



BREAKTHROUGH: **Fast**



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REMINDER FOR LEADERS

First, thank you for answering the call to lead a group of people through our Lentent study. You have been invited (and you'll serve an important role as a small group leader or host), as Church of the Shepherd, to learn about and join together in **fasting for change**. We believe this will transform us. We also believe it will lead to Breakthrough with both our prayers and in our faith—not just for everyone as individuals, but together as Church of the Shepherd.

This will be an exciting spiritual journey for the life of the church; and yes, it will also definately be a stretch for all of us—emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. However, the Bible couldn't be more clear: Fasting leads to breakthrough transformation, and is a vital spiritual practice for our journey's in faith. Especially with everything that has been happening the last few years, this lent we felt called that it was time to lead our community towards Breakthrough. So, it is our prayer that everyone would join us, as one body in Christ, to lift our hearts, our minds, and our bodies in prayer through this fast to grow closer to Jesus.

Your leadership will be more important than ever during this FAST for many reasons. First, it will be very tempting for us all to focus on the FOOD we can or cannot eat, rather than the spiritual dimensions of the FAST. You will undoubtedly have to redirect the people in your group when the discussion becomes too focused on food. It will be helpful to talk a bit about recipes, the way we are feeling physically, but please try to help your group remember that the reason we are doing this is so that we are taking a season to FEAST ON JESUS, rather than abstaining from food.

While you'll find plenty of biblical support for fasting and the call to fast (Matthew 6:16-17), please remember that we all come from different faith traditions and backgrounds. Some people may not be ready to participate, or maybe they are not in a healthy place to participate fully. That is OK! In fact, we would love it if you would give them maximum space to participate or observe at the level they feel prepared and called to participate. We anticipate that there may be a fair number of people who will want to watch from the sidelines. We don't want to manipulate or shame people into fasting. Our prayer is that each person would search their own hearts (Psalm 139:23-24) and allow Jesus to direct their hearts.

Finally, we have been working hard to supply supplemental materials for you as Leaders/Hosts, and for you to share with your group members! You'll be able to find these on our APP or on our website. We want you to feel well supported and hope that these tools will help provide maximum encouragement for everyone to participate successfully in our 21 day FAST.

This is our Group Guide for this series. You'll find that we adde some extra elements to enrich your and your group members expereince:

- A contract and list of acceptable foods for the fast are included in this guide for easy reference.

- Some of the Sunday sections have notes added to be used during the message.

- We have added a Sunday Review section so that you are able to review the message from Sunday with the group before moving on to the Group study.

- In the Icebreaker section, we are generally recommending that you use this time to check in your your group, and give them time to express how they are doing—especially when on the 21 day fast.

- We have added a journal section so that you can write down responses to the Daily Devotional (released with the second part of this guide). These could be prayers, thoughts, or pictures.



PART TWO | Beginning the Fast





CONTRACT

CONGRATULATIONS on your commitment to join Church of the Shepherd for our 21 day church-wide fast! Whenever a fast is recorded in Scripture, it's followed by an outpouring of God's miraculous power! As you join with other believers in drawing closer to Christ over the next 21 days, I believe your commitment will result in closer intimacy with God and breakthrough in your life and family.

I will be fasting for our entire church, asking that God would pour out His Spirit on us in a fresh way! I can't wait to see what He does!

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." - Matthew 5:6

Pastor Jon

THE FOCUS

Fasting is a spiritual discipline designed to connect us more deeply with God. Fasting involves giving up something PHYSICAL (ie: comfort food) for the sake of something SPIRITUAL (ie: a fresh filling of God's Spirit). Over the next 21 days, we will sacrifice some of our regular food intake and replace it with Bible reading, prayer, and journaling. The overall goal is to work up a greater appetite for God Himself that will provide a breakthrough in our lives! Remember: The focus of this fast is spiritual (a greater sense of dependency on God that leads to breakthrough in our lives). This isn't about weight loss or legalistic rules, so don't fixate on the menu... fixate on the heart behind it! Above all, God's most interested in your heart & hunger for Him!

THE FAST

We'll be participating in a partial fast called the "Daniel Fast." During this time, we will limit our diet to eating fruits and vegetables, and drinking only water. "Please test your servants... Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink." Daniel 1:12

Although we'll eliminate some common things from our daily diet, there are generous options available (see reverse-side for "Foods to Eat" and "Foods to Avoid"). If you have any condition* which might prohibit you from being a part of the Daniel Fast, there are other options, i.e.: You may choose to eliminate caffeine, coffee, soda, or sweets. Remember: the details are not as important as the Spirit in which you participate.

