



REAL

STILL

HOLY SATURDAY 2021
EXPERIENCE GUIDE



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Holy Saturday is a day of reflection on a world without the hope of Christ's resurrection. Sandwiched between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, this day represents the three days between Christ's death on the Cross and saving resurrection. Historically, this day is a time for the church to reflect on death, dying, life, and living.

Our staff has put together a few options for you, your household, or your family to see and experience holy living and holy dying through the lens of Holy Saturday. In this PDF, you will find the traditional Easter Vigil readings, as well as an article written by Pastor Matt on fasting. We pray that these resources will lead you into deeper reflection and discipleship this Holy Saturday.

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THE VIGIL READINGS

Celebrated in many Christian traditions, Easter vigil is the culmination of the 40 days of Lent, taking place after sundown on the night before Easter (i.e., Holy Saturday) or immediately after the Good Friday service. These readings below are a way for the church to reflect on the redemptive story of Christ, from the creation narrative in Genesis to Christ's resurrection in the Gospels.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:1-2:2, THE ACCOUNT OF CREATION

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18, 9:8-13, THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND THE EARTH

Genesis 22:1-18, ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE ON MT. MORIAH

Exodus 14:10-15:1, ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE FROM PHARAOH

Isaiah 54:5-14, THE COVENANT OF PEACE

Isaiah 55:1-11, SALVATION IS OFFERED TO ALL

Proverbs 3:1-35, GOD'S WISDOM

Ezekiel 36:24-28, A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

Ezekiel 37:1-14, DRY BONES COME TO LIFE

Zephaniah 3:14-20, THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

PSALM/CANTICLE

Psalm 33

Psalm 46

Psalm 16

Exodus 15:1-6, 11-13, 17-18

Psalm 30

Isaiah 12:2-6

Psalm 19

Psalm 42

Psalm 143

Psalm 98

NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 6:3-11, DYING AND RISING WITH CHRIST

Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

PSALM/CANTICLE

Psalm 114

FASTING: A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF A VITAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

BY MATT ERICKSON

I often refer to fasting as an important spiritual growth tool in our lives. While I do not always enjoy fasting, I have found it invaluable in my own spiritual life. Fasting is simply voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes. Fasting strengthens our will through abstinence from food, simultaneously strengthening our will for spiritual resistance against temptation. By fasting we say 'no' to yourself and 'yes' to God for growth into the abundant life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Fasting is a simple way to remember our human limitations and to put us in touch with other human beings who may not have enough food to meet their needs. Fasting is an invaluable way to draw near to God, expressing to God in a very tangible way that we need Him more than anything else, even a physical meal (Ezra 8:21-23). Fasting is always accompanied by focused prayer.

What follows is an attempt to address a number of specific aspects of fasting, biblical background on fasting, and some practical helps for how we approach fasting. I hope this resource encourages you to step forward with God through the spiritual practice of fasting.

HOW LONG IS A FAST?

When you read the Bible, you will find various time-lengths of fasting. Esther, a Jewish Queen, called the people of Israel to fast for three days when she was facing a challenging situation (Esther 4:16). Daniel fasted for three weeks after receiving a vision from God (Daniel 10:2-3). The prophet Joel called the nation to one day of fasting and prayer in response to God's judgment of their sin (Joel 1:14; 2:15). Jesus fasted for forty days as a way of preparing for His public ministry (Matthew 4:1-3). The Apostle Paul fasted for three days after encountering the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9). The church at Antioch launched Paul and Barnabas out on their church-planting mission after a short time of prayer and fasting (Acts 13:2).

WHAT FOOD OR DRINK IS INVOLVED IN FASTING?

While there are different types of fasts in Scripture, fasting usually involves abstinence from all food and drink except water. This is typically called a 'total fast'. There are some places in the Bible where people participate in partial fasts for a variety of reasons. The most memorable is Daniel and his colleagues who abstained from the royal foods in Babylon for spiritual reasons (Daniel 1:8-14).

If you are new to fasting, Richard Foster (author of *Celebration of Discipline*) offers some very helpful advice about: start easier with a partial fast (some food and juices to drink) and then work your way up to a total fast from food with only water to drink.

