

Discipline of FASTING



FASTING in disrepute

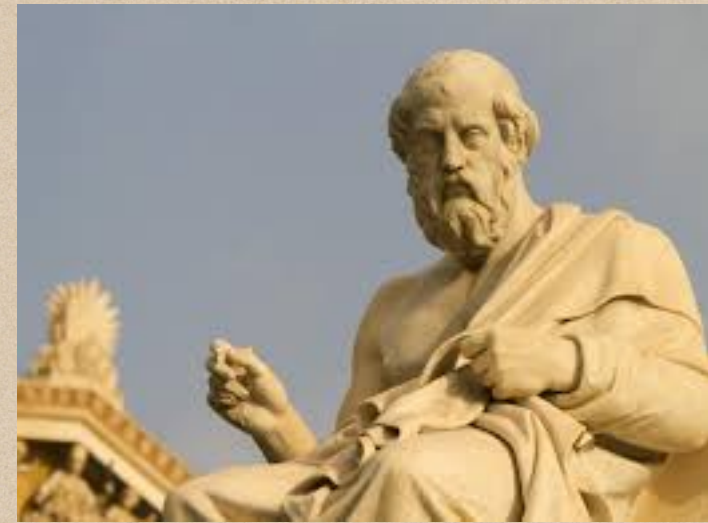
“Some have exalted, religious fasting beyond all scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it.” — John Wesley



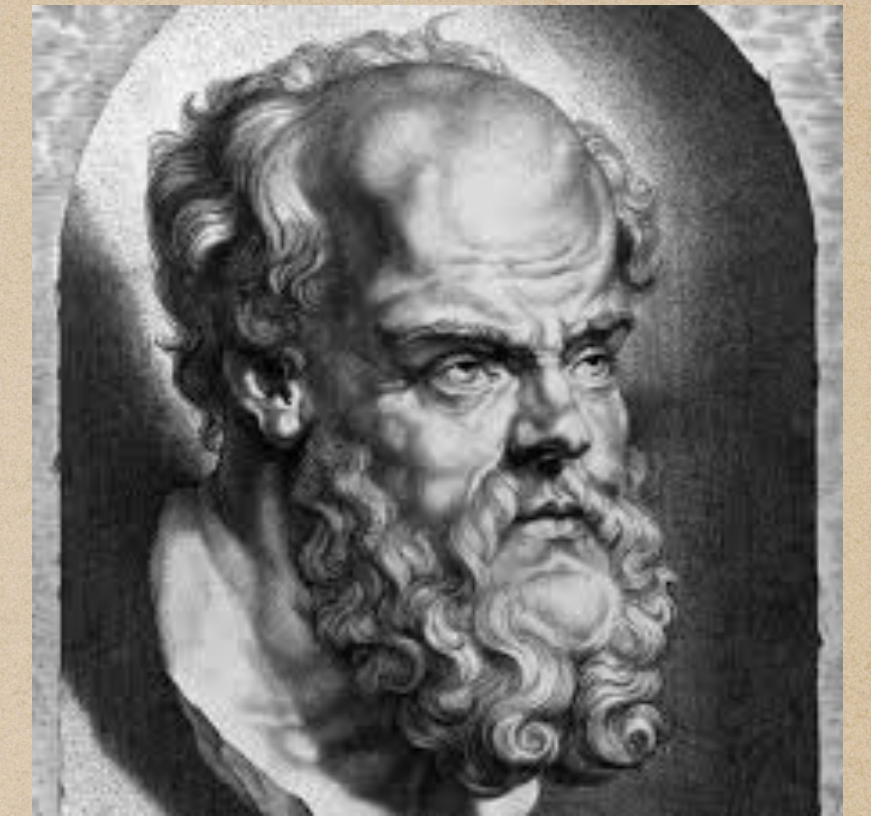
FASTING in disrepute — WHY?

