

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Feb 25, 2018

“Fast Foods and Faith” Pastor Hook 8:15, Pastor Temple 9:30, 10:55

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15-20 min)

- Is there anything that came up this past week in regard to the previous witness or application points that you would like to share? (Community and Confession, James 5)
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

- What seems to get in the way of being a prayerful person today? How might the practice of fasting help us in the practice of prayer?

Review the Sermon (25 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture below. As you go through the discussion questions that follow, know that it is ok to skip questions in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

Matthew 6:16-21

¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- Verse 16 begins with “when you fast” and not if you fast. The underlying assumption is, followers of Jesus practice fasting from time to time. Many characters in both the Old and New Testament fasted. Do you remember some who were listed in the Sunday messages?
- In scripture, there is normally a strong connection between fasting and prayer. Here in Matthew 6, the previous 10 verses are Jesus’ words about praying in secret before God. How do you believe your prayers might be different, if you were praying while you had intentionally gone without food?

- Why might fasting be an underutilized spiritual practice in today's world?
- The pastors in the sermons mentioned that fasting connects actions to our words [in prayer] and that while we cannot always control about how we are feeling at a given time, we can control what we eat or do not eat as an expression of faith. How do you respond to these observations?
- John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement adopted a regular practice of a water only fast from around noon on Thursday to noon on Friday. Whether fasting for a day, or just meal, or just a certain kind of food (like Daniel did), it is to be done as an act faith to the Lord and also frees up time and resources for something else. Besides prayer, what are some other God honoring ways in which the additional time and resources could be spent?
- Would a volunteer please read Isaiah 58:3-9. According to these verses, fasting in itself does not necessarily please the Lord. What also must accompany a fast for it to be the Lord's kind of fast?

Personalize the Sermon (15 min)

- What were points of encouragement or challenge for you personally in the sermon?
- Are there particular things that you have considered giving up or taking on during this season of lent as a fast that you could share with the group? For example, Facebook for more human interaction? Unkind words toward others?
- In what other ways might we as individuals or we as a body of Christ be working toward a more just world according to the kind of fast the Lord describes in His word?

Apply the Sermon (15-20 min)

- Because of personal physical health issues, not everyone can safely practice all kinds of fasts. For some, a juice and water only fast works better than a total fast or a water only fast. For some a vegetarian diet like the Daniel fast is a more healthy and positive experience. Please consult your doctor before doing any major diet changes, especially if it is longer than one day.
- Would anyone care to share their plans for fasting this week, if they have not done so already?
- Have you received the mid-week daily scriptures and reflections to accompany our weekly spiritual discipline? How is that going for you? Also, you can subscribe to receive them via email at www.christchurchsl.org/lent (just enter your email address in the box on the right side of the screen).
- If you would like to help clothe the naked or feed the hungry this week, the East Fort Bend Human Needs organization accepts clothing donations for the resale shop and canned goods for the food pantry.
- If you would like to help house the homeless, the Christ Church sponsored Habitat For Humanity House is underway. Volunteers and meal and snack sponsors are requested for the upcoming Saturdays (see flier for the meal schedule, or email reneet@christchurchsl.org for more information).

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- Is there someone you know who appears to be disconnected from the church or Christian faith that God has placed in your life and has given you opportunities to share your faith with? Would you be willing to share their name with the group to be in prayer for you and for them?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer.