

Apostles Houston  
Life Group Study: Fasting

**Love and Laughter**

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

**Remembering Our Purpose**

Why Do We Do Life Groups? (*feel free to communicate this in your own words*)

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

**Being Known**

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

*In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?*

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

**Following Up**

Responding to God's Word

Last week, we were encouraged to spend time daily in God's Word, meditating on a verse, journaling, or simply listening in silence. How did you spend your time with Him this week?

## Hearing the Word

Hearing: (*Read "Context" and then Matthew 4:1-11. Then pray for God's grace to understand.*)

- Before we dive in, what comes to mind when you think about fasting? What do you think its purpose is? What are some things that you heard in the sermon on Sunday?
- In v 2, Matthew tells us that Jesus was fasting forty days and forty nights. Can you recall any other figures in Israel's history who fasted for this length of time (and if so, the purpose of their fasting?) What seems to be the purpose of Jesus' fast? Have you ever fasted? If so, why?
- In v 4, Jesus resists the temptation to turn stones into bread, reminding the devil that man doesn't live by bread alone, but also on God's Word. This implies that what food is to the body, God's Word is to the soul. When you find yourself trying to live "by bread alone," what does that look like? How might fasting play a role in maintaining the right balance of that relationship?
- Throughout the Scriptures, prayer and fasting often go together. And in Matthew 6, Jesus assumes his followers will practice fasting when they pray. Spend some time reflecting as a group on the relationship between fasting and praying. What is it? What is it not? What are some things you could commit to prayer that fasting may help with?

Obeying (application):

- Following on from the final question, spend time this week fasting and praying for whatever came to mind. Whether it be one meal, or one day, take that time to bring your body and soul together, to seek God's mercy and grace. And for an added benefit, link up with one person in your LG to fast and pray at the same time with.

## Soul Care

### Prayer Requests

This week, break up into groups of MEN and WOMEN for prayer. Along with sharing prayer needs, create some space for confession. Then, remind each other of God's mercy, and pray for God's grace to repent and be healed (1 Jn 1:19; Js 5:16).

## Announcements

- Meal Night is coming up: pick someone to pair with and have a feast!

## Teacher's Notes

### Context

- This story takes place between Jesus' baptism and the beginning of his ministry. At his baptism he was declared to be God's beloved Son (i.e., the Messiah), and given the Spirit (i.e., the power to be the Messiah). During his ministry, he called disciples, healed many people, and gave his famous "sermon on the mount." But between these two events, Jesus fasted for forty days and nights and faced the multiple temptations to question his identity and abandon his calling. Nevertheless, in each case, he resisted the devil's temptations and "returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Lk 4<sup>th</sup> 14).

### Specific Insights

- Both Moses and Elijah fasted forty days and nights, as recorded in Exodus 34:28 and 1 Kings 19, respectively. In both cases, God revealed His Word to them, giving Moses the Ten Commandments and Elijah a promise of vindication over Ahab and Jezebel. In this passage, Matthew tells us Jesus was in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, who did so by twisting God's Word in effort to deceive Jesus. However, after forty days of fasting, Jesus resisted these temptations by... God's Word. Together, these examples demonstrate that one of the purposes of fasting is to encounter and be empowered with God's Word.
- In v 4, Jesus reveals that what food is to the body, God's Word is to the soul. And as people made in God's image, we need both to live. Our need for food is clear, though God's Word is less so. Nevertheless, Proverbs says, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." Thus, even if it sometimes appears that we can "live" without God's Word, the truth is, we need it just as much (if not more) than food.
- All throughout the Scriptures, prayer and fasting are practiced together. The purpose of fasting is not to manipulate God into answering our prayers, however; but to bring about the right focus on, and priority of, the thing we are praying for. When we fast, our whole selves, body and soul, are brought together as we seek God's mercy and grace. It doesn't change God, it changes us; and in turn, it changes our prayers.