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THE  
*JOYfull*  
FAST

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*Lenten Prayer Journal*

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09



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## Preface: A Letter from Pastor Tyler Jones

This guide is entitled a “Joy Full” fast and yet to most of us this seems impossible. The majority of us do not fast and even have not fasted yet Jesus leads us in Matthew 6 to fast. He says “when you fast” not if you fast. Fasting is one of the aspects of our faith that is most difficult and most beautiful. Fasting is meant to focus your spirit on Jesus. When you go without food and when you feel those hunger pains, they become a reminder to pray, to listen, and to worship Jesus. When you fast a meal, you should set the 15, 30, 60 minutes that you would have spent eating to worship. The fast becomes a constant reminder to seek Him.

Over the past 6 years, your Elders have fasted on many occasions. Honestly I dread it. I like food and I don't like to be hungry. In the midst of this difficulty, I have always met Jesus more fully. Every fast has produced in me a deeper desire for Jesus. Here's the challenge, take this seriously and enter into this time with preparation and prayer. This guide will help you greatly as it offers practical suggestions for a rich experience. I encourage you to enter into this with your community group. Join someone for a skipped lunch and a time of intentional prayer. Gather at your weekly meeting and share your experiences and pray for each you. Also, if you have questions, feel free to email us or post on our forums. I pray this will be a great experience in your journey with Jesus. This obedience to prayer and fasting will change our church!

— Pastor Tyler

## The Season of Lent

*Traditionally, the season of Lent marks the 40 days of fasting and praying leading up to Easter. Biblically, we see in key texts such as Matthew 6 and Isaiah 58 that fasting, praying, and giving to the needy were to go hand in hand. Therefore, we seek to echo this in the life of Vintage 21 church.*

### **Fasting**

Fasting is the forgoing of something - usually food - for the purpose of growing in spiritual discipline as a follower of Jesus. Literally, it means to “not eat” in Greek, and is to be a spiritual discipline and a demonstration of our dependence on God and the expression of our desire for deeper communion with Him. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is to be practiced simultaneously with prayer and giving to the needy [Matthew 6, Isaiah 58].

In Scripture men like Jesus, Moses, David, Nehemiah, and Daniel all fasted at particular times. Jesus instructed his disciples on how to fast in his teaching and by his example. Jesus taught that the key to fasting was humility, not pride, and for the Father’s reward and not public recognition.

Jesus said, “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” [Matthew 6:16-18]

## the season of lent

Great Christian leaders such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, and John Wesley all fasted regularly. Wesley fasted every Wednesday and Friday! Therefore we stand on the shoulders of great leaders in scripture and history to fast together for the purposes of knowing God more richly and joyfully.

John Piper says this, “If you don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great. God did not create you for this. There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened. I invite you to turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry, and to say with some simple fast: “This much, O God, I want you.”

### **Fasting is Not the Goal, Jesus Is**

Fasting itself is not the goal, nor is self denial or willpower. Scripture gives us the following warnings about fasting:

- Fasting alone does not gain favor or reward with God [*1 Cor 8:8*]
- Beware people who advocate fasting alone [*1 Timothy 4:1-3*]
- Humility is more important than the number of times we fast [*Luke 18:12-14*]
- Gifts from God are most likely to become our idols [*Mark 4:19*]

Jesus, through fasting, will reveal to you what you are tempted to worship other than him and your true needs before Him.

# FAQs

## How Do We Fast?

Firstly, examine your heart. Scripture tells us that the heart is deceitful [Jeremiah 17:9] and therefore we must examine our hearts and motives as we fast. Pray to the Holy Spirit and read Scripture, asking God to reveal the true state of your heart and for the right motives.

Secondly, confess any sin. As you prepare to fast, it is likely that the Holy Spirit will convict you of sin that needs to be confessed. We are sinners by omission, failing to be holy and perfect as God is. We are also sinners by commission, as we sin against God, others and ourselves. Therefore to maintain a humble posture, by God's grace, we continually live a life of confession and repentance.

Thirdly, prepare physically, and fast only if you are a healthy individual who can withstand a time of fasting. If you are unsure as to whether you might be physically able to fast, see your doctor.

Not everyone will be in a position to fast so you should not fast if it would endanger your health in any way.