QUOTATIONS ON FASTING

Here are a series of definitions of fasting by respected leaders in the church:

"Abstaining from food for spiritual purposes." –Richard Foster ¹

"Fasting is the natural, inevitable response of a person to a grievous sacred moment in life." –Scot McKnight ²

"A fast is the self-denial of normal necessities in order to intentionally attend to God in prayer. Bringing attachments and cravings to the surface opens a place for prayer. This physical awareness of emptiness is the reminder to turn to Jesus who alone can satisfy." –Adele Ahlberg Calhoun ³

"Simply defined fasting is the act of doing without something in order to put more focus on God." –David Drury ⁴

"Fasting, if we conceive of it truly, must not only 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 perfectly legitimate, but which for special peculiar reasons in certain circumstances should be controlled. That is fasting. There, I suggest, is a kind of general definition of what is meant by fasting." –Martyn Lloyd-Jones ⁵

WHY DO WE FAST?

Throughout the Bible, there are many reasons given for fasting, from personal spiritual renewal to community repentance before God.

Some churches will take focused times of prayer and fasting based on times in the Bible where God's people pray and fast in order to express deep needs before God. As a community, churches will stand together by praying and fasting to say to God in a very tangible way that we need to hear from Him.

In the Old Testament, we see this when Ezra, the spiritual leader of the people, gathered the entire nation together to pray and fast in the face of a desperate need. They were returning to their homeland after an extended exile in Babylon. "There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for us and our children ... we fasted and petitioned our God about this [need for protection on the journey] and He answered our prayer" (Ezra 8:21-23).

TYPES OF FASTING

In his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney offers a list of different types of fasting that I found particularly helpful.⁶ I have distilled Whitney's comments down here in hopes of giving a basic framework for understanding the variety of fasting seen in the Scriptures.

- NORMAL FAST – abstaining from all food, but not water (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2)
- PARTIAL FAST – abstaining from some food; a limitation of diet (Daniel 1:12; Matthew 3:4)
- ABSOLUTE FAST – abstaining from all food and water (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9)
- SUPERNATURAL FAST – an absolute fast that surpasses normal human limitations; this requires God's supernatural intervention (Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8)
- PRIVATE FAST – a personal pursuit of God that is hidden from or not noticed by others (Matthew 6:16-18)

1. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1988), 48.

2. Scot McKnight, *Fasting* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), xx.

3. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 219.

4. David Drury, *The Fruitful Life: What Will I Be Remembered For?*, 2nd ed. (Spring Lake, MI: Spring Lake Wesleyan Church, 2004), 128.

5. Quoted in Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 160.

6. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 161-162.

- CONGREGATIONAL FAST – gathering as a local group of believers in order to see God (Joel 2:15; Acts 13:2)
- NATIONAL FAST – gathering as an entire nation to seek God (2 Chronicles 20:3; Jonah 3:5-8)
- REGULAR FAST – specific days scheduled at regular times, such as the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-31) or monthly fasts (Zechariah 8:19); Lent (the 40-day period from Ash Wednesday to Easter) is traditionally seen as a time for fasting for Christians
- OCCASIONAL FAST – seasons of fasting established by leaders in response to specific situations or cataclysmic events (see Esther 4:16 and 2 Chronicles 20:3)

The bottom-line is that while fasting is, as Whitney says, “a Christian’s voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual reasons,” there are a variety of ways that this is worked out.

A VIEW FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

In thinking about the topic of fasting, I tried to cull through the Bible to find different references to fasting. Here is a mostly unedited list of references to fasting from the Old Testament with brief comments about what we can learn about fasting from these words.

- *“The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves [or fast], and present a food offering to the Lord.”* (Leviticus 23:27)
THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED (ANNUAL) DAYS OF FASTING FOR GOD’S PEOPLE CORPORATELY.
- *“There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. . . we fasted and petitioned our God about this [need for protection on the journey] and He answered our prayer.”* (Ezra 8:21-23)
CORPORATE FAST CALLED BY EZRA, LEADER OF THE ISRAELITE ENVOY BACK TO THE HOMELAND, FOR HELP FROM GOD IN THE FACE OF DESPERATE NEED.
- *“Then all the Israelites, the whole army, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the Lord. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings of the Lord. And the Israelites inquired of the Lord.”* (Judges 20:26)
IN RESPONSE TO TERRIBLE WRONGS DONE BY THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN, THE REMAINDER OF THE TRIBES GATHERED IN GRIEF TO FAST AND PRAY AND SEEK GOD’S GUIDANCE AS TO HOW THEY SHOULD RESPOND.
- *“Then they took their bones [Saul and his sons] and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.”* (1 Samuel 31:13)
KING SAUL AND HIS SONS HAD BEEN BRUTALLY KILLED. THE PEOPLE OF A NEARBY TOWN, JABESH GILEAD, GRIEVED IN RESPONSE WITH FASTING.
- *“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law.”* (Esther 4:16)
THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ABSOLUTE FAST BECAUSE OF DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE JEWS WERE THREATENED WITH TOTAL EXTERMINATION AT THE HANDS OF HAMAN. THIS ALSO SHOWS THE COMMUNITY-ORIENTATION OF FASTING.
- *“When I heard these things [that Jerusalem’s walls and gates were in ruins], I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”* (Nehemiah 1:4)
A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO A DIRE SITUATION. FASTING HERE IS PROMPTED BY GRIEF OVER GOD’S SACRED PLACE BEING IN RUINS. THE OUTCOME FOR NEHEMIAH IS A HUMBLE WILLINGNESS TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION.
- *“So I turned to the Lord god and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”* (Daniel 9:3)
IN RESPONSE TO UNDERSTANDING THE TIME OF GOD’S EXILE-JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL FOR THEIR SIN, DANIEL SEEKS GOD IN NATIONAL CONFESSION AND REPENTANT PRAYER.

