

SESSION 2

RESILIENT KNOWING

GET STARTED

- In its most simple form and meaning, a disciple is one who learns. The origins of the word disciple comes from the Latin word “discipulus” which means student, learner, or follower. **In what way do you learn best (visual, reading/writing, auditory, hands on, solo, groups, etc...)? Discuss what your learning style is?**
- We’ll talk a lot about learning from Jesus and Scripture during this study, but we learn from others as well. While we can always count on what we learn from God to be good for us, what we learn from others can be good or bad. **Is there a life lesson you’ve learned from someone that has served you well? Is there a lesson or habit you’ve learned from someone that has not served you well?**

TAKE IT IN

- Watch Session 2: Resilient Knowing at mynorthside.com/resilient. **What encouraged or challenged you from the sermon or video this week?**
- **What did you learn and/or how was your experience with the prayer spiritual exercise?**

TALK IT OVER

- This session is all about the concept of knowing Jesus, not just about Jesus. **If someone asked you what the difference is between knowing Jesus and knowing about Him, how would you answer?**

Read 1 Timothy 1:3-6

- Paul instructs his disciple Timothy to stay in Ephesus and tell people not to teach any doctrine other than Christ. The problem seems to be that some believers were adding tradition and myths to the Bible, causing people to look away from Jesus. Also, there was a focus on using heritage (genealogies) as the basis of importance rather than seeing everyone as fully and equally loved by God. **Why do you think it’s so easy to become swayed by ideas and teachings that aren’t found in Scripture?**
- The words Paul uses in verse 3 strongly tell Timothy to “charge” (ESV), “command” (NIV), or “stop” (NLT) people from teaching false doctrine. We can interpret this as a charge for us to do the same when we hear believers giving worldly advice that can lead people down a wrong path. **Do you feel as Christians in the 21st century that we are speaking up when we hear false doctrine being taught?**



- What we hear or read informs what we believe, and what we believe ultimately affects how we behave. In other words, the more you know Jesus, the more you will begin to live like Him. **In what ways have ideas not centered in the gospel affected your faith? In what ways has knowing Jesus changed how you live and interact with others?**
- Following his instructions to Timothy, Paul explains that the reason for doing this is to love others from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. He reminds him that some have turned away from these things to only meaningless talk. **Do you think we sometimes reduce our conversations to “meaningless talk”? Why or Why not? What could it look like to redirect meaningless conversations to discussions rooted in godly love? What are some creative ways we can enter into important conversations of faith without turning people away from God?**

Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17

- Here we see Paul describing himself as a blasphemer, persecutor, violent man, and the worst of all sinners. Paul’s ministry was incredibly effective, not because of what He did, but because of how knowing Jesus changed him. **What do you find most encouraging about Paul’s story? What makes his past important for Timothy, and for us, to see? How does sharing our own stories communicate the life change of knowing Jesus?**
- Paul declares his life as an example of the patience and love of God (v. 16). **What has God’s patience looked like in your life? Similar to Paul, since knowing Jesus, how has He been working to bring about change in your life? Where do you want to know Him more?**

LIVE IT OUT

In Philippians 3:8, Paul says that everything is worthless compared to the infinite value of knowing Jesus Christ. Do the priorities of your life reflect this truth? How are you pursuing knowing Jesus? How are you leading others to know the infinite value of Jesus? This week, pursue individual training with the fasting spiritual exercise. Along the way, prayerfully ponder these next steps to helping others know Jesus.

- Who do you know that doesn’t know Jesus? Invite them to church.
- Who do you know that needs godly friends? Invite them to a meal or your group.
- Who do you know that struggles with a hurt, habit, or hangup? Invite them to Care Night or to join a Care Group.

Individual Training: Shifting our priorities to focus on building a relationship with Jesus is essential to knowing Him. This week’s individual training is to practice the spiritual exercise of fasting (pg 4). This exercise will help you learn about fasting and guide you through a 24 hour fast. Review this exercise as a group, share your plans to complete it, encourage one another throughout the week, and come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: *“Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ”*
Philippians 3:8 (NLT)



SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

FASTING

THIS WEEK'S TRAINING GOAL: 24-Hour (Two Meal) Fast

WHAT IS FASTING?³

Fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from something for spiritual purposes. In the New Testament, this "something" is primarily refraining from food/drink, but not water for a short, lengthy, or intermittent period of time. Fasting can be expanded to other things. When you seek solitude you are fasting from crowds and people. When you seek silence, you are fasting from noise, busyness, and technology. When you attend church to worship, you are fasting from other activities. In each case, it is choosing to refocus our hearts and lives on the things of God.

