

MEMBERSHIP SUNDAY: PRAYER

SLIDE

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here. If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Genesis chapter 2.

INTRODUCTION: DARE

So, I'm a child of the 80s, and during the 1980s,

- under the leadership of first lady, Nancy Reagan,
- there was an advertising campaign on the war against drugs.

And the way I was introduced to it was through a program that came to my Elementary school called DARE.

- Drug Abuse Resistance Education. DARE.

So, once a year at Foothills Elementary, at a school assembly, we had a guest speaker, Officer Mike.

- And Officer Mike would come to talk about drugs
- and how bad they were for us...
- and he was crazy good a jumping rope,
- which earned him immediate street cred with second graders...
- and he'd sing an inspirational song for us.

But all this was to set up the slogan for the campaign. Anyone remember?

JUST SAY NO.

TRANSITION

The discipline we're looking at today is fasting. Fasting.

- Somehow Kyle got prayer,
- sandwiched right in between what I get:
- sabbath and fasting!
 - Now before you log out, if you're online...
 - or walk out, if you're in person...

I'd just ask you to wait and trust that God might have something for you in this message.

Because I think fasting might just be the secret to JUST SAY NO.

GARDEN

So, let's get into this.

- Now, even if you don't know anything about the Bible,
- you very likely know about Adam and Eve.

God creates them,

- and it isn't even three chapters into this thing,
- and they've already screwed stuff up. Right?
- And there was only one prohibition on them in the Garden...

Look at Genesis 2:16-17:

GENESIS 2:16–17

[16] And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

TEMPTED

The ONE prohibition is not to eat of ONE tree.

- But it isn't another 10 verses
- before the serpent,
- the devil in disguise,
- starts talking to her...
- tempting her with the one thing she wasn't supposed to eat.

Look down to chapter 3 verse 1: He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

- And Eve starts mulling it over in her head.
- And she starts making some excuses...
- and the tempter does his job...
- he tempts her.
- And she finds herself tempted by the forbidden fruit.

Now, hear me, it makes sense! Why?

Because you're never tempted by things that you don't care for.

And food...man...it's something we care about!

So, Eve is TEMPTED by a TEMPTER to eat something TEMPTING.

And what happens? Genesis 3:6

GENESIS 3:6

[6] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

And the first sin enters into the world.

Now, I read this passage, and it's like,

- *"No Eve!*
- *Don't do it!*
- *JUST SAY NO!"*

But she didn't.

And it's interesting to me that the fall of man is linked to food.

- God had given them dominion over all things in the garden,
- but now the things they had been given dominion over,
- had taken dominion over them!

This is the very nature of sin.

Does this sound familiar to anyone else here?

TRANSITION

Now, turn to Matthew chapter 4. From the first book of the Old Testament to the first book of the New Testament,

- and here we find Jesus just about to start his public ministry,
- but before he does that, he is led by the Spirit
- into the wilderness to be tempted.

Jesus is TEMPTED by the same TEMPTER as Eve was TEMPTED by.

But in Matthew 4, something is different. Look at Matthew 4 starting in verse 2:

MATTHEW 4:2-4

[2] And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." [4] But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Jesus is tempted in the same way Eve was tempted by the same tempter.

- Both of the stories had a tempter.
- Both of the stories had the tempted.
- And both of the stories had food.

But the difference in the stories was Jesus JUST SAID NO.

And a difference I SEE...

- is that Jesus had trained himself in how to say "no"...
- by fasting.

EXPLAIN: WHY THE TREE?

Now, you ever wonder why the tree was put in the garden?
Like, why did God even give them that tree in the first place?

I think the reason why the tree was placed at the center of the Garden of Eden, was because **God needed to give humanity something to say no to.**

- If there had been nothing for Adam and Eve to say no to, what would they have been?
 - Animals.
- The animal instinct is to do whatever you feel like.
- Whatever instinct you have, is what you follow.

But God is trying to teach us that we are not to be driven by our instincts.

We are not animals.

ILLUSTRATION: KENNEL

I haven't talked about my first dog, Hank, in a while. Hank is dead. But, when he was a puppy, we were trying to get him to the point where he could stay at home by himself and not mess all over the couch or whatever.

- And one day we left him,
- and Hank was free to roam around our place.

