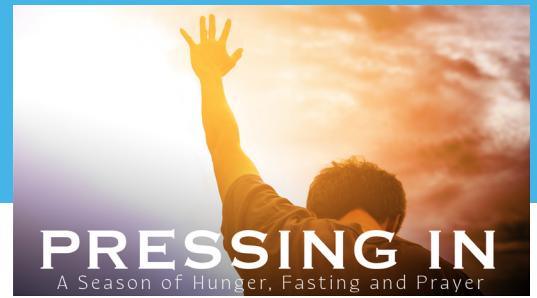


Discussion Questions

January 18, 2026

Pressing In Together - Acts 4:23-31



This week's sermon invites the church into a corporate five-day fast, framing it not as a legalistic obligation but as a beautiful invitation to intimacy with God. Anchored in Acts 4, the sermon highlights how the early church responded to terrifying threats not by isolating, but by gathering together (homothumadon) to pray for boldness rather than safety. The message demystifies fasting by distinguishing it from simply "refraining," explaining how physical hunger uniquely disrupts our dependencies and reveals the idols (the "Apple Pie Enemy") that often control us. Finally, the sermon offers four practical lanes for participation - Full Fast, Daniel Fast, Specific Meal Fast, and Non-Food Fast - challenging everyone to replace what they abstain from with prayer and to seek a hunger for God that is stronger than the distractions of the culture around them.

Opening (Connect):

1. If you are taking part in the fast this week, what has the experience been like so far?
2. Before hearing this sermon (and the last one on fasting), what was your general attitude toward fasting? Was it something familiar, intimidating, or something you had never really considered?

Engaging the Text (Observation & Interpretation):

Read Acts 4:23–31 together

3. Observation: According to verses 23–24, what was the very first thing Peter and John did upon their release, and how did the community respond?
4. Observation: Look closely at verses 29–30. What specific requests did the believers make? Why do you think this was their focus? What can we learn from this?
5. Interpretation: The sermon highlighted the Greek word homothumadon (together/one accord) in verse 24. Why do you think unity was so critical for the early church in this moment of crisis? How does this contrast with our modern tendency to isolate when we are hurting?

Discussing the Message (Reflection):

6. The "Apple Pie Enemy": The sermon quoted John Piper saying the greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison (sin) but apple pie (good things). What "good things" (hobbies, work, food, entertainment) tend to fill you up so completely that you lose your appetite for God?

7. In the sermon, we looked at Mark 9:29, where Jesus explains that a certain kind of spiritual breakthrough 'can come out only by prayer and fasting.' Referencing this, Jon Tyson said, 'There are things God wants to give you, that He will not give you apart from prayer and fasting.' How does that statement land with you? Does the idea that God might be waiting for you to fast before releasing a breakthrough feel like a heavy burden, or an exciting invitation? Why?"

Why do you think God would require the physical cost of fasting to access certain spiritual things?

8. Fasting as a Diagnostic: Richard Foster said, "Fasting reveals what controls us." When stress or anxiety hits, what is the first thing you tend to grab as a "numbing agent" (food, phone, shopping, etc.)? How might fasting help expose this?

9. "This Must Be Stronger Than That": Dietrich Bonhoeffer pointed to the Nazi airfield and told his students their spiritual formation must be stronger than the cultural formation of the Reich. In your own life, what cultural pressure or distraction feels strongest right now? What would it look like for your spiritual life to be stronger than that?

Application (Action):

10. Choose Your Lane: Which of the "Four Lanes" (Full, Partial/Daniel, Specific Meal, Non-Food) are you leaning toward for this week? What practical factors (health, family, work) do you need to consider?

11. The Replacement Principle: The goal of fasting isn't starvation; it's replacement. What specific practice will you use to fill the space you create? (e.g., reading Psalm 63 during lunch, prayer walking, silence).

12. Is there a specific situation in your life right now - a health battle, relational fracture, financial strain, or spiritual dryness - that you want to bring before God this week? How can your small group support you and pray with you?

Acts 4:23-25,29-31 (NLT)

As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. 24 When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them - 25 you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant... And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. 30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:23-24 (NLT)

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Acts 4:24 (NLT)

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

homothumadón: "with one mind, with one passion, with one accord."

Dr. Schnabel

All too frequently decisions in the church are based on the expertise of specialists who argue pragmatically in terms of 'what has worked for others,' or on prepackaged programs. Prayer is 'added' because this is what Christians do.

Acts 4:29-30 (NLT)

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

Acts 4:31 (NLT)

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

D.L. Moody

I need to continue to be filled with the Spirit because I leak.

Matthew 6:16 (NLT)

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do...

Mark 9:29 (NLT)

"Some things do not happen without prayer and fasting."

Jon Tyson

Jesus is saying there is a category of spiritual power that is locked behind the door of fasting. And if you don't go through the door, you don't get what is behind it. And there are things God wants to give you, that He will not give you apart from prayer and fasting.

Richard Foster

More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.

John Piper

The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It's not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It's not the X-rated video, but the prime-time drivel of triviality we drink in every night.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

This must be stronger than that.

Four "Lanes"

Lane 1: The Full Fast.

- For those who are healthy and able.
- Abstain from solid foods.

Lane 2: The Partial Fast (or Daniel Fast).

- No meat, no sweets, no processed foods, no alcohol.
- great for those who have physical jobs or minor health considerations

Lane 3: The Partial Fast.

- fast certain meals or certain days

Lane 4: The Non-Food Fast.

- Remove a significant source of "comfort" or "noise" from your life, and replace it with prayer.

The point of fasting is replacement, It is not just about emptying yourself but filling yourself.

Regardless of which food lane you pick, Include a digital fast this week.

Consider deleting distracting apps from your phone for these five days.

Do not let the noise drown out the hunger.