

Preparing our Hearts for Easter Devotional

WEEK 1

- _____ Mon, 3/2 (Day 1): Risk Showing Mercy
- _____ Tue, 3/3 (Day 2): Risk Welcoming
- _____ Wed, 3/4 (Day 3): Risk Kingdom Identity
- _____ Thu, 3/5 (Day 4): Risk Facing Temptation
- _____ Fri, 3/6 (Day 5): Risk Trusting God
- _____ Sat, 3/7 (Day 6): Risk Looking Foolish
- _____ Sun, 3/8 (Day 7): Risk by Relaxing

WEEK 2

- _____ Mon, 3/9 (Day 8): Risk in Faith
- _____ Tue, 3/10 (Day 9): Risk Trying Again
- _____ Wed, 3/11 (Day 10): Risk Taking a Stand
- _____ Thu, 3/12 (Day 11): Risk Regardless of Age
- _____ Fri, 3/13 (Day 12): Risk Being Human
- _____ Sat, 3/14 (Day 13): Risk Vulnerability
- _____ Sun, 3/15 (Day 14): Risk Receiving

WEEK 3

- _____ Mon, 3/16 (Day 15): Risk Obedience
- _____ Tue, 3/17 (Day 16): Risk Confidence
- _____ Wed, 3/18 (Day 17): Risk Against Evil
- _____ Thu, 3/19 (Day 18): Risk Letting Go
- _____ Fri, 3/20 (Day 19): Risk Doing It Again
- _____ Sat, 3/21 (Day 20): Risk Your "YES"
- _____ Sun, 3/22 (Day 21): Risk Asking Jesus

WEEK 4

- _____ Mon, 3/23 (Day 22): Risk Reputation
- _____ Tue, 3/24 (Day 23): Risk Your Comfort
- _____ Wed, 3/25 (Day 24): Risk Reaching Out
- _____ Thu, 3/26 (Day 25): Risk Gratitude
- _____ Fri, 3/27 (Day 26): Risk Practicing
- _____ Sat, 3/28 (Day 27): Risk Loving Enemies
- _____ Sun, 3/29 (Day 28): Risk Following Through

WEEK 5

- _____ Mon, 3/30 (Day 29): Risk Failure
- _____ Tue, 3/31 (Day 30): Risk Courage
- _____ Wed, 4/1 (Day 31): Risk the Unknown
- _____ Thu, 4/2 (Day 32): Risk Persevering
- _____ Fri, 4/3 (Day 33): Risk Being Unqualified
- _____ Sat, 4/4 (Day 34): Risk for More
- _____ Sun, 4/5 (Day 35): Risk Security

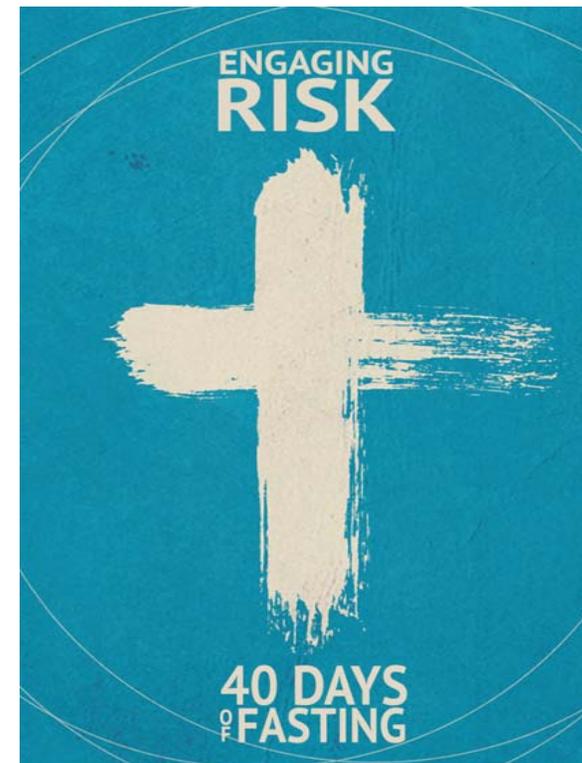
WEEK 6

- _____ Mon, 4/6 (Day 36): Risk Sharing
- _____ Tue, 4/7 (Day 37): Risk the Repercussions
- _____ Wed, 4/8 (Day 38): Risk with The Stranger
- _____ Thu, 4/9 (Day 39): Risk Compassion
- _____ Fri, 4/10 (Day 40): Risk Friendship



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A season of preparation
as we look toward Easter

March 2 – April 10, 2020

Here at the Valley Vineyard, we want to invite everyone to join us in preparing our hearts for the greatest day of the year, Easter. Here is what we will be doing...

