

Small Group Discussion Guide — November 10, 2019

- Series: Sacred Rhythms
 - Sermon: Fasting
 - Scripture: Luke 4: 1-4 (ESV), John 1: 16 (ESV)
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FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST WEEK:

How have you experienced Sabbath this week?

CONNECT:

What stood out most to you from Sunday's service? Do you have a question about anything? What is your marshmallow? When and where do you find you are most likely to indulge?

ENGAGE:

1. Read Luke 4: 1-4 (ESV).
 - How long has Jesus fasted? What is your reaction to his ability to forego satisfying his human need for so long?
 - How did Satan try to tempt Jesus, and how does Jesus respond?
 - What can we learn from Jesus' response?
2. Read Luke 3: 21-22 (ESV)
 - How does this passage explain Luke's opening statement in Luke 4: 1?
 - Right after the spiritual high of Jesus' baptism, He goes by himself to fast and pray. How is his example useful for your own spiritual growth?
3. Read John 1: 16.
 - What is the fullness of Jesus? (Also see John 1: 14)
 - How does Jesus' fullness feed us, especially during a fast or other times of want?

APPLY:

1. What kind of things do we stuff ourselves with, in order to fulfill a deep hunger? How does this distract you from Jesus? How might fasting help you realize where real abundance lies?
2. Pete said "fasting only makes sense when there might be something transcendent possible." Have you ever experienced something transcendent during or after a time of want (food or otherwise)?
3. Jesus said "I am the bread of life" (John 6: 35). How can you make room in your already-full life for Jesus?
4. What steps are you willing / able to take toward fasting as a means of improving your relationship with God?

PRAY:

Father, thank you for offering us relationship with You through your son, Jesus. Help us to draw closer to you by going without for a short time in order to realize you truly are all we need. Give us courage and faith to honor you through fasting, knowing you will provide everything we need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

GOING DEEPER

To use fasting as a means of accepting God's abundance, consider the following suggestions:

1. **Start simply** - pick one meal to skip one day this week. During that meal time, take a walk, pray, or journal and stay off your phone.

Or...

Give up your "marshmallow (if it's not food) for one day & pray for help to overcome that temptation and to draw closer to Jesus.

Consider using worship music to help focus your thoughts on God. Stick with it to make it routine.

2. **Pick a focus** for your fast. Identify something you want to pray about, and pray using specific language to God. Name your fear or pain honestly & specifically before God, or ask God in fasting how to proceed through a difficult time or season.
3. **Consider fasting in community.** Ask your family or friends to fast with you for a period of time. Perhaps you can "break fast" together at a set communion time.
4. **Fast in sorrow.** Recognize your brokenness and how longing for God brings us closer to Jesus.

REFERENCES:

"...fasting disappears because we are disenchanted. If there is nothing beyond what we might see, touch, taste, and feel, then a fast, a season like Lent, or a day like Ash Wednesday makes no sense. What could we possibly expect to happen on the other side of a fast except for discomfort or hunger?"

~ Mike Cospers, Wonder

"King David said, 'I humbled myself with fasting.' Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear - if they are within us, they will surface during fasting. At first, we will rationalize that our anger is due to our hunger. And then, we know that we are angry because the spirit of anger is within us. We can rejoice in this knowledge because we know that healing is available through the power of Christ."

~ Richard Foster. Celebration of Disciplines

"Fasting is not a no to the goodness of food or the generosity of God in providing it. Rather, it is a way of saying, from time to time, having more of the giver surpasses the gift."

~ John Piper