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

Most scholars believe that the spiritual habit of fasting was widely practiced by people in the Old & New Testaments. As a result, most people needed little instruction on the practice of fasting. This would explain why Jesus' teaching on fasting is brief compared to some other topics. Regardless, we know that Jesus fasted (Matthew 4:1-11), and He assumed His followers would weave this practice into their lives (Matthews 6:16, 9:15). The simple answer to why we pursue fasting is because Jesus did it and we are His followers.

To go a little deeper than playing the "Jesus did it" card, fasting helps get to the root of what we crave. The word crave means to have a powerful desire for something. We are designed to crave God, because He is the only thing that can fully sustain us. If we crave anything other than God, it has the potential danger of becoming an idol in our lives. When we set aside something that is important to us through fasting, it reminds us that we are sustained by God and that He holds all things together.

Throughout the Bible, people didn't just fast for the sake of fasting. Fasting is fueled by spiritual purpose. Below are some examples of why people fasted in the Bible.

- 1. To Fortify Prayers.** Fasting and prayer always go together. Combining these two practices brings more focus and increases our intensity of seeking God and revealing our requests in prayer. Daniel did this on his behalf and for the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:3).
- 2. To Repent Of Sin.** Fasting can accompany our heartfelt repentance from sin. Both David (Psalm 69:10) and Jonah (Jonah 3:19) revealed their deep remorse over sin while fasting.

³ This guide has been adapted from Prayer & Fasting by David Roadcup & Michael Eagle

3. To Discover The Lord's Will. It is always a good idea to seek God concerning the specific areas and decisions of our lives. Fasting has a way of bringing our request directly before God as we ask for His specific direction. With fasting, the Israelites sought guidance in battle (Judges 20:18-48), Saul looked for answers after being blinded (Acts 9:9-11), and the apostles' asked for direction when selecting elders in the early church (Acts 13:1-4; 14:23).

4. To Accompany Grief And/Or Mourn Loss. When handling grief, loss, or worry, going before God in fasting can bring comfort. When things feel out of control, fasting can realign us to the One that is in control. David mourned and fasted when heard about Saul's death (2 Samuel 1:11-12), and for the life of the son he had with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:15-22). Nehemiah fasted after hearing of the destruction of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-4).

5. To Seek Protection From Approaching Danger. When we sense a danger in our or the lives of others, there is wisdom in going to God in fasting. It shifts us to cling to his strength. David pleaded with God to save him from his enemies (Psalm 109:24). Ezra called for a fast over a group of released captives traveling (Ezra 8:21-23). Esther called for a fast to save her people (Esther 4:9-14).

6. To Offer Worship And Praise. Similar to prayer, there is something about fasting that intensifies our worship experience. It reformats our hearts to draw closer to God in individual or corporate worship. The Church in Antioch gathered with the intent to fast and worship, and the Holy Spirit decided to move, showing them a next step (Acts 13:1-3).

7. To Set Aside People For Leadership. The early church prayed and fasted when setting aside specific people for leadership (Acts 14:23).

8. To Spiritually Prepare For Leadership/Ministry. When believers are called into leadership or ministry, a great way to begin is by fasting to seek God for His blessing, direction, and presence. Immediately after He was baptized, Jesus went into the wilderness for a time of fasting, prayer, and preparation (Matthew. 4:1-11). It is important to note, that this was the moment Satan tempted Jesus assuming he was at his weakest. Fasting and prayer prepared Jesus with strength to rebuke Satan.

HOW DO I FAST?

For the Resilient study, we are encouraging you to complete a traditional fast of abstaining from food/drink, but not water for a 24-hour period of time (two meals). The thought of this challenge can feel a little intimidating. That's why we want to offer some steps to help you practice and build the spiritual habit of fasting for this study and beyond.

Step 1: Select A Spiritual Purpose. What purpose are you planning this fast for (worship, prayer, repentance, intercession, direction, etc...)? It may help to review the above reasons people fasted in the Bible. Once you have identified the reason(s), focus on this purpose during your time of fasting.

Step 2: Determine The Length Of Your Fast. A fast should always have a time frame. In this case, we are encouraging you to try a 24-hour or two meal fast. We recommend beginning after dinner and breaking the fast at dinner the next day. You can easily alter this time frame and go from breakfast to breakfast or lunch to lunch. **IF THIS IS A NEW HABIT OR A LITTLE OVERWHELMING**, you have the freedom to start slower. You could do a shorter fast time frame and just refrain from one meal. Remember this is about spiritual training in seeking God, sometimes you have to start slow and then build up.

