

FASTING, PURITY, AND SIMPLICITY The One Thing

November 12, 2022

PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Isaiah 58:5-11 (NIV) • "Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

Joel 2:12, 13 (NLT) • "That is why the Lord says, 'Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.' Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish."

1 Timothy 1:5 (NIV) • "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV) • "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."

2 Corinthians 1:12 (NIV) • "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace."

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NIV) • "In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity."

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "FASTING, PURITY, AND SIMPLICITY"

Purity and fasting do not top the list of "teens' most favorite topics." At any stage of life the notion of being single-minded doesn't seem like a very realistic endeavor. Life is frantically busy. Being able to do more, faster and better, is valuable in the minds of the popular culture. Even more, the discipline of fasting doesn't seem to fit in a culture that makes everything you could want easily accessible. It's hard even to find adults, much less teens, who can convey the meaning and purpose of the discipline of fasting. What is fasting? And how is fasting connected with Christian purity/simplicity?

It is clear from the Bible that there is a benefit in fasting. It is also clear that fasting became a way to fake being pure when the heart was wrong. Purity and simplicity simply mean: having one ingredient, or, being all about one thing. This quarter is about the exercises that help children in God's kingdom grow. Exercise in Bible study, prayer, service, and worship bring about growth in the Spirit. The exercise of fasting targets the spiritual muscles of the soul. The heart and the mind can easily be distracted and detoured away from God and still keep the appearance of being on track. The purpose of this lesson is to show that there are many ways to demonstrate a narrow God-centered focus. Fasting does not have to be just about not eating or drinking for a period of time.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "FASTING, PURITY, AND SIMPLICITY"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

- 1. Understand the meaning of Christian purity.
- 2. Discover the purpose of fasting in a relationship with God.
- 3. Explore the variety of ways in which they can practice fasting.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) camera with adjustable lens and/or variety of cardboard cylinders; (Activity B) paper, pencils or pens, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, pens or pencils, handout "Discovering the One Thing" (p. 79).

Applying • Paper, pens or pencils.



A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

- 1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
- 2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
- 3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www .realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below— Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word. At some point you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You'll need a camera that has an adjustable lens, or something as simple as a cardboard cylinder (wrapping paper, paper towels, toilet tissue, etc.). Different sizes of lenses and cylinders will be fine.

Get set • Tell students that the point is to practice targeting one thing. The students are to pick someone to sit at the front of the class and be the target. The students will focus on the face of the volunteer.

Go • Students are to place themselves wherever they need to be in the room to see only the face of the target. Each size lens or cylinder will require its viewer to stand a different distance from the target in order to see only their face.

Debriefing • Ask: How difficult is it to concentrate on one object without the cylinder compared to using the cylinder? (You can try to stare at the face without the cylinder, but other things in your line of vision distract you.)

Say: The cylinder is like fasting—it is a device that helps you be about "one thing." It is a common photographic technique to focus on an object while the background remains blurry. (See if you can find pictures of this in magazines to use as an illustration.) Fasting is simply deliberately exercising your focus on one thing.

Ask: How is the exercise of fasting misused or misunderstood today?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • The purpose of this exercise is to get students to evaluate the real meaning of fasting. Write the following ranking exercise on a white/ chalkboard.

Get set • Distribute paper and pens or pencils and have students rank items on the list with one being the best and seven the worst.

Go • When they have finished, have students share their ones and twos to get an idea of their choices for best, and their sixes and sevens to get an idea of what they consider the worst reasons.

Why should you fast?

Rank the following in order from best reason (1) to worst (7).

- _____ To clear your mind
- _____ To prepare to make hard decisions
- ____ To purify your body
- ____ To deny yourself in order to strengthen your will
- ____ To lose weight
- ____ To punish yourself
- ____ To be a good witness to others

Debriefing • Ask: Why do you think people responded the way they did? How do you see fasting as a benefit to believers? How can it be a problem?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

When Luciano Pavarotti, the world-renowned singer, was a boy, his father, a baker, introduced him to the wonders of singing. The young musician received his inspiration from his father, who encouraged him to practice seriously to train his singing voice. Arrigo Pola, a professional singer who was living in Modena, the hometown of Pavarotti, accepted to teach the young fellow. Pavarotti also studied to be a teacher. After he finished his education, he asked his father whether he should be a teacher or a singer. His father gave him very wise advice: "If you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair."

