

01.07.24

THE FAST

01.28.24

AT FREE CHAPEL
W/ JENTEZEN FRANKLIN
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Group
Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
--------------	---

Lesson 1: The Commission	4
--------------------------	---

What is Fasting?	4
------------------	---

Mountain Moving (Matthew 17:14-21)	4
------------------------------------	---

Set Apart (Acts 12:25-13:3)	5
-----------------------------	---

Closing	7
---------	---

Resources	7
-----------	---

Lesson 2: The Battle	8
----------------------	---

The Cost (1 Chronicles 21:24)	8
-------------------------------	---

Fight Fire with Praise (2 Chronicles 20)	9
--	---

Send in the Singers! (2 Chronicles 20:21-22)	10
--	----

My Soul Thirsts for God (Psalm 42:1-3)	10
--	----

Closing	11
---------	----

Resources	11
-----------	----

Lesson 3: The Victory	12
-----------------------	----

Victory Over Temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)	12
--	----

Victory In Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18)	13
--	----

Victory In Seeking God's Will (Daniel 9:3-22)	13
---	----

Closing	14
---------	----

Resources	14
-----------	----

Introduction

We designed this discussion guide as a tool for Free Chapel groups to use during the Fast 2024, January 7-28. Visit [this link](#) or scan the QR code to find a group.



This group guide is full of encouragements and quotes from Pastor Jentezen Franklin's book, "Fasting: Opening the Door to a Deeper, More Intimate, More Powerful Relationship With God."

The book is a profound exploration of the spiritual discipline of fasting, offering insightful perspectives on the transformative power of fasting in one's spiritual journey. Pastor Franklin delves into various aspects of fasting, from its historical significance to its practical application in modern life, providing readers with wisdom and guidance to deepen their understanding of this spiritual practice. For further study, pick up your own copy of this groundbreaking book.

To Leaders

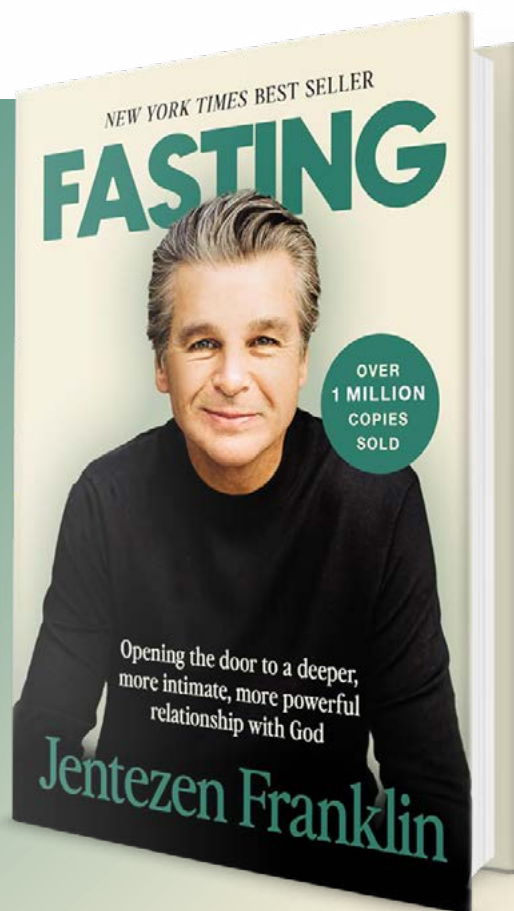
Group leaders, please inspire your group members to prioritize attending group sessions. Each lesson delves deeper into the profound aspects of prayer, fasting, and cultivating strong faith. The lessons are designed to complement and build upon one another, creating a meaningful and cohesive learning journey. On weeks two and three, begin today by briefly recapping the lesson from the week before.

FASTING

by Pastor Jentezen Franklin

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Lesson 1: The Commission

*"For me, fasting has been the secret to obtaining open doors, miraculous provision, favor, and the tender touch of God upon my life."
Fasting, Jentezen Franklin*

This lesson underlines that biblical fasting serves a spiritual purpose. Throughout this lesson we will explore the significance of faith, prayer, and fasting in the context of Scripture, and how they can shape our spiritual journey.

What is Fasting?

"Fasting" means going without food for a specified period of time in order to focus on the Lord. People who are fasting can set aside the time of preparing and eating meals and use it to worship and pray. Also, their hunger pangs will remind them of their complete dependence upon God.

Have you ever fasted before? If so, what was your experience, and if not, what are your initial thoughts and feelings about fasting?

Biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. What spiritual purpose do you hope to achieve through fasting?

Mountain Moving (Matthew 17:14-21)

Read Matthew 17:14-21 and set the context of the story of the demon-possessed boy and the disciples' inability to cast out the demon.

Matthew 17:14-21 NKJV

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So

I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."

Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Jesus expressed his frustration with the religious leaders due to their lack of belief and responsiveness, which characterized their generation. Interestingly, his disciples seemed to exhibit a similar attitude. However, Jesus didn't mince words when he corrected them. His intention was to ignite a stronger faith within them. He rebuked them for their inadequate faith, emphasizing the pivotal role faith would play in their future ministry.

When confronted with seemingly insurmountable challenges, it's crucial to shift your focus away from the enormity of the problem and instead direct your gaze towards Jesus to cultivate a deeper faith. This faith will empower you to overcome the obstacles that obstruct your path.

- Can you relate to moments of impatience or discouragement in your life, like the disciples' frustration in the passage from Matthew 17:14-21? Share an experience when you faced a seemingly insurmountable challenge.
- Reflect on your faith journey. Do you find it challenging to believe that even a small amount of faith can move mountains? Why or why not?
- In the book "Fasting," Pastor Jentezen points out, "Jesus said 'nothing' would be impossible to us—not if we had great faith, but if we had faith like the smallest seed." Discuss the encouragement that statement brings you.
- Who do you know that has great faith and what do you admire about that person?

The disciples had failed to lean on God's power through prayer. It's essential to actively seek and trust in God's power by making requests in each situation. Prayer serves as the critical mechanism for unlocking and showcasing faith. Effective prayer necessitates a mindset of absolute reliance on God, redirecting our thoughts away from self-centeredness and wholly towards God. This shift in focus equips us to confront and handle challenging circumstances.

- What would be your advice to someone who is considering fasting but is still undecided?
- The Scripture passage teaches the importance of not measuring your faith by the size of the problem but by the greatness of God. How can you shift your focus from the size of your problems to the greatness of God in your life?
- How can you incorporate faith and patience in your fasting experience? What strategies can you use to prevent discouragement from taking hold?

Set Apart (Acts 12:25-13:3)

We have discussed fasting, the importance of prayer, and reliance on God in the midst of adversity. Now let's look at the beginnings of the first century church. During a time of prayer and fasting, Paul and Barnabus received God's guidance to embark on a specific mission. Be encouraged that your own journey can be guided and empowered by these practices.

Acts 12:25-13:3

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 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." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

- What stands out to you about this passage?

The communication from the Spirit, potentially conveyed through a member of the group (Acts 13:1), directed them as follows: 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' (verse 2). The term 'set apart' is represented by the Greek word 'aphorizo,' signifying appointment or designation for a specific purpose. This term is employed to characterize significant moments in Paul's journey, such as his conversion (Romans 1:1) and, in this instance, his commissioning for the Gentile mission field.

- Have you ever experienced a similar sense that God was prompting you to do something in your life?
- In Verse 2, it says that they were "worshiping the Lord and fasting" when the Holy Spirit spoke to them. How might worship and fasting prepare us to hear God's voice and receive guidance?
- In your opinion, why do you think the Holy Spirit chose Barnabas and Saul for this mission? What qualities or characteristics might they have possessed that made them suitable for this work?
- How can we, as a group, actively seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our decision-making processes and in discerning God's call for us individually and collectively?

Fasting prepares the way for God to give you fresh revelation, fresh vision, and clear purpose.

Fasting, Jentezen Franklin

Through prayer, faith, and fasting, we not only cultivate a profound reliance on God but also open ourselves to guidance and direction from the Holy Spirit. Just as Barnabas and Saul were set apart for their specific mission after a time of worship, prayer, and fasting, so too can our own journeys be guided and empowered by these practices. Let's pray our reliance on God's greatness outweighs the enormity of any challenges that come during this fast, and for all of 2024!

Summary

- Fasting is the act of refraining from food for a specified period, primarily for a spiritual purpose, such as focusing on the Lord, worship, and prayer. It serves as a reminder of one's dependence on God.
- While you fast, remind yourself to rely on your faith and not just your senses.
- The lesson discusses the importance of faith and prayer, emphasizing that even a small amount of faith can move mountains.
- Effective prayer requires an attitude of complete dependence on God and the action of asking, focusing on God and dealing with difficult situations.
- Acts 12:25-13:3 illustrates a situation where fasting, and worship led to the Holy Spirit's guidance in setting apart Barnabas and Saul for a specific mission. Because God called them to the work, they had His blessing from the start!
- The passage highlights the importance of seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance in decision-making and discerning God's call, as it brings God's blessing to the task.

Resources

- [Download this week's wallpaper](#)
- [View the Hawkins Family Testimony on YouTube](#)
- Free Chapel App



For further personal growth, [download the Free Chapel app](#) for daily devotions based on Sunday's message.