Finally, choose how you will fast. Again, the issue is not only what you fast from - food, noise, connectivity - but how and when you will fast. Determine what fasting will be suitable for you. Remember, do it together, in community.

## What should I fast from?

We all have the propensity to turn gifts from God into idols that we worship. So, we make sacrifices of our time, talent and treasure that we would otherwise give to God and instead offer them to these gods. Paul, in his day, made the observation that food can be one such god. In our culture, we are most likely to worship the gods of Noise & Connectivity along with Food. We spend much of our time checking email, sending messages, talking on cell phones, listening to music, watching TV, updating Facebook and Twitter, and surfing the internet.

## FAQs

God is sovereign and owns everything. As stewards of our time, talent, and treasure we can abstain from activities which draw us away from deeper communion with God. Ask yourself what these might be, and fast accordingly. Typically, this is food as it is one of our primary physical needs. Ultimately, let your conscience and the Holy Spirit guide you because as Martin Luther says that scripture, “fixes no definite time, how long we are to fast...but leaves it to the individual....it is good to fast.”

### **Should I tell others I am fasting?**

Yes. For help, for support, as an opportunity for others to pray for you. Generally speaking, three types of people will ask you about your fasting. Family & friends, fellow Christians and non Christians. Fasting is still an opportunity to speak humbly about the transforming power and love of Jesus. Again, fasting is a gift of grace, not a law or self-discipline. Jesus calls us to check our motives in doing so and warns us against pride in this [Matthew 6:16-18].

### **Do I have to fast?**

No. Fasting is gift of grace and not to be an imposed legalism to enslave you. Furthermore if you have or have had an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia, we strongly recommend that you do not fast from food, but choose another way to participate.

Yes. Jesus taught that when we fast we will receive reward from the Father as we do so with humility. You don't have to, but you get to because of how good and gracious God is.

### **What are the different types of fasting?**

Tim Chester, author of Total Church, recommends 3 types of fasting that you could undertake.

1. A regular 24 hours fast - eat an evening meal one night and then break your fast with a light supper the following evening
2. A regular day fast - eat an evening meal and break your fast with breakfast the day after next
3. A fast for guidance - fast for a period leading up to a significant meeting or throughout a significant time together

### **What are the benefits of fasting?**

Dr Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ states 6 key benefits from undergoing biblical fasting. These include:

- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the “first love” for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, “I humble myself through fasting.”

- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.
- The Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God in your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you!
- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life-and make you a channel of revival to others.

### **Why does Vintage 21 Church fast?**

At present, the season of Lent is an opportunity in the calendar year to undergo fasting and praying as we continue to be on mission for Jesus to know the gospel, live the gospel and build the Kingdom in the Triangle.

First, we fast so that we would each worship Jesus more faithfully by owning our own spiritual development. This is a sign of healthy membership in the local church.

Second, that we as a church community both in community groups and as a large community would worship more faithfully during the easter season.

Third, many non believers attend church during the Easter season. It is a timely opportunity to know Jesus based on the transformation that is occurring both individually and corporately at Vintage 21 Church.

### **How do I use this journal?**

You can use this journal to record your journey through the season of Lent. Men like Nehemiah and David did the same in scripture. You will be able to look back on the growth and development of your relationship with God, and share these together in community here at Vintage 21.

Each week carries a theme, a profile of person in scripture who fasted, quotes and suggestions for fasting.

Each day carries a theme in scripture to meditate on and pray over and space for you to record your prayers, reflections and experience.

For instance, as your fast together on the day your community group meets, you will be able to record and share your experience together as you meet to share a meal and study scripture.

## References

*The books listed here are a selected resource for further study.*

Bright, Bill. *The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray and Seek God's Face*. Orlando, FL: New Life Publications, 1995.

Foster, Richard. *The Celebration of Discipline*. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960.

Massey, James Earl, *Spiritual Disciplines: Growing through the Practice of Prayer, Fasting, Dialogue and Worship*. Zondervan, 1985.

Piper, John. *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting & Prayer*. Crossway, 1997.

## week 1: joyful fasting

Scripture is fully laden with examples of great and godly men whom we are called to imitate. Above all, is our great God, Jesus Christ [Heb 13:7-8]. Therefore, over the coming weeks we will profile different people from scripture and the occasions which caused them to fast.

