



19 "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! 20 You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NLT)

Who, then, is this person that fears the Lord? He is the one whom the Lord will teach which path to choose. Psalm 25:12

- Our daily choices **matter**, and God is with us to help us choose correctly.

- I choose to come **close** to God.

8 Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. James 4:8 (NLT)

#### Fasting definition is:

- Voluntarily abstaining from food and/or something for a period of time.

- **Prayer** is an essential part of fasting.

- Fasting is an expression of our heart's longing for a greater **intimacy** with God.

...the Lord says, "Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Joel 2:12

....a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." Matthew 17:14-16 (NIV)

"You unbelieving and perverse generation," ... "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment. Matthew 17:17-18 (NIV)

#### Jesus identifies two problems:

- **We're unbelieving:** Which means we're not **connected** to God.

- **We're perverse:** Which means we're too **connected** to the **world**.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you. James 1:27 (NLT)

Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:19-21 (NIV)

#### The solution to our condition:

- Prayer **connects** us to **God**.

- Fasting **disconnects** us from the **world**.

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 1 John 2:15 (NLT)

#### Practical Steps:

- Choose to get **close** to God.

But as for me, I get as close to him as I can! I have chosen him, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful ways he rescues me. Psalm 73:28 (TLB)

- Choose to make **prayer and fasting** a part of your life.



## TO CREATIVELY LOVE AND LEAD PEOPLE IN A GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.

#### Questions that can be used in Connection Groups:

*These questions also work well for personal time with God.*

- What scripture and/or point spoke most to you from the Talk on Sunday? Explain.
- Do you have any resolutions for your new year? Do your resolutions reflect God's desires for you or just your desires to better yourself?
- How is fasting a discipline of "offering ourselves" to God?
- What is the goal of fasting and how does fasting help us in this objective?
- The problem Jesus identifies in Matthew 17:17 is a connection problem. Do you see that connection problem in your own life? Do you find that you are: 1) Not connected enough to God? 2) Too connected to the world? 3) Some of both?
- How does fasting disconnect us from the world? What does being disconnected from the world mean to you?
- How does fasting realign our desires? What does that mean to you?
- What does it mean to be close to God? What are some ways to do that?
- Prayer and fasting are not reserved for the beginning of the year only. What are some ways we can prioritize prayer and fasting?

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Today's Talk..



Come close to God

Sunday, January 5th, 2025

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