

Prayer and Fasting

Teaching Guide



THE NEW HAS COME AND ALL THIS IS FULFILLED IN CHRIST, THE CREATION. THE OLD HAS PASSED AWAY.

Day 1 Teaching Guide

Our church has a mission: To make disciples who make disciples by the Word of God for the glory of God to impact the world.

A disciple is someone who believes in something, commits to follow it, and teaches it to others. Being a disciple means believing in Jesus, being committed to obey Him, and telling other people about Him.

Discipleship begins by reading in God's Word. The Bible is full of truth about who Jesus is, how God wants us to live, and why He has given us special instructions for how to follow Him. Everything that God commands us to do or teaches us to practice is important. He wouldn't teach it if it wasn't!

Read Matthew 9:14-17.

"Then, the disciples of John came to him, saying 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But, new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.'"

One practice that God teaches His people is the practice of fasting. When Jesus was with His disciples, they had no need to fast. But, when Jesus left this world to return to heaven, it created an ache in our hearts for Him to come back. Fasting means you go without something that you usually use or enjoy. Most fasts are about food. You may skip a meal or stop eating your favorite thing on a certain day. It's important to know that a Biblical fast is more than just giving something up. It's about replacing what you gave up with God.

Here's how that might look: If I fast from a meal on Thursday, I might skip my lunch. I will probably feel hungry. When my tummy starts growling, it reminds me that I am giving up something to spend more time with God. I would use the time that I normally eat lunch to spend time reading my Bible and praying.

There are other ways to fast besides just fasting from food. You can fast from television and video games. You could fast from playing sports. The important thing is that you give up something that you need or enjoy to replace it with someone who is much more worthy of our time and attention. (So don't just say you'll fast from broccoli for the week. It must be a sacrifice!)

Day 1 Application



On the next two Thursdays (April 7 and 14), we will fast together as a church from one meal. If there are medical reasons why you cannot fast from a full meal, please take those into account. It is not recommended to fast from water for any length of time. Be wise, but also challenge yourself to participate beyond your comfort zone. Plan for your fast. Setting aside specific time for prayer and reading God's Word is a great plan! Remember, it is not enough to give something up – fasting is only a spiritual discipline when it involves spiritual pursuits.

Looking to go deeper? Consider the following challenge:

Remember, fasting can include more than food. Think about something that you do often. What is something that takes up a lot of your time and attention? What is something that you love doing every week? Make a commitment to fast, or sacrifice, that thing for the next two Thursdays (or longer if you would like). As a family, you might commit to giving up your TV time or not eating desserts. No matter what you choose, make sure you replace it by focusing your time and attention together on God's Word.

Use the time that was previously spent on entertainment and hobbies to encounter God's Word. We encourage you to pursue long reading of scripture and praying relationally with God and relationally for others during this time.

Let this experience be more than just gaining knowledge. This guide can equip you to teach this concept more simply to another disciple.



Day 2 Teaching Guide

Prayer is an important practice that God teaches us in His Word. When you pray, you are talking to God. We talk to a lot of people during the day. We might say a few words to the person who is delivering our groceries or a quick, "Thank you!" to someone who holds open our door. What you say to a librarian while checking out a book will sound completely different than a conversation with the fire department if your house is burning down! Prayer is a special conversation with the Creator of the universe. Our conversations with God should look different than the conversations that we have with people. Prayer is more than just talking – it is praising, thanking, trusting, and seeking God!

Jesus also prayed! He taught his disciples to pray. The example that Jesus set for us is not the only prayer that we should pray, but it does show us a pattern that we can follow.

Read Matthew 6:9-13.

"Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

Jesus started first with "hallowed be your name." Those are not words we hear or say very often! What Jesus means is "Your name is HOLY!" God is deserving of all our respect and honor.

When Jesus said, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," He is asking for God's power and plan to be shown. God will accomplish His plan whenever and however He wants to! Because we know God is trustworthy, we know His plan is great, and it is what we want most of all.

