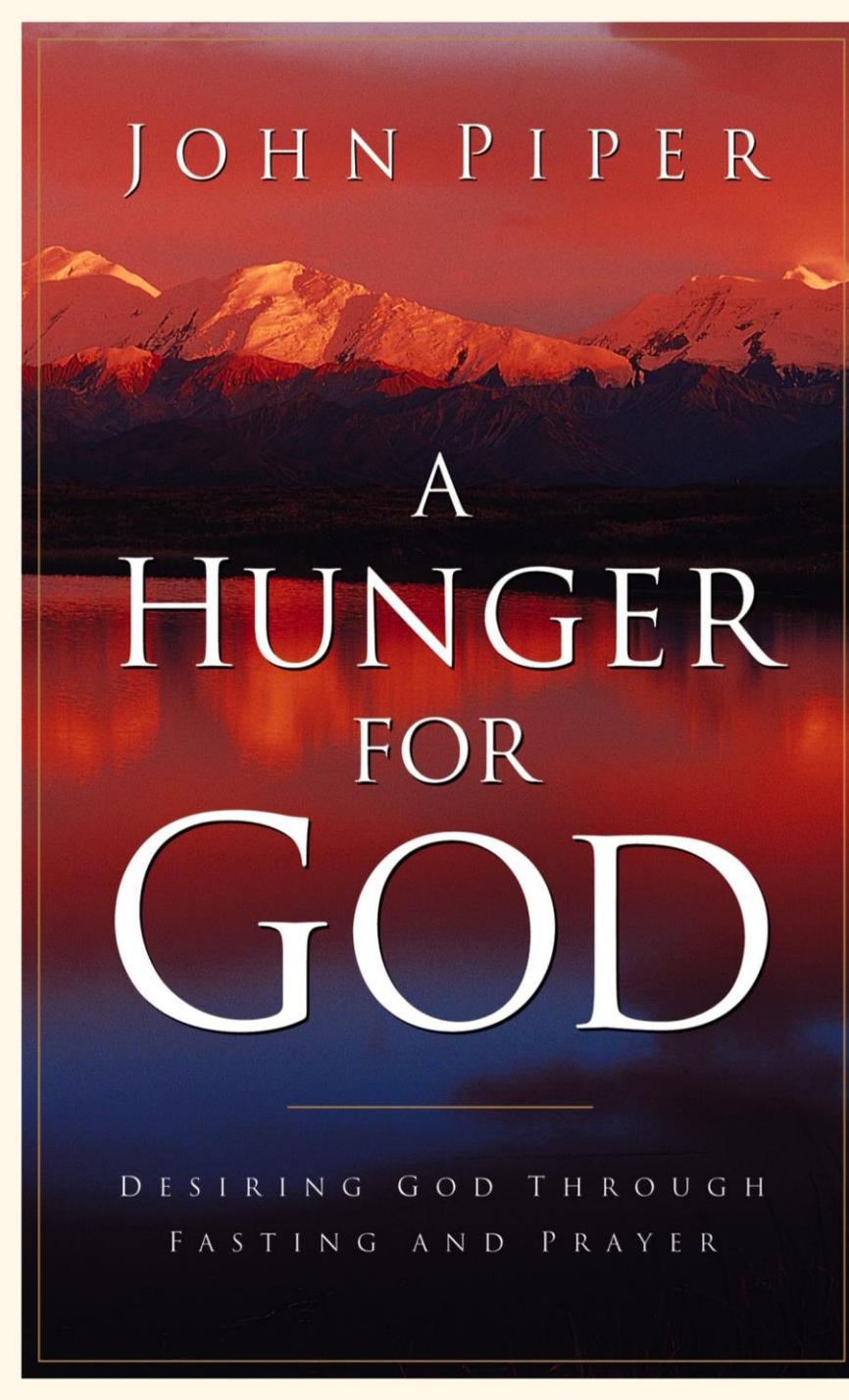


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If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.



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God did not create you for this. There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened. I invite you to turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry, and to say with some simple fast: “This much, O God, I want you.”

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