



PRACTICING FASTING

This week we learned that fasting is a response to sacred moments, that is, moments when we encounter God's presence and reality in an extraordinary, life-altering way. By fasting, we purposefully disrupt the most basic patterns of our daily lives, as a way to wholly embody our experience of those sacred moments.

The first step in this week's challenge on fasting is to identify the sacred moment(s) that God is leading you through. Spend some time in prayer, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify it/them. In the Bible, the sacred moments why people fasted can be grouped into three types:

1. **The crossroads moment:** God is redirecting your life, opening new opportunities, changing your life plans.
2. **The moment of turning from sinful choices:** God is making you aware of the self-centered ways you've been defining right and wrong for yourself, and He's leading you towards repentance.
3. **The moment of tragedy:** something tragic has happened to you or someone you know.

FASTING FROM THINGS OTHER THAN FOOD

Because of health reasons, you may not be able to fast from food. But you can still fast from other things (technology, entertainment, spending money, etc.) that can just as well disrupt the basic patterns of your daily life and give you an opportunity to respond to the sacred moments God is leading you through.

PREPARING FOR FASTING

- **Find an accountability partner (if possible):** It'd be great if you could partner up with someone you trust that could fast with you, or at least keep you accountable. You can encourage one another and share insight from your experience.
- **Set a time:** A common fast in the Bible is a 24-hour fast, that is, you eat dinner tonight, and you don't eat again until dinner tomorrow night. For a shorter fast, you could eat dinner tonight, and not eat again until noon or 3:00PM tomorrow. You can make your fast longer by skipping more meals, but go at your own pace. Choose the length of time and the day that would work best for you, and, if necessary, make sure you communicate that to the people you live with.
- **Get the tools you'll need:** During your fast, you may want to set apart a space for solitude and prayer. Make sure you prepare that place ahead of time. Another good practice during fasting is journaling (more on that below). Make sure you have the writing tools you'd need. In essence, however you plan to spend your time fasting, make sure you have all the tools you'll need prepared ahead of time.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FAST

- **Listen:** Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a posture of attention and the focus you need so you don't miss God's voice in this time. God may or may not communicate anything to you at this time. But trust that the very practice of pausing and listening is, in itself, an act of love and a blessing to your soul.
- **Pray:** Prayer goes hand in hand with fasting, because through prayer we voice our openness to God's ongoing work in our lives. When we talk to God through prayer, deep down we're acknowledging He is real, present, and involved. Not to mention

there's healing power in prayer as a vehicle for venting and letting go of the frustrations and burdens of life. Pray and leave it all at the feet of Jesus.

- **Read the Scriptures:** Don't miss this extraordinary opportunity to practice *Lectio Divina* (check out last week's challenge on solitude for more info on *Lectio Divina*).
- **Journal:** You'd be surprised how easily you can forget the things that you think, hear, and experience during your time fasting. Make sure you journal. Write down your thoughts, ideas, emotions, all of it. Make sure you write the date and time for every journal entry. It's an incredible experience to revisit your journals down the road, and seeing the fruit of what you experienced that time.
- **Get creative:** Write a song, a poem, paint, take pictures, go for a walk, a swim, exercise. Get creative with your time with Jesus. Do whatever would compliment your fast and would maximize your response to the sacred moment(s) God is leading you through.

SOME LAST WORDS

Just like you don't become a guitar virtuoso over night, you won't fast perfectly right away. So don't hate yourself if you break your fast earlier than planned. Disciplines take time. Try it again next week, and the next, and the next. And remember, fasting is an exercise in self-sacrifice. You give of yourself to Jesus, because Jesus gave of himself for you first. It's love responding to love. Let that drive the whole thing.



PRACTICING FEASTING

Feasting is a biblical response to the sacred moments in life that are happy, joyful, and cause for celebration. So the first step in this week's challenge on feasting is to identify such sacred moment(s) in your life. Spend some time in prayer, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify it/them.

Step two is simple: connect with your friends and family, and feast!

TWO THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

1. **Prepare:** A feast requires some preparation. You may need to save up some money, reserve a table at a restaurant, buy groceries if you're hosting the party at home, send out invitations, etc. In this time of pandemic, our options for feasting are even more limited. So spend time preparing for the best, most responsible way to feast.
2. **Communicate the reason for the feast:** Chances are your friends and family already know the reason for the celebration. But take some time during the party to share your testimony again, and to pray a prayer of thanksgiving. Make it very clear that the primary reason why you're all together is to celebrate the goodness of God and His work in your life.