



KICKSTARTER

WEEK 2: Fasting

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This series is intended to help jump into a relationship with God by engaging in some 'next level' spiritual disciplines. We hope to give a clear roadmap from which you can begin to live into each discipline.

SMALL STEPS TOWARDS BIG CHANGES

Romans 7.18-25 (HCSB) 18 For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. ^(A) For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. 19 For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but it is the sin that lives in me. 21 So I discover this principle: ^{(a)(B)} When I want to do what is good, evil is with me. 22 For in my inner self ^(b) I joyfully agree with God's law.^(c) 23 But I see a different law in the parts of my body,^{(c)(D)} waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body.^(d) 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this dying body?^(E) 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!^{(e)(F)} So then, with my mind I myself am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh, to the law of sin.

As I look back over 2016 I see a year of dwindled margin. I spent a good portion of my year traveling for work, learning new commutes, changing jobs, and watching my kids get involved and busy. Within the accelerating chaos I saw important things, things that focus on what makes me "good" become secondary or non-existent. I spent less time with my Small Group and more time on Facebook. I spent more time in planes, trains, and automobiles than I did in the Bible. My prayer time was coming in short whispers and my quiet time in tasteless morsels. I found myself getting up at 4:30AM to get to the gym so my aging body can keep up with my young kids, and going to bed near midnight so I could spend talkless time with my Wife in front of a television. All leading to a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual haze that has left me far from the contentment I have experienced in life. I was doing the things I didn't want to do, but not doing the things that brought me joy. When I read **James 1.22-24**, I see that I am the man looking in the mirror; I have fallen into an abyss of constant reaction and much less a man of intentionality. What I see now is that if I'm not careful, and intentional, 2017 is going to look a lot like 2016. While I admit my small concessions have lead to big unwelcome changes in my life, I also can acknowledge that small intentional steps can lead to large impactful changes in my life also.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

If you look at your life today, or you do a “year in review” of 2016, what do you see? Did life creep up on you or were able to make steps to navigate the course? Do you feel like that man looking in the mirror that quickly forgets who he looks like? Explain.

As you read the passage in Romans, what are some things you do that you wish you didn't, and things you don't do that you wish you would? If you were to make two columns, with WISH I DID and WISH I DIDN'T, what column would have more entries? Discuss.

What does intentionality mean to you? What place does that action have in your life today?

IT'S THE *WHAT WE TAKE OUT* AND NOT *WHAT WE TAKE IN*

Matthew 6.16-18 (HCSB) 16 “Whenever you fast, don't be sad-faced like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive^[(N)] so their fasting is obvious to people. I assure you: They've got their reward! 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face,^[(O)] 18 so that you don't show your fasting to people but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.^[(M)]

Sometimes we need to take intentionality to the next level and have purposed time when we set aside things to remind our bodies and our minds that our Spirit is in Control; in other words, we need to Fast. Read **2 Corinthians 5.17**. While we had bad habits before accepting Christ, the Holy Spirit inside us brought us to perfection after accepting Christ (the same Holy Spirit lived in Jesus while on Earth). It's important to understand that 1) we are each a spirit, 2) we each have a soul, and 3) we each live in a body. So, while the spirit is renewed and the soul is redeemed, the body still carries the temptation of those old habits. Fasting is about attacking the reality that our flesh is not redeemed and turned over to God.

If you Google *fasting*, you will find a number of bible references that give you examples. There is also a Cherokee story that tells of two wolves doing battle inside of us. One is Evil and one is Good. The story goes on to explain that the wolf that wins the battle is the wolf we feed. In other words, the flesh doesn't go away; fasting is hitting the pause button on the flesh so that we are feeding the right *wolf*.

The body is temporary, and all too often with allow the pleasures of the flesh to take the drivers seat that affects a permanent life. Fasting is about taking a time out from the “pleasures”. It's a pause from the fleshy habits before they become permanent and detrimental habits. Fasting is an intentionality to ensure we are filling the voids in our life with God things, no world things. Read **Romans 12.2** and **Ephesians 4.23**. Our minds don't require a one-time renewal – it becomes a steady discipline in our spiritual journey that brings us to the *Tent of Meeting* God desires to have with us. As you read Matthew 6.16-18, you see Fasting is not a Pharisaical habit, but it becomes an experience with God that we should enter into with a specific intimacy of purpose.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

When you think about the story of the two wolves, which wolf do you think you have a tendency to feed more in your life? How are you doing this? Describe.

