

A GUIDE TO THE SEASON OF LENT

As you observe the season of Lent, there are many different ways to observe it and resources out there for you to use. Below are just some ways to get you started in engaging with this season. The main thing to keep in mind is that along this 40-day journey, try and create intentional space that will help you to personally connect with God. Whether you choose to read, pray, listen to music, spend time with others, serve those in need, whatever it may be, consider how that specific thing is directing you towards a deeper relationship with Christ and an awareness of His in-dwelling Spirit, and remind yourself of that each time.

FASTING

During the season of Lent, one of the primary things we encourage you to do is fast. Fasting is a wonderful spiritual discipline that helps create space for you not only to deny your flesh of earthly things and increase your reliance on God but also to create space and opportunity to become more aware of His presence and be renewed in Him and prepared for ministry. Below you'll find information regarding what Scripture tells us about fasting and some things to consider as you think about your fast this season.¹

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL FAST?

biblical fasting is the voluntary abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. In scriptures, there are three basic types of fasts:

Total (no eating or drinking) [Paul in [ACTS 9:9](#); Moses in [DEUTERONOMY 9:9](#)]

Normal (water only) [Jesus in [MATTHEW 4:2](#)]

Partial (abstaining from specific items) [Daniel in [DANIEL 10:2-3](#)]

*WORD OF CAUTION

It is not recommended to fast from food/drink if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or with a medical condition that might worsen. If you feel strongly about engaging in a fast from food/drink, please consult your doctor first.

WHY FAST?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is an integral part of a believer's walk with God. Fasting changes **us** - as much as it changes the circumstances **before us**. While abstaining from food is not limited to the Christian faith, it is an important spiritual discipline in the life of Christian believers.

What differentiates fasting for Christian believers is that it is done with the purpose of drawing closer to God. In *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, author Donald Whitney states, "Without a purpose, fasting can be a miserable, self-centered experience." In fact, Jesus condemned those who fasted in order to be seen by others. [[Matthew 6:16-18](#)]. God rebuked the Israelites through the prophet Isaiah when they fasted and complained about not seeing the fruits of their fasting and humility [[Isaiah 58:2-12](#)]

The New Testament Scriptures give us further guidance on why we should fast:

¹ adapted from [New Years Consecration Guide 2019](#) (Mars Hill Fellowship Church)

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

[[MATTHEW 6:16-18](#)]

The human body can go for a little over three weeks without food and only 3 days without water. Fasting is not a means of pushing your body to the limits as if to challenge yourself. Again, it is a spiritual discipline designed to help you draw nearer to God and rely on Him as your source of life.

SOME KEY REASONS FOR FASTING

1. Fasting is expected from god “and **when** you fast ... but **when** you fast...” [[MATT 6:16-17](#)]
2. Fasting changes our spiritual appetites back to our first love. [[MATT 6:17-18](#)]
3. Fasting allows the holy spirit to reveal our spiritual condition and what to do about it. [[ISAIAH 58:9-12](#)]
4. Fasting humbles us and exalts god. [[EZRA 8:21](#)]
5. Fasting re-prioritizes the desires of our hearts. [[PSALMS 35:13](#)]
6. Fasting brings god’s intervention in the midst of life’s circumstances (wisdom, deliverance, healing, protection) [[MATT 15:32](#), [JONAH 3:5-9](#), [ESTHER 4:15-16](#)]

NON-FOOD FASTS

Though the context of fasting in Scripture primarily deals with the physical consumption of food/drink or certain types of food/drink, denying the consumption of something else can also be appropriate. Non-food fasts might include entertainment (eg. TV, movies, music, books, games, sports), social media, technology, a certain behavior (eg. negative self-talk, gossip), shopping, among other things.

WHAT DO I DO WHILE FASTING?

While fasting, apart from restricting your consumption of food/drink or other non-food related item, there are a number of things you can do, especially with the extra time and/or mind space that you might find yourself with. It can be easy to fill that with something else but consider one or more spiritual practices that you might take up instead.

- *Pray*
Intentionally set aside time throughout your day to engage in prayer. You might utilize your mealtimes if you’re fasting food/meals to engage in personal prayer + reflection. If you are fasting from things like social media, television, movies, entertainment, etc. take the time and effort that you would have spent there in prayer.
- *Worship*
Take time to engage in praise and thanksgiving. Listen to worship music or sing and make your own music to the Lord
- *Read the Scriptures*
There are a variety of tools available to read + hear the bible. You can find free audio bibles at [biblegateway.com](#) + [bible.is](#). You can also find a mobile bible reader at [youversion.com](#). If you’d like to receive a daily email with Scripture passage and reflection questions, subscribe to our email list by clicking [HERE](#).

- *Confess Sins + Humble yourself before God*
Preparing ourselves to commune with Jesus often involves confessing our sins of commission + omission before the Lord and asking for forgiveness. We do this not because it merits us salvation or increased love/favor from God but because sin creates a barrier that separates us from Him and it is something that we can actively engage in
- *Journal*
We encourage you to keep a personal journal through your time of fasting + prayer. You might write down reflections from reading Scripture or praying, record answers to prayer, write down conversations you had with God. Whatever it might be, keeping a record of your spiritual journey can be meaningful and great to look back on in the future.

OTHER WAYS TO ENGAGE THE SEASON

BOOKS/DEVOTIONALS

[*A Way other than Our Own: Devotions for Lent – Walter Brueggemann*](#)
[*Show Me the Way: Daily Lenten Readings – Henri J. M. Nouwen*](#)
[*Simplifying the Soul: Lenten Practices to Renew Your Spirit – Paula Huston*](#)
[*Wondrous Encounters: Scripture for Lent – Richard Rohr*](#)

If you'd prefer to read something more substantial than a quick daily devotion, [here's a great list of books to consider.](#)

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER/ GROUP

This can be a helpful resource in keeping on course along your journey and beyond. [HERE](#) is a guide to help get started.

MUSIC PLAYLISTS (SPOTIFY)

[For the Season of Lent](#)
[Lent 2018: Songs for Reflection](#)
[Music for Prayer/Devotional Time](#)
[Worship Tunes](#)

PODCASTS

[Pray as you go](#)
[Solid Joys Daily Devotional](#)
[Truth's Table](#)
[The Bible Project](#)
[The Next Right Thing](#)
[Pass The Mic](#)
[Another Name for Every Thing](#)

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/lent>
<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/40-days-of-lent-find-your-own-spiritual-path>