

GATHERING 10-DAY FAST | DEVOTIONAL

Preparing Our Hearts for the Gathering on February 1

INTRODUCTION

For millennia, God's people have practiced fasting, not as a religious performance, but as a way of turning their full attention toward God in moments of longing, repentance, worship, discernment, and dependence. Scripture shows God's people fasting when they needed mercy, strength, clarity, or a word from the Lord, and also reminds us that fasting is never a way to manipulate God or earn His favor. Jesus Himself fasted, and while He assumed His followers would fast at times, He never bound them to rigid rules.

Fasting, rightly understood, is not magic, not punishment, and not a test of spirituality. It is an invitation to seek God more intentionally and honestly, allowing Him, not our appetites, habits, or comforts, to be our Source of life.

As we prepare for the Gathering, we are inviting our church into a healthy, grace-filled fast, one marked by freedom, wisdom, and attentiveness to the Spirit. This may include fasting from food for a season, but it may also mean laying down another appetite: media, shopping, noise, constant connectivity, or distraction. The heart of fasting is not simply going without, but **making space to feast on God**, to offer Him the time, attention, and hunger we normally give elsewhere.

Fasting gently exposes what controls us, not to shame us, but to lead us into deeper surrender and truer nourishment. As we deny ourselves in small ways, we open ourselves to divine addition, learning again that our deepest hunger is met not by what we consume, but by the living God who longs to meet with His people.

A PASTORAL WORD OF WISDOM & CARE

(To be read at the beginning of Day 1)

As you consider participating in this fast, we encourage you to listen attentively to both the Spirit *and* the body God has entrusted to you. Fasting is a gift, not a requirement, and it should never place your physical or mental health at risk. If you are pregnant or nursing, managing a medical condition, recovering from an eating disorder, navigating significant anxiety or depression, or under medical care that requires regular nutrition, we encourage you **not** to fast from food.

Instead, consider fasting from another appetite, media, social platforms, shopping, constant noise, or anything that regularly competes for your attention and affection. This is not about intensity or comparison. There is no "holier" fast. The goal is not deprivation, but deeper attentiveness to God.

Choose a fast that leads you toward life, freedom, and greater love for Jesus and others. God is not impressed by what you give up; He delights in meeting you where you are. As Scripture reminds us, *"The Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). May this season be marked by grace, wisdom, and a growing hunger for God that brings renewal to our church and joy to your soul.

DAY 1 | JANUARY 23

BLESSED HUNGER

Scripture

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6

Jesus doesn't shame hunger; He *blesses* it. Hunger is not a flaw to fix but a signal to follow. In fasting, we don't deny hunger; **we redirect it**. When we intentionally abstain from something that fills our time, attention, or appetite, we allow God to awaken a deeper longing for what truly satisfies.

God longs to fill us, to satisfy us with Himself. John Piper writes, "Fasting is a way of saying with our stomachs and our whole body that we want God more than food" (*A Hunger for God*). As we prepare for the Gathering, this fast is not about willpower; it's about wanting more of God. Each pang of desire becomes an invitation to pray, "Lord, fill me, with Yourself."

Reflection

What competes most for your hunger for God right now?

How might fasting from that help retrain your desires toward God?

Prayer

Lord, awaken holy hunger in me. As I fast, fill me with a deeper desire for You alone. Amen.

DAY 2 | JANUARY 24

MAKING SPACE FOR GOD

Scripture

"Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

Fasting creates *space*, not just in our schedules, but in our souls. We live busy, crowded lives, full of noise and distraction. When we fast from something familiar, food, news, social media, or our phones, we step into a kind of "holy emptiness" so that God can meet us there.

Dallas Willard reminds us, "Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food" (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*). This week, don't rush to refill the space fasting creates. Sit with it. Let the quiet become a sanctuary in which to experience God. He often speaks most clearly when we finally slow down enough to listen.

Reflection

What noise or habit might God be inviting you to set aside?

How will you intentionally meet with God in that space?

Prayer

God, help me resist the urge to fill every empty space. Teach me to meet You in stillness. Amen.

DAY 3 | JANUARY 25

FEASTING ON THE WORD

Scripture

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

Jesus fasted, and He feasted on Scripture. Fasting without the Word becomes emptiness; fasting **with** the Word becomes *nourishment*. God's voice sustains us in ways food never could. And His truth nourishes our *souls* in ways that the world's "food" never does.

Richard Foster writes, "More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us" (*Celebration of Discipline*). Fasting gives up, for a time, the world's "bread" to gain our soul's King.

As we fast, let *Scripture* become your "daily bread." Read slowly. Pray honestly. Let God's Word refresh your soul, recalibrate your heart, and refocus your attention on what truly matters.

Reflection

What Scripture might God want you to linger with during this fast?

What is being revealed about what most controls you?

