



UNLOCK

Lent 2026
Prayer + Fasting Guide

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Introduction

Welcome to Lent

Welcome to the season of Lent - 40 days (plus Sundays) set apart to prepare our hearts for Easter. This ancient Christian practice invites us to walk with Jesus from his temptation in the wilderness to his triumph over death. Lent isn't about earning God's love through sacrifice; it's about making space to receive the love that's already ours in Christ.

At Orchard Church, we believe that spiritual disciplines like prayer and fasting are **means of grace**, practices that open us to God's transforming work in our lives. This guide will walk with you day by day, providing Scripture, prayer prompts, and an invitation to fast in ways that draw you closer to Jesus.

How to Use This Guide

Each day includes:

- **A Scripture passage** to read and reflect on
- **Brief context** to help you understand the passage
- **A breath prayer** to carry with you throughout the day
- **A reflection question** to help you apply what you've read
- **Space for notes** to journal your thoughts and prayers

We've organized the 46 days of Lent into six weekly themes that progress toward Holy Week. You can use this guide alone or discuss it with family, friends, or your Table Community.

Digital & Print Versions: This guide is available both online and in print. Feel free to use whichever format works best for you. If you're joining late, don't worry—jump in wherever we are and know that God meets you right where you are.

Why We Fast: A Wesleyan Perspective

Fasting is one of the oldest spiritual practices in the Christian tradition. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry (Matthew 4:1-11). He didn't say "if you fast" but "**when you fast**" (Matthew 6:16), assuming it would be a regular part of his followers' lives.

Fasting as a Means of Grace

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, understood fasting as a **means of grace**. These are practices that position us to receive God's transforming presence. Wesley himself fasted twice a week and encouraged early Methodists to do the same. He wrote that fasting serves several purposes:

1. **It humbles the soul before God.** Fasting reminds us of our dependence on God for everything—not just physical food, but spiritual nourishment.
2. **It creates space for prayer.** When we fast, we trade the time we'd spend eating (or scrolling, or shopping) for time with God. Our physical hunger becomes a reminder to seek God.
3. **It loosens the grip of our appetites.** We all have things we reach for instead of God—comfort foods, entertainment, approval, control. Fasting trains us to say "no" to lesser things so we can say "yes" to God.
4. **It aligns us with Christ's suffering.** Jesus fasted. He suffered. He chose self-denial out of love. When we fast, we participate—in a small way—in Christ's sacrificial love.

Fasting and Sanctification

In Wesleyan theology, **sanctification** is the process of being made holy, or of becoming more like Jesus in our thoughts, desires, and actions. Fasting doesn't earn God's favor, but it does cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work of transformation in us.

When we fast, we're saying: "God, I want you more than I want this. I'm making room for you to work in me." Over time, fasting shapes our desires. We begin to crave God's presence more than the things we're tempted to fill our lives with. We grow in self-control, one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Fasting also connects us to the global body of Christ and to those who are hungry—not by choice, but by circumstance. Our voluntary hunger can awaken compassion and move us to action on behalf of the marginalized.

Types of Fasts

Fasting doesn't have to mean giving up all food (though it can). There are many ways to fast, and the key is to choose something that will genuinely create space for God in your life. Here are some options:

Food Fasts

1. One Meal Per Week

Skip one meal each week (perhaps breakfast or lunch) and use that time to pray. This is a great beginner option.

2. Skip Lunch Daily

Fast from lunch each day during Lent. When noon rolls around, take a prayer walk or sit quietly with God instead of eating.

3. Fast Until Noon

Eat dinner and breakfast, but fast from after breakfast until noon each day. Use your morning hunger as a prompt to pray.

4. Daniel Fast

Eat only vegetables, fruits, and water (no meat, sweets, bread, or processed foods) for the entire 40 days. This is based on Daniel 1:8-16 and is a sustained, moderate fast.

5. One Day Per Week (Full Fast)

Choose one day each week to fast completely from food (water only). This is an advanced practice—please consult a doctor if you have any health concerns.

6. Partial Fast from Sweets/Caffeine

Give up desserts, sugar, coffee, or soda for Lent. When you crave them, turn to God instead.