Well, when we got back,

- Hank had opened all the cabinets in our kitchen
- and pulled out everything.
 - And he chewed up a Teflon frying pan
 - and a food processor.
- I didn't know if I should be impressed or furious?

And when we got home he acted like nothing had happened.

In fact, he was pretty much like, "Ta-da! Look what I did!" Like, proud!

And so, you know,

- while he's chewing up a food processor
 - (which I still don't know how he did it)
- but while he's chewing it,
- it felt like freedom.
- But it led to bondage.
- It led to the kennel.

So, we went to the PetSmart, and we got a kennel.

- And every time we left the house,
 - Hank had to go in the kennel.
- And the people at the PetSmart said
 - that we should say "*kennel*"...
 - and put him in there...
 - and he would learn to love his kennel.
- "It'll mean safety and security for him."

Well, the people at PetSmart are liars, and the truth is not in them.

- Because when we said "*kennel*",
- Hank would NOT go to his kennel,
 - instead he'd run upstairs
 - and hide under our bed just out of reach.

So, we needed a strategy...

- to tempt Hank into the kennel.
- And Hank loved cheese...

So, we'd get a piece of cheese and we'd show Hank,

- and he'd go nuts.
- And he'd think,
- *"What manner love is this,*
- *that the Father would lavish upon me, cheese?"*

And so, we would throw the cheese into the kennel

- and Hank would dive in there after it
- *"cheese, cheese, praise God for cheese."*
- And we'd slam the gate shut,
- and he'd be like, "Dang..."

And every time, I thought that he'd figure out that the cheese was just a way to dupe him into the kennel, but he never figured it out.

- And I'd think, *"what a dumb dog,*
- *going for that cheese every single time.*
- *Why doesn't he JUST SAY NO?"*

Does anyone else, at times, feel like Hank?

TRANSITION

- But you are not an animal.
- You have the ability to say no.
- You have the ability, through Christ, to JUST SAY NO.

But it takes training. OK?

It takes training...and the discipline of fasting trains us to JUST SAY NO.

WHAT IS FASTING?

So, what is fasting? Here's the definition: Biblical fasting is **SLIDE**

REFRAINING FROM FOOD FOR A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE.

- And in normal fasting,
- you still drink liquids,
- but you stop eating
- and turn your energies
 - toward prayer,
 - toward the reading of Scripture,
 - and other spiritual activities.

Now, there are times where you may do a partial fast, such as when Daniel fasted from particular categories of food.

But most often it is the complete stopping of eating food for a meal, or a day, or even multiple days.

And fasting is for a spiritual purpose.

- The goal is to enter into deeper relationship with Jesus.
- If you don't connect it with prayer and the scriptures,
- fasting is little more than dieting.

So, fasting is REFRAINING FROM FOOD FOR A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE.

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Now, let me quote from pastor and author Jon Tyson here because I think something needs to be added to our definition:

“In today’s food-oriented context, people are always trying to fast from everything except food. We say things like “fasting from social media,” “fasting from criticizing others,” “fasting from purchasing clothes.” As good and important as these things are, I don’t believe they fall into the same category as biblical fasting. They may be useful practices and focuses, but fasting seems to be tied to food.”

So, abstaining from other things is good...but fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. Remember, it was food that was linked to the fall!

Now, let me also add this in...fasting isn’t a commandment.

- There are simply no biblical laws
- that command regular fasting for the Christian.

Fasting isn’t a commandment...but it is an invitation.

It’s an invitation to JUST SAY NO.

EXPLAIN: FOOD IN SCRIPTURES

It’s pretty interesting how much spiritual danger and disobedience were related to food in the Scriptures.

- We’ve already mentioned Adam and Eve being tempted by the fruit in the garden.
- Later on, in Genesis, Esau was willing to give up his birthright for a pot of stew.

- After the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites often complained and wanted to forfeit their freedom and return to slavery when they remembered the food they had in Egypt.
- And again, remember, the first attack on the hungry Jesus in the desert, is with promises of food.

TRANSITION

Fasting is an invitation to subvert our instincts and appetites, and lead us in the ability to JUST SAY NO.

Now, why fast? What is the purpose of fasting?

POINT 1: DISRUPTION

Well, I think there are a many reasons why we should fast, let me just give a three for our purposes today.

