



40 Days 4 Families

A season of fasting and praying for families



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FASTING BASICS

THE BIBLICAL BASIS AND EXAMPLES

- Moses fasted when he received God's commandments- Ex. 34:28
- David fasted seeking God's forgiveness and guidance- 2 Sam. 1:12, 3:3-5, 12:16-22
- The nation Israel fasted when asking God's forgiveness- Judg. 20:26; 1 Sam. 7:6; Ezra 8:21-23
- Ezra fasted to ask God's forgiveness- Ezra 10:6
- Nehemiah fasted seeking God's favor- Neh. 1:4
- Daniel fasted, seeking God's favor- Dan. 9:3, 10:2-3
- Anna fasted seeking God's favor and guidance- Luke 2:37
- Cornelius fasted seeking God's favor- Acts 10:30
- Paul fasted seeking God's guidance- Acts 9:9
- God' leaders fasted for guidance- Acts 13:2
- Elders were appointed with fasting- Acts 14:23
- Jesus fasted in the wilderness seeking God's guidance- Matt. 4:2
- The manner of fasting is to be sincere, dedicated to God, without a public show- Matt 6:16-18
- Husbands and wives are to fast to make decisions together- 1 Cor. 7:5

THIS DISCIPLINE IS FOR YOU TODAY

- Fasting may be the most neglected of all the spiritual disciplines today. It is easy to dismiss as an old and outdated practice, but it is an **important and meaningful** tool for spiritual growth.
- One of the central points of fasting is training for **self-control** (2 Peter 1:6; Gal. 5:23; 1 Peter 1:13). If we are to break the hold of habits and sin in our lives, fasting is essential. Fasting is an effective approach to developing self-control because it deals with a very fundamental concern of human existence: **sacrifice**. For example, we need food to live; however, we can become enslaved by food and other things we need or simply want. If we are able to control things that are essential for life, we will be able to keep the things that are not essential for life in check, as well.
- The practice of fasting fosters **humility, reliance on God, compassion, and gratitude**.
- Fasting from food is the most obvious way to do it. Begin by fasting from food for a short period, such as skipping a meal. Build your fasting time up from there. As much as possible, use the time it takes to get, prepare, and eat food and substitute it with prayer, Scripture reading, memorization, and meditation. If you rely too much on caffeine for energy, it may be a good idea to fast from those beverages. This is true for any substance that we have become physically addicted to.
- Anything that you feel is "impossible" to give up is a good candidate to fast from.

Practical Ways to Fast for 40 Days

For the person new to this idea, it may be overwhelming. I want to share some practical ways you can engage a fast for 40 days. One of the most important things to remember about fasting is that it is not a legalistic engagement. In other words, the church isn't making you do it. We will not view you differently if you decide not to fast. We will not negatively view your decision of how you fast. This is an activity that is between you and God.

Ways to fast

- 40 days straight. This is the fast for the seasoned saint. Fasting straight through a 40-day period is a challenge, but not impossible. 40 days, with no days off.
- Sunday celebration. Many people take Sunday off from the fast. Use this day off from your fast to reflect on how God has grown you during the previous week. This is suggested, of course. If you can fast the entire 40 days without a break you will certainly be strengthened and encouraged.
- Partial day. For those who are new to fasting a partial day fast may be helpful to gain momentum. This is also good for those who have health issues that shouldn't go without food for extended periods of time. You can fast from breakfast to dinner or fast after dinner. You can decide a time frame, like fasting in the evening after 5:00pm.
- Monday through Friday.

The point to make here again is that there is no set way to do a fast. Surely you can follow Biblical examples for fasting, but those are just that, examples. There is no commandment to us from God to fast a certain way. The only Biblical mandate to fasting that applies is why we do it, not how we do it, or even what we fast from.

Types of fasts

- Food. This is the type of fast that is represented in the Bible. A food fast can take on different forms; full days, partial days, skipping meals, types of food (meat, sweets, fried, fast foods, etc.), or drinks (soda, alcohol, caffeinated drinks, etc.). Be creative, the choice is yours. If you have medical conditions that prohibit you from fasting foods, please make the wise choice to fast in a way that doesn't compromise your health.
- Media fast. Taking a break from media of some type is a very valuable exercise. You can take a break from a major distraction for many people, not just because of the time it robs you, but because of the negative content it may feed into your soul.
- Activities. Maybe you are too busy and need to fast from certain activities. Things like excessive sleeping, shopping, and working out can be fasted from.

