

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF THE KINGDOM

GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you experience deeper intimacy with Jesus and build meaningful, lasting relationships with others. Get together with friends or find a group by visiting brookwoodchurch.org/groups.

Let's grow stronger together!

July 27, 2025

Message Title: *When You Fast*

Main Passage: Matthew 6:16-18

Included in this Guide

1. Introduction to the Series
2. Connect
3. Pray
4. Explore and Discuss
5. The One Thing
6. Scripture Memory
7. Recommended Resources

Introduction to the Series

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them.

Matthew 5:1-2 (NIV)

What follows this verse in Matthew chapters 5-7 has become what is probably the most well-known teaching of Jesus, often referred to as *The Sermon on the Mount*. We studied Matthew 5 last summer. We'll continue with Matthew 6 this summer, and plan to finish the series with Matthew 7 next summer.

Connect

Feel free to respond to any or all of these questions to help get the conversation rolling:

- What has God been showing you from your devotional or Bible reading this week?
- Is your routine building your future or simply maintaining your past? Explain.

Pray

Lord, the noise of this world is deafening. I often find it difficult to hear Your voice. I pray You'd break through the chaos and help me experience stillness as I seek to be fully present with You. Teach me. Lead me. Change me. May I experience more of You today than I did yesterday.

Consider these prayer points related to this week's lesson:

- Pray for God to help you understand and appreciate the value of Biblical fasting.
- Ask God to give you a greater desire to fast so you can experience deeper intimacy with Him.
- Ask God to move you from legalism to freedom when it comes to fasting and other spiritual disciplines.

Explore and Discuss

Don't rush through this. It's OK if you don't get to all the questions. Sometimes it'll make sense to go on to the next question. Other times, you might slow down and process a bit longer. Allow God to guide the pace of your discussion.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁶ "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

FASTING

- The New Testament word *fast* (or *fasting*) comes from two Greek words translated *not* and *eat*, which together might be understood as *a total abstinence from food for a certain time*.
- One commentator defines fasting, *to abstain as a religious exercise from food and drink: either entirely, if the fast lasted but a single day, or from customary and choice nourishment, if it continued several days*. (Adam C. Clark)
- A common definition used at Brookwood is *refraining from food for a spiritual purpose*.

1. When you consider the word *fasting*, what thoughts and feelings come to mind, both positive and negative?

2. Based on Jesus' instruction, why would people want others to know they are fasting?
3. What's a better motivation for fasting?
4. Have you ever fasted? If so, describe what that was like for you. What message or feeling did you receive from God?
5. What spiritual benefits come from fasting? If you're in a group, allow a few minutes for each person to think about this on their own. Then build a list together.
6. What questions do you have about fasting?
7. During the time of the exile (roughly 700-500 B.C.) Jews fasted to remember events that had permanent significance in Jewish History. They did this in two ways: fasting or feasting. When would be times to feast? When would be times to fast?
8. Jesus assumes His disciples will fast, even as He assumes they will give and pray (Matthew 6:1-8), and as naturally as their normal hygiene (putting oil on their heads and washing their faces). How can you move from a *have to* to a *get to* attitude when it comes to fasting?
9. How often do you think God wants you to fast? Explain.

The One Thing

What's one thing you'll take away from this week's lesson? Pause quietly for a few minutes and ask God what He wants you to know. Allow time for Him to put thoughts in your mind and stir your heart. Share briefly what you sense God is saying to you, then pray for each other.

Fasting, at its core, is not a discipline of withholding. Fasting is a discipline of making space for God.

Lynn M. Babb

Scripture Memory

Memorizing Scripture will help you carry God's life-shaping words with you at all times and in all places. These words anchor our lives in truth, deepen our intimacy with God, and guide us on the path that leads to life. May we be like the Psalmist who ...*hid the words of God in his heart* (from Psalm 119:11).

Here's a passage to memorize based on this week's teaching. Consider writing this on a note card and carrying it with you this week.

He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting."

Mark 9:29 (NIV)

Recommended Resources

ARTICLES:

<https://www.brookwoodchurch.org/breakthrough>

<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/the-place-of-fasting-in-the-christian-life/>

BOOK:

Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites, Lynne M. Babb

(author of *Sabbath Keeping*)