



Welcome to FAST FORWARD. If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some simple instructions, as well as the continuation of the questions, on page 2, and this week's Group Practice Suggestion on page 3.

March 7, 2021

FAST FORWARD WEEK 3

"On Paying Attention"

Luke 8:4-15

WEEK 3

Questions to use with your group:

- ▶ For those trying the practice of fasting, what have been the challenging aspects of your experience? What has God been teaching you this week, whether through your prayer and fasting, or in other ways? *(We suggest opening your discussion time with this same question each week of Lent, as a way to encourage deeper sharing and growth.)*
- ▶ Our text for this week is Luke 8:4-15, the parable of the sower. Let's read it and identify the different types of soils.
- ▶ On Sunday, Pastor Bryan said – "If we were to draw some practical insights from the parable, we might say that with the hardened soil there's not enough **time** for the seed to take hold; with the stony soil there's not enough **space**; and with the weedy soil there's not enough **focus**. **Time. Space. Focus.** Three things the word of God needs if it's going to take hold in our lives, and put down roots, and bear fruit. Three things that enable us to pay attention to the Scripture. And without those three things, those seeds, with all their potential, produce nothing that lasts." What thoughts emerge in your heart after hearing that?
- ▶ Bryan asked us, "What kind of soil are you? How well are you paying attention to God's Word? Are you giving it enough **time** and **space** and **focus** to really take hold and put down roots and bear fruit in your life?" It might be too personal to describe what kind of soil we are today, however, let's unpack this idea of becoming better soil in the practices of creating time, space, and focus – which of the three do you need to grow in?
- ▶ [Bonus if you have the time] - What explanation does Jesus give to why he speaks in parables? What questions does this raise for you? What beauty and truth does it invite you to?

Questions, cont.

- ▶ What do you think the connection is between being shaped by our newsfeeds and our focus and everyday life actions and perspectives?
- ▶ As it related to fasting, Bryan explained “Fasting is a way of helping us **pay attention**. It removes some of the clutter and distractions of our lives so we can **focus** on important things; things we might have overlooked or ignored. Instead of focusing on our desire for food, we focus on our desire for God. Instead of focusing on what other people are up to on social media, we focus on what God is up to in the world around us. And as we’re going to learn today, instead of focusing on what our newsfeed is telling us, we’re going to focus on what God is telling us, in His Word, the Scripture.” What type of fasting or creating space might we consider pursuing this week in order that we might focus more on Scripture?
- ▶ *Let’s meditate a moment longer on Luke 8:15 – “The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.” Good soil makes a difference in all that it touches. How might that inspire us this week?*

How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- If your group is new this Lent, take some time during each meeting to get to know one another.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another, and be sure to set aside time for prayer.
- Don’t feel like you need to discuss every question. Pick two or three that you think will be fruitful for your group, and invite people to reflect on those.
- Use the weekly Group Practice Suggestions (found on page 3) if they are helpful for your group.
- You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.

This Week's Group Practice Suggestion

This Week's Group Practice Suggestion: Praying the Scriptures. As we close our time, let's prayerfully read Psalm 119:1-16 and invite God to create time, space, and focus in our hearts.

1 Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—

3 they do no wrong but follow his ways.

4 You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

5 Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

6 Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

7 I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

8 I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

12 Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees.

13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.