

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

PRAYER

21 Day Fast

August 21, 2011



ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. This week is the Small Group: Prayer for the City event where we are praying for the city of San Diego. Check the weekly email (from last week) for an attachment with a list of the “7 Mountains of Culture” that we are praying for.
2. The Rock Church is starting the 21 Day Fast this week, are joining us? Check out <http://www.therocksandiego.org/fast/> for more information on how to conduct a fast, but most important ingredient is prayer and study of the Word.
3. Small Group New Leader Orientation is this Sunday August 28th from 2-4 in room 252. If you know someone in your group that has expressed interest in leading a group, and you feel they are ready to start leading please have them contact John at john.darrow@therocksandiego.org, or Nicole at nicole.moser@therocksandiego.org.

MEMORY VERSES

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Gal. 5:24 ESV)

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt. 6:17-18 ESV)

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – PRAYER (21 DAY FAST)

Getting Started

1. Review the 4 points of “21 Day Fast” as listed in the lesson plan:
 1. What is fasting? To voluntarily **abstain** from eating and/or drinking for an extended period of time.
 2. Fasting goal: A personal encounter with the living God. John 3:30 says, “He must increase and we must decrease.” 1 Peter 1:16 says, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

3. Fasting preparation:

- A. Prepare your **heart**. *1 John 1:9, Ezra 7:10, 2 Chron. 7:14*
- B. Prepare your **motives**. *Ephesians 1:3*
- C. Prepare your **body**. (*sdrock.com/fast*)
- D. Prepare your **schedule**. *1 Samuel 3:19, Habakkuk 2:4*

4. Fasting guidelines:

- A. Explain to your family in advance what you are doing.
- B. Request privacy from those who do find out.
- C. Ask them not to discuss it until your fast is over.
- D. Never **complain** or brag about your fast, and avoid talking about it. *Matthew 6:16-18*
- E. Establish and **accountability** partner for prayer and encouragement. *Proverbs 27:17*
- F. Keep away from **negative** people. *Proverbs 23:7*
- G. Spend as much time as possible alone in prayer and solitude. *Matthew 4:1-11*
- H. Acknowledge that your flesh cannot be trained but must be crucified. *Galatians 5:24*

2. Were there any points from the message that stood out to you?

Digging Deeper

Imagine going down to Seaport Village with your family on a nice Sunday morning and come across the corner where the mimes and artists perform their various crafts and notice something a little different. There is a guy on a soapbox preaching strict religious observance and obedience to this rule book in his hand. "I am a holy man, that only does holy things. You must obey me at all costs!" He is preaching about himself and his book. To make things even worse, he decides to share that he hasn't even eaten or drank anything in two weeks and he is famished, but his "fasting" is spiritual and should be acknowledged and recognized.

Does this sound silly? It may surprise you but in the context of Matthew 6:16-18, this is precisely what Jesus told us (and specifically the religious leaders of his day) not to do. See the religious leaders of his day lorded over all the people their premier religious position and because fasting and prayer was an important part of Jewish religious culture, it elevated their status and created this fear in people. But Jesus radically changed all of that. Jesus is pleased in fasting and prayer, but not for selfish gain and ambition, but in reverence and adoration of a holy God. The following questions will help us gain understanding of what fasting should look like for us these next three weeks.

1. Look at the following passages from the Old Testament and explain what the purpose of the fast was in that context:

- 2 Sam. 12:15-24
- Ezra 8:21-23, 31
- Jonah 3:4-10

2. Most fasting in the Old Testament often involved gaining the attention of God for various reasons including agony over another person, or a difficult situation. How should we pursue fasting if we have Jesus?

Note: The Old Testament Hebrews had no concept of Jesus as we do. So keep in mind the shift of dependency upon God in these two different time periods. They both needed God, but received him in a different manner.

(See Hebrews 10:1-10)

3. Based upon our study of these passages, how are you to respond to the fast in your own personal life?

Miles provided us with examples of reasons to fast:

- Special revelation – *Exodus 34:27-28*
- In times of war – *Judges 20:26*
- Courage and wisdom – *Esther 4:3, 16*
- In times of grief – *Nehemiah 1:4, 2 Samuel 1:12, 1 Chronicles 10:12*
- *Spiritual recuperation* – *1 Kings 19:1-9*
- Mourning – *Daniel 10:1-3*
- Repentance – *Jonah 3:5, Daniel 6:18*
- Ministry preparation – *Matthew 4:2*
- Spiritual power – *Mark 9:29*
- Ministry commissioning – *Acts 14:23*
- Set aside self for holiness – *1 Corinthians 7:5*
- Spiritual discipline – *1 Corinthians 11:24-28* says that Paul “fasted often.”

Do any of these examples resemble a reason you are fasting? Or are you still not fasting, and if so why?

4. Above everything else, use this time of fasting to worship and honor God in all areas of your life. We hope you grow closer to him during this time.