Jesus said, "Give us this day our daily bread." God provides for us! He takes care of His people. God provides for our physical needs, but He also cares for our spiritual needs. He can provide us with food and shelter, but He also gives us peace, forgiveness, and grace.

"Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors," means that we need forgiveness! Romans 3:23 says that all people have sinned. When we confess our sin, God forgives us. When other people do wrong things, we should forgive them, too.

The last line that Jesus prayed is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Because we know all people sin, we also know that we are not perfect, even if we have been forgiven by God. Because we love God, we should always live a life of obedience to Him. We will mess up, but God can help us to have strength and to live how He tells us in His word.

Day 2 Application

This week, think about your prayers. How does your conversation with God look? Do you usually just tell God what to do or ask Him to give you certain things? Instead, take time to praise God. Thank Him for the wonderful things He does. Ask Him to help you see that His plan and His ways are better and more important than what we plan. Ask God to help you to be obedient to Him, even when it is hard.

Looking to go deeper? Consider the following challenge:

Expand your prayer life by considering these changes:

1. **Scheduled Prayer** – Set aside a specific time to pray. Allow nothing to move this time. Consider the six petitions modeled in the Lord's Prayer and see how you can put these petitions into personal practice.
2. **Spontaneous Prayer** – Make it a point to pray throughout your day! Find ways to thank God, praise God, and intercede for others. Especially when you are fasting, let any hunger pains be reminders to go before the Lord.
3. **Prayer Circles** – Write a list of people that you encounter on a regular basis. Use each interaction with these individuals as a chance to pray for others.
4. **Prayer Closet** – Read Matthew 6:5-6. Find a quiet, private place where you can pray without distraction. Remember that our time in prayer is not meant as a display before others, but as intimate time with our Heavenly Father.

Day 3 Teaching Guide

Self-examination is another important discipline that we find modeled in God's Word. Because of our sinful, deceitful hearts, we must intentionally allow God to uncover the parts of our lives that are not pleasing to Him. Think of it this way: Before you dive into a big project, you usually take time to prepare your materials. You would not start building a deck without gathering, measuring, and cutting your wood. You would not mix up a cake knowing you did not have the flour. Likewise, we should not neglect the condition of our hearts, taking time to reflect, confess, and repent, before we pursue the Lord. There are important, foundational steps that must be taken at the beginning of any process. Self-examination is one of the most important foundational steps that we should complete as we dive into prayer and fasting. **Read Psalm 51:4.**

"Against you – You alone – I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So You are right when you pass sentence; You are blameless when You judge."

Our sin is an offense to God. It is disobedience to our great Creator, an act of putting other things in a place of importance over Him. He is right to pass judgement and to provide consequence. **Read Romans 6:1-2,12; Psalm 51:17.**

"What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?...Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires."

"The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. God, you will not despise a broken and humbled heart."

Knowing that our sin is an offense to God should break our hearts! It is important to humble ourselves before God, confess our sin, and repent of it. Confession and repentance mean that we are turning away from that sin, not continuing to live in it. The only way this is possible is through the Holy Spirit. On our own, we are powerless against sin and unable to change. Self-examination means we take the time, with the help of the Spirit, to uncover the deep layers of our hearts, exposing the areas of our lives that we attempt to keep hidden and unchanged. **Read Joel 2:12-13; 1 John 1:9.**

"Even now – this is the Lord's declaration – turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the Lord your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster."

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

How great is our God! Even knowing our sins, He loves us. He gives us incredible grace through forgiveness as we confess to Him. God provided His Son as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. As believers, we are fully equipped with the Spirit to guard our hearts against sin and to pursue God. He alone can guide us in righteousness.

Day 3 Application




The next two weeks of prayer and fasting could be an incredible time with God, learning from His Word, communing with Him in new ways, and exercising spiritual disciplines that have grown weak. Or, this week could be a time of walking through motions and processes that will not bear fruit, because we have not prepared the foundation. Take the time to be prepared.