Following his father's counsel, Pavarotti chose one. He became a singer. Thanks to his single focus, he achieved wide recognition and was favored by audiences around the world. He affirmed, "It took seven years of study and frustration before I made my first professional appearance. It took another seven to reach the Metropolitan Opera. And now I think that whether it's laying bricks, writing a book—whatever we choose—we should give ourselves to it. Commitment, that's the key. Choose one chair."—Adapted from Sermon Illustrations, www.sermonillustrations.com.

Debriefing • Ask: What does this story illustrate? Why do you think it is important for Christians to have a singleness of mind and purpose? To what degree do Christians need to focus on one thing at a time? Have you ever had to focus on one thing at the expense of others? What happened, and how did it turn out?



A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

As citizens in God's kingdom we can expect the enemy to try to distract us.

One of the ways to bring down a kingdom is to cause the citizens to forget who they are and why they exist. Satan's oldest and most dangerous trick is a work of distraction. You may remember times in your life when you were consumed with many "good things." Purity (having one ingredient single-minded) is the goal and fasting is one way to be about that "one thing."

Have students work through the exercise on the handout from page 79. The point of the exercise is to get students to notice that in every endeavor of the spiritual life there comes a time to focus on one thing, which means letting other things go. Have the students work alone or in small groups. If time is limited, give each group one or two of the passages to work on.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Say: Focusing on "one thing" is not just a Christian concept. Even in the business world the gurus who speak about success and fulfillment note that one of the qualities of an effective person is the ability to be about one thing.

Ask: How does this illustration speak to your life? Who else do you know that could benefit from taking time to focus on one thing? Focusing on your relationship with God should be the most important thing in your life.

Say: This focus is literally what fasting is all about. Taking everything—food, entertainment, sports, and other hobbies—and giving it a lower place on the priority list is one of the exercises in the workout of the spiritual growth.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Give the following ideas in your own words:

Some people think fasting is an old-fashioned, outdated religious behavior. In almost every major religion known to mankind, fasting is a part of the religious experience. Even today, people who don't believe in anything other than "being spiritual" go to retreat resorts to fast (and they pay large amounts of money to do it). Evidently there is an obvious connection between our effectiveness as people and taking control of our lifestyle.

Say: Here are a few things some teens chose to fast from for a period of time. Consider how the teens were trying to be about "one thing" and reflect on the questions that follow.

- Cedric loves to watch sports on television or online. He never misses a game with his favorite team, but he has decided that this week he isn't going to watch any sports or talk about them with his friends at school. If you were to ask him what is more important in his life, God or sports, he would say "God." But by the way he lives it would be hard to tell, and so he is choosing to fast from sports.
- Jana is a phenomenal musician and everyone recognizes her talent. She practices music as much as she does homework for school.
 While music is her joy and passion in life, she recognizes how competitive she gets with

music and senses that her prayer life is short and hurried because of her demanding schedule. She used to have balance but during the holiday season she seemed to lose her focus in her prayer life. She is going to reduce her regimented music practice in order to have time for her relationship with God.

- 3. Michelle has many siblings and sometimes the only contact she has with her friends is by Facebook. Sometimes she will separate from the family for hours and connect with her friends online. Her little brother asked the other day, "Why don't you like to play with us anymore?" She felt as if she had been neglecting her brothers and sisters. Michelle decided that her fast will be to refrain from long periods on Facebook. She let her friends know that she couldn't get online as much because she was spending some extra time with her siblings.
- 4. Ronald is taking a fast from games on his smartphone to write encouragement cards to people in his church.
- 5. Justin is going to leave the table just a little bit hungry each meal to practice self-control because he seems to lose it regularly and it is affecting his ability to focus on God and on his other responsibilities.
- 6. Rachel is going to fast from saying anything negative about others.
- 7. Thomas is going to take time from hanging out with his friends to be alone with God.
- Mandy has chosen to keep from spending any money on anything she doesn't "absolutely need" for survival.

Debriefing • Ask: Which fast would be most difficult for you? Why? Which fast do you think would help your connection with God the most? Why? What other kinds of fasts can you think of that are not listed here?



APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Distribute or call attention to the student lesson.

Say: Using the passages in the student lesson, review the information about fasting and purity. In groups of two or three make a list of "Things to Do" while fasting and "Things Not to Do" according to the quotes and passages and any other insights you gain from the student lesson.