One of the greatest emphasis of fasting is about making sacrifices that counts. 2 Samuel 24:18-25 tells us about how a simple decision led to saving the lives of many. In that passage David makes a grand statement,

*2 Samuel 24:24 The king answered Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, **for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.**" David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for twenty ounces of silver.*

David's heart toward offering a sacrifice to God should shape our attitude toward fasting. Make sure your fasting costs you something. Don't make it so easy that you just skate through it. When you make great sacrifices, you will feel accomplished and position yourself to hear clearly from God during the fast.

40 Days 4 Families Devotionals
2021

Week 1

Stretch Forward (Philippians 3:13).

We are facing the most challenging times in our lives. The Coronavirus has changed life considerably and when it seems things are heading in the right direction, it gets worse again. I believe it is time for us to start to stretch forward. Going forward is hard because there are so many unknowns. I want to encourage you that you can go forward because what matters most does not change- God and His Word.

Monday (8/9) Day 1 Keep the main thing the main thing (Isaiah 26:3)

Stretching forward requires clear focus and a singular agenda. To keep going forward in uncertain times we need someone to keep our attention. Don't get too wrapped up in the images of this world. Don't let the news cycle or the social media engagement cause you to not see the real aim in your life. Jesus first, Jesus, in the middle, and Jesus in the end. Keep your mind on Jesus

- How does focusing on Jesus keep you on the right track in life?
- How can allowing too many other things to grab your attention be a detriment?

Tuesday (8/10) Day 2 What should you push to the front? (Matthew 6:33)

How long is the list of priorities for your family? Whatever the contents, all of them should point to one true priority, advancing the Kingdom of God. Be careful, we have a tendency to try to align our things with God's Kingdom in a way that doesn't work. It is like when a person gambles and says, "if I win, the first thing I will do is give a tithe." God's Kingdom is not glorified in that. As a matter of fact, because it may encourage others to do the same, it is actually working against God's Kingdom. Make sure you don't try to push your agenda before God's or try to hide your agenda in God's.

- Why should we seek the Kingdom of God before everything else?
- What does that mean for your personal goals?

Wednesday (8/11) Day 3 Avoiding spiritual drift (Hebrews 2:1)

A boat with no oars will drift in the water. It will seemingly float without a destination. There is always a destination though, it is dictated by the flow of the water. To prevent spiritual drift in our family, we must pay much closer attention to what we are doing; how we are engaging conversations, what we are watching on TV, what we are allowing the kids to do, etc. If we are not careful, our lack of rowing toward Jesus will produce spiritual drift. We will *not* be heading nowhere; we will be heading for a spiritual crash.

- What items in your life contribute to spiritual drift?
- What kinds of changes do you need to make to avoid the drift?

Thursday (8/12) Day 4 You must train to compete for the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

The Olympic games just recently finished. Many people were there to win medals for themselves and on behalf of their country. The athletes put in many hours of blood sweat and tears to compete on the biggest stage. All of that for a perishable prize. As followers of Jesus, we have an imperishable crown to compete for. We don't compete against human, but spiritual wickedness in high places. So, my friends, train as if you are

trying to gain the greatest accolades the world can offer. Realizing that you will receive the greatest reward any person can, eternal life as a child of the Most High Jehovah, our Lord and King!

- What things have you focused on that have not been helpful?
- How do you think focusing on spiritual things can change that?

Friday (8/13) Day 5 Stretch toward God (Job 11:13)

Stretching is an activity that requires effort. When you reach for an item, it requires you to move to your limits. It involves an inconvenience. It involves movement. Stretching toward a goal is not include leaning back, relaxing, and getting comfortable. How much the items mean to you will determine how far you are willing to stretch. Let us stretch toward God with all of our effort and might. Let us not get comfortable and lazy in our walk with Him.

- What is the most uncomfortable thing about the Christian life to you?
- How can you fight against the temptation to not stretch because that is hard?

