

# Fasting 101: Hungering for God and God's Will

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## We find two kinds of fasting in Scripture:

1. **Personal fasting** – we are to keep personal fasting private and use this practice when we need an answer from God or God's guidance on something. The goal is to assure that our will is aligned with God's will. When we're hungry, we replace that hunger with prayer and Scripture reading.
2. **Corporate fasting** – this is the kind of fasting we do together. It's typically done on Jewish high holy days and Lent, but it can be done at any time as an act of repentance (turning to God) and/or to seek God's will corporately. Corporate fasting can help answer specific questions and open ourselves to God's will. When answers come, they must be consistent with what Scripture tells us. This type of fasting is "about us," not "about me." As with personal fasting, when we're hungry, we replace that hunger with prayer and Scripture reading.

## What Fasting Is and Is Not

- Fasting is NOT giving up something you enjoy.
- Fasting IS giving up something you need.
- Fasting requires a physical connection. "One does not live by bread alone," (Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4).
- Fasting is NOT about giving up something you're addicted to. In this case, one must address the problem of addiction.
- Fasting is NOT for people with eating disorders or health conditions that prohibit the withholding of food or drink.

## Key Aspects of Fasting

### *Fasting...*

- Involves our body, mind, and spirit -- it is a holistic practice
- Makes us vulnerable
- Helps us to seek God from a place of weakness
- Is an act of privilege. You can't fast if you have nothing to give up. Recognize this privilege and blessing that we have something to give up.
- Causes discomfort because it deprives us of what we need. This forces us to depend on God and God alone, just as Jesus did in the wilderness for 40 days.

## Ideas for Fasting

### *Each person can choose the kind of fasting that's best for them. Some ideas include:*

- Food – for a set period of time, eat less food, no food, or fewer meals a day
- Temperature – turn down the heat for a period of time in the winter or turn off the AC in the summer
- Sleep – sleep less
- Sackcloth and ashes – sackcloth is a coarse black cloth made from goat hair. It was a practice of ancient near Eastern people to wear sackcloth and either sit in ashes or place ashes on top of their heads as a sign of mourning or repentance and when praying for deliverance. This is where our Ash Wednesday tradition comes from. Today we can wear something itchy or put a stone in our shoe.
- Withholding water is not recommended

## Two Things to Do During a Fast

1. **Repent** – turn and face God directly and say “I’m sorry” for your sins and trespasses. This apology however must be accompanied by a reparative act of repentance to remove the problem (e.g., burn your idols). This is why Jesus tells us (metaphorically), “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away,” (Matthew 5:29).
2. **Replace** – replace your physical need with prayer and Scripture reading.

*Repenting and replacing draw us closer to God and help us to discern God’s will.*

## How to Discern What Comes to Us

- Record what arises
- Meet regularly to discuss what arises
- Look for agreement -- consensus indicates God’s presence

An example from Scripture was during the Jerusalem Council in which members of various traditions gathered to discern how to address bringing new believers into the church. After fasting and prayer they had consensus on three things: (1) Abstain from eating strangled animals; (2) Abstain from eating blood; and (3) Abstain from fornication.

## Alignment with God’s Will

Alignment with God’s will is what glorifies God, not the fast in and of itself. If fasting alone glorified God, we would all starve. The practice of fasting is an essential part of growing our relationship with God and we should gain revelations through it.

We should ask and expect answers from God when we fast. If we ask a question and receive no answer, we may need to discern the question further and change the question. There will be answers. If we don’t hear them, it may be that we’re not listening or we’re resisting God’s will. God always speaks; we may not always hear.

## How Do We Hear God?

*To attune to the voice of God we can...*

- Journal
- Be aware of spontaneous thoughts (like toast popping up from a toaster). These thoughts must be consistent with what Scripture tells us.
- Be still and quiet for a period of time.
- Record our visions or dreams.

*For more information on the above four methods, explore Mark Virkler’s writings on hearing God’s voice:*

<https://www.cwgnministries.org/You-Can-Hear-God's-Voice.pdf>

- Spend time in Scripture. Read it, memorize it, study it, discuss it, and share the good news.
- Set aside adequate time for undistracted prayer. You may even want to pray aloud to God.

## Key Concepts to Remember

- Give up something you need to depend on God
- Fasting involves our body, mind, and spirit
- Repent
- Replace
- Ask and expect an answer
- Align with God’s will

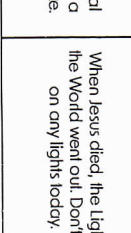
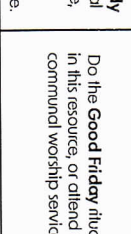
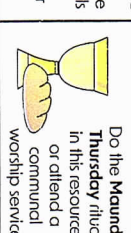
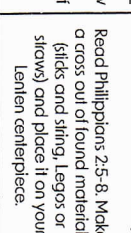
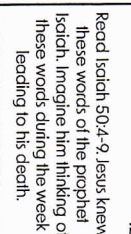
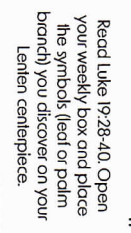


