

Fasting: Making More Room for God

"When you fast..." — Matthew 6:16

For nearly two thousand years, Christians have practiced fasting as a way of drawing closer to God. Jesus fasted and assumed His followers would fast, and throughout Scripture God's people fasted during times of prayer, repentance, discernment, worship, and preparation for God's work.

As the founder of Methodism, John Wesley practiced regular fasting and encouraged all Methodists to do the same. He believed fasting was one of God's means of grace—a regular practice through which God forms us into the likeness of Christ. Sadly, this meaningful spiritual discipline has become uncommon in many churches today. Our prayer is that you might discover the blessing it has been for Christians throughout the centuries.

Why do Christians fast?

WE FAST TO

- Draw closer to God and deepen our relationship with Him.
- Create intentional space for prayer and listening.
- Practice self-discipline and learn to rely upon Christ.
- Seek God's wisdom and discernment.
- Express repentance and renewed devotion.
- Remember that our deepest hunger is for God.

When physical hunger reminds us that we need food, it also reminds us how deeply we need the Lord.

Every member of our congregation is invited to fast sometime this week. Choose a form of fasting that is appropriate for your circumstances.

A 24-HOUR FAST



- Consume only water and other non-caloric beverages for 24 hours.
- Spend the time you would normally spend eating in prayer and Scripture.

A SUNRISE-TO-SUNSET FAST



- Abstain from food during the daylight hours, breaking your fast after sunset.
- This pattern reflects many biblical fasts and is an excellent place to begin.

A ONE-MEAL FAST



- Skip breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
- Use that time to pray or do an act of kindness instead of eating.

A PARTIAL FAST



- Eat only simple, plain foods for the day.
- Abstain from desserts, snacks, meat, or other favorite foods as an act of spiritual discipline.
- Allow every craving to remind you to turn your heart toward God.

IF YOU HAVE HEALTH CONCERNS

If you have diabetes, hypoglycemia, are pregnant, are taking medications that require food, or have another medical condition, please do not undertake a complete fast without your physician's guidance. Instead, participate through a partial fast.

During Your Fast

Whenever you feel hungry, let it become a prompt to pray.

PRAY FOR

- A deeper love for Christ.
- Wisdom and discernment.
- Your family.
- Our church and its ministries.
- Those who are suffering.
- Someone who does not yet know Christ.

Consider reading Matthew 6:16–18, Joel 2:12–13, Isaiah 58, Psalm 63, or Philippians 4:13.

Following John Wesley's example, consider giving the money you would have spent on food to help someone in need.

A Few Encouragements

- Begin with prayer and end with thanksgiving.
- Drink plenty of water.
- If this is your first fast, start with one meal or a sunrise-to-sunset fast.
- If you need to end your fast early for health or other legitimate reasons, do so without guilt.
- Remember that fasting is not merely going without food—it is making more room for God.

John Wesley warned that overindulgence in food can weigh down the soul and dull our attention to God. In his sermon, *Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse Seven*, Wesley wrote, "An increase of flesh frequently brings on a heaviness of spirit." Fasting helps us bring our physical desires under the lordship of Christ so that our hearts may become more attentive to the Holy Spirit.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." — Matthew 4:4

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." — Philippians 4:13