Isaiah, was one of Israel's greatest prophets, who saw the glory of the Lord [Isaiah 6] and was sent to preach repentance to the nation of Israel and foretold the coming of Jesus. True fasting, will bring joy and "delight in the Lord" [Isaiah 58]

### True and False Fasting

58:1 "Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup>Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. <sup>3</sup>Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. <sup>4</sup>Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. <sup>5</sup>Is

*such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord?*

<sup>6</sup>"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? <sup>8</sup>Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, <sup>10</sup>if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. <sup>11</sup>And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. <sup>12</sup>And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

<sup>13</sup>"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure

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*on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; "then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

### Quotes from John Piper and Richard Foster:

*"Fasting is not the only way, or the main way, that we glorify God in preferring him above his gifts. But it is one way. And it is a way that can serve all the others."* — John Piper

*"More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside of us with food and other things."* — Richard Foster

*"My prayer for the Christian church is that God might awaken in us a new hunger for himself - a new fasting. Not because we haven't tasted the new wine of Christ's presence, but because we have tasted it and long, with a deep and joyful aching of soul, to know more of his presence and power in our midst."* — John Piper

*"If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David said, 'I humbled my soul with fasting' [Psalm 35:13]. Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear - if they are within us, they will surface during fasting. At first, we will rationalize that our anger is due to our hunger. And then, we know that we are angry because the spirit of anger is within us. We can rejoice in this knowledge because we know that healing is available through the power of Christ."* — Richard Foster

**Suggested fasting:** Sunrise to Sunset - Food, Noise and Connectivity at least once a week. We recommend fasting from Food on the day your Community Group meets and then sharing a meal for the 'Bread' portion of your time together.





















## week 2: call & guidance

Nehemiah was one of Israel's greatest ever leaders, who rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, out of his love for the city and the glory of God. He is an unlikely hero, who lived outside Jerusalem and served under a foreign King. In responding to God's call on his life, Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for many days before doing what God had called him to do. You can read about the beginning of his journey in Nehemiah chapter 1:

### Report from Jerusalem

1:1 *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.*

*Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capital, <sup>2</sup> that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."*

### Nehemiah's Prayer

<sup>4</sup> *As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who*

*keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. <sup>8</sup> Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'<sup>10</sup> They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. <sup>11</sup> O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."*

*Now I was cupbearer to the king.*

Similarly, in the New Testament, the apostles continued the mission of Jesus after the Ascension. Before making important

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strategic decisions to further the Great Commission, they fasted and prayed. This is seen in Acts 13 & 14:

### **Barnabas and Saul Sent Off**

13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."<sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

### **Quotes from Martin Luther:**

*"Of fasting I say this: it is right to fast frequently in order to subdue and control the body. For when the stomach is full, the body does not serve for preaching, for praying, for studying, or for doing anything else that is good. Under such circumstances God's Word cannot remain. But one should not fast with a view to meriting something by it as by a good work"*

*"He fixes no definite time, how long we are to fast, as the pope has done, but leaves it to the individual so as to fast as always to remain sober and not burden the body with gluttony, that he may remain in possession of reason and reflections and determine how much he must do to keep his body under control. For it is utterly idle to impose one command about this on a whole group and congregation, since we are so unlike one another.... It is good to fast. But only that can be called true fasting when we give the body no more food than it needs to retain its health."*

*"Scripture places before us two kinds of fasting that are good. The first kind one accepts willingly for the purpose of checking the flesh by the spirit. Concerning this St Paul says, "in labours, in watchings, in fastings" [2 Cor 6:5]. The second is the kind one must endure and yet accept willingly. Concerning this St Paul says, "even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst" [1 Cor 4:11]."*

**Suggested fasting:** Sunrise to Sunset - Food, Noise and Connectivity at least once a week. We recommend fasting from Food on the day your Community Group meets and then sharing a meal for the 'Bread' portion of your time together.





















## week 3: repentance

Fasting is often seen as a response of repentance in the bible. Several times, whole nations have repented including Israel in the book of Esther and Nineveh in the book of Jonah. As you fast, it can be an occasion to express your repentance from sin that the Holy Spirit reveals to you. Likewise, consider how your community group might practice repentance this week as you meet.