**If you have any known medical conditions or suspect such conditions, consult your doctor before beginning any fast.*

THE FINISH

START: Sunday, March 20 – Return this Fasting Contract on Sunday, March 13 and begin your preparations for the fast. We will end our last day of normal eating on March 19.

FINISH: Saturday, April 9! We will come together on **Palm Sunday, April 10** to worship and end the fast together. This will be an incredible breakthrough celebration.

MY REASON:

I am Asking God to...

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 4:1-14

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

⁶And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷If you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

⁹The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

¹²Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

SUNDAY NOTES

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GROUP DISCUSSION FACING TEMPTATION

OPENING

Begin your time together with prayerful silence—whether for 30 seconds or for two minutes. You can invite the group to spend this time centering themselves for conversation, prayer, and reflection.

ICEBREAKER

Can you remember a time when you faced something really difficult or painful in your life? Share your experience with your Group and how you were able to grow from that experience.

Where in your life are you needing breakthrough healing right now? Is there anything keeping you from experiencing that breakthrough?

We recognize that not every person is going to feel comfortable talking about a painful experience. That's ok. Be patient as you go through this part with the group. Don't try to fill the silence, rather, embrace it.

You might not have time to do both questions. Use your best judgment to decide which question would be appropriate for your group.

SUNDAY REVIEW

Take 5-10 minutes to review Sunday's message. What stood out to you? What questions do you have? Where was the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

A | APPLY THE BIBLE

In the Gospels, the wilderness is often portrayed as a place of demonic activity, (Look up: Luke 8:29, 11:24), but in other situations, it is where leaders go to commune with God (Look up: Luke 1:80; 3:2; 5:16; 7:24). In Luke 4, Jesus both communes with God and faces the devil.

Jesus being led into the wilderness for testing is reminiscent of Israel being led by God in the wilderness for their time of testing and refinement.

Leaders - be sure you read all of these passages with your Group and summarize what is happening in each passage. We all have 'wilderness' experiences - but may not recognize them at the time. Often, it is in hindsight that we realize that God has been with us through it. It would be helpful if you could share an experience from your own life of a time in the wilderness and what God showed you or taught you.

Q. *We all have wilderness seasons - seasons where we are challenged. Would you be willing to share your experience with your Group? What did you learn in this season? How did you see God at work through this season?*

As Israel was led into the wilderness out of slavery and destruction, it did not take them long to begin to grumble and complain. If we are honest, we can find this difficult to understand, since they had just seen God's miracles before their eyes! We can say — WHAT??? Hey - Israel — Remember the plagues God sent against Pharaoh? Or what about the parting of the Red Sea, when Israel crossed through the sea on dry land? Israel — you also had a physical representation of God's presence with them, represented by a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud during the day. What is it with you guys? But if we are honest, our hearts turn just as quickly.

This is a great spiritual discipline for us as we mature in Jesus. Learning that in Jesus, God is always present with us, providing for us, even when we don't "feel" it. We want to help our Group members understand that we are Israel and we respond in the same way! We have been guilty ourselves of not noticing God's provision (manna) and wanting to go back to the very things that hurt us (Egypt and slavery). You will have to read through Exodus 16 here to get the full story, but try to guide your Group to understand that a daily dependence on Jesus, who



is our manna, is what God ultimately wants for us, His children.

Q. *Have several Group members read Exodus 16. What was the people's response to the wilderness?*

The people grumbled and complained. They even thought they would be better off in Egypt, where they were slaves and being killed, even after they had seen God's hand move them miraculously OUT OF EGYPT - they thought they would be better off where at least they had food. There is a spiritual discipline here that you will want to help your Group members understand, even in this Fast. We can complain about what we are not eating right now, but the Lord wants to provide in extraordinary ways, if we listen and follow Him.

How did the Lord respond?

God gave them food - but also careful instructions.

Q. *What was the shelf life of Manna? Why do you think God designed it this way?*

Manna only lasted for one day, except for the Sabbath. If they tried to keep it for more than one day, it got maggots. (Some people disobeyed and tried v. 20) God was trying to teach His children that HE would supply all of their needs, that His way is far superior and that He is reliable and dependable. He gives us what we need when we need it and more. His mercies are indeed new every morning.