Prayer

Jesus, nourish my soul with Your Word. Let Your truth sustain me, more than anything else. Amen.

DAY 4 | JANUARY 26

A BODY THAT LISTENS

Scripture

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice." Romans 12:1

Fasting is a form of *embodied* prayer. Our bodies participate in worship. When, through fasting, we say "no" to something with our bodies, we often hear "yes" from God more clearly.

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun notes, "Fasting teaches us to let go of what we crave and turn our attention to God" (*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*). It intensifies our craving for *Him*. This is not about punishing the body but training it to listen. Let physical awareness draw you into prayer, "*God, I offer You all of me.*"

Reflection

How does your body typically get your attention?

What might it look like to pray through your physical awareness today?

Prayer

Lord, I offer You my whole self, body, mind, and spirit. Train me to listen with all that I am. Amen.

DAY 5 | JANUARY 27

REPENTANCE THAT CLEARS THE WAY

Scripture

"Return to Me with all your heart, with fasting." Joel 2:12

One thing that often accompanies biblical fasting is *repentance*, not shame, but return. Fasting helps surface what needs healing and surrender. And it helps us run back to God to find it.

Elmer Towns writes, "Fasting releases the anointing of God that breaks yokes and opens doors" (*Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*). Where in your life do you most need spiritual breakthrough? How could fasting today pave the way for God's renewal to occur?

As we approach the Gathering, let fasting soften your heart. Confess sin quickly. Receive His grace freely. God delights in restoring His people. Trust Him for that.

Reflection

Is there anything God is gently inviting you to release?

How does repentance prepare us to hear God more clearly as a church?

Prayer

Merciful God, search my heart and lead me in Your ways. Thank You for grace that restores. Amen.

DAY 6 | JANUARY 28

LONGING FOR GOD TOGETHER

Scripture

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity." Psalm 133:1

This is a **corporate fast**. We hunger together. We pray together. And our unity amplifies our prayers. Scot McKnight emphasizes that biblical fasting is often *communal*, shaping a *people*, not just an individual (*Fasting: The Ancient Practices*).

As a church, we're inviting one another to fast together because we believe God wants to do something more in and through us *together*. As you fast, remember, you are not alone. God is knitting our hearts together in expectation and faith. Jesus is the King of Discovery Church, and our unity of heart and purpose fleshes that out.

Reflection

How does fasting together shape our unity as a church?

What aspect of our church is God inviting you to pray for during this journey?

Prayer

God, bind us together as we seek You. May our shared hunger lead to joy in Your presence. Amen.

DAY 7 | JANUARY 29

LISTENING OVER SPEAKING

Scripture

"Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:10

Fasting sharpens *spiritual attentiveness*. We talk less. We listen more. We teach this often because it is a biblically rooted conviction, God still speaks to His people.

Ask fewer questions today. Sit longer with Jesus. Consider journaling what rises to the surface. Trust that God delights in guiding His children. Listen.

Reflection

When do you find it hardest to listen?

What might God be inviting you to hear?

Prayer

Speak, Lord. Quiet my heart and tune my ears to Your voice. Help me to listen. Amen.

DAY 8 | JANUARY 30

STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY

Scripture

"Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength." Isaiah 40:31

Fasting is not weakness; it's a spiritual training that *strengthens* our dependence. When we wait on God, He supplies strength we cannot generate on our own, *His* strength in and through us.

In his book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard reminds us that it is *God's Spirit*, not our own elbow-grease, that empowers our spiritual practices. Let this fast remind you that endurance flows from intimacy with God, not self-effort.

Reflection

Where do you believe our church most needs God's strength right now?

How does waiting on Him reshape our expectations?

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. Renew my strength as I wait on You. Teach me to rely fully on Your grace. Amen.

DAY 9 | JANUARY 31

EXPECTANT FAITH

Scripture

"Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it." Psalm 81:10

God invites bold expectation. Fasting stretches our capacity to receive. Come to the Gathering expectant, not of a moment, but of God Himself.

Focus more on the Healer, than the healing. Focus more on the Deliverer, than the deliverance. As we fix our eyes on Jesus, we will experience more of Jesus. That's our goal. That's our expectation.

Reflection

What are you asking God to do in you? In us as a church?

How does bold expectation shape your prayers for God's movement?

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. Enlarge my capacity to receive from You as my faithful God. I come expectant and open-hearted. Fill our church with Your presence and power. Amen.

DAY 10 | FEBRUARY 1

FEASTING ON GOD

Scripture

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8

The fast leads to the *feast*. God Himself is our reward. As we gather to worship and pray tonight, come spiritually *hungry*. Come confident that God delights to *fill* His people.

Reflection

What has God been stirring in you these past days?

How will you continue creating space for God beyond this fast?

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. You are our portion and joy. As we gather, fill us with Your presence and power. Nourish us in Your goodness. Satisfy us together in Your presence. Amen.