- 1. Reputation from extreme ascetic practices of middle ages**
- 2. Modern propaganda (hyper consumption/3 meals per day/snacks)**
- 3. Misunderstanding: “Won’t it destroy healthy tissue?”**

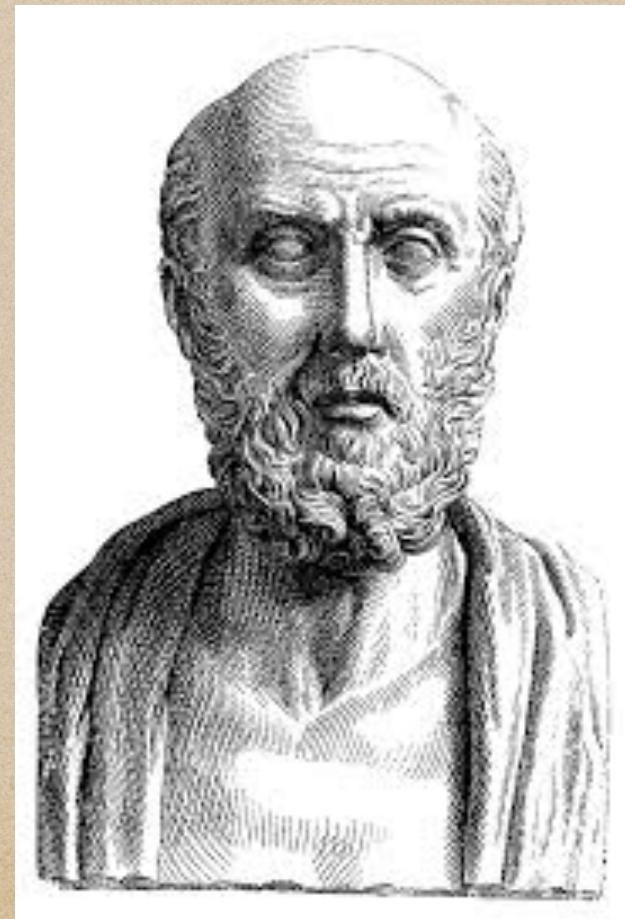
Fasting Throughout the world and history



Confucius
Yogis
Plato
Socrates
Aristotle



Hippocrates (father of modern medicine)