Q. *Why do you think Israel responded the way that they did?*

Your Group may be really hard on Israel, but the truth is we all respond in pretty similar fashion, if we are honest. They were probably scared — they left the only life they had known in Egypt — pursued hotly by Pharaoh and his army and were wandering in the desert for a long time, with no apparent destination or food source in sight. When the 'heat of life' gets turned up, it is our hearts that get exposed. Do we press into the Lord or do we try to figure out life on our own? Generally speaking, we

go back to 'what we know' - including old unhealthy patterns of living. Hopefully, through this Fast, we can all see more clearly those things that enslave us, and ask the Lord to help us break those chains.

Q. *How have you responded in 'wilderness' seasons in your life? Can you relate to the people of Israel?*

It will be important for people to be able to share safely - without judgment. Pray that the Holy Spirit would help them see negative patterns and ask for his help to change.

During this fast, the Lord may be revealing that you (like all of us) have something Paul Tripp calls, "spiritual amnesia." We forget all the ways that the Lord has blessed, protected and provided for us. While we may not have physical manna today-Jesus tells us that HE is in fact, our Manna, our daily bread. We always want to make connections between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Have someone read, John 6:32-35:

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life."

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, when we put our faith in him, he promises to "give life to the world!"

Q. *How can this change our perspective of a season in the wilderness?*

Knowing we are never alone and that Jesus died to fulfill His promise of LIFE is so encouraging!

A strategy for life in the wilderness has been called, "The Manna Principle." We effectively

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GROUP DISCUSSION FACING TEMPTATION

live day by day, dependent on Jesus, leaning on HIS strength, HIS power, in other words, HIS Spirit to lead, guide and keep us. Remember our passage from Joel last week? God promises His HOLY SPIRIT to be in us!

- Q. *Discuss with your Group how living with a 'Manna Principle' strategy could be life changing for you!*
- Q. *How can you apply the Manna Principle to your fast?*

Hopefully, you and your Group are seeing the different way of living that Jesus offers — even in the wilderness. He never wants us to forget all He has done, and IS doing in our lives. Sometimes the way through the wilderness (and our fast) can be day by day. Help your Group members to ask the Lord for strength 'just for today.' When we let our minds go too far ahead, often we begin to imagine all sorts of scenarios, instead of the ones the Lord has for us. We fill in the gaps with fear or false expectations, and begin to demand that God do for us what we think

GUIDE NOTES

God should. Living in daily dependence on God, allows us to focus on today and all that God is doing right before our eyes. It opens our spiritual hearts and minds to SEE what the Holy Spirit is doing right in front of us. It is liberating!

B | BEAR BURDENS

How is the fast going? Share some of the great things God has been doing/speaking in these past weeks. Remember that a Fast without prayer

is just a DIET! Also, share some challenges you may be experiencing while fasting. Take a moment to encourage and pray for one another. Check out the resources we have assembled as Church of the Shepherd.

C | CHANCE TO SERVE

Has your Group decided how you will serve? Let us know so we can celebrate with you!





Against such things
there is no law.

GALATIANS 5:23

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How are you doing on Week Two? Why not apply the Manna Principle to your fast? Try focusing on one day at a time, instead of all 40 days - just ask the Lord to give you the ability to remain focused for one day! He promises fresh manna tomorrow and the day after and the day after that.

DAY 8

DAY 9

DAY 10

DAY 11

DAY 12

DAY 13

DAY 14



LUKE 11:1-13

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

²He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.”

⁵Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’

⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

⁹“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

SUNDAY NOTES

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GROUP DISCUSSION PREVAILING PRAYER

OPENING

Begin your time together with prayerful silence—whether for 30 seconds or for two minutes. You can invite the group to spend this time centering themselves for conversation, prayer, and reflection.

ICEBREAKER

How are you feeling?

How is your fast going?

Even if you “messed up” you can get back onto the fast! If you haven’t started, it is not too late — JUMP IN! Encourage one another with your God-sightings! Share some ways that you have seen God at work around you.

