

SERIES	Stronger #1 - Jesus Fasting
BIBLE	Matthew 4:1-11
TITLE	Fasting Makes You Stronger
OVERVIEW	<p>Jesus wasn't going into the desert to prove to you and me that He could live for 40 days without food. He was spending valuable time strengthening Himself for the battle against the devil. And when the Devil comes at Him with 3 different temptations... Jesus is stronger. Did fasting have something to do with it? Was the purpose of that time more than just to "suffer through it"? I believe Jesus shows us that fasting is actually more powerful than we even know.</p>
SCRIPTURE BREAKDOWN	<p>A Fight that Doesn't Make Sense (Mt. 4:1-2) Before Jesus even begins His ministry He is led into the middle of nowhere to (explicitly) face the Devil. The Spiritual Being who has led humanity astray and has been attempting to ruin everything Jesus has worked so hard to create since the beginning of time. It makes sense that Jesus is about to go head to head. It has to happen. It's needed. But the next 40 days don't make any sense to us. Before Jesus even gets close to the fight... He fasts for 40 days. Arguably making Him the weakest He has ever been... in the flesh. But Jesus knew what He was doing. Nothing was by accident. He knew that in order to face off against the destroyer of mankind... Jesus needed to be at His strongest. That's why the "SPIRIT" led Him into the wilderness and into a 40 day fast. Jesus knew that what seems like weakness on the outside was actually strengthening Him in unseen ways. And by the time the devil appeared... Jesus was ready.</p> <p>Tempted to Find Satisfaction in the Wrong Place (Mt. 4:3-4) Satan's first temptation is the appeal of escape. When in the midst of pain and suffering... the flesh searches for an escape. A way out. But in the midst of fasting Jesus felt the satisfaction of God's Spirit in such a way that He knew nothing else could satisfy. He wasn't living on the flesh alone... but also the very words of God.</p> <p>Tempted to Go Above God (Mt. 4:5-7) The second temptation gets at our heart's desire to be above God. The very temptation that arguably destroyed Lucifer. To decide for ourselves what is best. To use God's words for our own means and methods. To make our own will over God's. But again, this temptation came against Jesus who had been so fortified with the direction and calling of God the Father, that He was now going on 40+days in the wilderness without food. Fasting had not brought Jesus to weakness, but to strength. A strong reliance on the Father's way over His own.</p> <p>Tempted to Achieve the Wrong Way (Mt. 4:8-11) The last temptation of Jesus goes against the growing Spirit inside of us. The part that desires to see goodness flourish... but becomes frustrated at how long it takes. The desire to take things into our own hands with the justification that "the end will justify the means". This is a lie that is so hard for our brains to distinguish. And truly without spending daily time with Jesus—it is impossible. Jesus had just spent 40 days strengthening His flesh and Spirit in order to follow the Father's way—not His own. And you see Jesus not only turn away from this temptation now, but also the night before the cross (Lk. 22:42).</p>
GOSPEL	<p>Matthew 16:24-26 – ²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^[f] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? —Following Jesus means living a backwards life. One that doesn't make sense to both our brains and to those around us. But the reward is LIFE.</p>

NEXTSTEPS

Engage in the fasting season with us.