- *"At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over."* (Daniel 10:2-3)

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A PARTIAL, PERSONAL FAST; HERE THE REASONS FOR THE PARTIAL FAST ARE UNKNOWN.

- *"Yet when they [David's enemies] were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself in fasting."* (Psalm 35:13)

DAVID EVEN GOES SO FAR AS TO FAST AND PRAY FOR HIS ENEMIES.

- *"When I weep and fast..."* (Psalm 69:10)

DAVID MADE IT PART OF HIS PRACTICE TO FAST IN RESPONSE TO GRIEF OVER ACCUSATIONS OF OTHERS.

- *"My knees give way from fasting; my body is thin and gaunt."* (Psalm 109:24)

DAVID SEEKING GOD'S HELP AND JUSTIFICATION FROM THOSE WHO ACCUSE HIM. AFFIRMING FASTING AS A CONSISTENT ASPECT OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF ISRAEL.

- *"David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying on sackcloth on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them."* (2 Samuel 12:16-17)

DAVID IS FASTING BOTH AS A SIGN OF REPENTANCE FOR HIS SINS OF ADULTERY AND MURDER, BUT ALSO FOR GOD TO INTERCEDE FOR THE LIFE OF HIS NEW CHILD FROM BATHSHEBA, WHO HAD BEEN STRUCK WITH ILLNESS BY GOD.

- *"Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly"* (Joel 1:14 & 2:15)

HERE, FASTING IS A CORPORATE GATHERING ENCOURAGED BY THE PROPHET JOEL AND ISSUED BY THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL IN RESPONSE TO THE IMPENDING JUDGMENT OF GOD ON THE NATION. FASTING HERE IS CONNECTED WITH REPENTANCE.

- *Alarmed [by the vast army coming from Edom], Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek Him."* (2 Chronicles 20:3-4)

AGAIN, WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF FASTING CORPORATELY IN RESPONSE TO A NATIONAL EMERGENCY. FASTING HERE IS CONNECTED WITH SEEKING GOD'S HELP.

- *"The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth."* (Jonah 3:5)

FASTING AS CORPORATE RESPONSE TO THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE OF GOD. THIS IS A UNIQUE EXAMPLE BECAUSE IT IS A NON-ISRAELITE NATIONAL RESPONSE IN REPENTANCE BEFORE GOD.

- *"When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water."* (Deuteronomy 9:9)

THIS IS MOSES' MIRACULOUS ABSOLUTE FAST OF 40 DAYS WHEN RECEIVING THE LAW FROM GOD. THIS IS MIRRORED BY ELIJAH'S MIRACULOUS FORTY DAY ABSOLUTE FAST WHEN FLEEING FROM JEZEBEL AND AHAB AFTER THE PROPHETIC SHOWDOWN ON MT. HOREB IN 1 KINGS 19:8.

- *"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah.'" (Zechariah 8:19)*

EVIDENCE HERE THAT REGULAR FASTS HAD BECOME A PART OF THE LIFE OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL.

- *"Then the Lord said to me, 'Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry..." (Jeremiah 14:11-12)*

FASTING HERE IS EMPTY BECAUSE THE PEOPLE ARE DISOBEDIENT AND THEIR HEARTS ARE NOT DIRECTED TO GOD.

- *"Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves?... Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and ... to set the oppressed free?" (Isaiah 58:3-11)*

ISAIAH REBUKES THE NATION FOR EMPTY FASTING THAT IS MERELY A FORMALITY WHILE THE ESSENCE OF FAITH IN GOD — JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS — IS NEGLECTED. SUCH FASTING IS WORSE THAN USELESS.