Have the different groups share their lists and make a master list of the common elements compiled from all the groups.

Say: Since fasting is a personal/private exercise with God, it might seem strange to do it with a partner. But in truth, it is important to have partners who can encourage you to stay on track. The caution from Scripture is to avoid doing the spiritual exercises in order to be noticed by others. A partner or small group could be a strength in being able to focus on the one thing you need to focus on. Have students decide if, and how, they would like to divide into support groups.

Say: Think of one area of your life that could use a fast. Refer to the Applying section in the student lesson. You will notice a large number 1. The goal is to identify what the one thing is that you want to focus on (prayer life with God, the ability to serve others, Bible study, quiet communion, self-control, etc.) and put it in the line next to the number 1. This is the one thing you want to be about for that period of time. You will also notice the other spaces around the number 1—these are for the things that get in the way or that you might want to refrain from as you focus on the "one thing."

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What does it look like when someone is single-minded at work? school? sports? with friends?

- 2. Who do you know that has the ability to clear away everything but their relationship with God? How do they do it?
- 3. What do you think would be the hardest thing for you to fast from?
- 4. Why is it that when people fast it often involves refraining from eating food?
- 5. How would you explain the value of fasting to someone who claims, "God wants us to be happy. Fasting doesn't sound like much fun"?
- 6. How did Jesus model the principles of fasting? (See Isaiah 58:5-7; Luke 2:49.)



SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Fasting is a great exercise when it is done for the right reasons and with the right goal. People who fast experience a tremendous sense of clarity in what their life is all about. If you find that you struggle sometimes making sense out of who you are and what you should be doing with your life, maybe you should consider simplifying life down to one thing. Grab on to the one thing you want most of all.

FOR LESSON SEVEN:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE CONNECTING ACTIVITY.

Discovering the One Thing

In the passages given below there are several references to the "one thing." They are all different and have different stories illustrating them. Remember that when someone emphasizes the "one thing" they make it more important than all other things. What is the "one thing" in each of the passages below?

Questions to consider:

- How are the "one things" mentioned in these verses essential to the Christian life?
- What is the lesson in the fact that the "one thing" might be different for other people?

Mark 10:21 (NIV)

"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"

The one thing is _____

Luke 10:42 (NIV)

"But few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

The one thing is _____

John 9:25 (NIV)

"He replied, 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'"

The one thing is _____

Philippians 3:13 (NIV)

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."

The one thing is_____

2 Peter 3:8 (NIV)

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

The one thing is

Psalm 27:4 (NIV)

"One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

The one thing is ____

If you could seek one thing in your relationship with God, what would that one thing be?



Sabbath FOR STUDY

- Memory Text: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8, NKJV).
- >> Our Beliefs, no. 22, Christian Behavior: "We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. For the Spirit to re-create in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things that will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives."
- >> Ellen G. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 91

THE ONE THING

Flight 401 was bound for Miami from New York City with a load of passengers. As the huge aircraft approached the Miami airport for its landing, a light that indicated proper deployment of the landing gear failed to come on. The plane flew in a large, looping circle over the swamps of the Everglades while the cockpit crew checked out the light failure. Their question was this: "Had the landing gear actually not deployed, or was it just the lightbulb that was defective?" To begin with, the engineer fiddled with the bulb. He tried to remove it, but it wouldn't budge. Another member of the crew became curious and tried to help him, and then another. By and by, if you can believe it, all eyes were on the little lightbulb that refused to be dislodged from its socket. No one noticed that the plane was losing altitude. Finally it flew right into the swamp. Many were killed in that plane crash. While an experienced crew of high-priced and seasoned pilots messed around with a 75-cent lightbulb, an entire plane and many of its passengers were lost. The crew momentarily forgot the most basic of all rules in the air: "Don't forget to fly the airplane."

There are so many things to think about in our Christian experience. But let us never lose sight of the basics—our relationship with the Lord.

—Adapted from Henry Feyerabend, "Flight 401," *Slices of Life* (Oshawa, Ont.: It is Written, 1995), pp. 41, 42.