Further Discussion (Optional)

- Discuss the three types of fasting mentioned in chapter three of "Fasting" by Jentezen Franklin.
- Talk about the moments when people might become discouraged during fasting and how to overcome them.
- Discuss the importance of faith and patience in fasting, using the example from the Bible.
- Emphasize that even a small amount of faith, like a mustard seed, can move mountains when combined with patience.

Lesson 2: The Battle

The greatest thing you can do in the midst of a battle is magnify the Lord.

Fasting, Jentezen Franklin

Begin today by briefly recapping Lesson 1 – The Commission. Using some of the closing points from Lesson 1 may be helpful.

“Stated simply, biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Fasting has always been a normal part of a relationship with God. ... When you eliminate food from your diet for several days, your spirit becomes uncluttered by the things of this world and amazingly sensitive to the things of God.”

(Fasting, Jentezen Franklin)

Today we will look at how fasting serves as a weapon to wage war on our flesh and the Enemy. Like a battle, fasting is not easy, and it's not meant to be.

The Cost (1 Chronicles 21:24)

In 1 Chronicles 21:24, Araunah generously offered land to David as a gift. However, David refused, saying, ‘I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.’ David desired the land but insisted on paying its full price as a sacrifice to God. The word ‘sacrifice’ implies something that costs the giver in terms of self, time, or money.

- Has there been a time in your life where you felt that God was asking to you to give something up – either permanently or for a season?

Giving to God what costs you nothing does not demonstrate commitment.

Fasting requires something of us. It's a chance to sacrifice the time we would be eating as time devoted to prayer and fasting. Taking additional strides toward intentional communion with God involves stepping away from other distractions. This is a battle but one that's worth fighting. When faced with difficulty, remember the purpose behind your fast.

Fight Fire with Praise (2 Chronicles 20)

Fasting remains relevant today when seeking God's guidance in special circumstances or during specific periods.

Let's turn our focus on an Old Testament king of Judah, Jehoshaphat known for his exceptional care for his people amidst numerous battles. One of the notable instances is recorded in 2 Chronicles 20, where they encountered a significant threat from a coalition of enemies. Let's explore an instance when Jehoshaphat was directed to engage in battle using a different strategy.

2 Chronicles 20:3-4 NIV

Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

In earlier battles (chapters 13 and 14), Judah and his men physically fought their enemies. In this battle against a coalition of enemy nations, their means of fighting was to pray and fast.

Taking a break from their daily meals allowed the nation of Judah to get serious with God. Feeling hunger would reinforce their penitence and remind them of their reliance on God. In Jehoshaphat's prayer (20:6-12), he included crucial elements: entrusting the situation to God's hands, seeking His favor for his people, recognizing God's sovereignty, praising Him, and emphasizing dependence solely on God for deliverance.

In verse twelve, he ends his prayer with, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

- The people confronted the enemy not as combatants, but as prayerful spectators. How does this challenge your perspective?
- Have you ever prayed a similar prayer as Jehoshaphat's prayer in verse twelve, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you"?

Sometimes our part is not to take up arms but to exercise faith and to offer prayer and praise (see Eph. 6:10-18).

Send in the Singers! (2 Chronicles 20:21-22)

Sometimes, like the people of Judah, we war through worship. Jehoshaphat sent singers into the battle. The people had fasted, prayed and received their instructions on how to battle - with singing praises and a heart of thanks to God! God honored their obedience by giving them the victory.

2 Chronicles 20:21-22

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

*"Give thanks to the LORD,
for his love endures forever."*

As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

The victory for the nation had been won! "There is power in corporate fasting and power in corporate praise! It creates a river of healing, a river of deliverance and victory, a river of cleansing in the house of God. It is time to exchange ashes for beauty, mourning for joy, and a garment of heaviness for a garment of praise." (Fasting, Jentezen Franklin)

- The singers' song of praise invoked God to move against their enemies. How does their actions of literally praising God in the battle encourage you?

My Soul Thirsts for God (Psalm 42:1-3)

Before we close, let's view an impassioned plea written to the Lord by the sons of Korah – Psalm 42. Let this passage remind you that fasting leads to a deeper and more intimate relationship with God.

Psalm 42:1-3

*"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long,
'Where is your God?'"*

The song begins with a poignant expression of longing for God himself, using the image of thirst. As stated earlier, when you abstain from food for an extended period, there's a potential for your spiritual awareness to heighten, allowing a clearer focus on the divine rather than worldly distractions.

- Can you recall a time when you felt especially close to God in your life? What were the circumstances that contributed to that experience?
- How does the idea that fasting is a secret source of power change your perspective on this spiritual discipline?

Fasting brings you to a place where you hunger and thirst for God, and allows a deeper, more intimate, and powerful relationship with Him. Continue to pray that your reliance on God's greatness outweighs the enormity of any challenges. Exercise faith this week; offer up prayer and praise!

Summary

Fasting remains relevant today when seeking God's guidance in special circumstances or during specific periods.