Biblical Foundation: Jesus fasted (Matthew 4:2), taught about fasting (Matthew 6:16-18), and expected his followers to fast after he ascended (Mark 2:18-20). The early church fasted regularly (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23).

Technology & Media Fasts

- **Social Media:** Delete apps or log out for 40 days. Use the time you'd scroll for Scripture reading or prayer.
- **Streaming/TV:** Give up Netflix, YouTube, or other entertainment platforms.
- **News:** Fast from news consumption (besides essential updates) to reduce anxiety and make space for God's voice.
- **Phone:** Set specific phone-free hours each day (e.g., before 9am and after 8pm).

Biblical Foundation: "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless" (Psalm 101:3). Our attention is a gift—what we focus on shapes us.

Other Fasts

- **Shopping:** Only buy essentials for 40 days. Give what you would have spent to someone in need.
- **Complaining:** Fast from speaking negatively about others or your circumstances. Replace complaints with gratitude.

- **Comfort:** Take cold showers, sit in a hard chair, or sleep without a pillow—small discomforts that remind you to depend on God.
- **Busyness:** Say "no" to optional commitments and protect space for rest and prayer.

Beginner vs. Experienced Fasting

If you've never fasted before, start small. Choose one meal per week to skip, or give up one specific food (like sweets or coffee). The point isn't to be extreme, it's to create space for God.

If you've fasted before, consider a more sustained practice like the Daniel Fast, daily fasting until noon, or a full-day fast once per week. You might also combine multiple types of fasts (e.g., Daniel Fast + social media fast).

The Invitation: Choose **ONE thing to fast from for the entire 40 days.** This is your anchor fast—the primary way you're making space for God this Lent. Then, each week, you can add optional **weekly challenges** (suggested in each week's introduction) to deepen your practice.

For example:

- **40-Day Commitment:** Daniel Fast (vegetables, fruits, water only)
- **Week 2 Add-On:** Fast from criticism/judgment for 7 days
- **Week 4 Add-On:** Add a daily Lectio Divina practice

Important Health & Pastoral Notes

Please consult a doctor if you have any medical conditions, take medications, are pregnant or nursing, have a history of disordered eating, or have any concerns about fasting from food.

Eating Disorders: If you have a history of anorexia, bulimia, or other eating disorders, food fasting may not be healthy for you. Please consider fasting from technology, media, or other non-food items instead. Your health and wholeness matter to God and to us.

Listen to Your Body: Fasting should not endanger your health. If you feel faint, dizzy, or unwell, break your fast and eat. There's no shame in adjusting your fast to fit your body's needs.

Grace, Not Guilt: If you break your fast or forget, don't spiral into shame. Lent is about drawing near to God, not about perfection. Simply return to your practice the next day. God's love for you doesn't change based on your fasting performance.

Fasting Is Private: Jesus warned against fasting for show (Matthew 6:16-18). Don't announce your fast publicly or make a big deal about it. Fast quietly and let God reward you.

Let's Begin

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026. Over the next 46 days, we'll walk with Jesus from the wilderness to the cross, from the tomb to the resurrection. We'll fast, pray, and open ourselves to God's transforming grace.

This Lent, what will you fast from? What will you make space for?

Choose your 46-day commitment now. Write it down. Tell one trusted person. And then, day by day, step by step, let God meet you in the emptiness.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." — Psalm 51:10

How to Use the BREAD Method

Each day's Scripture reading in this guide follows the **BREAD method**—a simple, accessible way to read and meditate on God's Word. BREAD is an acronym that stands for:

B - Be Still

R - Read

E - Examine

A - Apply

D - Dwell

This method is designed to help you slow down and truly encounter God through Scripture, rather than rushing through a reading plan just to check a box.

B - Be Still (1-2 minutes)

Before you even open your Bible, **pause**. Take a few deep breaths. Quiet your mind. Acknowledge God's presence with you right now.

You might pray something simple like:

- "Lord, speak to me through Your Word today."
- "Open my eyes to see You."
- "I'm here. I'm listening."

The goal is to transition from the noise and busyness of your day into a posture of receptivity. God is already present—you're simply tuning in to notice.

R - Read (2-3 minutes)

Read the Scripture passage slowly. Read it once, then read it again. You might even read it out loud.