First, fasting is a **SLIDE DISRUPTION**.

DISRUPTION

Fasting is like a disruption to your regularly scheduled programming.

- When you fast,
- you insert a disruption
- to your regular eating rhythms...
- which, by the way, are THE defining rhythm to our days.
- Morning, noon, and evening are all marked with meals.
- So, we fast and disrupt that normal rhythm.

And a fast is very effective at getting you out of a rut. Why? Because you are inviting a disruption into your life.

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Historically, when God's people have turned to him through fasting, he breaks in...it's a disruption...but it can bring radical change.

- Moses's forty-day fast resulted in the revelation of the Ten Commandments.
- Hannah fasted, and God gave her a son named Samuel who would change the fate of the nation of Israel.
- Esther called for a fast, and the Hebrews were delivered from their enemies.

Church, we just did this same thing for Baby Leni only two weeks ago...

- many of us prayed and fasted for her
- to come through her birth and surgery to remove the tumor,
- and she is healthy and growing stronger every day!

Fasting is a DISRUPTION!

- Where are you stalled?
- Where are you stuck?
- Invite a disruption into that situation.

POINT 2: RECEPTION

Second, fasting boosts our **SLIDE RECEPTION**. It boosts our reception.

ILLUSTRATION: ANTENNA

I don't have cable at home, but I do like to watch network TV sometimes, and so we have an HD antenna connected to our TV.

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- And I was trying to watch the Broncos game
- last Sunday afternoon,
 - and I know exactly where...
 - and how to place...
 - and angle that antenna...
- so that I can get crystal clear reception of the game.

So, I get it set, I'm watching the game, and all of a sudden, my daughter runs into the room...and you know what happens?

My reception gets interrupted! And I'm like,

- *"Hey honey,*
- *yes I see you,*
- *and I'm glad you're here,*
- *but why don't you just come over here*
- *and snuggle in...*
- *and don't move!*
- *You're messing up my reception!"*

So, she snuggled up and settled in...

- and we were able to watch the game...
- until Maryse came in the room
- and jacked up the reception again!

APPLICATION

Fasting helps us by boosting our reception.

- There are so many things beckoning
- and screaming for our attention,
- and they come into the room
- and they interrupt our reception.

But fasting helps us hear God with more clarity. It's a boost to our reception.

ILLUSTRATION: DRIVING

You ever get lost driving somewhere?

- To my Gen-Z-ers in here,
- before the iPhone,
- and the Maps App,

We used to have three options when driving somewhere...

- use a paper map...
- actually know where you're going...
- or get lost.

Well, if you ever got lost, what was the first thing you did when you realized you were lost?

- You'd always turn down the music in the car.
- If people were with you,
 - *"Hey, just shut up for a second..."*
 - *let me figure out where we're at!"*

You turn down competing distractions
when you're trying to focus on one thing.

Fasting essentially turns down the other knobs in our life so our reception from the Holy Spirit is boosted.

- It strengthens our spirits.
- It reorders of loves...
- And it allows us to feast on the goodness of God.

Fasting increases our intimacy with—and delight in—God.

POINT 3: POWER

And third, fasting is for **SLIDE POWER**.

Galatians 5 says that we are to **crucify the flesh with its passions and desires**.

- But you see, we are used to doing whatever
- our appetites and our bodies tell us to do.
- That's how sin holds its power over us.

But as Christ followers,

- empowered by the Holy Spirit,
- we don't have to do what our appetites
- tell us to do any longer.

Fasting gives us the POWER to JUST SAY NO.

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PENALTY & POWER

You see, Evangelical Christians are so bought into the fact that

- Jesus saves us from the PENALTY of our sins...and He does!
- But Jesus also frees you from the POWER of your sin!

Before you were saved you were unable NOT to sin...

but now that Jesus is your Lord,

you have been given the power NOT to sin!

And one of the best ways to train yourself in that power is to practice fasting.

- Fasting is saying no to a good thing,
- to prepare you to say no to a bad thing.
 - There are bad things...
 - fleshly things...
 - sin things
- that you need to be ready to say no to...
- and fasting helps prepare you
- to be self-controlled enough to JUST SAY NO.

Fasting is one of the ways that God actually loses the bonds of sin in our lives.

- He sanctifies us through fasting.
- He purifies us through fasting.