Please give lots of room for your Group members to be ‘honest’ with the way the Fast is affecting them. Many people may have ‘slipped’ up and then given up because they thought they blew it. This is a great time to remind them of the GRACE of Jesus and that he takes us back EVERY. SINGLE. TIME. His love never fails. Just encourage them to start again. Hopefully, you and your Group members will have lots of stories of how they are seeing God at work in their daily lives. It is helpful if you are attuned to that in particular, so that you are able to share.... maybe it is something like, “Normally when I am driving, I get super frustrated with slow drivers in the left lane. This week, I found myself calmer, and moving into the right lane myself, to let others pass me! I feel different!” How about this, “Normally, when I have to drag my teenager out of bed in the morning, it ruins my whole day. But this morning, I just asked Jesus to help me love her despite her foul mood, and I found that MY perspective towards her changed, and not only did we have a better morning together, but my whole day was better!”

It is in the little things of life that we begin to change, when we are in tuned with the Holy Spirit. A Fast is one way that we can ‘wake-up’ to what the Holy Spirit is up to in our lives.

SUNDAY REVIEW

Take 5-10 minutes to review Sunday’s message. What stood out to you? What questions do you have? Where was the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

A | APPLY THE BIBLE

Have someone read Matthew 6:1-18

Q. *Matthew 6 has been described as “The Development of Kingdom Life in the Real World.” Jesus gives examples of how a person’s faith could be hypocritical in his culture.*

When we tell people that we are fasting, or giving, or praying, often they look at us in wonder and think we are ‘super spiritual’. Our pride is fed because people think well of us and praise us! They could say things like, “I don’t know how you do it, I could never give up sugar, meat, etc, for 40 days!” “You are such a good person, you are so involved in your church and do so much for others.” This can feel really good to us and we get ‘puffed’ up like the Pharisee we read about in Week one - Luke 18. Go through this section and pray that the Holy Spirit is able to help you and your Group members to see the difference for doing things for the Glory of God v. receiving praise from people.

Q. *What does Jesus mean when he says that the hypocrites have ‘received their reward in full,’ in verse 2?*

As we said above, they receive the praise of people for what they are doing.

Q. *What does Jesus mean when he says, “Don’t let the left hand know what the right hand is doing?”*

Jesus is saying that it is REALLY hard not to let others know about our good works, because when we do, we get a lot of identity and praise which makes us feel really good about ourselves. Jesus wants our good deeds to be about glorifying HIM,

not us! Ask your Group members: “How difficult has it been to not tell everyone you know that you are fasting?” Why did you tell some people? Why did you not tell others?

Q. *Why would hypocrites love to stand on the street corners, ‘to be seen by others?’*

More of the same - we can look super spiritual and get a lot of praise from people.

Q. *In vv. 16-18, Jesus talks about how we should fast. How can that relate to us and our current fast?*

During Jesus’ day, when people fasted, they also humbled themselves by wearing sackcloth and ‘disfiguring’ themselves by leaving their faces unwashed and sprinkling their faces with ashes. This would publicize the physical hardship of fasting. Those fasting would get a lot of respect from people. Jesus is saying (as he does in this entire Sermon on the Mount) that fasting (and giving and praying) should be a matter of the heart between us and God.

Again, we don’t want our Group members to feel guilty if they have already told a lot of people about their fast, but we want them to see the different emphasis which Jesus places on these kinds of spiritual practices.

Jesus repeats this sentence three times in this passage! “Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

We know in studying Scripture that if something is repeated that many times, God wants us to remember what He says!

Q. *What do you think the reward is?*

Instead of the public reward of people, God wants us to know His deep pleasure and love for you. That happens all of the time, but He is especially proud of us when we do things (like giving, praying, fasting, obeying, serving) for HIM and not ourselves. See Matt 6: 2-4 also.

Q. *Have you ever experienced the Father’s reward when you have secretly obeyed his command to you? Would you share it with your Group?*

We are hoping that you have experienced the

Father’s warmth and love when you have perhaps served someone and never told another soul; known that something you have said or done has made a huge impact on an individual’s life (but no one else will ever know!); or even in this fast, no one else knows you are participating.

Q. *Jesus is talking about an inner v. outer focus. What does he mean by this?*

As Jesus emphasizes throughout His Sermon on the Mount, He wants our hearts far more than He wants our actions.

Q. *What are some of the ways we can avoid being hypocritical, when we are giving, serving, praying and fasting?*

We can be tempted to make a big deal about what we can or cannot eat throughout this Fast. We may be complaining to others about the sacrifice we are making, all the while drawing attention to ourselves and what WE are doing instead of quietly obeying what God has called us to or listening for His voice. Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves, WHY we give, serve, pray and fast? Is it for us or for Jesus?