Sunday RESPONDING

- Kelly loves to read, and she sometimes loses track of time. In many ways it is a way for her to escape. Her mother noticed that her time spent reading was increasing and commented, "Kelly, you have been reading a lot lately. Why don't you try taking a break and doing something different?"
- » Kelly stiffened and replied, "Maybe later." But she did think about how much time she was spending on her hobby and how little time she spent with God. Still, her books were more enjoyable than "quiet time with God." That hadn't

been true in her life before, and she wondered how she might return to a more meaningful relationship with God.

If she came to you about "getting focused," how would you encourage her to fast and focus her life in a way that would honor God and would bring joy to her and others?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

- Read Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Philippians 2:4; Titus 2:11-13; 1 John 2:6.
- When we include Jesus in everything we think, say, and do, our lives will be changed. If we are true followers of Jesus, we will allow His transforming influence to be reflected in all aspects of life. Then it will be a joy for us to engage in those activities that promote our overall health and well-being physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.

See activity at the end of this lesson.

Tuesday REFLECTING

» "Singleness of purpose, wholehearted devotion to God is the condition pointed out by the Savior's words. Let the purpose be sincere and unwavering to discern the truth and to obey it at whatever cost, and you will receive divine enlightenment. Real piety begins when all compromise with sin is at an end. Then the language of the heart will be that of the apostle Paul: 'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them

but dung, that I may win Christ' (Philippians 3:13, 14, 8)" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 91).

Fasting is about clearing the clutter from your spiritual life. Fast from TV if it gets in the way of your walk with God. Take a day or two away from the Internet if you spend more time chatting than you do in conversation with the Savior. Take a break from sports or shopping or junk food. Find something that is getting in the way—even if it is a good thing—and abstain from it while putting your focus on Christ. Most of all, fasting is about our hearts being bent on seeking the "one thing."

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

See activity at the end of this lesson.

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Review the memory text.
- If you were to think about the "one thing" that Jesus delights to see in you, what would that be? Jesus was passionate about teaching, healing, serving, and spending time in prayer with the Father.
- Paul describes beautifully the purpose-driven life of Jesus that serves as an example to each one of us: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in

heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11, NKJV).

Single-minded? Focused? Absolutely! Jesus came into our world as a human being, having His eyes fixed on one thing: to offer salvation to you and to each person who would believe in Him. As you think about that, Jesus will teach you step by step what it means to make Him the number-one priority in your life. could improve. Identify the "one thing" you want to focus on (prayer life with God, the ability to serve others, Bible study, quiet communion, self-control, etc.), and put it on the line under the number 1. You will also notice the other spaces around the number 1—these are for the things that get in the way or that you might want to refrain from as you focus on the "one thing."



Friday APPLYING

» Think of one area of your life in which you

Monday activity

Fill in the blanks: Texts are from the New King James Version.

- "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Those who are ______ have no need of a ______, but those who are ______. I have not come to call the ______, but _____, to repentance.' Then they said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John ______ often and ______, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?' And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the bride-groom ______ while the ______ is with them?'" (Luke 5:31-34).
- 3. "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:6, 7).
- 4. "'Please ______ for ______ for ______, and let them give us ______ to eat and ______ to drink. Then let our ______ be examined before you, and the ______ of the young men who ______ the _____ of the king's ______; and as you see fit, so deal with your _____.' So he ______ with them in this matter, and ______ them ten days. And at the end of ten days their ______ appeared ______ and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's ______. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them _____" (Daniel 1:12-16).
- 5. "Then Daniel said to the king, 'O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found _______ ; and also, O king, I have done ______ before you.' Now the king was _______ for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because ______ (Daniel 6:21-23).
- 6. What examples do you find in these Bible passages that describe Christian behavior?

Wednesday activity

Match the phrase with the text. Texts are from the New King James Version.

| 1. | ", but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better |
|----|--|
| | than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, |
| | " (). |
| | |
| 2. | " Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the |
| | believers" (). |
| | |
| 3. | ", so that you do not appear to men to be fast- |
| | ing, but to your Father who is in the secret place; |
| | "(). |
| | |
| 4. | "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: |
| | , and to keep oneself |
| | "(). |
| | |
| 5. | и |
| | The |
| | things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and |
| | " (). |
| | |
| Α. | Philippians 4:8, 9 |
| В. | James 1:27 |
| С. | Philippians 2:3, 4 |
| D. | Matthew 6:16-18 |
| Ε. | 1 Timothy 4:11, 12 |
| | - |