

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

Matthew 6:16-18: Too Full for Heaven: Awakening Our Hunger for God

Preaching Date: October 4, 2026

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Understanding the Text

1. Looking back to Genesis 1–3, how did the sermon establish a "biblical theology of eating"? How was the original Covenant of Works in the Garden broken over a failure of appetite, and how has that Fall corrupted our relationship with food today?
2. Under the Mosaic Law, God commanded Israel to fast on only one day of the year—the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29). How did this fast function under a national republication of the Covenant of Works, and how did Israel corrupt this discipline by the time of Isaiah 58:3?
3. How does Jesus' forty-day fast in the Judean wilderness (Matthew 4:1–4) succeed where both the first Adam and national Israel failed? Using a proper Law/Gospel distinction, why is it essential that we rest in the "active obedience" of Christ's finished fast before we ever attempt to fast ourselves?
4. In Matthew 6:16, Jesus uses a biting Greek wordplay (*aphanizousin* and *phanōsin*) along with the commercial accounting term *apechousin* ("paid in full"). How did the Pharisees turn fasting into "street theater" on Mondays and Thursdays, and what is the tragic reality of the "reward" they received?
5. When asked why His disciples did not fast in Matthew 9:14–15, Jesus pointed to where His followers live in redemptive history. How does the tension between the "Already" and the "Not Yet" of the Kingdom explain why Christians fast under the New Covenant today?

Personal Reflection & Application

1. Augustine confessed that *"while I am passing from the pinch of hunger to the satisfaction of having eaten, the snare of concupiscence lies in wait for me."* Where in your own life are you most prone to turn to the good gifts of creation ("comfort food" or entertainment) to medicate anger, loneliness, or boredom rather than seeking comfort in the Creator?
2. While we probably aren't rubbing ashes on our faces in the grocery store aisle, how are you tempted to practice the modern equivalent of Pharisee street theater—such as the spiritual "humble-brag" in conversation or curating your piety on social media? How does Jesus' command for "radical normalcy" in Matthew 6:17–18 challenge our desire to be noticed?
3. John Piper observed that *"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 mindless nibbling at the table of the world."* What "innocent" blessings or daily

trivialities are currently stuffing your soul and dulling your appetite for God's Word and prayer?

4. C.S. Lewis warned that fasting asserts the will against the appetite, carrying the danger of pride, while skipping a meal often pulls back the blanket on hidden irritability and anger in our hearts. When your physical comforts are removed, what sins rise to the surface, and how can those moments drive you humbly to the cross rather than to "willpower worship"?
5. Consider the five pastoral directions for fasting (**regularly, prayerfully, secretly, humbly, and creatively**). Whether abstaining from food or fasting creatively from digital media, news, or shopping, what is one specific way you can build this discipline into your routine this week to awaken your hunger for the Bridegroom?