In the middle of this passage, Jesus stops to teach us how to pray. Why do you think he did this?

Jesus never ever leaves us to figure out what He wants us to do! While He is telling us what the wrong way to pray looks like, He gives us a model to follow! This does not mean that this prayer, which is known as “The Lord’s Prayer,” should be repeated mindlessly, it is an example of what prayers should be like.

If you have time, you may want to introduce ACTS to your Group if they are unfamiliar with this concept. Many people ask how to pray and Jesus gives us this model to follow:

A= Adoration - we start with Praising God for who He is.

C= Confession - confess those things in our hearts which are far from God.

T= Thanksgiving - we want to be sure we are thanking God for every breath we take and every morsel of food He gives us.

S= Supplication or asking for things. Often this is the content of most of our prayers, without an

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GROUP DISCUSSION

PREVAILING PRAYER

acknowledgment of who God is!

Of course, we don't want to be legalistic about the order of our prayers - but we do provide this kind of an 'outline' for those who are new to the faith or don't come from a background of praying from the Spirit.

Q. *How is Jesus' model for prayer different than the 'pagans,' v. 7-8?*

The pagans repeated the names of their gods or certain words over and over again without thinking. Jesus is prohibiting mindless, mechanical repetition, not the earnest repetition that flows from an imploring heart. It could be that some in your Group come from a tradition where 'praying' means repeating certain prayers many times over. Gently help them move from that kind of prayer to a more

meaningful, deeper prayer that comes from the heart.

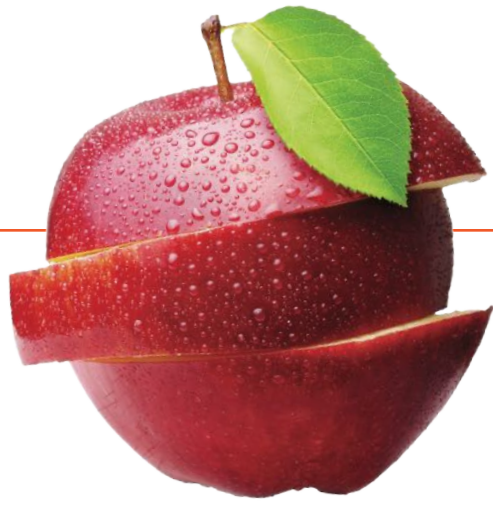
*Of course, a visible spiritual life is not all bad.
Have someone read 1 Corinthians 4:14-16*

Q. *What is Paul saying about learning from others?*

Paul is saying that we all learn from one another — and should be watching one another — as imperfect as we are. This is why God calls us to have a humble spirit in all things - and point to Jesus as our source of strength, power, and hope.

Q. *How can we make sure that as we imitate others — or others are imitating us — we avoid the temptation of hypocrisy? In other words, how can we stay true to who we are and, more importantly WHOSE we are?*

GUIDE NOTES



There are many passages which remind us to humble ourselves, most notably, Romans 12:3; James 4:10 where God promises to lift us up when we remember Acts 17:28, “In Him, we move and live and have our being.”

Remember, that “...we have not been given a Spirit of Fear, but a Spirit of Sonship.” (Romans 8:15).

Cry out to your Abba Father and ask Him to purify your motives and draw you closer to Him.

B | BEAR BURDENS

Check in with your prayer partner and share how God is speaking to you and what the continued challenges are for you!

You may want to provide a good amount of time for people to pray together, it is likely that this week's

lesson was an eye opener for people! Our motives go askew so easily, we need constant reminders of Jesus' lavish love for us. Allow time and room for the Holy Spirit's powerful movement among your Group.

C | CHANCE TO SERVE

Has your Group been able to serve together yet?

You give me
strength for battle.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13





JOURNAL | 4

At this point, you may be feeling tired and craving the foods you have been missing. There is a school in India where the students all fast every Friday. They don't focus on what they are not eating — they call it FEAST DAY....the day they get to FEAST on Jesus! They pray for us — the Church in America — every Friday! As you meditate on this week's devotionals, ask the Holy Spirit to help you feast on the goodness of God the Father, Jesus His Son, and His Holy Spirit! We are praying for you!

DAY 15

DAY 16

DAY 17

DAY 18

DAY 19

DAY 20

DAY 21

SCRIPTURE: MARK 9:14-29

JESUS HEALS A BOY POSSESSED BY AN IMPURE SPIRIT

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

¹⁹“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. ²²“It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.”