Set aside specific time to pray and reflect. Do I have sin that has not been confessed? Have I been angry with a friend and refused to forgive them? Are there parts of my life that I am making more important than God? Ask God to reveal any sin in your life. Take time to confess those sins, but also to repent (turn away from them). Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live in a way that honors God.

Looking to go deeper? Consider the following challenge:

Find a Biblical balance between no self-examination and destructive self-examination. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul writes that we should test and examine ourselves. This is a necessary action for believers. However, we must avoid examining ourselves to the point of shame and condemnation. Meditate on Romans 7:21 – 8:1. Be reminded of the position that believers hold before God considering heavy self-evaluation.



Day 4 Teaching Guide

Today is the day! Choose one meal that you will fast from today. During the time that you would eat, **read Psalm 34.**

“I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!

I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.”

Food is so delicious and satisfying. There is an element of creativity in how God created food and how people prepare it. You probably have a favorite food – one that you choose to eat during holidays or celebrations. It is something that you crave with anticipation and slowly savor when you can enjoy it. Just a simple bite of it makes you hungry for more.

Even though physical food for our bodies can be incredibly satisfying, there is nothing more satisfactory than the spiritual food of God’s Word! Psalm 34 tells us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” and that the pursuit of Him will cause us not to lack anything good.

Reading God’s Word should be like savoring our favorite food. We should crave it. We should anticipate what it is like to taste it. One bite of it should cause us to want it even more. When we seek God through His word, it will often cause a new kind of hunger – not from our belly, but from our heart.

Day 4 Application



Read and meditate over Psalm 34, as well as this week's passage in Mark. Ask God to show you something new about His Word. Seek Him to understand what His Word means, and how to apply it in your life. Each time your stomach is hungry, or you are tempted to temporarily satisfy your body with food, feast on God's Word. Allow Him to satisfy you.

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge.

Look for new ways to be involved in reading scripture. Choose a book to read during your time with the Lord. Don't hurry through it. Remember – this is not a last minute granola bar for breakfast. This is a long-awaited and highly anticipated gourmet meal. Savor it as such.

Practice praying through scripture. God has already given us His divine Word. What better way to seek Him than to pray His own words? Re-read Psalm 34. Let it guide you into prayer. For example, verse 1 says, "I will praise the Lord at all times. His praise will always be on my lips." What praises can you offer to God right now in prayer? Continue through Psalm 34 as your prayer guide for today.



Day 5 Teaching Guide

We all have priorities. There are some parts of life that just can't wait. There are other parts of life that we allow to be urgent, even though they aren't even necessary. What are your priorities in life? Where are your priorities taking precedence over Christ?

(If your immediate reaction was "Oh, no! They are about to ask me to give up that?!" followed by a queasy feeling – congratulations! You've just identified it.) Not all things are bad – it's great to have fun, relax, and enjoy life. But we also must consider leaving behind the good for the best. **Read Ephesians 5:15-17.**

"Pay careful attention, then, how you walk – not as unwise people, but as wise – making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Read 2 Timothy 2:4.

"No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the recruiter."

Our time on earth is limited. We are not guaranteed additional days or hours beyond this current moment. How, then, are we making the most of our time? Are we maximizing the time that we have in pursuit of our own earthly gain? Or are we pursuing what is pleasing to the Lord? Knowing that God has created us for His plan and purpose should spur us on to pleasing Him.

When a soldier signs up to be in the army, they expect to follow their commander. They would not sign up to be a soldier only to skip training, sleep through assignments, or plan other activities during a battle. We are just like soldiers. God is our commander, and we must be ready to fulfill our assignment.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:8.

"And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work."

On our own, we are not capable of pursuing the Lord with priorities intact. We allow our minds, bodies, stomachs, and eyes to see things (even good things) and seek them above the best thing – God. The goal of prayer and fasting is not to check off a spiritual to-do list and return to the same ways. Our goal in pursuing Christ is to encounter Him, and to let that encounter change us.


