



WEEKLY STUDY

Week Two

Our summer series called Pathways is introducing eight practices that help us get closer to the heart of God. This week, Pastor Jacob taught on the topic of fasting.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/signup and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this or your own prayer.

*God, you are our only hope.
Jesus, you are our only Way.
We are desperate for you. We hunger for you.
Come and fill us.
Amen.*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: MATTHEW 4.1-4

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

- Jesus went from the waters of the Jordan river to the wilderness and a time of fasting. The devil knew exactly where to tempt a man who was surely hungrier than most of us could imagine. A season of fasting will not keep us from the work of the tempter, but will actually give us strength to stand against him.
- Pray and fast with confidence that you will be able to stand up to the devil's schemes.

TUESDAY: EXODUS 34.28

Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.

- Here again is a connection between fasting and receiving the word of God. Just as Jesus proclaimed the power of God's word after 40 days of fasting, so Moses found God's word at the end of the same period of fasting.
- *Pray for a focus on God's word as you experience the results of your fasting.*

WEDNESDAY: JOEL 2.12

*“Even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”*

- The prophet Joel is quoting God here and in the next line he writes, “Rend your hearts and not your garments.” Fasting can be a form of rending your heart. A form of grief and repentance for people of the day was to tear (rend) their clothing. In fasting, we can rend our hearts instead.
- Pray for a spiritual rending of your heart before God as you lament and listen to God.

THURSDAY: NEHEMIAH 1.3-6

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said:

“LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel.

- In a time of total loss, Nehemiah was reminded of the God who keeps his promises. Through a time of fasting and prayer, he tuned his heart to hear from God. What losses or grief have led you to times of weeping before God? Have you ever felt a renewed sense of God's faithfulness during those times?
- *As you pray, picture the broken “walls and gates” of our church, country and world today. Cry over them. Fast and pray for them. And listen for God's voice.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 13.3-4

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

- Watch out! Fasting and prayer can lead to a calling to go out into new territories. The community around Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted and heard clear directions that led to more people in new places hearing about Jesus.
- *As you pray and fast, pray for the Spirit's guidance to lead you beyond your comfort zone in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.*

SATURDAY: DANIEL 9.3-5

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

"Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

- Daniel sought forgiveness through fasting and prayer. He was willing to sit in his brokenness but always in the context of the God who keeps his covenant. Fasting does not earn you forgiveness, but it can help set your heart in a place to receive the forgiveness that is already offered to you through Jesus.
- *Thank God for the forgiveness you are afforded through Christ.*

- See reverse for Small Group Discussion -

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob encouraged the church to consider a fast. One method of doing this is to fast from sundown to sundown. From dinner to dinner. Have you tried that this week? What did you fast from? Did you notice a change in your prayer life during that time?