

1. Motivate

How do you tune out distractions when you really need to focus?

2. Transition

In today's world, we have many distractions.

- We need times when we focus on spiritual things.
- We can stay rightly focused on Christ by the practices of fasting and confession.

A video introduction is available to view at https://watch.liberty.edu/media/1_gqpcwi2z

3. Bible Study

3.1 Focus on More than Physical Needs

Listen for how Daniel approaches God.

Daniel 9:1-4 (NIV) In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom-- 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands,

What events motivated this prayer of Daniel?

How did he approach his time of communicating with God?

Identify the various words and phrases that speak of the character of God.

What do those words say about the attitude of a petitioner who comes before the Lord?

What is the significance of fasting, sackcloth, and ashes?

What are some reasons for fasting?

What are some other activities besides eating that we could set aside or fast from in order to spend time with God?

In addition to prayer, what other spiritual disciplines can you engage in during a time set aside for a fast?

What life events might cause us to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting?

3.2 Focus on God's Forgiveness

Listen for the need of confession.

Daniel 9:5-7 (NIV) we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame--the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.

What words did Daniel use to describe the state of the people before God?

How did Daniel contrast the Lord and the people?

How does our sin become magnified in the presence of a righteous, holy (unique, distinctly different) God?

What can we learn about genuine confession from Daniel's prayer?

Why should confession be an important part of our spiritual lives?

3.3 Focus on the God Who Answers

Listen for Daniel's appeal for God to hear his prayer.

Daniel 9:17-19 (NIV) "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. 18 Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. 19 O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

As Daniel closed his prayer, what various appeals did he make to the Lord?

What is NOT seen in the reasons why God should hear Daniel's prayer

What ARE the reasons why God should hear and answer Daniel's prayer? For whose sake was he raising this prayer?

On what basis do *we* often make requests of the Lord?

"Mercy" means that someone does *not* receive what they *do* deserve.

- it is God's mercy that we are not punished for our sins
- we deserve destruction for our sinfulness, but God withholds it

How does this definition of "mercy" help us pray for ourselves, our families, our nation?

⇒ Thus, we have every reason to believe that God wants to hear and answer our prayers.