Saturday (8/14) Day 6 Do hobbies damage focus? (1 Corinthians 10:6-7)

Some of us have hobbies that take time and energy. Are these hobbies godly things? I believe this passage helps us to determine when a hobby becomes a problem in your life. When it directs your heart away from God, it becomes an idol. When you desire that thing more than God, when it demands more of your attention and time than God, when it consumes more resources in your life than God, it has become an idol. The hobby itself isn't the problem, the position it assumes in your heart is.

- How does a hobby or activity become an idol to a person?
- How can you make sure you don't let those things take an unhealthy place in your life?

Sunday (8/15) Day 7 Recap: Stretch like a rubber band (Isaiah 40:31)

Stretching can be serious activity, and it can be patiently waiting. Have you ever got really frustrated waiting for something to happen? Thankfully when we wait on God, He gives us rubber band faith. Our waiting is rewarded with the faith to bounce back in life. Waiting on God renews, refreshes, and strengthens us for the journey ahead. Let us learn to wait on God and not rush His work on us.

- What has been the most difficult thing you've waited for during the pandemic?
- How has focusing on Jesus helped?

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Week 2

Stretch to Serve (2 Timothy 1:3-7)

God establishes the faith and ministry habits of our families. There is a lot about the Christian faith that is more “caught than taught” and serving in ministry is a main thing. Families learn from one another how to serve. The attitude, approach, perseverance; these are just a few of the qualities that our families need to see displayed in serving. Pray this week that God will reinvigorate your heart to serve others.

Monday (8/16) Day 8 Ministry for the whole family (Philippians 2:22)

It seems inevitable that the whole family will get involved in ministry. Now that doesn't mean that the whole family will do the same ministry, but that serving others will be contagious in your families. Every person should be involved in ministry in some way, young and old. Encourage one another to let God use them in ministry.

- What area of ministry are you serving in?
- How can you give more attention to serving?

Tuesday (8/17) Day 9 Serving together (Nehemiah 4:6)

When the Israelites went back to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, it was a difficult work. They faced opposition and the work wasn't easy. It *required* them to work together. Even when working together, sometimes you will get discouraged and distracted. When everyone has a mind to work it helps the whole family to serve with passion and perseverance. Even when you are tired, if you have a mind to work, you will pitch in to help. Make up your mind that you are going to serve for God. He will strengthen you when you don't feel like doing it.

- Tell about a time you worked together with others in ministry.
- What was the outcome of that?

Wednesday (8/18) Day 10 Respecting each other's ministry (1 Corinthians 3:8-9)

Each family member has their specific role in the home and in the church. We must never diminish the value of what one another does in serving. Everyone has an important role; no one is more important or better than others. Everyone's work is important. God keeps us humble by assuring us that it is Him that makes it all work not us. Even though you may not understand why someone else serves as they do, encourage them in the ministry. You benefit because of what they do.

- Have you ever wanted to do something you saw someone else doing in ministry?
- Why were you drawn to it?

Thursday (8/19) Day 11 When ministry drains you (Philippians 4:11-12)

It isn't a matter of *if*, it is a matter of *when*. Ministry can be challenging for a number of reasons. It doesn't matter why; the result is the same- we can come away drained. Contentment with our ministry life is an important key to maintaining energy over the long haul. Be content in who you are, what you do, and most importantly, who God is. When you serve for an audience of One, you will serve to your best. When you serve to your best, you will be satisfied at the end of the day.

- Have you ever been tired of serving?
- How did you feel in your heart after serving?

Friday (8/20) Day 12 Serve like it depends on you (Acts 20:35)

Hard work is a good trait, even in the family of God. Working to accomplish the mission God has given you is expected. As the verse quotes the words of Jesus, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Always remember brothers and sisters, you cannot out give God. The harder you work does not mean you will receive more blessings, but you will give the blessings of God. We are all dependent on each other for the hard work of one another. When any of us does not serve as God has called us, we all are missing out on the blessings of God. Others need you to be the vessel of blessings God made you to be.

- How is your work for the Lord a blessing for others?
- What would be the impact on their life if you didn't serve as you have?