When you look at your “wish list” form earlier, what are some things you could fast from to help you create intentionality? What things in your life can you hit pause on that would lead to a renewing of your mind? Explain.

TUNING IN TO GOD

Matthew 6.31-33 (NIV) **31** So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' **32** For the idolaters [p] eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God [q](x) and His righteousness, (y) and all these things will be provided for you. (z)

Fasting is about getting us tuned in to God's frequency. It is not about getting God to pay attention to us, it is about us getting us to pay attention to God. There is a very real difference about focusing on what you are giving up and focusing on why you are giving something up. It's less about the flesh and all about the spirit.

Remember some significant relationships in your life? Maybe it was your *first love*, or when you first met your spouse. There were the endless nights of sitting in the car or on the porch talking. The phone calls where neither of you wanted to hang up first or the sappy sweetness of not wanting to drive away and be apart. God wants this same relationship with us. It goes back to the Tent of Meeting (read **Exodus 33.7-11**). Time with God shouldn't be something we are skillfully carving out, but rather something we enter into expeditiously, intentionally, and frequently.

When we fast we confront who is in control (think of those Cherokee wolves). Fasting is about telling our body that the Spirit is in control. Our spirit is what comes first. There is humility about it and a discipline that brings renewal.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

How close do you feel with God today? Do you feel like you are having *Tent of Meeting* experience, or do you feel like you are only skimming the service? Are you having a first-love experience, the occasional friend experience, or the cordially polite experience? What level do you desire? How do you get there? Discuss.

If you go back to your “wish list”, pick one thing to fast from. How long would it take to fast from that thing to allow space with God, and allow Him to fill the void you were attempting to fill with what you would fast from?

GETTING RESULTS

Matthew 4.1-4 (HCSB) Then (A) Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.(B) **2** After He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights,(C) He was hungry. **3** Then the tempter approached Him and said, “If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”(D) **4** But He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”(E)[a]

Every major person in the bible fasted. You will find examples of Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon, Daniel, Esther, Job, Jesus, Peter, and Paul fasting. Fasting leads to transformation. Jesus, before He entered His ministry, stepped into a 40 day fast. The devil immediately stepped in, and being crafty, offered temptation that would lead to death (medically, what happens when a 40 day fast is met with bread and

what it will do to digestive track). The devil would use worldly wisdom to detract you from spiritual purpose. “That’s not safe”, “How will I stay connected?”, “I have too much travel to make that commitment”, “It would inconvenience my family” are just excuses that seem logical, but divert true intentionality.

As you look to 2017, you can begin making small steps that lead to big changes. Big changes can lead to lifetime disciplines that bring true joy and true peace. There is a sacred thought around the intentionality of connecting with God on a personal level, a level developed by the reliance and admission that He is the provider of all good and perfect things.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

How do you want 2017 to be different for you? How can disciplines this year lead to lifetime fulfillment? What do you wish to see? How does what you thought about fasting from earlier play into this? Explain.

ACTIVATION

Take the challenge. “I am Fasting from... to experience ...” Do it for a day, a week, a month. If you haven’t done it before, take the first step and remain focused.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Visit the Jentezen Franklin website and explore the Fasting Movement. See how other believers are engaging in fasting to become closer to God.

PROVIDE US WITH FEEDBACK

We are excited about the potential these studies have to help each of us process the weekend message at a deeper level, and to see God change our lives in significant ways. In order to make these guides as helpful as possible, we would love to hear which elements are most helpful, which are least helpful, as well as any other comments, questions or suggestions. Feel free to send your feedback directly to Jon Holmberg at jonholmberg@gmail.com.

Has God been prompting you to lean out over your skies a bit? Have you had a desire to write, but not sure how to start to scratch that kind of itch? This may be your chance. We are currently looking to expand our team of writers. If you have experience, or no experience, writing studies or devotionals... it’s not a big deal – Let God guide your fingers. If you would like to investigate this a bit more please contact me at jonholmberg@gmail.com.

REFERENCES

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An Old Cherokee Tale of Two Wolves, <https://wizdompath.wordpress.com/2008/03/05/an-old-chokeee-tale-of-two-wolves/>