Day 5 Application



Spend time in prayer. Ask God to reveal areas in your life where you have pursued good things over the best thing. Prayerfully seek discernment and wisdom to know what is pleasing to God. Ask God to empower you to seek Him above any other thing. Reprioritize your schedule to allow dedicated time for God's Word and prayer.

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge.

Pray through Psalm 90. Pay particular attention to Psalm 90:12. Look at your day-to-day priorities. How did you re-prioritize your schedule? We can be tempted to cram more into our day, to keep all of our activities and plans. Instead of simply rearranging your schedule, find a hobby or habit that you can give up or replace with the pursuit of spiritual things. Stop going to your book club and seek an intentional discipleship relationship instead. Don't finish the season finale of that TV show and establish a personal or family time in God's Word.



Day 6 Teaching Guide

Tennis shoes that are too tight. Nails scraping down a chalkboard. Being stuck in a car with windows that won't roll down in the middle of a hot summer. Feeling too full after a huge Thanksgiving dinner. Is anyone starting to feel uncomfortable?

Discomfort is not a feeling we want to experience. Our lives are full of gadgets that are made just for our comfort, like air conditioners, seats with cushions, and stretchy waistbands. We tend to seek the physical comforts of this world, but are we also allowing ourselves to be spiritually comfortable?

Read Romans 12:1-2.

“Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

The words used in Romans 12 are not comfortable words. We are urged to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament, people sacrificed animals to be forgiven and clean from sin. This type of sacrifice means death. In an even bigger way, Christ gave His life on the cross to atone (or make right) our sin, so that our death was not required.

God has not asked for our death in sin, but He has asked for our life. Jesus modeled sacrifice for us – giving up something important (His life) for a cause more worthy to Him (our freedom from sin). Out of an overflow of love for this gift, we are called to give up what is important to us (ourselves) for something much more worthy (the pursuit of Christ). This is an act of worship. Worship is not only singing songs, but it is the very way that we act, speak, think, and live – all with the goal of bringing Him glory and honor.

Read Mark 10:17-27. Think about the rich young ruler. He wanted eternal life, but he could not give up his possessions to follow Jesus. Our possessions and wealth are part of our comfort and what we think we can control. What if I give this up, and I never get it back? What if I don't have enough? What if this causes me to lose friends? Sacrifice is painful, but it is worth being uncomfortable. Worldly possessions for a life forever with Christ. It doesn't compare!

Read Hebrews 13:16.

“Don't neglect to do what is good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.”


Day 6 Application



Sacrifice is hard. It is not something that we want to do, and it is generally something that we avoid. Today, lean into the act of sacrifice. Pray over your day, examine your time, and see what areas need sacrifice. Think about the growing pains you experienced as a child. They can be so painful – even keeping you up at night! But what is the reward? Growth. Push through the spiritual growing pains that come with sacrifice, and see what growth happens as a result.

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

Think about sacrifice on a bigger scale. Are there any areas where God can be glorified by your generosity with time or money? Do you need to devote more time to working with missions, either through short term trips or partnerships with local organizations? Is there someone that you could meet with in discipleship once a week? Prayerfully consider a greater sacrifice of your time or money for the Gospel to be shared and God's Kingdom to be made bigger.



Day 7 Teaching Guide

Have you ever picked up a glass of Sprite to take a big drink, but you actually gulped down a huge mouthful of water? The disgust of that unmet expectation can catch you by surprise. Even if you enjoy drinking water, the expectation that you had in mind can sour it for that moment. In the same way, we often expect things from God. When His will doesn't meet our expectations, it can leave us feeling sour to who He is and to His plan. In the pages of Mark, we see that the people had expectations for Jesus. What they expected in their mind was not what they received.

Read Mark 11:1-11.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethpage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve."