Saturday (8/21) Day 13 Don't let serving overshadow devotion (Luke 10:38-42)

As we have reviewed in our devotionals this week, serving is an important part of the life of a believer. This passage reminds us that it is not the most important thing. It appears that people have a tendency to work when personal connections need to be made. It happens in homes, on the job, in schools and in just about every area of society. We use the words, "I don't have to say I love them, I show them by what I do." True devotion to one another needs hearts to reach hearts. As in our passage, we can replace devotion to God with serving in the church. We must be careful in our service to one another to make sure we aren't using it as a substitute for connecting with people. People will not care about what you know, until they know you care.

- Why do we substitute devotion with serving, God or man?
- How can we be careful to reach hearts as we serve?

Sunday (8/22) Day 14 Recap: Serving requires us to stretch our lives (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

Stretching yourself to serve the Lord can be scary. There are unknowns and the burdens of past experiences. There is the time crunch and scheduling conflicts. There is the lack of resources and confusion about where to start. All of those are real concerns, but let me tell you, don't let any of them stop you from stretching out into the ministry God has called you to serve. Once you have gotten involved and reached your stride, you will not look back. You will find so much joy and satisfaction in serving. You will want to stretch further and further. But it all begins with the first yes.

- What area of service have you avoided?
- Make a plan to start.

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Week 3

Stretch to Fight (Neh. 4:14)

You are in a fight for the life of your family. A skilled fighter understands the tendencies of their opponent and develops a plan to capitalize on those weaknesses. Do you have a game plan for fighting the spiritual battle in your home? The battle is real, and you need a real plan to fight.

Monday (8/23) Day 15 What is our purpose? (Jude 3)

To develop a battle plan, you need a common purpose with your family. Yes, winning is always the aim, but what does winning mean to your family? For some winning is eliminating negative influences. For others it means adding positive influences. For some it is repairing broken relationships. Determine what your purpose is and put your all into winning the battles before you.

- What battles do you need to address first in your family?
- Make a list of what each person added and prioritize them.

Tuesday (8/24) Day 16 How do we work together to fulfill the purpose? (Acts 1:14)

Staying on one accord is critical to accomplishing your purpose as a family. In our text, the disciples gathered together after Jesus' ascension to hear from God about the next steps. This verse provides a clear picture for us- everyone came together to pray. Bring your needs to your family and pray together over them. Don't be tricked into thinking it that what is important to you isn't important to them. When you pray together, God can speak to you all about what is needed to help your family be whole and well.

- Have you set a specific time to pray together?
- Each week make a list of your concerns so you can bring it to your family for prayer.

Wednesday (8/25) Day 17 God determines your purpose (Psalm 57:2)

God uses our experiences and sensibilities to help us fulfill our callings personally and as a family. God has purposes for your family that are greater than human intentions. The best part of God's purpose for your family is that He fulfills His purpose in you. When we try to fulfill our purposes, we work in our own power. Although we can be stopped in our purposes, there is nothing that can stop God in His. That includes His purposes for you and your family.

- How do you partner with God in fulfilling His purpose?
- How can we be careful to not get ahead of God in fulfilling His purpose for us?

Thursday (8/26) Day 18 Fight against distraction (Isaiah 26:3)

Distraction can be a constant battle. It seems the distractions in life are growing by the day. We must fight against the urge to give our attention to the distractions. All distractions aren't necessarily bad things. The way to determine what is a distraction is based on if it takes you off course of God's purpose for your family. This is one of the most significant fights we have. My brothers and sisters fight with all you have against the distractions of the day. Fight against those things that take your attention off of Jesus and the Word of God. Anything that will distract you from eternal goals is a distraction.

- Name a few distractions you face every day.
- How can you eliminate those distractions?

Friday (8/27) Day 19 Rest during the fight. (Exodus 14:14)

Even when fighting you have to know when to punch and when to rest. Watch a boxing match and you will see fighters lean against each other when they get tired. They don't quit, they just rest. When we rest during the fight, it may not be because we are tired, it is an act of faith. It shows the Lord we will trust in Him to fight on our behalf when we resist the urge to keep pressing. Just because you have to fight doesn't mean that fighting is all you do. Be still and watch the Lord fight on your behalf.

- What does it look like to rest in the battle?
- Do you have an example of when this happened in your life?

