

RENEWING THE MIND

Fasting



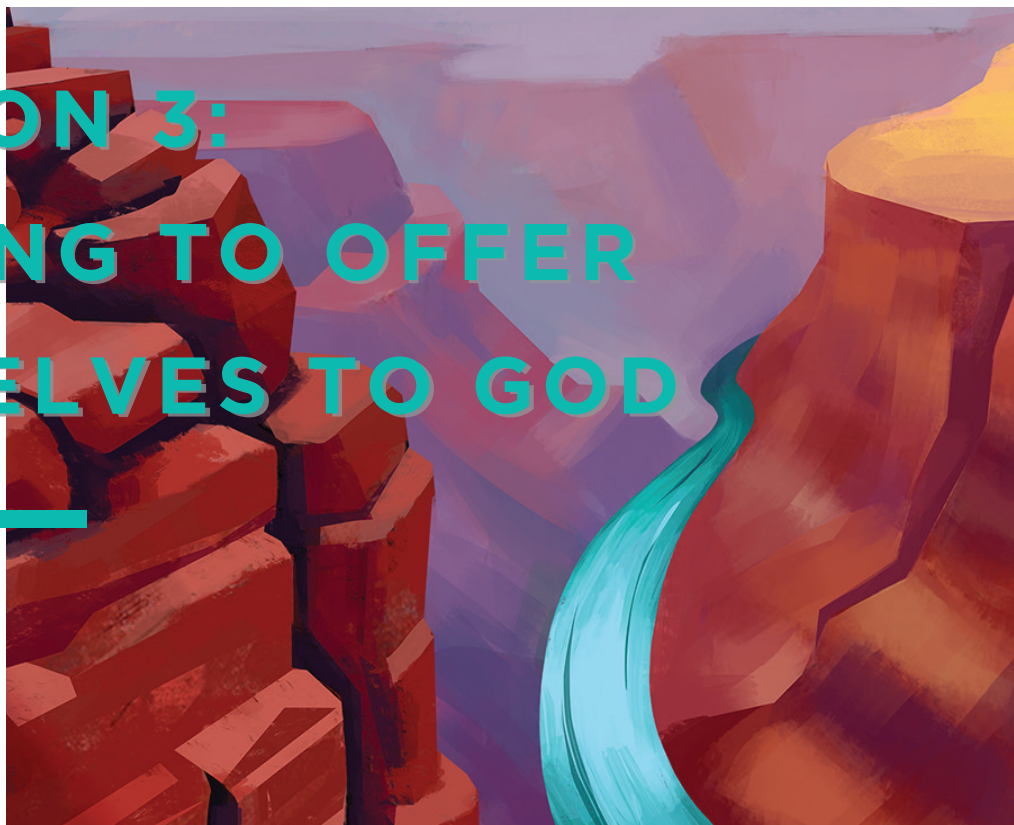
SESSION 3: FASTING TO OFFER OURSELVES TO GOD

Main Text:

Romans 8:5-13

Take Home Exercise:

Fast for 12 hours



OPENING EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Spend a moment in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your time together, and then lead your group through the below exercise.

Invite someone in your group to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together. Spend one or two minutes in silence. By intentionally creating space for silence, free from distraction and noise, we position ourselves to hear from him.

As another option, consider using the Prayer of Examen to reflect back on your day, or even the past week, with the Lord. If your group would like to use the Prayer of Examen, you can find a guide from our series on Attentiveness to God below.

[Prayer of Examen Guide](#)

Close this time in silence by thanking God for being with you in every moment.

OPENING DISCUSSION (10-15 Minutes)

Spend some time together debriefing the take-home exercise from your last gathering.

In the last gathering, you were encouraged to fast as a community for 12 hours, focusing on offering yourself to God. Reflect back on your most recent experience with fasting, and review any journal entries you may have written during that time. Giving yourselves immense grace, share with the group how this went.

How did fasting go this week? What was encouraging? Where did you face resistance?

Is there anything you might need to modify or keep in mind as you fast this week? Where might you need to extend more grace to yourself?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the study and discussion below for your group. Feel free to read it in its entirety or put it in

your own words.

This week, we are exploring the first two primary motivations for fasting (to offer ourselves to God and grow in holiness). Rather than fasting to get what we want or to simply get something from God, we fast as a way of freely giving ourselves to him. Fasting is an embodied practice. It is a way for us to reintegrate our mind into our body, and in doing so, we offer God the whole of who we are.