As you read:

- Notice words or phrases that stand out to you
- Pay attention to your emotional response—does something stir you, comfort you, convict you, or confuse you?
- Don't rush. Let the words sink in.

In this guide, we've provided **brief context** for each passage to help you understand what's happening. Use that context to orient yourself, but let the Scripture itself do the primary work.

E - Examine (2-3 minutes)

Now **examine the passage** more closely. Ask questions like:

- What is God revealing about himself in this passage?
- What is God revealing about me (or humanity)?
- What's the main point or invitation of this text?
- Is there a promise to believe, a command to obey, or a sin to confess?

This isn't about dissecting every verse or doing deep theological analysis. It's about curiosity and attentiveness. What is the Holy Spirit highlighting for you today?

In this guide, we've provided a **reflection question** to help guide your examination. But feel free to follow where the Spirit leads—your own questions and insights are just as valid.

A - Apply (2-3 minutes)

How does this passage connect to your life right now?

This is where Scripture moves from information to transformation. Ask:

- What is God saying to me today through this passage?
- How does this truth change the way I see my circumstances, relationships, or decisions?
- What's one concrete way I can live out this Scripture today?

Write down your thoughts in the **Notes** section. Be specific. For example:

- Instead of "I need to trust God more," write: "I'm going to stop checking my phone every 5 minutes to distract myself from my anxiety about work. When I feel anxious, I'll pray the breath prayer instead."

Application doesn't have to be big or dramatic. Small, faithful steps add up.

D - Dwell (Throughout the day)

Carry the Scripture and the breath prayer with you. Let it simmer in your heart and mind throughout the day.

Each daily reading includes a **breath prayer**—a short phrase you can pray in rhythm with your breathing. Use it:

- When you're stuck in traffic
- When you're waiting in line
- When you wake up in the middle of the night
- When you feel anxious, angry, or distracted

The breath prayer helps you **dwell** in God's Word all day long, not just during your morning quiet time. It sanctifies the ordinary moments and keeps you tethered to God's presence.

You might also memorize the key verse from the day's reading or set a phone reminder to pause and pray at noon or before bed.

Putting It All Together

The BREAD method takes about **10-15 minutes total**, but the impact lasts all day. It's less about speed and more about depth. You're not trying to "get through" the Bible, you're trying to let the Bible get through to you.

A note on time: If 10-15 minutes feels like too much right now, start with 5. Be consistent rather than ambitious. God honors our small, faithful steps.

A note on distraction: Your mind will wander. That's normal. When it does, gently bring your attention back to the Scripture. Some days will feel rich and alive; other days will feel dry. Show up anyway. God is at work even when you don't feel it.

Example: Using the BREAD Method

Let's walk through an example using Day 2's reading:

B - Be Still

Take three deep breaths. Pray: "Lord, I'm here. Speak to me."

R - Read

Read Matthew 4:1-11 slowly, twice.

E - Examine

Notice: Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He fasted for 40 days. He was tempted to use his power for comfort, spectacle, and control. Each time, he responded with Scripture: "It is written..."

Reflection question: What am I hungry for besides food? What "bread" am I tempted to reach for instead of reaching for God?

A - Apply

I realize I reach for my phone and social media when I'm bored or anxious—it's my "comfort bread." During this Lent, when I feel that urge, I'm going to pause and pray the breath prayer instead of scrolling.

D - Dwell

Throughout the day, pray: "Not by bread alone / But by every word of God." When I reach for my phone, I'll breathe this prayer and ask: What am I really hungry for right now?

Now you're ready to begin your Lenten journey.

Let's start with **Week 1: The Call to Follow.**

WEEK 1: THE CALL TO FOLLOW

February 18-21, 2026 (4 days)

Theme: Letting go to follow Jesus

This week, we begin our Lenten journey by following Jesus into the wilderness. Just as Jesus fasted for 40 days, we're invited to let go of the things we cling to and make space to hear God's call.

Your 40-Day Commitment: This week, finalize your primary fast for all of Lent. What is the one thing you're committing to fast from for 40 days? Write it down. Tell one trusted person. And begin on Ash Wednesday.

