

ROOTED
Fasting (Ash Wed)
Luke 4:1-13
March 1, 2016

Good evening and welcome to the Colonial Park campus, one of four campuses here at CrossPoint Church. Tonight we recognize the end of Marti Grau and the beginning of what is known as the season of Lent. For almost 2000 years' people have been purposefully taking the six weeks before Easter and diving into some kind of habit that helps them come closer to God. And that's what I'm going to encourage you to do this evening I want to make a case that Jesus would love for you to temporarily stop doing something you love so that you can use the lack of that thing in your life to become something powerful.

Disciplines

So, we're talking about stepping into a what people have called a "spiritual discipline." We know what the word discipline means. According to Kristen Feola in her book, ***Spiritually Strong: Discipline is mental toughness. It's choosing to act on what you should do rather than what you feel like doing.*** We all know what discipline means...the problem is, most of us don't like discipline because it means doing things we know we need to do even when we don't want to do them. It could be that we're just a bit rebellious and discipline doesn't sound like freedom and we don't like to conform. Or we just don't feel like we have enough time on our hands or we just don't like getting up early or sticking to a routine. This evening I want to let you know that when you add the word "spiritual" in front of the word disciple we change the purpose and intention and the force behind the intentional efforts Jesus calls us to in all our lives.

Let's take a look at a time in the life of Jesus where he drew on a time of personal, spiritual discipline and because of that he was able to rise above a challenge and live a victorious life.

READ PASSAGE Luke 4:1-13

4 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry. ³ Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴ But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. ⁷ I will give it all to you if you will worship me." ⁸ Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'" ⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! ¹⁰ For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect and guard you. ¹¹ And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'" ¹² Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'" ¹³ When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

This is at the very beginning of what we know to be the ministry phase of Jesus' life and it kicks off a three-year time that will see him making his way to Jerusalem, dying on a cross on a hill just outside the city of Jerusalem, and rising from a tomb near that cross on the third day to bring new life and hope and eternity with God forever for all who believe. Just before this journey into the wilderness he goes into the Jordan river at a spot where his cousin John is baptizing those people who want to be cleansed and forgiven by God. Now, Jesus is preparing for the next three years. And so, he goes out into the wilderness and spends time alone with the Father. He decides that he's not going to do anything but spend time with the Father, including eating. Fasting like this was not unheard of back then as a way to join closer with God through physically submitting your body to a discipline that was meant to help cancel out the noise of the world and help the person focus in on God. For Jesus, he is doing this because he knows that the next three years are going to require everything he's got, including his own life.

So, if we take a moment to look at this we can pull out some pretty significant elements that can help us decide about the next six weeks in our lives as we enter into Lent and make our way toward Easter, 2017. So, go back to the passage with me for a moment, the first thing that is clear here is the influence of the Holy Spirit. It's the first thing mentioned here and should be the first voice all of us are listening to if we're going to engage in some kind of spiritual adventure that is meant to bring us closer to God and develop us into stronger spiritual beings. Don't miss this...it says that Jesus is 1) **Full of the Holy Spirit**. This isn't a halfhearted effort on God's part. This is full on and because of that, there is a full investment into the adventure. It's important for all of us to hear this...if you are going to do something, anything that you are hoping will draw you closer in your relationship with God, God is all in and is willing to bring the full power, guidance, direction, and support that will help you have a rich experience that will draw you into a closer relationship with the Father. Make sense? Good...look at what's next.

The second thing it says is that Jesus was 2) **Led By The Spirit**. Not only is God all in but, Jesus is paying attention to the direction the Spirit is giving. God knows us better than we know ourselves and knows exactly what it's going to take for us to go deeper with Him. The Spirit is not going to take us some place that is inconsistent with where God wants us to go. If we're going to take an adventure in giving up something this Lent, then we need to trust the Spirit who will lead us to do exactly what each of us needs to go to the next level in our relationship with God. Most of us here would love to have a better relationship with God, to follow Jesus more closely, to be more attentive to the directions of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is clear that if we're going to have those things we need to full of the Spirit and willing to go where the Spirit directs us.

Once we've established the position of the Holy Spirit as the one who is directing our steps and defining what we are to do we can look at the challenge. At this time of the year people give something up or fast from something as a way to have the absence of that "thing we give up" to be a constant reminder of what Jesus did for us. So, as you sit here this evening I'd like for you to think of what that might be that you might give up. Is it a food item or an entire meal? The thing about giving up some item of food or a meal time is that you feel it...you know it's missing. What you give up needs to be something you may not be able to think you can live without. It might be coffee or red meat. And every time you think of that food or every time you get to that meal it brings you to a greater dependence on the Holy Spirit, who will see you through. And you'll learn things about yourself that maybe you didn't know.

Here are just a few of the **benefits** of establish a fast:

- a. Help us establish priorities. It's easy to get off track and fasting can serve as a tool to bring us back on center with God.
- b. Gives us a new focus on God. Fasting can open us to an expanded view of who God is.
- c. Teaches us discipline and perseverance. We could all use a little more of these two things
- d. Produces self-control. If you can't say no to a meal, how will you say yes to something bigger that God might have in store for you.
- e. Gives us a stronger bond with God via dependence on God to see you through. When you have all you need there is not a huge need to depend on God.

As Jesus steps into this place it says that Satan showed up to tempt him. So, let me just tell you, you will be tempted. It happened to Jesus and Satan's promise is that it will happen to us. So, you must be determined. You must pray when you are tempted that God will see you through and keep you victorious. You need to set yourself up for success instead going into this with an already defeated attitude.

First, establish goals. What will you fast do for you?

Set boundaries. It's hard to avoid stepping in cow poo if all you do is walk through cow pastures. So, how will you set boundaries that will help you have a successful fast? Don't go to a bar/club if you're giving up drinking alcohol. Don't do down the snack aisle if you're giving up chips.

Recognize the rewards. Each Sunday should be a celebration that ends the week. To celebrate that you made it each week. Also, you should plan on an end of Lent party for Easter.