

LESS IS MORE: A six-week self-detox

Life Group Curriculum

Introduction:

In the US, Lent has become a time when people give up little luxuries like chocolate and alcohol or guilty pleasures like social media and video games. Fasting, for many, is a way to practice self-discipline but what if there was something more to our fasts? What if our fasting could help us better appreciate the sacrifices of Jesus? What if by observing lent we could turn our hearts away from our selfish desires in order to appreciate the plan of God? During this Lenten season we will explore a six-week self-detox. With six one-week fasts, we will seek to purge our lives from our overemphasis on self and instead turn our focus to the incredible sacrifices Jesus' made on his journey to the cross.

Accompanying each week's fast is a reading that explores a different sacrifice Jesus made in his final pre-resurrection week. As we explore these narratives, the reflection questions will help your group appreciate the sacrifices of Jesus as he lessened himself for the glory of God. Unlike past Life Group curriculums, these questions will be more open and less guided. It is our hope that this format will provide more opportunities for your group to reflect and appreciate His sacrifices.

It is our intent that as we fast and reflect together, we will better appreciate the work of Jesus as we prepare ourselves for Easter.

WEEK 1: Detoxing Self-Sufficiency to Find God-Dependency

Self-Sufficiency (V): to maintain oneself without outside support.

Weekly Reflection:

If you have ever participated in a fast, please share your experience with the group. What was the motivation behind your fast, were your reasons spiritual or health related? What did you learn through that experience?

Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 22:7-23

1. What did Jesus experience during the passage we read this week? What did he see, hear, smell, etc.?
2. If Jesus chose to use the full extent of his power and authority for self-serving gain, how might the situation have looked differently?
3. The focus for this week is for us to detox from self-sufficiency to find God-dependency. How did Jesus give up “self-sufficiency”? In what ways does he pursue “God-dependency”?
4. How does this week’s reading help you better appreciate Jesus’ sacrifice?
5. What areas of your life might your pursuit of self-sufficiency limit your ability to fully embrace God-dependency? What could you do this week that might help bring about meaningful change?
6. As you prepare for this week’s fast, what do you hope to experience?

WEEKLY FAST: (February 27–March 4)

A Lunch Break Fast. Instead of eating lunch with co-workers, family, friends or working through your lunch break, take advantage of this time and take a lunch break fast. Utilizing the entire amount of your available time, spend it fasting and communing with Jesus. Each day reflect on the sacrifices of Jesus by reading through the passion story in the book of Luke (chapters 22-23).

WEEK 2: Detoxing Self-Determination to Find God-Dependence

Self-Determination (v): the process in which a person seeks to control their own life.

Weekly Reflection:

Share your experience with last week's fast. What did you find challenging? How did it help you appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus? Are there any habits or lessons learned that you would like to carry forward? If you were unable to participate in last week's fast, share with the group what kept you from engaging.

Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 22:39-46

1. What did Jesus experience during the passage we read this week? What did he see, hear, smell, etc.?
2. If Jesus chose to use the full extent of his power and authority for self-serving gain, how might the situation have looked differently?
3. The focus for this week is for us to detox from self-determination to find God-dependency. How did Jesus give up "self-determination"? In what ways did he pursue "God-dependency"?
4. How does this week's reading help you better appreciate Jesus' sacrifice?
5. What areas of your life might your pursuit of self-determination limit your ability to fully embrace God-dependency? What could you do this week that might help bring about meaningful change?
6. As you prepare for this week's fast, what do you hope to experience?

Weekly Fast: (March 6–March 11)

A Planning Fast: We all have a long list of things to do. To accomplish those tasks often causes busy schedules and well-planned days. For this week's fast, schedule an uninterrupted hour (or whatever you can allocate) to be still and quiet. During this planned time, don't try to accomplish anything; turn off your phone, don't check your emails, don't multitask, instead be silent and listen to the Lord. To guide your time, focus your prayer around the commitment of Jesus "not my will but your will be done." Don't try to accomplish anything, just seek to allow God to dictate your time and commit to dependency on him.

WEEK 3: Detoxing Self-Promotion to Find Undivided Worship

Self-Promotion (v): the process in which a person seeks their own advancement, prosperity, or growth.

Weekly Reflection:

Share your experience with last week's fast. What did you find challenging? How did it help you appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus? Are there any habits or lessons learned that you would like to carry forward? If you were unable to participate in last week's fast, share with the group what kept you from engaging.

Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 22:66-23:24

1. What did Jesus experience during the passage we read this week? What did he see, hear, smell, etc.?
2. If Jesus chose to use the full extent of his power and authority for self-serving gain, how might the situation have looked differently?
3. The focus for this week is for us to detox from self-promotion to find undivided worship. How did Jesus give up "self-promotion"? In what ways did he pursue "undivided worship"?
4. How does this week's reading help you better appreciate Jesus' sacrifice?
5. What areas of your life might your pursuit of self-promotion limit your ability to fully embrace undivided worship? What could you do this week that might help bring about meaningful change?
6. As you prepare for this week's fast, what do you hope to experience?

WEEKLY FAST: (March 13-18)

A Compliment Seeking Fast: This week instead of seeking out the approval of others turn your attention to giving regular compliments to others. Each day seek out at least three different people and offer compliments to them and/or say complimentary things about them to others.

