

Series	Stronger (Part 4)
Bible	Acts 13:1-3
Title/Topic	“Show Me The Way” or “What’s Next?”
Overview	Sometimes, we find ourselves in a season of life where we are wondering what God has next for us. This can happen in both seasons of dryness or fruitfulness. What the Church in Acts 13 experiences shows us the valuable role that fasting can play in figuring out the direction in which God may be leading us.
Scripture Breakdown	<p>The Main Point: Fasting helps position us to sense God’s leading.</p> <p>It is important to understand and possibly reemphasize that fasting itself is not a magic pill or a way to rub God the right way, as if he is a genie in a bottle so that he reacts a certain way. Fasting is simply one of the tools God has given us (along with worship, prayer, and Bible reading) to help us position ourselves for his direction. What happens to the Church in Acts 13 as a result of their fasting does not imply that we should expect exactly the same results as a result of our fasting. It simply shows us that fasting helps position us to sense God’s leading and is, therefore, an extremely valuable discipline.</p> <p>HOW FASTING HELPS POSITION US TO SENSE GOD’S LEADING:</p> <p>1) Fasting enhances our worship and prayer (v.2-3).</p> <p>This passage tells us that the Church was not only fasting, but they were also spending time in worship and prayer along with it. They understood that worship and prayer were important, but they showed how seriously they were seeking the Lord when they were willing to fast.</p> <p>Fasting becomes just a diet plan when we divorce it from the other disciplines that help us seek the Lord—in this case, worship and prayer. If we fast an entire day (or week) but don’t also spend time in worship and prayer, we are cutting ourselves short of the benefits of this discipline.</p> <p>2) Fasting, because it enhances our worship and prayer, helps us further tune into the Holy Spirit (v.2).</p> <p>As we tame our fleshly desires (in this case, the desire for food), our spiritual needs and desires are able to come to the forefront. This is implied by Galatians 5:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 9:27. Our fleshly desires and spiritual desires are constantly striving for our attention and their gratification. We will not be able to focus on both. Therefore, in order to</p>

	<p>target our spiritual needs and desires so that those can be gratified, we must tame our fleshly desires so that they do not suffocate our spiritual desires. As a result, we will position ourselves for the Holy Spirit to direct our steps as he did with the Church in Acts 13.</p> <p>3) Fasting, because it enhances our worship and prayer, prepares the church for the next season of ministry (v.3).</p> <p>It is very interesting that, up until this point in the book of Acts, the focus was largely on Peter and the work he and others (such as Philip) did in the communities of the church in Jerusalem. At this point in Acts, the focus shifts to Paul’s work among the Gentiles throughout the rest of the Roman empire. This shift in the narrative communicates to us that the Church was getting ready to expand into its next season of ministry.</p> <p>We should not miss that this shift to the next season of ministry happened after a period of fasting, prayer, and worship. As God’s people, we should expect nothing less. If we want to effectively step into our next season of ministry, we should follow the example of the Church in Acts 13.</p>
Gospel	<p>Biblical fasting reminds us of how much we need God’s direction. The first step in allowing God to direct our lives is to surrender our lives to Jesus. In fact, fasting has essentially no value if our lives are not first surrendered to Jesus and his direction. Will you trust him and surrender to him today?</p>
Next Steps	<p>What do you believe God wants to do next in your season of ministry? How are you seeking him? Consider incorporating fasting into your life on a more regular basis. Be sure to supplement that time of fasting with plenty of worship and prayer.</p>

If you have any questions or need assistance, you can email me at jasonp@newlifechicago.org.