Oh, how the people celebrated Jesus! But were they celebrating the coming Messiah who would save them from their sin? Not quite. The people were crying Psalm 118:25-26:

"Hosanna! He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One! The coming kingdom of our father David is blessed! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

It seems like the people understand – They are calling Him blessed, from God. The cry of "hosanna" means "please save us!" They wanted to be saved, but not in the way that Jesus intended. The people cried for Israel to be saved from the rule of the Romans. They wanted Jesus to fix their politics and their government. But Jesus didn't come to restore Israel. He didn't come as a mighty politician or an overbearing king. He came, humble and low, to serve. He came to die as our spotless lamb. Jesus was ushering in a new kingdom – the Kingdom of God.

Day 7 Application



Do you understand the difference between what Jesus came to do and what you want Him to do? Examine your words, actions, and prayers. What do they say about your belief in who Jesus is? For example: Being bitter over a plan that did not go my way might show that I am not trusting God's will as the best plan for my life. Instead, I am expecting God to bless my plans as a reward for my obedience. Pray that God will reveal areas where you are expecting Jesus to be someone other than who He is. As you spend more time in God's Word and in prayer, you will see His character as trustworthy. Ask Him to help your heart to be in line with His will.

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

Take time to write down what you have been in prayer for over the last week. Look carefully at each request. How does that request demonstrate your trust in who God is? Would this request achieve the purpose of your kingdom or God's kingdom? Now, consider how these prayers might need to change. How could the prayers change to being Christ-minded?

Day 8 Teaching Guide

What is your favorite kind of pizza? Supreme is a classic favorite. When you go online to order, there is a wonderful button that says “customize.” That means you can remove the mushrooms and olives and add extra pepperoni. So many parts of our lives can be made to order, just the way we like it. When it comes to God’s Kingdom, we may be tempted to find a “customize” button – maybe we want some parts of Kingdom life, but we don’t hope for God’s kingdom in full.

Read Matthew 6:24.

“No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.”

Read Matthew 12:25.

“Knowing their thoughts, He told them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.’”

Both passages share the same truth: We can’t be loyal to both God’s Kingdom and the world. We often hear the phrase “a house divided” when members of the same household are cheering for different sports teams. But imagine if it was not members of a household, but a player. Could one person be the quarterback for two competing teams? There is no way for them to give equal practice and performance to both teams, especially when they are competing against one another. One of the teams will suffer. When we try to serve both God and ourselves, one will naturally gain more of our time and attention. Our pursuit should be fully devoted to God’s Kingdom in full.

Read Psalm 16:11.

“You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.”

The path of life from God is one full of joy. This does not mean that we will have all the possessions that we want, or all our circumstances are easy. However, it does mean that the perfect plan and purpose of Christ is being achieved, and we get to witness it. That is worth our complete devotion.


Day 8 Application



Are there areas of your life where you are trying to customize God's kingdom for your ease or benefit? Can you identify ways that you are trying to play for two competing teams? Ask God to reveal these areas to you. Don't just identify them – with the help of the Holy Spirit, change them. Pray Matthew 6:10, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Colossians 3:1-17. When we come to Christ, we are a new creation. That means we will look different than we did before, because our devotion is to a new master. The church at Colossae was challenged (as we are challenged today) to put to death what was earthly in them. Use this passage as a guide to consider specific earthly ways that must be put to death in you, as well as Christ-like traits that should be present in your life. Ask God to shape your heart and mind to be like that of Jesus.



Day 9 Teaching Guide

If you type a celebrity's name into Google, you will be flooded with information about that person. You can know their height, where they live, who they are married to, and every project they have done. You can see pictures of what they wore at last year's red carpet or watch interviews on the news. There is plenty to learn! Now that you have read all these facts, does that mean that you are close with that person? Do you have a relationship with them? No! Knowledge of someone is not the same as relationship with them. Relationships take time, conversation, and time in someone's presence.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens – Jesus, the Son of God – let us hold fast to the confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.”

In the Old Testament, people had to offer sacrifices to God by way of the priest. Only the high priest could enter the holy of holies to God's presence. When Jesus, the great high priest, died for us, His death granted us a different access to God. Not only did He bridge an impossible gap, but He understands us. He has intimate knowledge of our emotions and weakness because He has experienced humanity. He has intimate knowledge of the Father because He is God. Who better can we intimately love and trust?