Saturday (8/28) Day 20 Using strategy during the fight (1 Peter 5:8)

We have an enemy that seeks our demise. This passage describes him as a roaring lion seeking to devour you. When you are unarmed, that sounds like a scary picture. When you are armed with the proper weapons and have a team with you, a lion isn't as scary. You have every weapon you need, and you have a great team in your family. Develop your strategy to win the fight and stick to it. When family members get off track, gently draw them back in. When everyone knows how they aid the team, you all can fight effectively as a unified front against the devil.

- Does everyone know what their job is in the fight?
- Give one another regular reminders of their role so they can fight from a position of confidence.

Sunday (8/29) Day 21 Recap: The battle is the Lord's (2 Chronicles 20:15)

When we are in the fight it is easy to forget who is really fighting the battle. We feel real pain, fear, fatigue, and frustration. Those are real emotions that affect us in real ways. Even in our scars, Jesus is the only one who can win the fight. Because the fight is spiritual, it is fought in heavenly places. Don't get despaired or downtrodden in the fight. The Lord will come through. Always remember, the story has been written and you win!

- How do you respond to the pain from the battle?
- How can you stand still and let God fight the battle?

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Week 4

Stretch to Protect (Mark 13:33)

We are in a time of war, saints. The enemy is coming for your children. The evil that was once in the darkness has come to the light and is trying to persuade your children to join in. We must work hard to protect our kids from every kind of wickedness. Don't be fooled, some of it is disguised as harmless fun. Look closely at the things your kids are engaging, don't take any of it for granted. Satan hopes you are not on guard so he can lead your children into darkness.

Monday (8/30) Day 22 We need discipline to protect ourselves (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

Discipline is one way to describe training. Every aspect of it is designed to direct a person to a desired outcome. As this passage shows us, children aren't the only ones who need discipline. Discipline takes sacrifice, it takes making right decisions, it takes learning from mistakes. Discipline is necessary to avoid the pitfalls of worldliness and to draw into the presence of God daily.

- Why is discipline so hard?
- How can we help each other to be more disciplined?

Tuesday (8/31) Day 23 Guard against covetousness (Luke 12:15)

What does covet mean? It is a selfish and ungoverned desire for things you don't have. We can covet just about anything: stuff, money, relationships, education, etc. The list of things is endless that people may covet. Covetousness is a sin that creeps in on us usually. It can disguise itself as a natural desire or a basic need. When it goes unchecked, it can grow into a unhealthy desire that causes you to make poor decisions. Guard your heart and make sure to carefully examine the things you love too much. Don't let yourself fall into covetousness; it is a deep stinky hole to get out of.

- Examine the things you enjoy the most, is there any covetousness toward them?
- How can you fight against covetousness?

Wednesday (9/1) Day 24 Guarding my children's hearts (Colossians 3:21)

How can a parent help his or her children have a better life? By not being too harsh on them. Parenting does not require anger. Having to give them the same instructions often can be challenging, but you have to remember they are children. Believe me, if you ask your parents, they will tell you they had to do the same thing with you. Focus on how you can discipline your kids with kindness, gentleness, and in a loving way. Don't yell at them unnecessarily, don't demean them or belittle them. Your words and attitude toward them will go a long way toward guarding their heart from hurt and harm. It may be a stretch to protect your kids heart, but it is worth it.

- What does it mean to guard something?
- How can you practice kindness and gentleness toward your children?

Thursday (9/2) Day 25 Giving them the best (Ephesians 5:15-17)

This passage gives us a good picture of the aim of discipline. Helping our children to be aware of how they live and to develop practices to live according to God's way is succeeded in discipline. The Bible's description of fools should motivate us; no one wants to raise a fool.

- How can you help your children make the best use of their time?
- Explain the benefits of using time wisely to your children.

Friday (9/3) Day 26 Making wise decisions (Proverbs 3:6-7)

The basis for protecting our lives is to make wise decisions. Wisdom is the right application of the right information in the right way. God gives us the tools to be wise, His Word and His Spirit. God will protect you when you look to Him first in decision making. Trust God's direction for your life. Don't let the culture or your own ideas sway you from His path for you.

- What obstacles may you face when seeking God's direction?
- What kind of decisions are the hardest to follow God's direction?