1. A Daily Devotional

We want to recommend an excellent daily devotional, "Engaging Risk." You can get the devotional through our church app or at this website: vinfo.org/40days

2. A 40-Day Fast

We are calling everyone to fast on one level or another for almost 6 weeks. That may be daunting, but here is some helpful information about fasting. We truly want this to be a Holy Spirit-inspired journey.

Throughout the Bible, fasting is almost always the decision to abstain from food for a set period of time. In Matthew 4, we find that Jesus was "led by the Spirit" to go without food for 40 days. It also tells us that he got really hungry! It was an uncomfortable and challenging process, even for Jesus, but it produced powerful results. He not only resisted temptation, but His Spirit-led fasting resulted in three power-packed years of ministry.

3. Good Friday Service

Make plans to join us on Friday, April 10, at 7 PM, to recognize Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We will have an impactful service as we gather to worship our Savior who gave his life so that we would have eternal life.

What should you fast?

Begin by asking Jesus what his Spirit is leading you to abstain from. It might be more beneficial for you fast from things that feed your mind, body, soul, or imagination: television, sports, Facebook, alcohol, the news, shopping, or political discourse. You can also seek to abstain from certain foods, fast every morning or evening during this season, or fast a day or certain days of the week. You probably won't hear an audible voice, but you will have a sense of what the Spirit is targeting.

It's vital to understand that fasting is not an end in itself, but a spiritual discipline. Just like a physical discipline, you engage in it with a goal in mind. You don't diet just to diet, but to get healthy and lose weight. In the same way, as you fast, you should have a spiritual goal or purpose in mind.

As you look through the goals below, which one might Jesus be calling you to pursue?

- **A greater dependency on Jesus**
As you experience the discomfort of denying yourself something you enjoy, it can be a constant reminder to turn to the Lord for strength. Fasting can help us stay centered on Jesus. 2 Cor. 12:9
- **More time in prayer and the Word**
Imagine what would happen if all the time we spend looking at screens or eating meals was devoted to prayer and meditation on Scripture? Fasting can be a way of feasting on the Lord. John 4:27-38
- **Fasting for revival**
Fasting is a great way to revive your own spiritual life. It says you are serious about living a Spirit-filled life with Jesus. Jonah 3:7; Joel 1:14, 2:12, 15
- **A deepening in your walk with Jesus**
You may choose to fast because you hear Jesus calling, "Come away, my beloved!" He's calling you to quiet your heart and go deeper. Song of Solomon 8:14
- **Reliving the Passion of Jesus**
In the 40 days leading up to Easter, you may want to simply meditate on the last few weeks of Jesus' life by daily studying the various accounts in the Gospels. Mt. 21-28; Mk. 13-16; Lk. 21-24; Jn. 11-21
- **Spiritual Warfare**
Fasting can be a way of releasing God's power to overcome evil. Mt. 17:18-21
- **Ministering to the needs of others**
When you fast from food and other pleasurable activities, you identify with those who are hungry and needy. This is the meaning of Is. 58:6-9. Fasting can produce compassion and a desire to do something about the oppressed.
- **A season of mourning**
It was common for those who were grieving to abstain from food for a season. Perhaps you need to mourn a loss. 2 Sam. 12:23; Neh. 1:4.
- **Facing a great challenge**
In 1 Chron. 20:3, the king called a fast when facing overwhelming odds in battle. The Lord gave him a great victory, v. 24 Also see Esther 4:16.

Some fasting no-no's

- Don't fast to look spiritual by telling everyone you are fasting. Mt. 6:16, 18
- Don't go around being miserable and cranky. Is. 58:4-6; Mt. 6:17
- Don't try to manipulate God. It doesn't work!
- Don't try to be a hero and overdo it. If you are new to fasting, you might start with one meal a day or one full day a week. If your fast is media-related, you might try 5 days a week and give yourself a break on the weekend or vice versa.
- Don't expect it to be easy.
- Don't expect instant results. Often, the fruit of fasting is seen after your fast is over. Therefore, don't be disappointed if you don't have an immediate breakthrough or if you feel, "It's not working." Trust the Lord.
- If you are married, don't fast from sexual intimacy unless you both agree. 1 Cor. 7:5

Finally, although Jesus calls us to fast in secret (Mat. 6:16), He didn't mean you can't tell anyone. His intention was to stop us from bragging about how spiritual we are. We suggest you find someone to share with about your fast. If you are in a Connect Group, you should share with the group and ask them to pray for you. It will help you follow through.

"Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food."

- Dallas Willard