Read Psalm 73:28.

“But as for me, God's presence is my good. I have made the Lord God my refuge, so I can tell about all you do.”

You can know facts without having a deep and intimate relationship. That doesn't mean that knowledge isn't important, but it does mean that there is more to our relationship with God than simply information. John 8:32 says, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Understanding the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection is critical to our relationship because it is the only way to God. There is much to know about God, and that knowledge deepens our relationship with Him! What we read in God's Word reveals His character, allowing us to trust Him more. But, as we see in Psalm 73:28, God's presence is our good! Just as we do in any deep relationship, we must go past knowledge and seek closeness.

Read James 4:8.

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, double-minded people!”

Day 9 Application



This week, as we pray and fast, draw near to God. Set aside one hour today to simply experience God's presence. Spend deeper time in His presence through reading His Word – specifically, find verses that speak to God's character and trustworthiness. Sit in silence and ask God to speak. Worship Him through songs that praise His character. Disconnect from noise and distractions to devote proper time to the Lord.

See Scriptures: Psalms 42, 63, Romans 8:32

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

Knowledge is not the only part of our relationship with God, but it does allow us to see who He is and how He keeps His promises. Read and pray through Psalm 84. What words and phrases spoke to your heart? How does praying through Psalm 84 change the way you seek God's presence?



Day 10 Teaching Guide

We have all experienced pain and suffering. Some pains are temporary, like a papercut, but other pains last for a long time. When someone you love is diagnosed with a terrible illness or you experience great loss, the emotional pain and suffering that you experience can be crushing. It is in times like these that people begin to doubt God's goodness. Why is this happening? Can a truly good God allow this heart-ache? **Read Isaiah 46:10.**

"I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all my will."

Our God is sovereign. That means He has full control over all things. His plan will happen, and His plan is good. What we might decide is good – extra money, an easy life, good health – may not be what is best for us. The greatest "good" we can experience is God's plan! God's plan is meant to accomplish His will, to show us who He is, and to make us more like Him. When gold is refined and made pure, it must be melted by fire to take out impurities. Our suffering refines us, teaching us more about God and drawing us near to Him. **Read Deuteronomy 32:4.**

"The Rock – His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true."

So, is God truly good in allowing heartache? Yes! We can see in Deuteronomy 32:4 that God's ways are perfect. He is perfectly fair, perfectly faithful, perfectly righteous, and perfectly true. All that He does is right. When we are struggling to understand our circumstances, we can trust the perfect character of our God.

If you have ever worked a puzzle, you know that it can be hard to identify where some of the pieces fit. Luckily, puzzles come with a completed picture. Even though it doesn't always make the puzzle easy to complete, we have a reference point. It would be incredibly difficult to put a puzzle together not knowing what the result is supposed to be. Yet, that is exactly what we try to do in our own lives! We attempt to put together the pieces of our lives according to the picture that we have in our mind; however, we can only see the piece that we are experiencing today. But God, in His sovereignty, has the complete picture! He sees how our lives will be shaped, each circumstance we will encounter, and how these fit together for our good. **Read Hebrews 12:2.**

"Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne."

It can be tempting to withdraw from God when we are suffering, but our response should be to lean even more on Him. He is worthy of our trust in all things. No matter what happens here on earth, we have the joyous promise of life eternal through Jesus Christ.

Day 10 Application



Read the following scriptures. What word/theme do you see repeated in each verse? How should this deepen your trust in God, despite times of suffering?

Psalm 11:7

Psalm 97:2

Psalm 98:9

Psalm 111:3

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

Read Psalm 13 and Psalm 121. Let them guide your time in prayer.



Day 11 Teaching Guide

Today is the day! Choose one meal to fast from today. During the time that you would eat, read Matthew 9:36-38 and set aside time for concentrated prayer. **Read Matthew 9:36-38.**

“When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”

Have you ever lost something that was important to you? Chances are, you have misplaced your car keys or an important piece of paper. You might have lost your homework or your phone. When you realized it was missing, how did you respond? Did you decide it wasn't worth your time to search, or did you tear apart your house looking for it?