As we fast in partnership with the Holy Spirit, we begin to tame our appetites for things other than God, and in turn, we cultivate a deeper hunger for holiness. Rather than surrendering to feelings of powerlessness from being constantly controlled by our desires for gossip, consumerism, power, drink, or sex, we lean on and feast on the Holy Spirit. When we fast, we invite and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal what is in our hearts and begin to re-order our desires toward God.

Watch and discuss this brief overview of the sermon together.

VIDEO 4 - Fasting To Offer Ourselves To God

Have someone in your group read Romans 7:15-24.

What we dwell on shapes the way we live our lives and also shapes our very character and behavior. Throughout the book of Romans, Paul writes about the importance of renewing our minds and bringing our thoughts into alignment with the truth of God’s Word. The discipline of fasting sharpens our focus on the Spirit by leveraging our body’s response to hunger, turning our hunger pangs into opportunities to return our minds to the Spirit. In Romans 8, Paul describes the struggle we face between living by the flesh and the Spirit.

Have someone in your group read Romans 8:5-13.

As you read through the passage, take note of the contrast between living by the flesh and living by the Spirit. Write down words associated with each in the columns below, paying particular attention to any actions or results that Paul talks about.

Living By The Flesh	Living By The Spirit

Review the two columns above as a group. What key patterns or points stand out when comparing these two mindsets (or two ways of living)?

Re-read verses 5-7. How have you personally experienced “life and peace” when you have submitted to God’s Word and his Spirit? On the other hand, how have you personally experienced hostility toward God (the result of a mind governed by the flesh) in your own life? What examples come to mind?

What does it mean to set our minds on what the Spirit desires? (Hint: Colossians 3:1-4 and Philippians 4:8). What practical ways can we intentionally rely on the Spirit's guidance and strength in our daily lives?

TAKE HOME EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Read through the below exercise, adapted from Practicing the Way, that each individual will do before your next gathering. Talk through any questions people may have on what they are to do. Again, it is about practice, not perfection. Give yourselves grace.

1. Identify a day and time to fast as a community.

Set aside a day this upcoming week when you will fast. It is recommended that you fast as a community on the day you typically meet. Doing so will help you stay encouraged and enlivened as you begin to cultivate this habit. We recommend starting with a 12-hour (sun-up to sun-down) fast.

2. Plan in advance for your fast, leaving room in your day to commune with God.

Avoid overfilling your schedule on the day you choose to fast, allowing for more space to simply commune with God. Consider how you may need to adjust your schedule that day (e.g., lunch meetings, workouts, plans with family and friends, etc.).

3. As you offer yourself to the Lord in fasting, invite him to reveal the areas of your life where he may be calling you to grow in holiness.

Consider making Psalm 139:23-24 your prayer as you begin and end your fast.
“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

As you fast today, ask Jesus to turn your affections to him. Invite him to reveal the areas in your flesh that may need to be “starved” (habits, patterns, or areas where the power of the flesh needs to be broken so that you might feed on the Holy Spirit) and spend some time praying into those.

4. Reflect back on your fast with the Lord.

Break your fast, ideally with your community group, with a small meal. After your fast, spend some time reflecting on your day with the Lord. Consider journaling about the following prompts:

1. How was your fast? What was encouraging? Where did you experience resistance?
2. What tendencies or character traits (i.e., irritability, anger, fear) may have come to the surface as you fasted?
3. Did this time of fasting reveal any dependencies (i.e., food, affirmation)?
4. Are there any areas of your life you may be holding back from the Lord? How might you offer this to him now in confession, repentance, and prayer?



CLOSE IN PRAYER (5 Minutes)

Close your time together by reading and reflecting on the following prayer adapted from Knowing Jesus. Then, take some time to share any prayer requests/updates and pray for each other's upcoming week.

Dear Heavenly Father, you are a holy God, and we desire to be holy too—set apart unto You and living our lives in a manner that is worthy of you and pleasing to you. Search our hearts, we pray, and if there is any cherished sin lurking within, we ask that you would search it out and destroy it, for we know that only the ones that have clean hands and pure hearts may stand in your presence. Purify our hearts, cleanse our inner thoughts, and examine the very motives behind our acts and attitudes, for we desire to live in holiness of heart. If there is anything that is displeasing to you in our lives, we ask that in Your grace you would root it out, so that we may live in godly holiness all the days of our lives, clothed in Christ's righteousness, separated unto you and walking in godly love. This we ask in Jesus' name, amen.