A VIEW FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

Here is an unedited list of references to fasting from the New Testament with brief comments about what we can learn about fasting from these references.

- *"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him."* (Matthew 4:1-3)

BEFORE JESUS LAUNCHED INTO HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY, HE WENT TO THE DESERT FOR 40 DAYS TO PRAY AND FAST. THIS REMINDS US OF MOSES' 40 DAYS ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH GOD, AS WELL AS THE ISRAELITES' 40 YEARS OF WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS BEFORE ARRIVING IN THE PROMISED LAND OF CANAAN.

- *"When you fast..."* (Matthew 6:16-17)

IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT JESUS TAKES FOR GRANTED THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WILL FAST, JUST AS THEY WILL GIVE AND PRAY (6:2, 5). HE DOES NOT SAY, 'IF' YOU FAST OR YOU 'MUST' FAST. IT SEEMS THAT THE FASTING IS INCLUDED WITH GIVING AND PRAYER UNDER THE HEADING 'ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS' (6:1). THESE ARE PRACTICES WE SHOULD LIVE BY, BUT NOT IN A LEGALISTIC WAY LIKE THE PHARISEE, WHOSE AIM WAS RECOGNITION BY OTHERS FOR THESE THINGS.

- *"Then John's disciples came and asked him [Jesus], 'How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?' Jesus answered, 'How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.'" (Matthew 9:14-15)*

JESUS IS NOT SAYING THAT HIS FOLLOWERS SHOULD NOT FAST, BUT THAT THE TIMING IS NOT RIGHT FOR FASTING WHILE HE IS ON EARTH. WHEN HE LEAVES, FASTING WILL BE APPROPRIATE.

- *"For three days he [Paul] was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."* (Acts 9:9)

AGAIN, AN EXAMPLE OF AN ABSOLUTE FAST IN THE FACE OF CATAclysmic CIRCUMSTANCES. PAUL (THEN 'SAUL') HAD JUST ENCOUNTERED THE GLORIFIED JESUS ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS; HIS LIFE WAS NEVER THE SAME.

- *"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.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."* (Acts 13:2)

THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH WERE GATHERED IN WORSHIP. FASTING HERE IS NOT CLEARLY A RESPONSE TO ANYTHING, OTHER THAN POSSIBLY A REPORT BY BARNABAS AND SAUL TO THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM. PERHAPS IT IS A RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR CLARITY ON NEXT STEPS.

- *"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."* (Acts 14:23)

AS WITH THE EXAMPLE FROM ANTIOCH, THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERSHIP WERE ESTABLISHED IN PRAYER AND FASTING.

IS FASTING ONLY ABOUT FOOD?

In the midst of all the posts on fasting, a few people have asked me if fasting is really all about abstinence from food or is it broader than that. I think this is an important question for us to consider within this whole topic.

Earlier we encountered the definition of fasting as "voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes." If we were to do a biblical study on fasting, we would find that fasting is always connected with physical abstinence from food.

Scot McKnight, in his excellent book *Fasting*, describes fasting as 'body language'. It is a physical way of responding to a sacred moment; of communicating to God our desire, grief, repentance, etc. The very physicality of skipping a meal, or meals, is a means of expressing to God our spiritual longing for Him.

A friend once observed this about fasting:

The physical response from my body when fasting from food reminds me of the purpose of my fast, that I need God. So if I'm to abstain from food, the only thing that can satisfy my need is God. Therefore I spend more time praying to God for the reason why I am fasting.

At the same time, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a renowned British pastor and teacher of the Bible from the 20th century, defined fasting in a much broader sense:

Fasting, if we conceive of it truly, must not only 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.

So, is fasting just related to food, or is it a broader self-denying “abstinence which is legitimate in and of itself”?

Although I agree with the direction of Lloyd-Jones’ thought, I would define what he calls fasting as self-denial or even simplicity. My view is that fasting has to do with food, not other things. I have not seen any connection between the term fasting and anything but food or liquids in the Bible. (The one exception to this is Isaiah 58 where fasting is connected with justice & righteousness.)

It is worth saying, though, that stepping back from other things that we give much time or energy to (e.g., TV, Facebook, work, shopping) can be helpful for our spiritual growth. However we categorize this (self-denial or a form of simplicity), I do not think of it strictly as fasting.