### Jonah Goes to Nineveh - Jonah 3

*3:1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.*

### The People of Nineveh Repent

*<sup>6</sup> The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup> but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”*

*<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.*

### Esther Agrees to Help the Jews - Esther 4

*4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. <sup>2</sup> He went up to the entrance of the king’s gate, for no*

*one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.<sup>3</sup> And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

### **The People of Israel Confess Their Sin - Nehemiah 9**

*9:1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.<sup>2</sup> And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.<sup>3</sup> And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God.<sup>4</sup> On the stairs of the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani; and they cried with a loud voice to the Lord their God.<sup>5</sup> Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

### **Quotes from John Calvin:**

*"Whenever, finally, any difficult matter of great importance is to be discussed, or again when there appear the judgments of the Lord's anger [as pestilence, war and famine] - 'tis a holy*

*ordinance and one salutary for all ages, that pastors urge the people to public fasting and extraordinary prayers"*

*"Holy and lawful fasting has three objectives. We use it either to weaken and subdue the flesh that it may not act wantonly, or that we may be better prepared for prayers and holy meditations, or that it may be a testimony of our self-abasement before God when we wish to confess our guilt before him"*

*"Throughout its course, the life of the godly indeed ought to be tempered with frugality and sobriety, so that as far as possible it bears some resemblance to a fast. But, in addition, there is another sort of fasting, temporary in character, when we withdraw something from the normal regimen of living, either for one day or for a definite time, and pledge ourselves to a tighter more severe restraint in diet than ordinarily."*

**Suggested fasting:** Sunrise to Sunset - Food, Noise and Connectivity at least once a week. We recommend fasting from Food on the day your Community Group meets and then sharing a meal for the 'Bread' portion of your time together.





















## week 4: warning

Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, our example and substitute not only fasted himself [Matthew 4] but instructed his disciples on fasting [Matthew 6]. Fasting is an opportunity to know scripture more deeply as a way to withstand temptation and defeat Satan's schemes. Therefore, we do well to echo Jesus' example and follow his teaching.

### The Temptation of Jesus - Matthew 4

*4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup> But he answered, "It is written,*

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

*<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup> and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,*

*"He will command his angels concerning you,"*

*and*

*"On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."*

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,*

*"You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."*

*<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

### Fasting - Matthew 6

*<sup>16</sup> "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

### **A Question About Fasting - Matthew 9**

*<sup>14</sup> Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" <sup>15</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. <sup>16</sup> No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. <sup>17</sup> Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."*

### **Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley:**

*"One more thing I would mention concerning fasting and prayer, wherein I think there has been a neglect in ministers; and that there is that although they recommend and much insist on the duty of secret prayer, in their preaching; so little is said about secret fasting. It is a duty recommended by our Savior to his followers, just in like manner as secret prayer is....it seems to me 'tis a duty that all professing Christians should practice, and frequently practice. There are many occasions of both a spiritual and temporal nature that do properly require it; and there are many particular mercies that we desire for ourselves or friends that it would be proper, in this manner, to seek of God."*

**Suggested fasting:** Sunrise to Sunset - Food, Noise and Connectivity at least once a week. We recommend fasting from Food on the day your Community Group meets and then sharing a meal for the 'Bread' portion of your time together.





















## week 5: biblical poetry on fasting

In the Psalms, we have the records of men who fasted that we can study and observe. In part, this gives us encouragement as we do likewise. Also, it shows us how our lives are to accord with scripture as we do likewise in an attempt to imitate their faith and glorify Jesus. Consider and meditate on Psalms 35, 69 and 109 all written by King David - simultaneously one of Israel's greatest sinners and righteous men, because of the grace of God.