SUNDAY NOTES

5

GROUP DISCUSSION POWER TO HEAL

OPENING

Begin your time together with prayerful silence—whether for 30 seconds or for two minutes. You can invite the group to spend this time centering themselves for conversation, prayer, and reflection.

ICEBREAKER

How are you doing?

How is your fast going?

What is your experience with miraculous healing? Share your background, questions, thoughts and experience with your Group.

We all come from different church traditions and theological backgrounds. Some in your group may have different views of healing, the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.

Some may hold to the cessationist view which says that miraculous healing IS NOT for today. Others may hold to a view that believes healing is very well possible. More likely, you'll have a mixture of beliefs about healing. As a group leader, you are encouraged to live in the tension, and understand that while healing is possible—and some people do experience radical healing—not everyone will experience healing in the way they expect. God does bring healing. God does answer our prayers. Breakthrough happens when we pray God's will be done. However, it may not always be a physical healing.

Feel free to emphasize different sections of this lesson as the Holy Spirit leads. As a leader, you may know better the needs of your group for conversations. Use your discretion and use as much or as little of these lessons as you feel you need. Never feel the need to complete every single question.

This is not the goal of these guides. You may still be determining how YOU feel about this issue, and that is wonderful! Please be honest with your Group members, it may help open a wonderful discussion.

SUNDAY REVIEW

Take 5-10 minutes to review Sunday's message.

What stood out to you? What questions do you have? Where was the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

As you are talking through the sermon, notice if there are common themes or questions that are raised. Try to notice any emotions that come up from group discussion.

We would love to hear any common theme or questions that are raised. And if there is anything that you are finding difficult to address, please reach out to Pastor Benjamin.

A | APPLY THE BIBLE

This could be a very lively discussion for you and your Group members! We want to make a major point here — we never want to say that people do not have enough “faith” and that is why they are not healed - that just causes additional suffering for them! However, Jesus is saying that we may be on either side of this spectrum - lack of belief or being too involved in the world. The beauty of this FAST is that this time is set aside to allow God to have a higher priority in our hearts and lives. If people come to a place of repentance, don't minimize what they are saying, it is likely that the Holy Spirit is speaking to them, so Praise God! Gently help them ask the Lord for forgiveness, but remind them that they are FORGIVEN! Luke 15 tells us that all of the Angels in Heaven rejoice when anyone turns towards God! There is literally a party in Heaven!

V. 10 “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

In Matthew 17:14-20 Jesus indicated that a healing could not happen because of an, "...unbelieving and perverse generation." Jesus is saying that something is missing, which is why the disciples could not heal. If we are honest, these two still exist in our church, and lives, today.

Unbelieving:

When we stay connected to the Father, our faith grows! When we are disconnected from a relationship with God, it is difficult to believe in trust God, because we do not know God. Knowing here isn't about knowledge, but about intimacy with God.

Perverse:

Are we too connected to the world? Are we involved in things which dilute our relationship with Him?

Q. Which is true of you? [Maybe a little of both?]

- **UNBELIEVING** — Are you spending time with God - listening for God's voice?
- Do you set aside a part of your day to learn more about who Jesus is?
- Do you listen to what He says about you?
- **PERVERSE** - Are you too connected to the world?
- How often are you using "stuff" to numb yourself from feeling? from being present?
- How about your relationships - are you consistently growing in your love for others?
- Would people say that you act differently because of your relationship with Jesus?
- Are you a light in a dark world?
If people looked at your Social Media feed, could people tell you apart from the world?

As you guide this discussion, we do not want people to feel guilty or ashamed. We want to create safe environments where we recognize that as Followers of Jesus, we are already forgiven! But we also know that God wants us to be more like Jesus, so we are to "Put **OFF** our Old Self and Put **ON** our New Self. (Ephesians 4: 20-32)



Read 2 Corinthians 2: 15 *"For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing."*

Q. Would you say this is true in your life?
Do you want it to be?

Brainstorm with your Group, ways you can grow in your faith, ("believe") and put aside those things which can be "perverse" for us as followers in Christ.

In the book of Acts, the early church prayed and fasted together regularly. Read the following passages to see the miraculous healings which occurred.

Acts 3:1-10; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 14: 8-10

Q. Summarize some of the healings in these passages.

We want you and your Group members to understand that healing is BIBLICAL! Allow some time for your Group members to read these passages and understand how the Spirit was at work in the Early Church.

