

Fasting

Hungry for God

LISTEN & WATCH www.BTLdiscipleship.guide/fasting [QR code]

BIG IDEA	Fasting is feasting on God. By going without for a time, we tell our bodies and our hearts that Jesus is enough.
MEMORY VERSE	<i>"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."</i> Matthew 4:4
ACTION STEP	Fast from one meal (or choose a non-food fast) this week. Spend that time with God, and give away what you save.
OUTCOME	I've completed a fast with a clear purpose and used it to pray.

The Way of Jesus Read before you meet • about 5 minutes

"When you fast," not "if"

Jesus assumed His followers would fast. In the Sermon on the Mount He says, "When you give...", "When you pray...", and "When you fast..." (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16). Fasting was simply part of life with God for Jesus, for the early church, and for Christians through the centuries. One of the earliest Christian teaching documents, the *Didache*, describes believers fasting every Wednesday and Friday.

Jesus began His public ministry with forty days of fasting in the wilderness. When the tempter told Him to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered from Scripture: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Why fast?

- **Fasting exposes what controls us.** Skip a meal and see what comes out: impatience, irritability, cravings. Fasting doesn't create those things. It reveals them, so we can bring them to Jesus.
- **Fasting turns hunger into prayer.** Every hunger pang becomes a reminder: *God, I need You more than this.*
- **Fasting sharpens our seeking.** The early church fasted and prayed when they needed God's direction (Acts 13:2-3).
- **Fasting opens our hands.** In Isaiah 58, the fast God chooses includes sharing food with the hungry and setting the oppressed free. Many Christians give the money they save to someone in need.

How to begin

Start small. Skip one meal and spend that time in prayer and Scripture. Drink water. If that goes well, try a sunrise-to-sundown fast, or join the ancient rhythm of a weekly fast day. Fasting isn't about earning

God's favor or proving how spiritual you are. Jesus warns against showing off (Matthew 6:16–18). It's a quiet, private way of saying, "*Jesus, You are my bread.*"

A word of care

Fasting from food isn't right for everyone. If you are pregnant or nursing, have diabetes or another medical condition, take medication that must be taken with food, or have a history of disordered eating, please don't fast from food. Talk with your doctor, and choose a non-food fast instead: social media, streaming, news, video games, or shopping. A non-food fast is a real fast.

When You Meet *about 60 minutes*

Who leads: The disciple opens in prayer and leads Connect. The discipler leads the rest.

Connect • 10 min

- What's your experience with fasting: never tried it, tried and struggled, or it's a regular practice? What questions or fears do you have?
- How did your daily "no" go? What did you notice about yourself?

Read • 20–25 min

Read aloud: Matthew 6:16–18 and Isaiah 58:6–9

1. What's the difference between the fasting Jesus warns against and the fasting He blesses?
2. In Isaiah 58, what does God connect fasting to? Why might that matter?
3. What do you think a fast might reveal in you?
4. What would you want to pray about while you fast?

Practice • 15 min

- **Plan your fast together.** Decide five things:
 - **What:** one meal, sunrise to sundown, or a non-food fast?
 - **When:** what day and time?
 - **Why:** what will you pray about?
 - **Instead:** what will you do with the time (pray, read, take a walk)?
 - **Give:** what will you do with what you save?
- Consider fasting on the same day so you can pray for each other.

Pray & Plan • 10 min

- Pray for each other's fast and prayer focus.
- Confirm the day you'll fast.

For disciplers: Tell your partner about a fast that went badly, or one that surprised you. It takes away the pressure to perform.

For groups: Pick one day for the whole group to fast and pray about a shared concern (a mission partner, someone who is sick, your church). Share what happened next week.

Live It This week's action step

Fast from one meal (or keep one non-food fast) this week. Use that time to pray and read Scripture, and give what you save to someone in need.

I'll fast from _____

On (day) _____

My prayer focus _____

I'll give what I save to _____

Go deeper (optional): Try a sunrise-to-sundown fast, or fast with your partner or group on the same day.

Pass It On within 48 hours

Invite someone to pray with you about the need you're fasting for.

Five Days with Jesus 10–15 minutes a day

Use **R³** each day: Read, Reflect, Respond.

☐ **Day 1 • Matthew 4:1–4**

What am I hungry for besides God? How did Jesus answer temptation?

☐ **Day 2 • Matthew 6:16–18**

Why does Jesus want fasting kept private? What's my motive?

☐ **Day 3 • Isaiah 58:6–12**

Who could my fasting help this week?

☐ **Day 4 • Acts 13:1-3**

What decision or direction do I need God's guidance on?

☐ **Day 5 • John 4:31-34**

Jesus said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." What truly feeds my soul?

Awareness: Hunger Is a Prayer Bell

During your fast, and all week long, let every craving ring like a bell that calls you to prayer: "*Jesus, You are my bread.*" Notice what emotions surface when you don't get what you want.

Ready to Move On?

- ☐ I completed a fast (food or non-food) with a clear prayer focus.
- ☐ I used the time to be with God.
- ☐ I can explain why followers of Jesus fast.

When you and your discipler agree these are true, move on to the next session. If not, take another week. That's growth too.

Sources & Acknowledgment

The original pathway

This booklet adapts and substantially rewrites material from *Discipleship Pathway* (2024) by Rev. Megan Koch and Rev. Phil Wiseman of Table Church in Des Moines, Iowa, used with the authors' blessing. The original identifies its license as Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

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The Colonial adaptation

Prepared for Colonial Presbyterian Church by Pastor Jeff Sparks for the Be the L.I.G.H.T. Discipleship Pathway. This adaptation keeps the original ten lesson themes; adds a Launch session with a gospel foundation and a Commissioning session with a multiplication plan; restructures each lesson around a weekly meeting, one action step, and a five-day reading plan; and draws on Colonial's *Be the LIGHT Abide Guide* (P.R.A.Y., R³, BLESS, and the Abide Plan), earlier micro-course drafts, and Kent Mathews' evangelism training at Colonial (listening, validating, clarifying, and "know, tell, do, and be the story").

Also informed by

Zúme Training (the Model, Assist, Watch, Leave pattern and the emphasis on obeying and sharing between sessions); *Rooted* by Mariners Church (short daily readings and shared experiences); and *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer (one practice at a time, and a rule of life).

Quotations

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies* (2021). Dallas Willard, on "pitching its message too low." Henri Nouwen, on downward mobility. Robert Louis Stevenson (attributed), on seeds and harvest. The *Didache* (early Christian teaching, 1st–2nd century), on weekly fasting.

Scripture

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain. Read the full passages in any trustworthy translation or audio Bible.

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