Fasting in Christianity & Scripture

Who's Who of Fasting

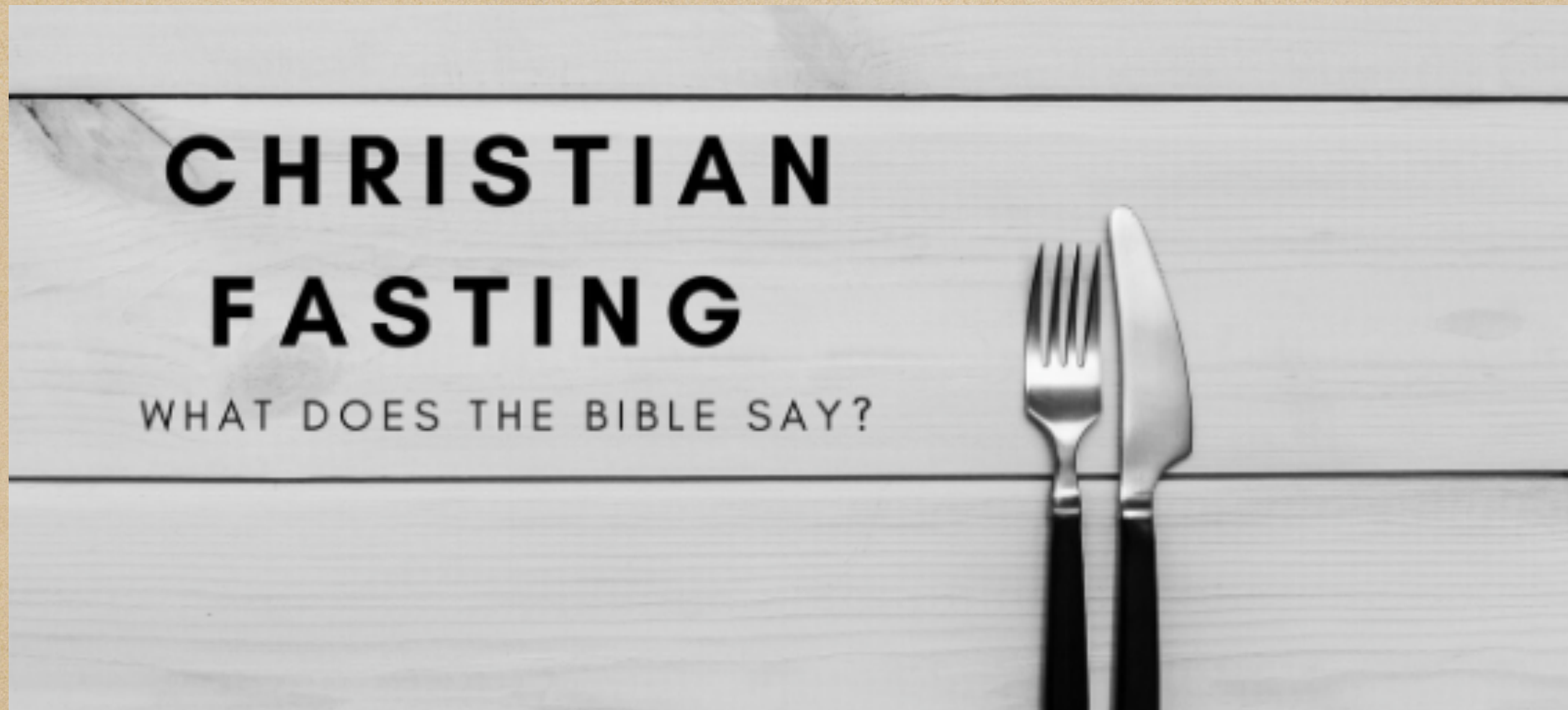
Scripture: Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Anna the Prophetess, Paul, Jesus

History: Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards

What is FASTING in a Christian context?



“Abstaining from food for
spiritual purposes
and intensification of
concentration on God.”



What does Scripture say?

TYPICALLY — abstinence from food (not necessarily water)

Jesus in desert

Luke 4:2 — “He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.”



TYPES OF FASTS

Partial Fasts (Daniel 10:3)

Absolute Fasts (Esther 4:16, Acts 9:9)

Supernatural Fasts — 40 days no food OR water (Deut. 9:9, 1 Kings 19:8)

Private & Corporate Fasts — Lev. 23:27, Joel 2:15-16, 2 Chron. 20:1-4, Jonah 3:7

Development of **REGULAR** fasts — Zech. 8:19, Luke 18:12



Does Jesus command us to fast?

Matt 6:16-18 — “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matt 9:15 — “The wedding-guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

strongly encouraged; assumed we will — but not a clear command



THE PURPOSE OF
FASTING SHOULD BE
TO TAKE YOUR EYES
OFF THE THINGS OF
THIS WORLD TO
FOCUS COMPLETELY
ON GOD.

Purpose of Fasting

PRIMARY PURPOSE:

must always center on God (e.g. Anna the Prophetess)

Zechariah 7:5 — “When you fasted...was it for me that you fasted?”

John Wesley — “...to glorify our Father in Heaven.”