Fasting prepares you for that fight...for that battle!

ILLUSTRATION: MARK 9

In Mark 9 you find a story that's kinda bizarre. You see, Jesus' disciples are attempting to cast out a demon from a young boy.

- Now, they had already cast out demons earlier in the story,
- so, they knew how to do this kind of thing...
- but for some reason they were unable to cast this one out.

So, then Jesus shows up...

- and sees what's happening,
- and is essentially like, "Move!"
- And then he just rebukes the demon,
- and it comes out of the boy.

So, the disciples come to him, and they say this:

SLIDE MARK 9:28b–29

"Why could we not cast it out?" [29] And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting."

- Somehow, when we fast,
- God grows us in power,
- Through the Holy Spirit,
- to actually break free from sin.

There are some strongholds that cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.

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APPLICATION

Question: do you have any strongholds?

Listen, I'm going to just assume that you love Jesus for a second, ok.

- You can love Jesus,
- and I mean really, REALLY love him...
- and yet find yourself caught by a stronghold.
- You know what I mean?

What's that thing that you're like, *"I'm done with that! I'm gonna JUST SAY NO!"*

- And you know it's wrong,
- and you know it's a sin...
 - And maybe you've got your verses memorized!
 - And maybe you've covered yourself in prayer!
- and yet you keep finding yourself in that place...
- and you don't even know how you got there!
- And then there's so much shame afterward.
- *"What is wrong with me!?!"*

May I suggest that it's time to fast.

Perhaps this kind cannot be driven out by anything but fasting?

CONCLUSION

So, I want to land the plane on this discipline by getting really practical. I want to challenge us this week with this:

- if you are physically and emotionally able,
- and I say that with a great abundance of care, ok?
 - You may legitimately NOT be able to fast.
- Remember, this isn't a command...it's an invitation.

But IF you are able,

- I would like to encourage you to find a two-meal block.
 - I would recommend a breakfast and a lunch.
- And I'm challenging you to fast sometime this week.

So, this was the discipline that I have been challenged by the most in this series...ok? I can't just tell you to fast, if I'm not doing it! So, I'm in training here, too.

I have started fasting on Thursdays from breakfast and lunch.

- That works for me because, first, I'm at work...
 - and so, I'm not pulling Maryse and Harper into that.
- Second, I can control my schedule
 - So, I don't schedule lunch with people.
- And then I break my fast when I get home
 - to have dinner with my family.

So, pick a two-meal block, ok? Look at your calendar and block it out.

And then, I'd encourage you to do two things:

1. pick something to fast FOR
 2. AND plan what you will do when you normally be eating.
- So, maybe you just feel spiritually dull,
 - and you need God to DISRUPT your apathy.
 - Or maybe you are trying to make a decision about something in your life
 - and you want to clearly boost your RECEPTION from God's Spirit.
 - Or maybe you've got a lingering sin that you just can't beat,
 - and you need POWER to put that thing to death once and for all.

Whatever it is...pick something to fast for, and then plan what you'll do when you would normally eat.

- So, maybe during your lunch block you go for a walk and pray.
- Or, instead of eating breakfast,
- you devote 30 minutes to reading a larger portion of Scripture.

Every time your stomach rumbles,

take that as an invitation to press into God...

to press into the disruption, and the reception, and the power.

You can do this!

ENDING

Here me in this: sabbath and fasting might just be the most counter-cultural disciplines you can do.

- Sabbath: taking one in seven days to stop, rest, delight, and worship.
- And fasting...not doing what your cravings tell you.

And here's why these two are so counter-cultural...because we live in a culture of more.

- More of this.
- More of that.
- More money.
- More things.
- More experiences.
- More friends.
- More likes.
- More follows.
- More food.
- More drink.
- More pleasure.
- More of everything.

But here's what you learn from the disciplines:

SLIDE ABUNDANCE IS FOUND IN ABSTINENCE.

- Abundance is found in abstinence.
- Abundant life is found in abstaining.
- You want more?
- More of Jesus?
- More life?
- More love?

JUST SAY NO.

Let's train in this together, church.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

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- Chandler, Matt. *Feasting While Fasting*.
- Foster, Richard. Celebration of Discipline.
- Practicing the Way. <https://practicingtheway.org>
- Tyson, Jon. Beautiful Resistance.