We tend to panic when we realize that something we own is lost; however, we do not have the same level of urgency over the souls around us that are eternally lost. Every day, there are people that we encounter who do not have the hope and security of the Gospel. How are we responding?

Spend time today in urgent prayer for those who are lost. Don't just pray for others, but pray for yourself as a representative of Christ, that you might respond with urgency for the lost.

Consider these ¹prayer points as you pray. Use these as a guide to shape your prayer, adding your own cries and the names of specific people that you know.

1. “Pray that God would relent His wrath and show mercy on the unreached by saving them.”
2. “Ask God to send laborers to the unreached, to preach the Gospel.”
3. “Pray for those missionaries who are on the field. Ask God to give them confidence and boldness in His Word. Pray that they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out God's work in these places.”
4. “Ask God to protect those ministering in unreached places, especially in areas where Christianity is dangerous and unlawful to practice. Pray that they will be fearless and strong during spiritual warfare.”
5. “Pray that God will be glorified and victorious through the proclamation of the Gospel, both in our neighborhoods and the nations.”
6. “Ask God to grant us peace with fellow believers, that our unity with one another would be a demonstration of Christ.”
7. “Pray that God will help you to find favor in your relationships with unbelievers, in order that the Gospel can be shared.”

Day 11 Application



Commit to praying for the lost. Joshua Project is a helpful tool to identify areas where the Gospel is not known, and God's Word is not available. Add this to your daily time in God's Word and prayer each day.

Go to <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/today> to see how to pray.

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

It is necessary to pray for the lost; however, as believers, it is also our job to share the Gospel. On the last Saturday of each month, Fairfield will host "Saturday Conversations." During this time, you will receive training on how to engage in spiritual conversations. Then, you will be challenged, with the help of others, to use your training outside of the church. Mark the date on your calendar and commit to attend. Invite someone from your life group, a mentor, or a friend to join you.



Day 12 Teaching Guide

If you pull up the calendar on an iPhone, you will see dots marking many of the days. You might think to yourself, “I didn’t know I had plans that day!” When you click on the day, however, you realize that it was letting you know of a particular holiday or celebration. Nine times out of ten, you might not know what exactly is celebrated on these days, or how the celebrations came to be. “Good Friday” to some might just be another day off school; however, the significance of this day – Passover – holds incredible, rich truth for believers.

Before we discuss the glories and true good of “Good Friday,” take time to read Exodus 12:1-28. Here, in the Old Testament, we see God do incredible things for the Israelites in Egypt. They have been held as slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. Pharaoh did not want to see his workforce leave, so he refused to let the people go. God sent plagues to Egypt, filling the land with gnats, flies, frogs, illness, and other plagues. The last plague that God sent was a plague of death. All the firstborn of Egypt would die; however, God protected the Israelites. Anyone who killed a lamb and spread the blood on the doorpost would be passed over by God.

This wasn’t just any lamb. It was a perfect, spotless, innocent lamb. That lamb had to die for the people to live. Because of our sin, we face the punishment of death. In the Old Testament, animals were sacrificed for sins to be covered. We no longer live under that law, because our sins have been covered by the sacrifice of a different perfect, spotless, innocent Lamb! In John 1:29, we see John the Baptist refer to Jesus, saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”

Read Galatians 3:13.

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”

Read 1 Peter 2:24.

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

Read Colossians 2:13-14.

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

How incredible! Jesus, who had never sinned, carried the full weight of our sin on the cross that day. Because of the blood of Jesus – the Lamb of God – my sin can also be passed over. Forgiven. The debt is paid in full.

Day 12 Application



As a believer, you have a testimony. Your testimony is the story of what God has done in your life, and how He has saved you from the debt of your sin. Take time to write out your testimony. Here is a simple structure to help you as you write.