We hope that by now in the FAST, you are learning how to put aside those things which distract you from hearing God's voice. When we are in tune with the Holy Spirit, God can use us in miraculous ways!

B | BEAR BURDENS

Use this time to pray for one another and lay hands on one another and pray for healing.

It would be wonderful if you and your group could actually pray for healing for one another before you leave the Group. You can follow a 5 - Step

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GROUP DISCUSSION

POWER TO HEAL

process when we pray for healing, here are the basics:

5 Step Healing Process

1) INTERVIEW

Where's it hurt?

2) ASK PERMISSION

Can I put my hand on your Shoulder, Arm, Head, whatever?

3) PRAY

Ask (intercessory) or Command (authority) In the name of Jesus!

4) ASK

On a scale of 1-10, how we doin'? (get honest, accurate feedback)

5) FOLLOW-UP

Healing may be instantaneous or gradual.

GUIDE NOTES

What is God's next step for this person?

How is the fast going? Encourage one another to continue — you are almost there. If you slipped, it is ok — just get back on track.

Of course, we want to give room for people to share how they are doing. If you find that people are spending more time talking about the food they are eating or NOT eating, it is time to refocus them!

They are actually dieting, not FASTING! Gently redirect them.

C | CHANCE TO SERVE

A powerful way to connect to God is by serving others.





For my yoke is
easy and light.

MATTHEW 11:30

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Perhaps at this point in the fast, you are sensing that the Lord is calling you to stop certain habits or behavior. Perhaps you are realizing how much you run to food, wine, beer, sex, gossip, social media, television, sports, relationships — pretty much anything — instead of Jesus when you are hurting or happy or depressed. It is unhealthy to use these things to numb our emotions, instead of bringing them to the cross of Jesus Christ. Eventually they leak out! They can impact our relationships, jobs and growth! This week, ask the Lord to show you where you can begin to take small steps to change. What is God calling you to “put off” and encouraging you to “put on?” [See Colossians 3: 5-17]

DAY 22

DAY 23

DAY 24

DAY 25

DAY 26

DAY 27

DAY 28

ISAIAH 58

¹“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. ²For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ³‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. ⁴Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. ⁵Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

⁶“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? ⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. ⁹Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, ¹⁰and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. ¹¹The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

¹²Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

¹³“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, ¹⁴ then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

SUNDAY NOTES

6

GROUP DISCUSSION

GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

OPENING

Begin your time together with prayerful silence—whether for 30 seconds or for two minutes. You can invite the group to spend this time centering themselves for conversation, prayer, and reflection.

ICEBREAKER

How are you doing?

How is your fast going?

Have you ever participated in social activism - maybe you have served on the Relief Bus or in a Soup Kitchen? Have you gone to a Mission and sorted clothes or played with homeless children to give their tired parents a break?

If so, share your experience(s) with your Group. Or ask the questions you may have had about these experiences with those who have served in this way.

Just allow people to share. Point out as people are speaking, how they light up when they talk about serving others. (Even though we are not there, we know they will be!) That is the Holy Spirit just shining through them! Point that out! Allow them to see how joyful it makes us to serve others. If any of them point back to Lesson 1 and say they are not supposed to tell others — smile and say yes! But we also want to remember and encourage one another about how pleased the Lord is when we care for those who have no voice! It is truly the heart of Church of the Shepherd.

Proverbs 31:8

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

SUNDAY REVIEW

Take 5-10 minutes to review Sunday's message. What stood out to you? What questions do you

have? Where was the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

A | APPLY THE BIBLE

Throughout this fast, we have been trying to differentiate between religion and turning our hearts toward Jesus. In Isaiah 58, the people of Israel cry out to God.

Q. *What does Isaiah say is the chief complaint of the people?*

The people say that they are fasting and praying but don't see God working. They are complaining that they do not see their prayers being answered. On the surface, it looks as though they are "doing" all the right things.

Q. *What is God's response? What have the people been doing in the midst of their fast? (v4)*

Enough with the image; now God exposes the reality. The reality was that His people didn't fast with the right heart, and did it only as an empty ritual. The reality was that even on a day when they fasted, they still exploited their employees. God didn't accept their fasting when it wasn't connect with a sincere heart of obedience.