Step 3: Decide On The Type Of Fast. For this study, we are encouraging you to complete a traditional fast of abstaining from food/drink, but not water for a 24-hour period of time. **IF THIS SEEMS TOO MUCH**, you could do a partial fast and drink juices instead of water. Due to health issues, you may not be able to fast from food. As an alternative, you may want to consider fasting from technology or social media for 24-hours instead.

Step 4: Communicate To Those Who NEED To Know. Jesus' teaching on fasting emphasizes limiting the people who know about your fast to keep the focus on God (Matthew 6:16-18). Communicate to any family or friends who need to know you are fasting in terms of meal planning, schedule, etc. Since this is a group study, communicate with your group members so that they can encourage and provide accountability.

Step 5: Make A Specific Commit To Complete The Fast. Once you have the details figured out, make a commitment with God to complete the fast. Just as a heads up, you will be tempted to break your fast early or diminish it in some way. Resist the temptation, hold on to your commitment, and see it through to completion.

Step 6: Begin Your Fast With Prayer And Repentance. It is good for the healing and maintaining of our heart, mind, and soul to begin here. To help, prayerfully read through Psalm 139:23-24 or Colossians 3:1-17.

Step 7: Fill Your Heart With Scripture. When Jesus faced temptation from Satan, He refuted him with Scripture. In fact, one of His responses in Matthew 4:4 was, "...It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" During your fast, take in meaningful sections of Scripture. This practice will nurture your soul, and will deepen your experience. You could spend the time you would normally be eating reading Scripture, or take Bible snack breaks throughout the day. Here are some Scripture suggestions: Genesis 1-3; Psalm 42, 43, 119, 145; Matthew 4-7; Galatians; Ephesians; Phillipians; Colossians; James; or 1-3 John.

Step 8: Pray Passionately And Often. Beyond Scripture, plan time for prayer. During a fast, you are seeking God and spending time with Him. Communicate, listen, and soak in His presence. Plan to spend moments in prayer during the time you would normally be eating. As you pray, focus on the spiritual purpose of your fast. Also, you may want to review and practice some of the types of prayer from the Prayer Wheel exercise (Session 1).



Step 9: Seek Solitude And Silence. The people and noise of our lives can prevent us from listening and focusing on God during a fast. If you can plan it or if opportunities arise, seek out moments of solitude and silence with the intent of fellowship with God. Again, this could be during the time you would normally spend eating.

Step 10: Breaking The Fast. When breaking a fast, avoid high fatty or greasy foods. Ease back in with lighter foods (vegetables, salads, soups, juices, etc...). Your stomach will thank you.

Step 11: Know That God Is Pleased. When we voluntarily give up something that is important to us for a spiritual purpose to focus on God, there is a reward. Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 6 (v.4, 6, 18, 20-21). This reward is relationship, intimacy, and pleasure from our Heavenly Father. It is a reward that directs us toward eternity with Him. God is proud of His children, and He praises, celebrates, and recognizes their commitment to pursuing Him. Paul summed it up this way in Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

A Few Final Fasting Thoughts

- If you would like to learn more about fasting, check out the books *Prayer And Fasting* by David Roadcup and Michael Eagle or *The Celebration Of Discipline* by Richard Foster. If you are more of a visual learner, check out the videos for *The Fasting Practice* by John Mark Comer on RightNow Media (www.rightnowmedia.org).
- If you have a health issue that could be impacted by fasting, please consult your doctor on how to proceed, or consider fasting from something else beside food.
- If you find yourself extremely hungry during the 24-hour time frame, let the hunger pains remind you of your purpose behind the fast. Also, drinking a large glass of water can help temporarily ease hunger pains.
- There may be some physical factors to take note of during a fast. Be aware you could experience fatigue, headache, sleepiness, and mild dizziness. These are temporary, and will subside when the fast is over. Also, remember to stay hydrated.
- If you are involved in a high energy or high physically demanding job, take this into consideration on when and how you fast. If you regularly work out, you may want to adjust your workout during your fast.



FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These Family Conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each Family Conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each Family Conversation, you will find 4 parts.