Part 1 – What was your life like before encountering the Gospel of Jesus?


Part 2 – What brought you to faith in Christ?

Part 3 – What is your life like after Christ saved you?

If you do not have a testimony, consider your relationship with God. Have you put your faith in Jesus as Savior (freeing you from sin) and Lord (the master you are committed to follow)? If you are not sure about your salvation, or you would like to talk to someone more, call a friend or one of the pastors at Fairfield Baptist.

Looking to go deeper? Consider the following challenge:

Now that you have written your testimony, take time to share it! You can practice with other believers but make it a point to share with someone who does not know God.



Day 13 Teaching Guide

Have you ever gotten sucked into a good book? The story has serious twists and turns, and you are not sure what will happen to the main character. You might be tempted to turn to the end of the story just to see what happens. Does the main character live? Does he win? How does the story end?

In the Bible, the end of the book does tell how the story will end! But you can also see a preview at the very beginning. After Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent and disobeyed God, they were faced with the consequences of their sin. However, God made His plan known in the garden that very day.

Read Genesis 3:15.

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

God, in His incredible mercy, did not leave us to fend for ourselves. In the family line of Eve, a victor is coming. He will crush the head of the serpent. Evil and death will strike Him, but He will not be defeated by them.

Read Hebrews 2:14.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...”

Jesus left His rightful place in heaven – away from His throne – to come to earth as a servant. He took on the body of a human, with flesh and blood, just like God’s children. He did this so that He might forever conquer death, and not only death, but the one who seeks to eternally destroy us with it.

What an incredible prophecy and promise that God gave to Adam and Eve that day! In His first coming, Christ was victorious over death. When He returns, we know that He will conquer Satan and death forever. Praise to God for this truth!

Read Romans 16:20a.

“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

Day 13 Application



The Gospel is the story of Jesus. It must include the serious news of our sin. Every single one of us has sinned. The gospel must include the punishment for sin – death. This spiritual death separates us from God now, but when we die physically, we are separated from Him forever. There is no gospel without the horrible, but true, fact of sin.

However, as we have just read, God had a plan! He sent His son Jesus – perfect and sinless – to take our punishment for us. Jesus died on the cross, taking all our sin on Him. But Jesus did not stay dead! Three days later, He rose again. He is seated at the right hand of God! And one day, He will return. When we confess that Jesus is Savior and Lord, God forgives our sin. He puts the righteousness of Jesus on us. We are no longer separated but promised eternal life with Him.

Why is the story of the Gospel in the application? Sometimes we struggle to share it. We leave out important parts. We keep quiet. But this is the best news we can offer to someone! Practice sharing the gospel. Don't leave out the hard parts! The truth is hard to hear, but it is eternally important. Ask the Holy Spirit to help guide your words.

Looking to go deeper? Consider this challenge:

Now that you have practiced sharing your testimony and the gospel, write down the name of one person you know who does not know Christ and commit to sharing with them. As you share, offer to answer questions. Don't just share and consider your job done – stay available. This is the beginning of a process that takes time. Ask God to direct your steps and open the heart of the person you wrote down.



What must we do now?



This guide was designed so that you - the reader - can dine on the riches of God and teach this to others. This is a piece of discipleship both in our lives and with others, to train us to walk in godliness.

After finishing this time of fasting, consider these closing thoughts:

- Saturday night before Resurrection Sunday, spend time intentionally preparing your heart through prayer, to encounter God. Then pray that others would come to encounter the beauty of the Gospel and the inviting presence of God.
- If this guide has awoken questions of God and of your faith, please contact the staff, so we can walk together towards understanding.
- Devote yourself to regular, daily reading of God's Word.
- Establish and commit to regular prayer times both in a quiet, private place and in spontaneous moments.
- Prayerfully inquire about getting into a discipleship relationship with another person, where you walk/grow together in the Word and holy pursuit.
- Regularly fast from "good things" to guard your heart from making the gift greater than the giver. Keep our first love, to Christ, first!