Q. *Who have they really been fasting for?*

They fasted for needs, but selfish needs like "LORD, help me win this argument." "LORD, help me defeat this person." Though their prayer was accompanied with fasting, it was still a selfish, even wicked prayer - so God did not answer. The purpose of their fasting was to glorify themselves, to make their voice heard on high. God says, "No more. You will not fast as you do this day."

Q. *How does this relate to passages we read in Week One: Luke 18:9-14 and Week Four: Matthew 6?*

Help your Group see the connection between the hypocrisy Jesus talks about in these passages when we practice spiritual disciplines so that people tell us how wonderful we are, not for God.

Q. *Getting right with God means that we STOP acting in fleshly ways and BEGIN acting in spirit-filled ways. [Isaiah 58:6-7; 9b-10] What*



would that look like for us in modern day America?

Obviously there will be lots of discussion about what this could look like. Encourage your Group members to start with their OWN HEARTS - and not to point too many fingers at others.

Remind them of Matthew 7: 1-3

7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Isaiah establishes that true religion is not what is acceptable to man but what is acceptable to the Lord. All of us fall into the routine of life. We can be very comfortable in our small worlds and forget about the greater world and needs around us. Have someone read these verses to see what the Lord ‘requires’ of His children.

Q. *Fill in the blanks for each passage - (NIV).*

James 1:27 Look after WIDOWS and ORPHANS in their DISTRESS.

Micah 6:8 Act JUSTLY and to love MERCY and walk HUMBLY with your God.

Zechariah 7:9 Administer TRUE JUSTICE, show MERCY and COMPASSION to ONE ANOTHER

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to DO RIGHT; seek JUSTICE, Defend the OPPRESSED. Take up the cause of the FATHERLESS; and plead

the case of the WIDOW.

Q. *What is the Lord saying to us through these passages?*

That as followers of Jesus, who have been given so much, we are called to defend the defenseless and look after others who are in distress. We are called to ACTION!

Q. *When you think of those who are oppressed and vulnerable, how do you generally respond?*

Here is where this could become difficult, but we are praying that people will see their own hearts of judgment here, and not judge others. You may want to remind them of the unending grace Jesus displays for us over and over, despite our brokenness. We are not called to judge (look back at Matthew 7 from above) but to ACT.

Q. *What is the Lord saying to you personally through these passages?*

We are praying that your Group is moved to even tears as they recognize God’s call on each of our lives.

Q. *What do you think the Lord is saying to us as a Church? Remember, because of Jesus’ death and sacrifice, we do not HAVE to serve out of guilt or to get into God’s good grace – He ALLOWS us to participate in His Kingdom work because He loves us so very much!*

Here at Church of the Shepherd, we want everyone to participate in serving the least and the lost. We try to create multiple opportunities for you and others to serve. Remind your Group members that it is only because of their amazing generosity that we are able to be so generous with others. Thank you so much!

Read Isaiah 58:8-9 again to hear God’s promise to His children when we remember the least, the lost and the oppressed.

“Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you

6

GROUP DISCUSSION

GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

Q. *Ask the Lord if there are any poor, oppressed, or hurting people in your daily life that He wants you to serve and encourage.*

This may be eye opening for the people in your Group. They may start to have compassion for those they never had compassion for! They may be moved in ways they never did before! Start the discussion

for them.

Remind them that in Isaiah 58:11, when the people fasted with a pure heart, God promises so much to us: Here is just one:

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

GUIDE NOTES

B | BEAR BURDENS

How is the Lord speaking to you? Remember, the Lord Jesus was neither Republican nor Democrat! If you recall last year, the world noticed when Jesus' Church responded to multiple hurricane disasters in greater measure than the government! That is the POWER of the Body of Christ! Pray together as a Group for the Lord to 'enlarge your tent,' in other words: Ask Jesus to give you eyes to

see those in need, a heart of compassion and feet to respond in action.

C | CHANCE TO SERVE

Brainstorm ideas with your Group so that you can set up a schedule of regular serving — whether it is quarterly or monthly or other!



And God said
it was good.

GENESIS 1:12



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You are almost there! Praise God that His Spirit empowered you to make it this long in the fast. Some of you may have slipped up, but fear not, you can start again today! This week, ask the Lord to open the eyes of your heart to see those in need and to determine how the Lord may be asking you to use your unique gifts to serve them.

DAY 29

DAY 30

DAY 31

DAY 32

DAY 33

DAY 34

DAY 35

And Jesus said to them,
“I have eagerly desired to eat
this Passover with you...”

LUKE 22:15





EASTER

JOIN US