

Lesson 17: Fasting and giving

Aims for each learner:

- Start a disciplined habit of fasting and giving under God's guidance.
- Be glad to do this generously and sacrificially, without compulsion or seeking merit.
- Learn two principles of how God guides us.
- Revise Mark 12:30-31.

Cultural clues:

- BMBs and the detailed guidelines of Shariah
- BMBs and Ramadan
- Muslims and giving

Opening

Last week's practical task: Were you able to help a needy brother or sister in Christ. What did you do? How did that person respond? **Ask someone to pray for today's lesson.**

Lesson 17 home study review:

Question 1: Word, Spirit

Question 2: prayer

Question 3: a) all; b) as much as possible

Question 4: a) God, people; b) love

Introduce today's topic: What have we learned so far about Christ's shariah? *See the lesson Introduction.* As Christ's followers we fast & give money with a different motive than in our old shariah.

Discussion

How does God guide us on the straight path? (Questions 1-5)

Question 1: Look at the two pictures of sheep.

- Which of these pictures is like our old shariah and which is like Christ's shariah? What are the differences?



Islam's shariah is like the fence, which is strongly constructed to keep the sheep in their right place. Detailed regulations make the boundaries between what is forbidden and what is permitted. By contrast in Christianity there are fewer regulations and it can feel like we don't know where the boundaries lie. But we have Christ himself as our Shepherd. He promises to lead his sheep to good places and keep us safe.

Questions 3-4: Read the whole of question 3 and the first paragraph of question 4.

- How can we hear Christ speaking to us by his Spirit? *The Spirit speaks through our Bibles as we read each day, in quiet ways through our conscience, by bringing an idea strongly into our mind, or a feeling in our spirit. Sometimes he speaks more loudly, through a dream or a clear voice. He also speaks to us through the advice of other believers.*
- But can we make mistakes in hearing the Holy Spirit's voice? *Yes! Sometimes we think it is God's voice when it is only our own sinful desire. Whatever God says to us will never contradict what is written in his Word the Bible. So we should always check that what we 'hear' is not against the Bible!*

Fasting (Questions 6-14)

Questions 6-7: Read the first paragraph of question 6 and the speech bubbles.

- Do you have the same questions as Parveen? Or other questions about fasting?
- From question 7, what two things can help Parveen find answers to her questions?



Question 8: Why should we fast? *Split the learners into three groups and assign each group a passage to use in answering the question. Or go through each passage together.*

- In the following Scripture passages, why did the people fast?

Daniel 9:3-5 – confession of sin, repentance and petition.

Psalms 35:13 – praying for someone in need.

Acts 13:2-3 – worshipping, prayer for mission and seeking wisdom for a decision.

Question 12: When should we fast? Read the question.

- When should we fast? Is fasting compulsory or optional for us? *The Spirit will lead us to fast.*

Question 13: Read the whole of question 13, including the 'stop and think' section in bold.

- What are your personal responses to this question?

Question 14: Read the whole of question 14, if this is a relevant issue in your context.

- What reasons did you write for and against Parveen fasting with her family in Ramadan?

Reasons for: *She can show loyalty to her family even as a follower of Jesus. She can fast and pray for her family to find salvation. If she does not fast, it may cause unnecessary problems and her family will think that Christ's followers are lazy.* **Reasons against:** *They may think she is still following Islam or is doing it for religious merit. She may be influenced by her former way of thinking that it is for religious merit.*

- To what extent does Parveen's decision depend on her circumstances? *E.g. it depends if she is with her family and they are all strict Muslims. For those living independently there is more choice.*
- What about you, in your circumstances?

Giving (Questions 15-25)

Question 15: Read the first paragraph and the speech bubbles.

- Do you have the same questions as Khalid? Or other questions about giving?



Questions 16-19: Read the whole of question 16 and the first half of question 17.

- How much of our property belongs to God?
- Should we set a limit on how much we give back to him?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15:



Ask group members to read one or two verses each, going around the group, so that everyone has something to read.

After reading it out, give one minute in silence for each person to think about the meaning.

- Each person please explain in your own words the meaning of your verse(s).

Question 21: Read the question. What is your answer for this question, and why?

Question 24: Read the question.

- What did you write here? How can you practically set aside the money and not spend it?
- If you have no income, what other ways can you give to God? *E.g. our time, our voluntary service etc. But most people have at least some money and we should learn to give from that too. Even children can give something out of a small allowance.*

Question 25: Read the question. What did you write here? *Ideas include: Help the poor, not just our relatives. Buy gospels or books about Jesus to give to interested non-Christians. Contribute to the costs of our local group of believers. Contribute to believers in Christian service full-time, in our country or overseas.*

The law of love (Question 26)

Question 26: Read the question.

- How can fasting be a way to obey the law of love? *We deny ourselves out of love for God, putting him before our hunger. Also, when we fast and pray for people in need, that shows our love for them.*
- Why is giving money a way to obey this law of love? *Because we show our love for God by giving money back to him, and our love for other people by using the money to help them.*

Conclusion

Obeying today's teaching:

- What difference will today's lesson make in your life?
- **Read together the practical task.** Don't just think about setting aside money to give to God, start this month!

If you wish, suggest a day of prayer and fasting as a group. You could all fast for a day and come together to pray for some of the time, e.g. for a specific purpose.

Pray: In a few minutes of quiet, ask God to show each of us how and when to fast, and how much he wants us to give. Then pray in groups asking him to help us be generous & disciplined in these things.