WEEK 4: Detoxing Self-Gratification to Find Undivided Worship

Self-Gratification (v): the act of satisfying one's desires.

Weekly Reflection:

Share your experience with last week's fast. What did you find challenging? How did it help you appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus? Are there any habits or lessons learned that you would like to carry forward? If you were unable to participate in last week's fast, share with the group what kept you from engaging.

Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 23:26-31

1. What did Jesus experience during the passage we read this week? What did he see, hear, smell, etc.?
2. If Jesus chose to use the full extent of his power and authority for self-serving gain, how might the situation have looked different?
3. The focus for this week is for us to detox from self-gratification to find undivided worship. How did Jesus give up "self-gratification"? In what ways did he pursue "undivided worship"?
4. How does this week's reading help you better appreciate Jesus' sacrifice?
5. What areas of your life might your pursuit of self-promotion limit your ability to fully embrace undivided worship? What could you do this week that might help bring about meaningful change?
6. As you prepare for this week's fast, what do you hope to experience?

WEEKLY FAST: (March 20-25)

An Audio Fast: Deny yourself the gratification of listening to your favorite music, talk show, or podcast. Instead, substitute your favorite worship music. Allow this worship music to resonate through your ears and fill your life this week.

WEEK 5: Detoxing Self-Defensiveness to Find Faith in the Plan of God

Self-Promotion (v): the act of protecting oneself, work, or reputation.

Weekly Reflection:

Share your experience with last week's fast. What did you find challenging? How did it help you appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus? Are there any habits or lessons learned that you would like to carry forward? If you were unable to participate in last week's fast, share with the group what kept you from engaging.

Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 23:32-43

1. What did Jesus experience during the passage we read this week? What did he see, hear, smell, etc.?
2. If Jesus chose to use the full extent of his power and authority for self-serving gain, how might the situation have looked differently?
3. The focus for this week was for us to detox from self-defensiveness to find faith in the plan of God. How did Jesus give up "self-defensiveness"? In what ways did he pursue "faith in the plan of God"?
4. How does this week's reading help you better appreciate Jesus' sacrifice?
5. What areas of your life might your pursuit of self-defensiveness limit your ability to fully embrace faith in the plan of God? What could you do this week that might help bring about meaningful change?
6. As you prepare for this week's fast, what do you hope to experience?

WEEKLY FAST: (March 27-April 1)

A Comforts-of-Home Fast: Each day make an effort to leave the comforts and safety of your home to meet a practical need of one of your neighbors (provide a meal, offer simple yard work, take in garbage cans, bake cookies, etc.). For an extra challenge, seek to serve someone you find difficult to interact with.

WEEK 6: Detoxing Self-Serving to Find Faith in the Plan of God

Self-Promotion (v): the act of working for one's own advantage.

Weekly Reflection:

Share your experience with last week's fast. What did you find challenging? How did it help you appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus? Are there any habits or lessons learned that you would like to carry forward? If you were unable to participate in last week's fast, share with the group what kept you from engaging.

Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 23:44-49

1. What did Jesus experience during the passage we read this week? What was he see, hear smell, etc.?
2. If Jesus chose to use the full extent of his power and authority for self-serving gain, how might the situation have looked differently?
3. The focus for this week is for us to detox from self-serving to find faith in the plan of God. How did Jesus give up "self-serving"? In what ways did he pursue "faith in the plan of God"?
4. How does this week's reading help you better appreciate Jesus' sacrifice?
5. What areas of your life might your pursuit of self-serving limit your ability to fully embrace faith in the plan of God? What could you do this week that might help bring about meaningful change?
6. As you prepare for this week's fast, what do you hope to experience?

WEEKLY FAST: (April 3-April 8)

A Luxury Fast: This week, fast from all extra luxuries of your life. Postpone entertainment, beauty treatments, trips to the coffee shop and even choose a simple diet, like rice and beans. As you fast from those luxuries, keep track of the money that you saved and use those funds to contribute toward a ministry that pursues the plan of God.

WEEK 7: Embracing the More

Weekly Reflection:

Share your experience with last week's fast. What did you find challenging? How did it help you appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus? Are there any habits or lessons learned that you would like to carry forward? If you were unable to participate in last week's fast, share with the group what kept you from engaging.

Weekly Reading and Questions:

Read Luke 24:1-12

1. What did the women experience during the passage we read this week? What did they see, hear, smell, etc.?
2. In what ways does Jesus' resurrection demonstrate the extent of his power and authority?
3. The focus for this series was to focus less on ourselves in order to experience the purpose and plan of God. Where in Jesus' life did he experience the purpose and plan of God through the giving up of "himself"?
4. How does this week's reading help you better appreciate Jesus' resurrection?
5. How can you celebrate and appreciate the resurrection of Jesus this week?

WEEKLY FEAST:

Fasts are designed to be temporary. For the past six-weeks, we have intentionally deprived ourselves of things that give us pleasure, comfort and even security. The goal of these fasts was not just to have less but instead to prepare ourselves to embrace the full and beautiful message of Jesus' resurrection. Now as we celebrate Easter, it is time to feast and celebrate the awesome victory of the resurrection.

This week, with your life group or another group of loved ones, and celebrate Easter by having a meal together, enjoy good food, good conversations and most importantly take time together to appreciate the good news of Jesus.