**SEEKING  
GOD'S WAY**

**Daily Ritual Calendar**  
A Lenten Journey

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16

<p><b>Week 1 :: Seek God's Ways</b> <i>Light seven candles.</i> Prayer: Jesus, we confess that we sometimes miss the mark. Reveal your ways to us. Give us wisdom to know when it's time to shout and when it's time to be quiet as we follow you. Amen.</p>	<p><b>Week 2 :: Security to Generosity</b> <i>Light six candles.</i> Prayer: Jesus, we are tempted to shore up our own security instead of trusting in you and in the strength of your community. Open us up to generosity and trust. Amen.</p>	<p><b>Week 3 :: From Fear to Compassion</b> <i>Light five candles.</i> Prayer: Jesus, we sometimes let our fear and lack of understanding keep us from showing your love to others. Open our hearts to compassion. Amen.</p>	<p><b>Week 4 :: From Earning to Receiving</b> <i>Light four candles.</i> Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we forget that all good gifts are from you. We rely on ourselves instead of on you. Open us up to receive your goodness.</p>	<p><b>Week 5 :: From Exceptionalism to Inclusion</b> <i>Light three candles.</i> Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we get a little entitled, thinking we have a right to privilege. Open us up to embrace the community you've placed us in and to be part of your inclusive love.</p>	<p><b>Week 6 :: From Scarcity to Abundance</b> <i>Light two candles.</i> Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we hold onto things too tightly. We're afraid of not having enough. Open us up to see and share your abundance.</p>	<p><b>Week 7 :: From Power Over to Power With</b> <i>Light one candle.</i> Prayer: Jesus, sometimes we want to be powerful, to be in control, instead of collaborating with others to do good work through your power. Open us to the kind of power you showed in your death and resurrection.</p>
Worship God in community.	Worship God in community.	Worship God in community.	Worship God in community.	Worship God in community.	Worship God in community.	Worship God in community.
Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (stone and grain) give you to the stories of the week to come?	Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (leathers) give you to the stories of the week to come?	Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (banquet items) give you to the stories of the week to come?	Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (perfume jar) give you to the stories of the week to come?	Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (bread) give you to the stories of the week to come?	Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (olive and palm branch) give you to the stories of the week to come?	Open your weekly box and place the symbols you discover on your Lenten centerpiece. What clues do these symbols (olive and palm branch) give you to the stories of the week to come?
Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11. The story of Abraham moves the people of God to offer gifts. What story moves you to generosity?	Read Genesis 15:5-6. Go outside and look at the stars. Try to count them.	Read Isaiah 55:1-9. Delight yourself in the Word of God by sharing a favorite Bible verse. Or go literal and delight yourself in some rich food!	Read Joshua 5:10-12. Eat something that is a product of the land around you (a locally grown food).	Read Psalm 126. What are your stories of restoration? What are your current needs for restoration?	Read Psalm 136. What does it mean to make God our refuge?	Read Luke 4:1-13. Do you recognize what the devil says to Jesus? Jesus has walked the whole human path, including temptation.
Do the Ash Wednesday Ritual in this resource, or attend a communal Ash Wednesday service.	Read Joel 2:12-17. What does it look like for you to "return to God" with your whole heart?	Read 1 Corinthians 10:12. When have you thought you were pretty secure, only to find yourself falling?	Read Luke 13:34. Make a cozy "nest" for yourself and imagine Jesus as the mother hen, snuggling and protecting you.	Read Luke 13:6-9. Fig trees usually take 3-5 years to bear fruit, and they love richly fertilized soil, so the suggestion to give it time and spread some manure was pretty practical. When have you needed to wait patiently?	Read Matthew 6:1-2. Do an anonymous act of kindness for someone.	
Read Luke 19:28-40. Open your weekly box and place the symbols (leal or palm branch) you discover on your Lenten centerpiece.	Read Isaiah 50:4-9. Jesus knew these words of the prophet Isaiah. Imagine him thinking of these words during the week leading to his death.	Read Philippians 3:12-14. What are your goals? What do you work toward or strive for? Ask God to help what you want to align with what God wants.	Read Luke 15:1-32. Act it out. What is most precious to you. What would it look like to offer this to God?	Read John 12:1-8. Find the thing that is most precious to you. What would it look like to offer this to God?	When Jesus died, the Light of the World went out. Don't turn on any lights today.	



**It's Palm Sunday!**  
Worship God in community.

Read Luke 19:28-40. Open your weekly box and place the symbols (leal or palm branch) you discover on your Lenten centerpiece.

Read Isaiah 50:4-9. Jesus knew these words of the prophet Isaiah. Imagine him thinking of these words during the week leading to his death.

Read Philippians 3:12-14. What are your goals? What do you work toward or strive for? Ask God to help what you want to align with what God wants.

Read Luke 15:1-32. Act it out. What is most precious to you. What would it look like to offer this to God?

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**Easter, Sunday, April 17**  
Happy Resurrection Day! Choose from the Easter Day activities in this resource.