Saturday (9/4) Day 27 Take a day off (Deuteronomy 5:14)

How do you observe a Sabbath? Is your family taking any day's off to rest? Working hard is important; there is so much to do and so little time to do it. The number of things that need to get done should not affect your ability to take a day off. The Bible tells us of God's original design for man, "work six days and take the Sabbath off." (Exodus 20:10-11). Don't get trapped into running every day. When you take a day off you will find that your energy, patience, and endurance are improved. One great way to protect your family is to enjoy some downtime together.

- How does your family rest together?
- What ways can your family improve in this area?

Sunday (9/5) Day 28 Recap: Discipline for everyone (Proverbs 12:1)

Living a disciplined life is a life of wisdom. I don't believe balance is possible the way we expect balance. We may say, "I will enjoy a little of this and little of that" in seeking to balance things, but before long we are having too much of something. I believe we like the idea of balance because it allows us to let things in our life that we should leave out. What we should all strive for is a disciplined life. One that restricts us in ways that bring true health to our life. Discipline is sustainable, balance is not. Discipline will protect our life and prepare us to stretch when necessary.

- Why is balance in life not sustainable?
- What does our family need to practice better discipline with?

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Week 5

Stretch to Love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

How can we stretch forward as a family? There are lots of answers to that question but placing love above the challenges and needs is a great start. It is easy to work our way out of situations. Here is a new practice, let's love our way out of situations. Instead of looking to do something first, let's lead with love. In word, in deed, in giving, in sacrificing- love is the main ingredient.

Monday (9/6) Day 29 Stick like Glue. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

There is Elmer's Glue and then there is Super Glue. Each has its purposes, and each has its strengths and weaknesses. Elmer's glue has lots of applications, but it doesn't bond items tight like Super Glue. Super Glue makes things stick together stronger, but it can be hard to use. Families need some of each type of glue to have a healthy balance.

- How does glue resemble love?
- What areas do you think your family can be better glued together?

Tuesday (9/7) Day 30 Give yourself to each other. (Philippians 2:2-4)

Submission places each of us in the service to one another. It requires a level of love, sacrifice and respect for others that places their needs before your own. When you put the needs of others before yours, you will nurture an environment of service that will make things easier instead of harder to accomplish as a family.

- What does it look like to submit to your family members?
- Is it hard to submit to your family members?

Wednesday (9/8) Day 31 Clarify your love. (1 John 3:10-15)

Submission is an act of love. When you submit yourself to each other, the love you have inside will be displayed in that interaction. Make the level of your love clear by giving your family members prominence in actions, conversation, and decisions. When you submit to others, they will not have to wonder where they stand with you.

- How does submission display love?
- What does it say about love that refuses to submit to one another?

Thursday (9/9) Day 32 Handling problems. (Ephesians 4:2-3)

No family is perfect. As a matter of fact, every family has some kind of challenge to work through. Working diligently, prayerfully, and consistently on problems will not only reveal answers to problems but will help you see how much each of you love for each other. Truly, the quality of love you have is discovered in the trials, not in the good times.

- Why is it hard to address the problems in your family?
- How can you work on the hard spots?

Friday (9/10) Day 33 Encourage one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Encouragement is a verbal thing. You can encourage someone with a gift or a helping hand, but the most significant way is to say something uplifting to them. Encouragement is an expression of love that speaks volumes to your family members.

- Say something encouraging to each of your family members right now.
- How does being encouraged make you feel?

Saturday (9/11) Day 34 Be there (1 Corinthians 12:26)

When we are together, we are better and stronger. When we stand together we can endure any attacks and overcome any obstacle. Sometimes it doesn't require a lot of activity, just be there. When Job faced the attacks of satan upon his life, his friends came and were just there for 7 days. Oftentimes we don't have to try to give answers or solutions, just be there. Be there in mind body and spirit.

- What prevents us from being there for one another?
- What can you do to be more present with your family today?

Sunday (9/12) Day 35 Recap: What does love look like? (John 13:14-15)

For some of you, building togetherness is a new thing in your family. You must be intentional; you will not have new togetherness by accident. Continue to look for ways to build togetherness in your home. Spend time with each other, listen to one another, put each other's needs before your own. The foundation for a new togetherness is Jesus, and he calls us to serve one another.

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Week 6

Stretch to Grow (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

When we stop growing, we begin dying. This is true naturally and spiritually. Atrophy is a real and present danger. Growing happens naturally for our physical bodies, but it requires intentionality for the spirit-person. In order to grow daily we need a healthy appetite of spirit-led activity.