### Great Is the Lord - Psalm 35

*Of David.*

35:1 *Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me!*<sup>2</sup> *Take hold of shield and buckler and rise for my help!*<sup>3</sup> *Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers! Say to my soul, "I am your salvation!"*

<sup>4</sup> *Let them be put to shame and dishonor who seek after my life! Let them be turned back and disappointed who devise evil against me!*<sup>5</sup> *Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them away!*<sup>6</sup> *Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them!*

<sup>7</sup> *For without cause they hid their net for me; without cause they dug a pit for my life.*<sup>8</sup> *Let destruction come upon him when he does not know*

*it! And let the net that he hid ensnare him; let him fall into it—to his destruction!*

<sup>9</sup> *Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord, exulting in his salvation.*<sup>10</sup> *All my bones shall say, "O Lord, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?"*

<sup>11</sup> *Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know.*<sup>12</sup> *They repay me evil for good; my soul is bereft.*<sup>13</sup> *But I, when they were sick—I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest.*<sup>14</sup> *I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning.*

<sup>15</sup> *But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered; they gathered together against me; wretches whom I did not know tore at me without ceasing;*<sup>16</sup> *like profane mockers at a feast, they gnash at me with their teeth.*

<sup>17</sup> *How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their destruction, my precious life from the lions!*<sup>18</sup> *I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you.*

<sup>19</sup> *Let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes, and let not those wink the eye who hate me without cause.*<sup>20</sup> *For they do not speak*

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*peace, but against those who are quiet in the land they devise words of deceit.* <sup>21</sup> *They open wide their mouths against me; they say, “Aha, Aha! Our eyes have seen it!”*

<sup>22</sup> *You have seen, O Lord; be not silent! O Lord, be not far from me!* <sup>23</sup> *Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication, for my cause, my God and my Lord!* <sup>24</sup> *Vindicate me, O Lord, my God, according to your righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me!* <sup>25</sup> *Let them not say in their hearts, “Aha, our heart’s desire!” Let them not say, “We have swallowed him up.”*

<sup>26</sup> *Let them be put to shame and disappointed altogether who rejoice at my calamity! Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves against me!*

<sup>27</sup> *Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, “Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant!”* <sup>28</sup> *Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all the day long.*

### Quotes from John Wesley:

*“The man who never fasts is no more in the way to heaven than the man who never prays.”*

*“Fasting is a help to prayer; particularly when we set apart larger portions of time for private prayer. Then especially it is that God is often pleased to lift up the souls of his servants above all things of earth, and sometimes to rap them up, as it were, into the third heaven. And it is chiefly, as it is a help to prayer, that it has so frequently been found a means, in the hand of God, of confirming and increasing, not one virtue,*

*not chastity only....but also seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God, and every holy and heavenly affection”*

**Suggested fasting:** Sunrise to Sunset - Food, Noise and Connectivity at least once a week. We recommend fasting from Food on the day your Community Group meets and then sharing a meal for the ‘Bread’ portion of your time together.





















## week 6: the future end to fasting

### Theme and Profile in Scripture: Jesus

One day, Jesus will return and there will be no need to fast ever again, as he brings about His kingdom where hunger will be no more and we will walk in His presence and see him physically. In light of that day, meditate on John's revelation of the future in Revelation. Consider how you can give, bless and redeem your community in light of the kingdom that God will eventually bring because of Jesus.

### The New Heaven and the New Earth - Revelation 21

*21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, [and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

### The River of Life - Revelation 22

*22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*

### Jesus Is Coming

<sup>6</sup> And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

<sup>7</sup> "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

<sup>8</sup> I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, <sup>9</sup> but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow

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servant [with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

<sup>10</sup> And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. <sup>11</sup> Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

<sup>12</sup> “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

<sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, [10] so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. <sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

<sup>16</sup> “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

<sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

<sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

“Let us learn from our Lord’s instruction about fasting, the great importance of cheerfulness in our religion. Those words, “anoint thy head and wash thy face,” are full of deep meaning. They should teach us to aim at letting men see that we find Christianity makes us happy. Never let us forget that there is no religion in looking melancholy and gloomy. Are we dissatisfied with Christ’s wages, and Christ’s service? Surely not! Then let us not look as if we were” — J.C Ryle

“Fasting, if we conceive of it truly, must not...be confined to the question of food and drink; fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose. There are many bodily functions which are right and normal and perfectly legitimate, but which for special peculiar reasons in certain circumstances should be controlled. That is fasting.” — Martin Lloyd Jones.

“This is the essence of Christian fasting: We ache and yearn - and fast - to know more and more of all that God is for us in Jesus. But only because he has already laid hold of us and is drawing us ever forward and upward into ‘all the fullness of God’. — John Piper

“Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything - to sacrifice ourselves - to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.” — Andrew Murray

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