

## 2025 LENT DEVOTION Week 2 - Fasting

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MONDAY, MARCH 10 | DEVOTION

*“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

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”*

Romans 8:5

Most people in our culture associate fasting with something Catholics do during Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter. Growing up, I would see kids in school with ash on their foreheads—who abstained from eating chocolate or other food associated with decadence—and think, ‘They’re just plain weird.’ I had never read a single Bible verse, but it seemed obvious that abstaining from certain foods did not make one righteous. While this is true, it’s also a fallacy to reject a practice like fasting just because someone else did it for the wrong reasons.

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned the crowds not to practice their righteousness before others where they would be noticed (Matthew 6:1). Similarly, he warned them not to practice generosity, prayer, or fasting to be seen by others. When done to gain favor, credibility, or reputation with others, spiritual disciplines (like prayer, fasting, giving, etc.) have no value to God and will receive no reward from him—Jesus says we’ve received our reward already. So, fasting is not a problem unless done for the wrong reasons. Regarding the practice, Jesus does not say, “if you fast,” but rather, “when you fast.” He assumes that fasting is an activity that’s practiced and believes that his disciples, along with everyone else in their culture, intentionally deprived themselves of something (usually food) regularly to seek righteousness. But why? How does skipping a meal or meals lead to righteousness? In and of itself, it doesn’t. Then why bother, and why would Jesus list fasting along with prayer and generosity as a practice of righteousness?

The answer lies not in what is given up during the fast but what takes place instead. Think back to last week’s devotional on setting your mind on the things of the Spirit. One of the reasons people do not set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5) is because they run a hundred miles an hour with their hair on fire. Who has time to focus on Christ when we triple-book every waking moment of our day? We fill every minute with activity, and every thought faces competition from our next podcast or playlist. We have no margin left for focusing our minds on the things of the Spirit—and we feel overwhelmed or frustrated when someone suggests we try. That’s where fasting comes in.

If you decided that during lunch, to pass on lunch (fast) on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you would have two hours each week freed up to pray, read and memorize Scripture, or do anything that focuses your mind on the things of Christ. And it can be done with anything, not just meals. You could fast from social media, reading the news, or watching TV. The nature of fasting is to abstain from something legitimate and focus on something better.

Notably, Jesus fasted from food and water for forty days before Satan tempted him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). You might think that Satan approached Christ in the wilderness because he was isolated, hungry, and thirsty, making him vulnerable. But note this: Jesus intentionally deprived himself. His fasting gave him strength to withstand hell’s assault. That’s remarkable! He gave up something (food) to gain something (strength). If fasting drew Jesus closer to his father, preparing him to resist sin and glorify God, it’s also his will for us. We would be wise to follow in Christ’s footsteps.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11 | READ SCRIPTURE

Read the following passages slowly. Ask the Lord to help you understand each passage's intent and to show you what he wants you to see.

**Matthew 4:1-11**

What did Jesus potentially abstain from besides food during the forty days before his encounter with Satan? How might going without food and other things have strengthened him to resist the devil?

**Luke 5:33-39**

What reason does Jesus give for his disciples choosing not to fast like everyone else? Jesus explains that his disciples will fast again after he is no longer with them. How might fasting allow them to set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5) in a way that was not necessary when Jesus walked among them?

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12 | REFLECT ON THE WORD AND YOUR LIFE

Jesus fasted to prepare him for his encounter with Satan and his mission to redeem a lost and broken humanity (Matthew 4:1-11). He then explained there is no need to fast when the bridegroom is present (Luke 5:33-38). Jesus is with us in Spirit but has yet to return to make all things new.

What legitimate activities could you possibly abstain from to intentionally set your mind on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5)?

What internal objections come to mind when you consider the practice of fasting? Are those objections due to a fear of abstaining from something or the Spirit's prompting to honor Christ?

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THURSDAY, MARCH 13 | PRAYER FOR WISDOM, INSIGHT, AND GRACE TO UNDERSTAND

Daniel fasted from certain foods for three weeks (Daniel 10) as he contemplated the future of his people in Babylon's captivity. We need not look far to see the work of the enemy in the world, culture, families, or personal lives. The bridegroom will return someday and he will make all things new. In the meantime, we wait, watch, and pray. Ask the Lord to burden your heart with what burdens his. Ask him for a strong desire for something he desires. List what the Lord reveals.

Ask the Spirit to reveal something you could fast from, such as food, entertainment, media, etc. This would free up time to focus on the Lord and pray for what he has burdened your heart with.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 14 | PRACTICE WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Excellent article by Bill Bright, founder of CRU, on how to fast: [grace3.org/cru-fast](http://grace3.org/cru-fast)

Identify three potential things you could fast from which will free you to set your mind on the things of the Spirit. List them out. Share what you plan to do with someone. After your fast, write down what God is showing you. Then, share those revelations with someone.