Monday (9/13) Day 36

Growing children (Luke 2:40)

This description of Jesus in His youth is a good picture of what we should expect for our children. The Bible has many verses that instruct us in raising children. Adhering to Biblical standards can sometimes oppose the standards of the world. We must stay the course to assist them in growing in healthy ways.

- Is there a particular verse about children that you are most fond of?
- How does that verse help your children grow in wisdom and God's grace?

Tuesday (9/14) Day 37

Growing women (Proverbs 31:10-31)

This passage is the high-water mark for women. This is a list of qualities that may not be easy to achieve, but it is. What does it take for a woman to be a Proverbs 31 woman? Intentionality, consistency, attention, and mostly prayer. A woman that resembles the one in this passage is a woman that stays on her knees. She prays for strength each day because she doesn't always feel so industrious. She prays for patience because her family isn't always appreciative of her hard work. She prays for opportunity because the world is a hard place. Keep praying woman of God. Keep growing toward this high mark.

- What part of this passage can be the most challenging for you (for women)?
- How can you be supported in your work in the family?

Wednesday (9/15) Day 38

Growing men (1 Corinthians 16:13)

This verse speaks directly to the life of men. Some translations have the phrase "act like men" where brave or courageous is included in others. The implication is that men must be courageous and brave, they must display qualities that are critical for their families. Men have a calling from God to stand in areas where others will not. Men are commissioned by God to be solid when others are failing. How do you grow in this men? By staying close to Jesus. Remember, the one who called you is able to keep and equip you for the work.

- What obstacles do men face in the home when living out their calling by God?
- How can you be supported in your work in the family?

Thursday (9/16) Day 39

Children are a blessing. (Psalm 127:3-4)

Children provide a level of energy and happiness to homes that only they can bring. The balance they provide to a home helps to teach parents valuable lessons about life, love, and sacrifice. Children, pay attention to the lessons your parents are teaching you and look for ways to show that you have learned them. Be an example of obedience in your home; it can help them, and their family be healthier by watching your example.

- How do children help their parents to grow spiritually?
- What ways can children be intentional in those things?

Friday (9/17) Day 40 Desire to grow (1 Peter 2:2)

We have a lot of desires, don't we? We desire to be happy, free, healthy, etc. We also desire things of the flesh, food, shelter, etc. In all of those desires place at the front of the list- grow in the spirit. That's right, the Bible tells us to desire to grow as Christians the way a baby desires milk. What does that look like? A baby will wake up in the middle of the night to eat. It will stop all events to eat. A baby doesn't care what is going on, when it is time to eat it is time to eat! That is the idea behind this verse. When your desire for the things of God reaches this level, you will grow. And then you will desire more and more and more.

- What are your biggest obstacles to growing spiritually?
- How can you work together to help one another to grow spiritually?

You DID IT!! You are finished with our 40 days of fasting and praying. I want to encourage you to continue to make fasting a part of your regular routine as you grow in your faith. Continue to pray for your family and for others- Lord knows we all need it. Keep a regular routine of devotions together as a family. You will see the fruit of God in your family and in everyone.

Pastor Travis

Bonus Days

Saturday (9/18) Family stretches together. (Ephesians 2:21-22)

The family is a single unit comprised of different parts. Just like a machine, when each part works together as designed the family will run like a well-maintained machine. Each of you will be stretched in certain ways throughout the year. That is normal. My encouragement is to communicate well with your family. Tell them when you are struggling, let them into your world regardless of how hard that may be. Your togetherness is used by God to grow all of you. It may be a stretch to do, but you will be better for it.

- How can you stretch yourself to make your family better?
- What ways can your family stretch to help you grow?

Sunday (9/19) Recap: Stretch forward, family (Philippians 3:13)

40 days of fasting is definitely a stretch! I pray that you are able to see how strong in the Lord you truly are. If you can stretch for 40 days, you can stretch in other areas that may have been a challenge before. Keep stretching forward. Don't give up. If your stretch didn't go good today, don't quit, start fresh the next day. Sanctification isn't about perfection, it is about pursuit. Keep stretching toward God and watch the growth happen!

- What is the hardest area for you to stretch in?
- How can you help one another to stretch forward?