

YOU

Sermon Series: Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus

To be used with: Maintaining Focus on Jesus

Sermon Title Possibilities: Growing through Pursuit

Scripture: Daniel 9:1-7,17-19

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *“Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus,”* this sermon from Daniel 9:1-7,17-19 explains that we become more like Jesus through the Word, Prayer, and Fasting. Prayer and fasting are two essential spiritual disciplines.

Introduction: In Daniel chapter we find the recorded response of the man of God. After he had been shown the visions of the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, and the Ram and the Goat—and was given the interpretation of those dreams, Daniel immediately goes into prayer. He not only goes into prayer, but he also enters into a fast.

Our focus today is on what Daniel did and said in pursuit of God. One of the best ways to pursue God is to pursue Him in the manner of the men in Scripture. In this passage we get some helpful hints on how to fast and pray in way that will help us stay focused on Christ. This passage teaches us *The Revelation that Helps Us Focus on Christ*, *The Humiliation that Heightens our Focus on Christ*, and *The Supplication that Holds our Focus on Christ*.

1. Engaging with the Revelation that Helps Us Focus on Christ. (v. 1-2)

Stated plainly: *No Word = No Faith. Little Word = Little Faith. Much Word = Much Faith.* This is what Paul was communicating when he said in Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.” I like the way our CSB version puts it, because when you focus on the Word, you are focusing on Christ. The message of the Bible is the message of Christ (John 5:39). So, for us to become more like Jesus, we must engage with Scripture regularly, intentionally, and devotionally.

In our text, Daniel had read the writings of Jeremiah. He declared, “I, Daniel, understood from the books according to the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah that the number of years for the desolation of Jerusalem would be seventy.” The thing that prompted and fueled Daniel’s prayer and fast was the Word of God. It is imperative that we engage with Scripture, and as we are reading pray about the things the Word of God teach, illustrate, and declare. This will help us focus on Christ.

2. Expressing the Humiliation that Heightens our Focus on Christ. (v. 3)

Daniel attests to the fact that what he had read in Scripture motivated him to pursue God through prayer and fasting, “So I turned my attention to the Lord God to seek Him

by prayer and petitions, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” Prayer, petitions, and fasting speak to practices, but sackcloth and ashes speak to posture. Daniel came to come God from a posture of, not of entitlement, but rather, humility. When the people of God humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He gives us grace and exaltation (James 4:10; I. Peter 5:5-6).

Praying is talking to God. Fasting is denying ourselves of food (or some physical pleasure) in order to focus of God and receive something supernatural from God. In Daniel’s case, he is seeking the mercy, favor, and restoration of God in lives of His people—the children of Israel who are currently in captivity for their sins. You and I should recount our sins—and the sins of the people we love and serve—and humbly plead with God for His mercy, favor, and restoration. This type of praying and fasting heightens our focus on Jesus and helps us become more like Him.

3. Executing the Supplication that Holds our Focus on Christ. (v. 4-7,17-19)

In this prayer Daniel talks to God extensively about His goodness and their badness. He declares God’s righteousness and confesses Israel’s rebellion. He tells God that He is a covenant-keeper, while they have been covenant-breakers. He tells God that righteousness belongs to Him, but they “have sinned, done wrong, acted wickedly, rebelled, and turned away from your commands and ordinances.” Praying with honest confession and reverent acknowledgement of God’s goodness, righteousness, and holiness will hold our focus on Christ.

Don’t be afraid nor reluctant to talk come to God in prayer. We have access to God through the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22), and His throne is a throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16). God longs to fellowship with His children through prayer, and He longs to reward His children through fasting (Matthew 6:16-18). If you want to grow in becoming more like Jesus, then stay focused on Christ, and praying and fasting regularly will help stay focused on Christ.

Conclusion: Marriage.com suggests that a lack of communication is the third leading cause to the breakdown in marriages. Communication is key to any relationship. Furthermore, communication is of utmost importance in our relationship with Christ. Our spiritual growth will be in direct proportion to our communication with God. Remember: when we pray, we are talking to God. And, when we read the Bible, God is talking to us. The more we talk to God and the more we allow God to talk to us, the more we become more like Jesus Christ.

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