

Life Group Lesson

“A Culture of Prayer and Fasting”

October 2, 2011

Below are verses and questions from the weekend message. The goal is not to read every verse and ask every question but to use them to bring about discussion, study, interaction, and growth of Your group members to be the church of Jesus Christ.

This group involves more time devoted to prayer as a group. Take time to read the scriptures, ask questions and then pray. We encourage You to pray as a large group and then break up into groups of 2 or 3. We also encourage You to find a prayer accountability partner You can communicate with during the week.

READ

Luke 2:37

ASK

1. In this scripture, we see Anna, who worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. What benefits would You have if You practiced a lifestyle of fasting and praying beyond this one weekend?
2. To change the culture around us, we must first allow God to change us personally. How consistent is Your prayer life? Have a few people explain their prayer routine (time frame, time of day, do You use a guide, do You pray scripture, place, etc.).
3. What kind of life would You have if You spent time daily in prayer?
4. Do You know what to pray? What tools can help You have a successful prayer life (scripture, lists, Bro. Bill's prayer from weekend, 9 things, Apostles' Creed, The Lord's Prayer, prayer partner, etc.)

PRAY

Spend time now praying the “9 Things” from the weekend service as a whole group or in smaller groups.

- *Spirit of Revival (personal & corporate)*
- *Radical Faith*
- *Passionate Prayer & Worship*
- *Reaching the Thousands*
- *New Location in Redfield*
- *New Location in Pine Bluff*
- *More Life Group Leaders*
- *Financial Increase*
- *One-on-One to develop to 500 disciples*

READ

1 Chronicles 4:10

ASK

1. Do You believe the Lord will bless You (for His purposes)?
2. Do You believe the Lord will enlarge Your territory for Your ministry assignment?
3. Do You believe the Lord will be with You?
4. Do You believe the Lord will keep You from evil?

PRAY

Spend time right now praying these four things over every person in Your group. We advise You break up in to smaller groups to do this.

READ

Matthew 6:16-18

ASK

1. How did Your fast go?
2. What did the Lord show You?
3. How many of You fasted for the first time ever?
4. According to Matthew 6:16-18, how are You supposed to look, act, and talk while fasting (answer: look, act, and talk like You are not fasting).
5. Do You fast on a regular basis?
6. If You started fasting on a regular basis (i.e. once a week from food, every night for an hour from TV) what difference would it make in Your life?
7. Would continual fasting build Kingdom culture in Your life and those around You?

PRAY

Spend a moment praying quietly and alone, asking God what He wants You to fast from on a continual basis. Remember, You must put something spiritual in its place. Now, get in small groups and find someone who can help keep You accountable to this time of fasting.

The following material is only for Your information in case You want to refer to it in Life Group or make it available to Your people. A Biblical guide to fasting, Bro. Bill's prayer from the weekend, and the Apostles' Creed are below for Your convenience.

A Biblical Guide To Fasting

SIMPLY STATED, BIBLICAL FASTING IS REFRAINING FROM FOOD FOR A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE.

Biblical fasting takes a lot of discipline and strength—strength which you can only receive from God. Your private discipline will bring you rewards in Heaven, says Matthew 6. **When you give God your first through fasting, prayer and giving at the beginning of the year, you set the course for the entire year. Why should I fast?**

- Are you in need of healing or a miracle?
- Do you need the tender touch of God in your life?
- Is there a dream inside you that only He can make possible?
- Are you in need of a fresh encounter?
- Do you desire a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord?
- Are you ready to have heightened sensitivity to the desires of God?
- Do you need to break away from bondages that have been holding you hostage?
- Is there a friend or loved one that needs Salvation?
- Do you desire to know God's will for your life?

OK. SO, HOW DO I BEGIN MY FAST?

STEP 1: Set Your Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Through fasting and prayer we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

STEP 2: Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14, 15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast – one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)
- What physical or social activities you will restrict from.
- How much time each day you will you pray and read the Bible

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14, 15

- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1, 2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16, 17).

STEP 4: Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

- Do not rush into your fast.
- Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
- Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

TYPES OF FASTS

Specific Food or Activity Fast: This type of fast refers to omitting a specific item(s), activity or habit from your time of prayer and fasting. For example, you may choose to eliminate red meat, processed or fast food, or sweets. It could also involve fasting from an activity or habit, such as television watching, or social media.

Daniel Fast: The Daniel fast is a great model to follow that proves to be extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline and purification in the body and soul. It is probably one of the most commonly referred to types of fasts, however within the term “Daniel Fast”, there is room for broad interpretation. In the book of Daniel, we find two different times where Daniel fasted, once in Daniel 1 and again in Daniel 10. Daniel 1 states that he ate vegetables and water, and in Daniel 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, it does state that Daniel ate no rich (or choice) foods as well as no meat or wine. So based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or any variations in between constitutes a fast.

Juice Fast: A juice fast is when no solid food is consumed and instead involves the intake of vegetable juices, fruit juices and water.

Water Fast: A water fast is eating no foods and drinking no liquids except water for a period of time. Extreme precautions should be taken with a water fast and should be done under the direction supervision and monitoring of your physician.

Total Fast: A total fast is where nothing – neither liquid, solid food or even water is consumed for a period of time. We do not recommend total fasting as this can be very dangerous to your health. Attempting to go without water especially, for any period of time can be extremely harmful to the body.

Bro. Bill's Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, I come to renew my place in You, my allegiance to You, and to receive from You all the grace and mercy I so desperately need today. You are my Lord and I surrender every aspect of my life totally and completely to You. I give You my heart, soul, mind, strength and my body as a living sacrifice.

Dear Father, You alone are worthy of all my worship, all my praise. I worship You and only You. I renounce all other gods, all idols, and give You first place in my life. It is all about You and not about me. Grant me the grace of a deep and true repentance.

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming for me, for redeeming me with Your own life. Thank You for forgiving my sins, for granting me righteousness and for making me complete through Your shed blood. I take my place in Your cross and death. I am crucified with You. My flesh, will and its passions, desires, and pride is crucified. I put off the old man and put on the new man. I receive the triumph of Your resurrection. I have been raised to walk in a newness of life. I take my place in Your resurrection. I am alive in You. I reign in life through You.

Lord Jesus, I receive You as my authority and rule. I receive all the work and the triumph of Your ascension. Satan and his kingdom is defeated and disarmed. All authority in Heaven and earth is Yours. I take my place in Your ascension. I am seated with You at the right hand of the Father. I bring Your authority and Your Kingdom rule over my life. I bring the fullness of Your cross, resurrection and ascension against satan, against his kingdom, and his works. You have given me authority to overcome all the power of the evil one and I claim that authority now.

Holy Spirit, I receive You as my Counselor, my Comforter, my Strength and my Guide. I honor You as my Lord and I ask You to lead me into all the truth, to teach me and anoint me. I choose to be filled with You, to walk in step with You in all things. Apply to me, Holy Spirit, all of the work and all of the gifts in Pentecost. Fill me afresh!

Father, I receive these blessings in my life today and every day. Thank You for Your angels. Thank You for the whole armor of God. I call forth the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ this day, throughout my life, my family, and my church.

I pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ with all glory and honor and thanks to Him.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
and from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;
One Christian church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.

Amen.