



MARCH 30 @ 5PM / Northwest University Chapel / Kirkland WA

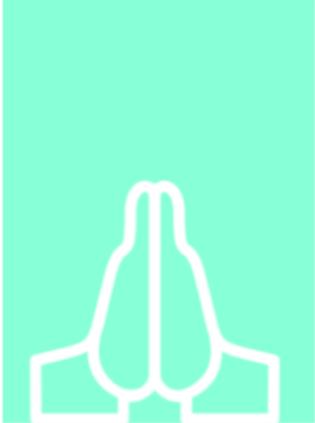
40 days of FOCUS through SACRIFICE



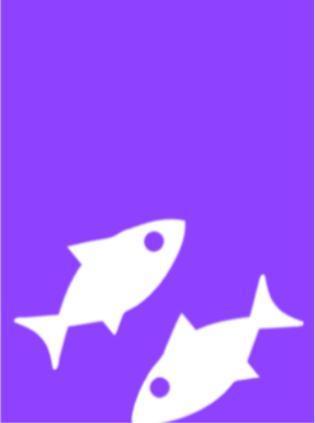
Rose Hill Middle School / 13505 NE 75th St Redmond WA



GIVE



PRAY



FAST

40 Days of FOCUS through SACRIFICE



For centuries, many Christians have chosen to set aside the 40 days prior to Easter or “Resurrection Sunday” as a season of Lent. We are choosing to call this season: **40 Days of Focus through Sacrifice**, a time marked by prayer, fasting, and giving. It is not meant to be a burden or an extra list of things you have to do. Rather, it is a season to purposefully cultivate your spiritual foundation. That said, fasting is a key component of this season, and there are a few reasons why you might want to consider choosing to fast along with us.

Below you will find thoughts, resources and ideas to help be intentional with this time for you and your family. Please keep this one thing in mind: Fasting is not a way to earn favor with God and does not make you a “better” Christian. However, it can be a fruitful season of following biblical examples, reminding us of the great sacrifice Jesus made for us, and realigning our priorities with those of God’s. May God bless you in your endeavors!

FASTING: WHY BOTHER?

1. The Bible is filled with examples of fasting. One of the most well-known is when Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days. The Bible also speaks of many others, including Esther, Moses, David, the Israelites, and the apostles spending time fasting and in prayer. Joel 2:12 says, “‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’”
2. Fasting reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice in giving his life to save us from our sins. While our fasts are nothing compared to what Jesus did for us, they are a small reminder of his sacrifice. When we give up something that we enjoy or that has a fairly large presence in our life, it provides us ample opportunities to remember and be thankful that Jesus was willing to make such a big sacrifice for us.
3. Fasting can allow us to “reset” and cultivate better spiritual practices. Our resources (time, money, and energy) are limited, and sometimes ...

SUNDAY 3/18 - Repentance, Fasting

Admitting you are wrong is rarely an easy thing to do. We are used to hiding, avoiding, and minimizing our faults and living wholly for our own comfort and happiness. Yet the truth is that our faults do not make us uniquely bad or unworthy—humanity, as a whole, is broken and in desperate need of restoration. Through our selfishness, vices, and pettiness, we continue to separate ourselves from God, but God is always there, waiting for us to admit we were wrong and to embrace his love.

SUNDAY 3/25 - Palm Sunday—Jesus comes into the mess and restores

Today, as we end the book of Nehemiah, we find Jerusalem still in shambles. Yet, today is Palm Sunday, the day we Christians celebrate Jesus’ triumphant entry into the restored Jerusalem. But, of course, we know that this triumphant entry is still not the end of the story: Jesus, a week later, was brutally killed by an angry mob and a weak magistrate, only to rise again—against all expectations—in his final victory over death. Jesus, today, offers that same restoration. Though we know the mess will come, we have hope. Even though the walls we prop up to guard us come crashing down and life is full of uncertainty, Jesus’s resurrection assures us that we, despite our mess, are made whole, just as we are.

