

:: summary

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples about prayer and fasting as a way of closely connecting with our Father in heaven. Everyone at GraceWay, from children to adults, has been invited into a special time of seeking God through the spiritual practices of prayer, fasting, and Bible reading. During March 1-22, we are encouraging you to accept God's *invitation of grace* to encounter God based on God's promise in Deuteronomy 4:29:

"But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul."

:: explore and discuss

We seek lots of things: happiness, a lost object, information. Sometimes we seek to know a relative, friend, neighbor or co-worker better. Describe a time where you sought to know someone more fully. What was involved in getting to know this person?

Read Deuteronomy 4:29 and Jeremiah 29:13.

In each text, two different Hebrew words are used for seeking. The meanings behind the words include striving after, searching, desiring, seeking God's face, seeking in prayer and worship.

Based on these meanings, what is God saying to his people in these two texts about how to look for him? In light of your answer, what does God mean when he says "you will *find* me"?

Read Matthew 6:5-8

There are many jewels in this short teaching on talking with God. What is one idea that stands out to you and how might it shape your life of prayer?

Read Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting is to be done in a way that is not obvious to others or showy. Jesus says, "just look normal."

When people do show off their piety, what is the reward they get? What does Jesus say is far more important (both in this text and in vv. 5-8)?

What is the implication of Jesus using the word "when" in vv. 5,6,7,16, and 17?

:: make it personal

How does reading Scripture help you to draw near to God? What do you do to make it personal?

If you have not done it for spiritual reasons, what is most challenging to you about the call to fast? If you have fasted in order to draw near to God, what has been hardest? What was most rewarding? What encouragement would you have for those in your group?

:: pray

Pray for one another as you each seek God in this time.

Close by reading together Matthew 6:9-13 as your prayer.

We pray that this Seeking God experience will deepen your relationship with Jesus, your desire and longing for God's Kingdom to come in all its fullness, and your yearning for more of God's presence, power and blessing to be poured into your life.