David's refusal of a free offering illustrates that true sacrifice involves personal cost. Likewise, fasting demands sacrificing time dedicated to prayer, demonstrating commitment beyond convenience.

Jehoshaphat's approach to battle, involving fasting and prayer, showcases an alternative strategy to physical combat. Fasting deepens reliance on God, as seen in his prayer of complete dependence on God's guidance.

Jehoshaphat's use of singers in battle, praising God, resulted in victory. Their worship invoked God's intervention against their enemies, demonstrating the effectiveness of praising God amidst trials.

Psalm forty-two illustrates the soul's thirst for God, akin to fasting's ability to strip away worldly distractions, intensifying the longing for and closeness to God.

Resources

- [Download this week's wallpaper](#)
- [View the Karekezi Family Testimony on YouTube](#)
- Free Chapel App

For further personal growth, download the [Free Chapel app](#) for daily devotions based on Sunday's message.



Further Discussion (Optional)

- Discuss the contrasts between conventional approaches and unconventional strategies in facing life's challenges. How does Jehoshaphat's example of fasting and prayer in battle challenge modern notions of problem-solving and conflict resolution?
- Delve into the significance of worship, particularly in times of difficulty or adversity. How does praise and worship contribute to victory in life's battles?

Lesson 3: The Victory

If Jesus could have accomplished all He came to do without fasting, why would He fast? The Son of God fasted because He knew there were supernatural things that could only be released that way. How much more should fasting be a common practice in our lives?

Fasting, Jentezen Franklin

In the life of every believer, prayer and fasting emerge as powerful threads woven together to create a masterpiece of spiritual victory. The Bible is filled with so many instances where the combination of prayer and fasting has led to triumphant outcomes. In lesson three, we explore the transformative journey of individuals in the word of God, who tapped into the profound power of these disciplines in three cardinal areas.

Matthew 17:21

"But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

- Why do you think some situations require both prayer and fasting for breakthrough?
- How can you maintain persistence in prayer and fasting, especially during challenging times?

Victory Over Temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)

The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness underscores the victorious potential of prayer and fasting. Fasting becomes a weapon against the tempter, fortifying the believer's spirit against the attraction of worldly pleasures. As Jesus responded to each temptation with the Word of God, we are encouraged to immerse ourselves in scripture during times of fasting, finding strength and guidance in the written promises of God.

Matthew 4:4

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

- Why is it essential to be filled with the knowledge of God's Word at all times?
- Have you ever found yourself in a tempting situation like Jesus in the account highlighted above? What was your immediate response?

Victory In Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18)

"Have you ever seen a military man try to fit into his uniform thirty years later? Usually, it won't even come close to buttoning down the front. When you're a soldier, you stay fit; you stay healthy, alert, and ready. Paul said we should live that way because the days are evil."

(Fasting, Jentezen Franklin)

The Apostle Paul, a towering figure in the New Testament, spoke about spiritual battles believers face. He emphasized the need for us to put on the whole armor of God to withstand the schemes of the enemy.

Prayer and fasting are integral components of this armor, providing spiritual resilience necessary to overcome the forces of darkness.

Ephesians 6:12

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

- Have you ever felt like you were engaged in spiritual warfare? What was that experience like for you and how did you overcome it?
- Can prayer and fasting be considered as weapons in the context of spiritual warfare?

Victory In Seeking God's Will (Daniel 9:3-22)

"Victories are not won in public but in private. That is why fasting, whether corporately or individually, is a private discipline. Where there is little private discipline, there is little public reward."

(Fasting, Jentezen Franklin)

Prayer and fasting create a sacred space for us to seek God's will with clarity and discernment. The prophet Daniel, in times of uncertainty, sought God through prayer and fasting, leading to profound revelations and divine guidance (Daniel 9:3, 10:2-3). In moments of fasting, we open ourselves to a heightened spiritual sensitivity, enabling us to align our desires with God's perfect plan.

Daniel 9:3

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

- How does confidence in God's character impact your approach to prayer?
- In what ways can you align your requests with God's will in your prayers?
- Share a personal experience where you witnessed victory in prayer and fasting.

Summary

The victory in prayer and fasting is not only about obtaining earthly desires but, more importantly, about aligning ourselves with God's purposes and experiencing spiritual breakthroughs. Let's draw from Biblical wisdom, seeking inspiration to triumph over temptation, in spiritual battles, and in aligning with God's divine will on this transformative journey.

May we find strength in this ageless spiritual discipline of prayer and fasting, discovering the enduring power unleashed by the hand of God, enabling us to navigate the complexities of life and faith.

Resources

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Further Discussion (Optional)

- Explore the idea that fasting can heighten spiritual sensitivity, making believers more attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Discuss how this increased sensitivity can lead to a deeper connection with God and a more profound understanding of one's spiritual journey.