That being said, there are some folks for whom fasting as traditionally understood is not a realistic option because of health issues (e.g., diabetes, pregnancy). In cases like this, other forms of self-denial can be viewed as a viable substitute for fasting.

In the midst of these discussions, we do well not to get overly concerned with definitions and categories, but with the heart of the matter: putting ourselves in a place where God can truly transform us to be more like Jesus.

INSIGHTS FROM CHURCH HISTORY ON FASTING

Here are some words from the past two-thousand years about the topic of fasting. I found these words alternately challenging and inspiring.

- *The Didache*, a first century document relating core teaching of the early church, “prescribed two fast days a week: Wednesday and Friday” for early Christians; this was seen as a regular part of daily discipleship ⁷
- “Regular fasting was made obligatory at the Second Council of Orleans in the sixth century.” ⁸
- “Whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer.” – Jean Calvin, 16th century pastor and reformer ⁹
- “Constant propaganda fed us today convinces us that if we do not have three large meals each day, with several snacks in between, we are on the verge of starvation” –Richard Foster, 20th-21st century pastor and author ¹⁰
- “John Wesley sought to revive the teaching of the Didache and urged early Methodists to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. He felt so strongly about this matter, in fact, that he refused to ordain anyone to the Methodist ministry who did not fast on those two days.” ¹¹
- “Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it.” – John Wesley, 18th century pastor and author
- “First, let it [fasting] be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven.” –John Wesley, 18th century pastor and author ¹²

7. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 51.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Quoted in Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 165.

10. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 47.

11. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 51.

12. Quoted in Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 55.

- “The king of Britain called for a day of solemn prayer and fasting because of a threatened invasion by the French in 1756. On February 6 John Wesley recorded in his Journal, ‘The fast day was a glorious day, such as London has scarce seen since the Restoration. Every church in the city was more than full, and a solemn seriousness sat on every face. Surely God heareth prayer, and there will yet be a lengthening of our tranquility.’ In a footnote he wrote, ‘Humility was turned into national rejoicing for the threatened invasion by the French was averted.’”¹³
- “During the early days of our nation, Congress proclaimed three national fasts. Presidents John Adams and James Madison each called all Americans to fast, and Abraham Lincoln did so on three separate occasions during the War Between the States.”¹⁴
- “Fasting helps us to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain the Kingdom of God.” – Andrew Murray¹⁵

SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES ON FASTING

Here are some very practical guidelines on fasting that have been helpful for me from Adele Calhoun’s book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*:¹⁶

- Don’t fast when you are sick, traveling, pregnant or nursing. People with diabetes, gout, liver disease, kidney disease, ulcers, hypoglycemia, cancer and blood diseases should not fast.
- Don’t fast if you are in a hurry and are fasting for immediate results regarding some decision. Fasting is not magic.
- Listen for a nudging from God to fast.
- Stay hydrated. Always drink plenty of water and fluids.
- If you are new to fasting, begin by fasting for one meal. Spend time with God that you would normally be eating.
- Work up to longer fasts. Don’t attempt prolonged fasts without guidance. Check with your doctor before attempting long periods of fasting.
- If you decide to fast regularly, give your body time to adjust to new rhythms of eating. You may feel more tired on days you fast. Adjust your responsibilities appropriately. (Expect your tongue to feel coated, and expect to have bad breath.)
- Begin a fast after supper. Fast until supper the next day. This way you miss two, rather than three, meals.
- Don’t break your fast with a huge meal. Eat small portions of food. The longer the fast, the more you need to break the fast gently.

CONCLUSION

So may we be people who fast and pray. May fasting draw us closer to God, who is our true source of strength. May our will be strengthened and our hearts be filled even as we feel our weakness and encounter our emptiness. In all things, may the spiritual practice of fasting bring God glory in His church and in our individual lives as disciples. May our heart cry be that of the psalmist:

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.*

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. (Psalm 42:1-2a)

13. Quoted in Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 50.

14. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 162.

15. Quoted in McKnight, *Fasting*, xviii.

16. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 220.

HOLY SATURDAY AT EASTBROOK

Holy Saturday is a day of reflection on a world without the hope of Christ's resurrection.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE ONLINE:

Join us on Saturday, April 3 for an on-demand service that you can watch at any time on Holy Saturday.

Find the service online at eastbrook.org/athome or
inside the Eastbrook App, available at eastbrook.org/app.



QUESTIONS?

Contact the Eastbrook Church Office, open Monday-Friday, 8 am-4 pm at 414.228.5220 or info@eastbrook.org.