

YOU+ | Week 1 - The Flourishing Life**Message Big Idea**

Disciples of Jesus choose to live lives aligned with the Kingdom of God.

Scripture

Matthew 4:17-20, John 17:13-19, Philippians 3:18-21

Points to Keep In Mind

1. When Jesus says that the Kingdom of heaven (or the Kingdom of God) has “has come near,” he uses a verb that indicates a past and completed action. He’s telling us that with his coming, the Kingdom has arrived. In effect, Jesus is announcing that an opportunity for a new way, a better way of living in this world, has now been opened. It is life in his Kingdom, and Jesus invited people to live in it!
2. Christian philosopher Dallas Willard once said, “Jesus came among us to show and teach the life for which we were made.” That’s what the YOU+ life is all about. As you have your conversation tonight, there may be many questions about YOU+, what a YOU+ conversation is, and what a plan might be. That’s OK. We’ll continue to talk about it, and hopefully, soon, people will be able to have a YOU+ conversation and experience it for themselves.
3. Living according to the values of God’s Kingdom is a lot like switching time zones when traveling internationally. When the time difference is wide, we must learn to signal to our bodies and minds that we’ve entered a new reality. When we live according to the Kingdom of God, we learn to adjust our thinking, feeling – our whole way of being to the patterns of Jesus. We’ll still feel the pull of the old time zone. We may be tempted to eat when we should sleep and sleep when we should eat, but if we adjust our lives around our new reality, we find ourselves more awake and alive to Jesus than ever.
4. This is an excellent reminder from pastor Tara Beth Leach: “It’s possible to believe in Jesus and not have Jesus driving our lives. It is possible to believe in Jesus and live in a way that is counter to the kingdom of God. It is possible to believe in Jesus and live nothing like Jesus. It is possible to believe in Jesus and live as citizens of this world instead of the kingdom.” -Tara Beth Leach, Radiant Church
5. Jesus taught his apprentices to engage in practices that would help them draw near to the Father. Fasting is one of the oldest and most prevalent spiritual practices in the Bible. Great leaders in the Bible fasted routinely, including Moses, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples. In Matthew 6:16, Jesus addresses fasting when he tells the disciples, “When you fast....” Notice Jesus says “when” not “if.” Jesus assumes that we will fast. Though fasting is assumed, it is not required. We don’t have to fast; we get to fast. Like all intentional spiritual practices, fasting should not be legalistic – we are not earning approval from God through fasting.
6. Several kinds of fasts can be helpful for people to see who may be new to fasting. It will help get those who have practiced fasting before to share their experiences with those new to the practice. Challenge your group to fast new ways that will push them beyond what they’ve done in the past. Here are four ways of fasting:

Complete Fast – In this fast, you drink only liquids, typically water, with light juices as an option.

Selective Fast – This fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the “Daniel Fast,” during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

Partial Fast – This fast is sometimes called the “Jewish Fast” and involves abstaining from eating any food in the morning and afternoon. This can correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sunup to sundown.

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Soul Fast – This fast is an excellent option if your circumstances prevent you from fasting from food or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast.

Next Steps

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey?
3. Have you considered getting baptized? communitychristian.org/baptism
4. Have you read the Community Daily recently? How is it encouraging you and challenging you? You can sign up at communitychristian.org/daily
5. See fasting resources here: communitychristian.org/21days
6. If anyone in your small group is seeking professional counseling, you can always refer them to our resource page: communitychristian.org/mentalhealth
7. Start your pre-work and sign up to have a YOU+ Conversation by visiting: youplus.info