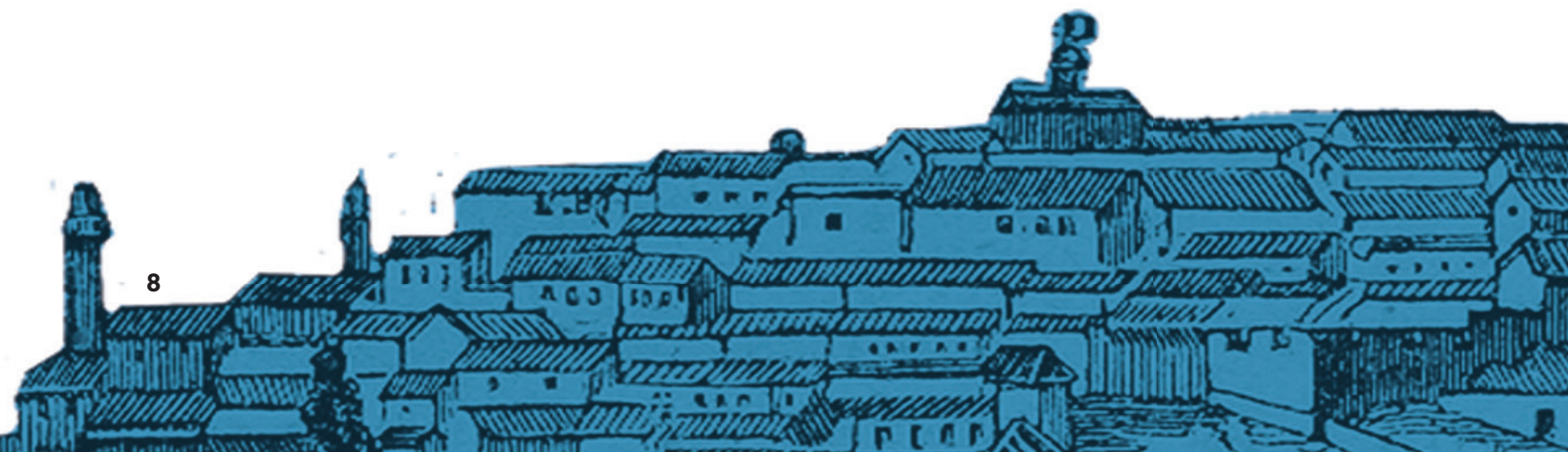
1. **Scripture:** Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.
2. **Devotion:** Read this to your family.
3. **Conversation:** Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.
4. **Prayer:** Pray for your family, or encourage a family member to pray.

Just as a heads-up, things probably won't go as planned with your Family Conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won't pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

FAMILY CONVERSATION: SESSION 2 RESILIENT KNOWING

Scripture:

“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.” **1 Timothy 1:13-16**



Devotion:

Who is someone that you look up to? Perhaps it is someone you admire from afar, like an athlete, a musician, or an influencer. Maybe you can recall their stats, have memorized all their songs, or commented on all their posts (you know everything there is to know about them). But, you don't really know them. You've never encountered each other (although that might be a dream of yours), had any shared experiences, or have any real relationship at all. Now, think about someone you admire who you truly know. Maybe it is a family member, a best friend, perhaps a teacher or a coach. There is a big difference here, because you know a lot about them and you also have a relationship with them. You've had shared experience (good and bad), learned from them, and grown from their interactions in your life.

Knowing Jesus is similar. You can read about him in the Bible, know the stories of His miracles, and be familiar with his teachings. But, truly knowing Jesus goes beyond just information. It involves a personal relationship, spending time in prayer, and experiencing His presence in your daily life. As Paul recounts his own personal transformation moment, he is encouraging, Timothy and us, that truly knowing Jesus is what changes us. Mere information about Him is not enough.

Conversation:

- Who came to mind when you thought about who you look up to? Name some of those people. How has your relationship with them made an impact on your life?
- Think about your relationship with Jesus. Would you say that you know about Him? Or do you know Him personally? Parents, share your own personal transformation story like Paul did. (This may be an optimal time to explain and talk through how your children can enter into a personal relationship with Jesus).
- Part of the beauty of God's grace transforming our lives is that those around us get to see those changes in us take place! Is there anyone in your life that may not know who Jesus is? How could you tell them about Him?
- If you feel it is an appropriate exercise for your children, consider having them participate in a fast with you this week. Get creative with them and let them speak into the experience. Maybe fasting from phones, video games, or tv could make more of an impact than fasting from food. Read through the fasting spiritual exercise together.

Prayer:

Together as a family, thank God for His incredible grace and mercy, and that through Jesus we can be in an intimate relationship with Him. Ask Him to continue to transform you as you seek to live in a way that reflects His love and grace to others.