Purpose of Fasting

SECONDARY PURPOSES:

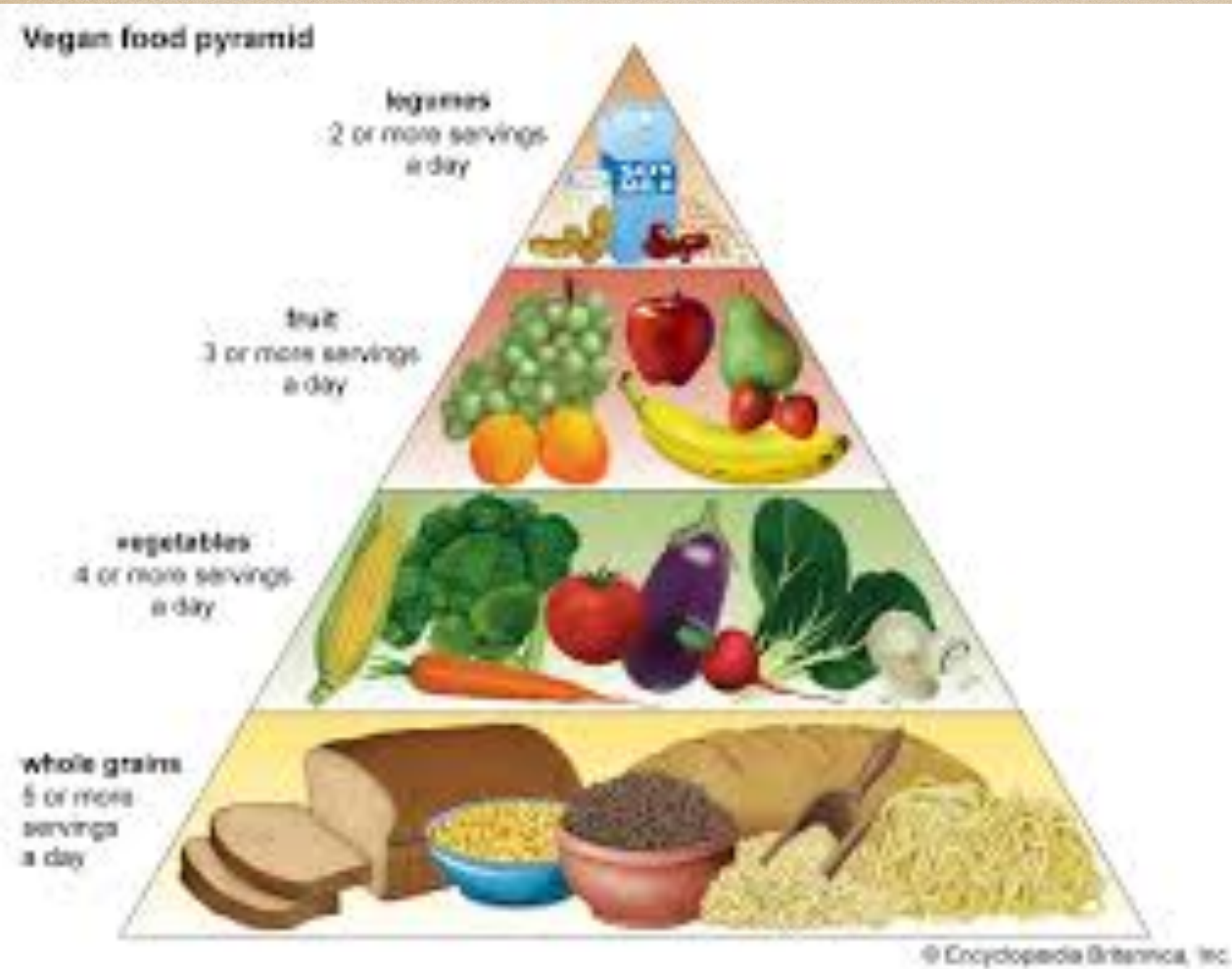
1. Fasting reveals what controls us (we cover up what's inside with food, etc)
2. Fasting reminds us we are sustained "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4)
(fasting is feasting on the real food)
3. Fasting helps us maintain balance in life



isn't extreme asceticism but discipline

"Living such that our wills are infused by and in union with the will of God;
to be like Christ."

FAST from more than FOOD



- A. Fast from people (extroverts & introverts)
- B. Fast from media
- C. Fasting from telephone
- D. Fasting from “billboards” (the ad man)
- E. Fasting from comfort zones