Thank you Seth and Annaleah Riley for the research and contribution to this booklet.

Themes of Giving, Prayer and Fasting

Starting Sunday Feb 25, the following themes will be woven into our time of worship and teaching.

SUNDAY 2/25 - Generosity/Service-Giving

Everything we have belongs to God. Our lives, our health, our possessions, our wealth... None of this would be ours if God hadn't given it to us. Perhaps the greatest way we can remind ourselves of this truth is through our willingness to give these things away. By letting go of our habits of hoarding and the temptation to cling to the things God gives us, we learn to better steward his gifts to us and to better use his gifts to impact those around us.

SUNDAY 3/4 - Perseverance/Prayer

Unfortunately, the road we walk is often paved with long, difficult passages we cannot detour. But God is with us. He has promised to never abandon us. So, do not neglect your prayer life. Know that even though God is aware of our struggles, our darkest thoughts, and our most ingrained habits, he loves us more than we could ever realize. So much of the stress we experience is the stress we—in some oddly-backwards form of self-centeredness—put upon ourselves. In the light of a long path ahead, we are often tempted to doubt ourselves, and God, and to mentally beat ourselves up. So, let go, through prayer. Stop telling yourself how difficult things are and, instead, quiet your mind's chatter by devoting your thoughts, through prayer, to God.

SUNDAY 3/11 - Discipline of Staying in the Word

Confronted with temptation during his forty days in the wilderness, Jesus rebuffed Satan by reminding him that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4, ESV) Of course, we don't usually forget to eat, but how often do we neglect what God is telling us? Only through investing time and attention to his words—in the Bible and through prayer—can we confront the desert with the sustenance that his words bring.

we give God the leftovers of those resources—if anything at all. While fasting is traditionally connected with food, we can fast from other things as well, particularly something that we feel has too big of a presence in our life or something that is taking over as an un-needed or wanted priority.

FASTING IDEAS

When considering what to fast from, think of the things that take up too much of your time or resources. What are you too attached to? Choose something that will allow you to redirect some of your resources toward spiritual growth. You should choose something that will challenge you personally, but don't pick something that will make life miserable for everyone around you (although you certainly can decide to fast as a family)!

- Food (choose a kind of food: meat, sugar or treats, dairy, pizza, fast food, etc.)
- Snacking
- One meal per day
- Eating out
- Coffee, alcohol, or soda
- Television (can be all television, or certain shows)
- Video games
- Watching sports
- Social media (or one platform)
- Podcasts or radio
- Netflix
- Smart phones/internet at certain times of day
- Texting
- A bad habit or vice (worrying, yelling, procrastination, gossiping, etc.)
- Complaining or negativity
- Unkind words or sarcasm
- Buying anything except necessities
- Using credit or debit cards
- Makeup or time consuming hairstyles
- Paper/disposable products (plates, napkins, etc.)
- Snooze button
- Lounge clothes
- Ranting about politics or other issues
- Consuming large quantities of the news
- Reading books (except the Bible)
- An item of "comfort" (pillow, hot showers, etc.)

SERVICE AND GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Giving up something isn't the end-goal, in-and-of itself. Instead, we can use the time or money we save by fasting to grow spiritually in another way. If you have given up a pastime, use the time you would have spent reading the Bible, in prayer, or serving in some way. Likewise, if you save money by fasting, donate that money to a charity or cause that serves others or spreads the gospel.

A FEW IDEAS FOR FAMILIES:

- The whole family can fast from something as well. Choose something age appropriate, such as a TV show or unkind words, or treats.
- Memorize a passage of scripture together. Practice each day at a meal or before bed.
- Read a story from the Jesus Storybook Bible each day. There are 40 stories from the beginning through the Resurrection, one for each day of Lent.
- Cut 40 strips of paper. Write a name/prayer request on each, and make them into a chain. Each day tear one off with your child and pray for that person or request.

NOTES

