MORNING:
Begin your day by committing this sacred time to Jesus through prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, I offer you this fast for your glory and my good. All I am and all I have I offer to you for Your purposes. Amen.

(Read Luke 9:37-45; Meditate on key verse 9:45)

J.D. Walt, Theologian, and author and Sower-in-Chief at Seedbed, shared a few words in a recent devotional. As we approach Easter, it seems fitting to stop, reflect, and re-orient our lives based on the challenge contained in his writing. Read an excerpt below.

Consider This
But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Can we resolve something here at the outset of this journey to the Cross? “The greatest hindrance to growing in our understanding of life, faith, Jesus, the World and the World to come is our present understanding of life, faith, Jesus, the World and the World to come. It’s hard to learn what we think we already know. And that may be our greatest problem: We don’t know what we don’t know. Know what I mean?

In other words, the more we grow, the more difficult growth becomes and the more likely we are to stall out, plateau, and get stuck or arrested in development.

So what’s the remedy for this condition? Sometimes it takes a desert to bring us to a desperation which can lead us to a humility making way for the kind of learning that leads to breakthrough growth. The word “disciple” comes from the Greek word mathetes which means, “learner.” A disciple is not one who learns by mastering information, rather a disciple is one who learns by submitting to a master. Here’s how Jesus describes it:

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:29-30

“But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.”

So what was it they failed to understand?

“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”
Of course, we get this. It’s obvious. We learned it a long time ago. This is basic Christianity 101. Remember how Jesus prefaced this critically important statement?

“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you:”

Ok, so I will go first. “Jesus, as sure as I think I understand what you said here, I am confident that I don’t fully get it. I may not even get it a little bit. I want to ask you to instruct me and lead me deeper into the meaning of your life and death and resurrection. I’ve been in church all my life and I have the perfect attendance pins to prove it... But, I confess that what I understand causes me to love you and to want to understand more, and I know that understanding more will cause me to love you more which will lead me to love others more. I’m listening Jesus.”


Reflection: In what desert place are you searching for clarity, yet continue to experience confusion, fear, or a sense of powerlessness? What do you think “you know” about this situation that might be hindering what Jesus wants you to know? Don’t be afraid. Ask Him. Start your morning asking for eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand that which is presently hidden.

Make a note of any new understanding, impressions, or implications from this time of fasting and prayer.

NOON:
Let’s build off of J.D.’s insight by picking up the story of the demon-possessed boy, now from the Gospel of Mark. (Read Mark 9:17-29). Mark reveals to us a situation where the disciples and religious experts of the day were having no impact. Their failure wasn’t because of a lack of effort. Their failure wasn’t because of a faulty technique. It wasn’t because of the conflicting advice they received. Their failure was because they didn’t believe they needed God’s power to succeed. The scene was one of repeated attempt and struggle to heal the boy. They were trying to do what could only be done in God’s power.

“He replied, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer.”” Some ancient manuscripts indicate prayer and fasting.

God has a purpose for everything, including prayer. It’s His creative language designed to open our minds to the things unseen and to deepen our spiritual understanding of life, faith, Jesus, the World and the World to come. Through prayer, we also get to participate in His redemptive work by acting as His ambassadors in the world.

Reflections: Be honest. How often do you go it alone only to be left feeling exhausted, frustrated, and perhaps even embarrassed by failure? I get it. You’re a competent and resourceful person. But what if we were never designed to operate that way? What if success with our God-size problems directly correlates with our ability to recognize our own limitations? Then, and only then can we experience the powerful force of God freely flowing through us. Do your frustrations reveal a faulty pattern of belief that needs to be re-oriented? Don’t be afraid. Ask Him.

Make a note of any new understanding, impressions, or implications from this time of fasting and prayer.

MID-AFTERNOON
Watch this video “I’m Listening” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT8iKdwbKdU).

The world can seem very loud when we are trying to sort things out. Fasting and prayer provide us with an opportunity to cancel out the distractions and focus our attention solely on the voice of our Savior. That’s exactly what the father does in the story described in Luke and Mark. The father of the demon-possessed boy leaves the chaos of the crowd behind and turns all his attention to Christ. He appears to know more about Jesus’ authority and power than even His own disciples.

“Teacher, I brought my son to you.”
“I do believe; help my unbelief!”

**Reflection:** Is there a lingering doubt that keeps you from listening at the deepest level to the words of Jesus? Is your relationship with Jesus lacking because you’ve not settled what it is that you believe about Him, or submitted to His authority over your life? Don’t be afraid. Ask Him.

Make a note of any new understanding, impressions, or implications from this time of fasting and prayer.

Prayer is the safe place – the learning lab – Jesus invites us into for breakthrough growth. On Sunday, April 28 we will begin a 40 Days of Prayer discipleship experience. It’s an interactive journey that will teach us to pray, ignite a passion for prayer and provide opportunities to see God answer our prayers. Check out https://chelseafmc.com/40-days-of-prayer/ for more information. Make sure you sign up for a Discovery Prayer Group, too. Maybe Jesus has something He’d like to unveil in this season of seeking His voice for breakthrough growth.

**ENDING YOUR FAST AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD**

When we gather together at the table of the Lord, we acknowledge our brokenness before God and are reminded of our need for a Savior. We’re also invited into a deeper surrender and truer submission to Jesus. Close your fast with communion and this prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, I offer you this fast for your glory and my good. All I am and all I have I offer to you for Your purposes. Amen.

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