Weekly Fast Challenge (Optional): Fast from Distraction & Multitasking

Our culture glorifies busyness and constant stimulation. We check our phones while talking to our kids. We listen to podcasts while cooking. We scroll while watching TV. This week, practice doing **one thing at a time**.

Practical Steps:

- When you're with someone, be fully present—put your phone away, make eye contact, listen without planning your response
- When you eat, just eat (no phone, TV, or computer)
- When you pray, just pray (resist the urge to multitask)
- When you drive, drive in silence—no podcast, music, or phone calls

Why this matters: Distraction fragments our souls. God speaks in the quiet, focused moments. When we're always splitting our attention, we miss his voice. This week, practice the holy discipline of presence.

Reflection: What is God saying to you as you begin this journey? What are you most afraid to let go of?

Day 1 - Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 6:16-18

Context: Jesus doesn't say "if you fast" but "when you fast"—he assumes his followers will practice this discipline. But he warns against fasting for show. True fasting is between you and God, done in secret, and God sees and rewards what is hidden.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Not for show"

Exhale: "But for You alone"

Reflect: What are you hoping to receive from God during this season of Lent? How might fasting create space for that?

Notes:

Day 2 - Thursday, February 19, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

Context: Immediately after his baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days. There, Satan tempts him to abandon his calling—to use his power for comfort, spectacle, and worldly success. Jesus shows us that fasting isn't just about food—it's about depending completely on God and his Word.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Not by bread alone"

Exhale: "But by every word of God"

Reflect: What am I hungry for besides food? What "bread" am I tempted to reach for instead of reaching for God?

Notes:

Day 3 - Friday, February 20, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

Context: Before Jesus begins his public ministry, he goes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. Though Jesus has no sin to repent of, he identifies with sinful humanity and receives the Father's blessing: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Fasting follows this moment of identity and belovedness.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I am beloved"

Exhale: "In You I am enough"

Reflect: Do I know—deep in my bones—that I am God's beloved child? How might fasting help me receive this truth more fully?

Notes:

Day 4 - Saturday, February 21, 2026

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Context: Peter has fished all night and caught nothing. Jesus tells him to go back out and try again. Peter obeys—and the nets are filled to breaking. When Peter sees this miracle, he's overwhelmed by his own sinfulness. But Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. From now on you will fish for people." Peter leaves everything and follows.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You call me"

Exhale: "I will follow"

Reflect: What is Jesus asking me to leave behind to follow him more fully? What nets am I clinging to?

Notes:

WEEK 2: THE HEART OF COMPASSION

February 22-28, 2026 (7 days)

Theme: Cultivating compassion through sacrifice

This week, we walk with Jesus as he touches lepers, dines with sinners, and welcomes the outcast. Fasting isn't just about self-denial—it's about making space in our hearts for others. When we fast, we open ourselves to feel what others feel, to see what God sees.

Weekly Fast Challenge (Optional): Fast from Judgment & Criticism

For one week, commit to not speaking (or thinking, if possible) negatively about others. This includes:

- Complaining about people
- Gossiping or critiquing others behind their backs
- Making harsh judgments about strangers (drivers, politicians, celebrities, etc.)
- Criticizing your family members or coworkers
- Inner negative commentary about people you encounter

Practical Steps:

- When you catch yourself about to criticize someone, pause and pray for them instead
- Replace criticism with curiosity: "I wonder what they're going through that would make them act that way?"
- Practice the "24-hour rule": Wait 24 hours before saying anything negative about someone
- If you slip up, confess it quickly and try again

Why this matters: Jesus looked at crowds with compassion, not contempt (Matthew 9:36). When we fast from judgment, we make space for empathy. We begin to see people as Jesus sees them—beloved, broken, and worth dying for.

Reflection: Who do I most often criticize or judge? What would it look like to see them through Jesus' eyes of compassion?

Day 5 - Sunday, February 22, 2026

Scripture: Mark 1:40-45

Context: A man with leprosy—an outcast, considered unclean and untouchable—kneels before Jesus and begs, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus does the unthinkable: he reaches out and touches him. "I am willing," Jesus says. "Be clean!" Compassion moves Jesus to break social boundaries and restore dignity.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You reach out"

Exhale: "And touch the untouchable"

Reflect: Who are the "untouchables" in my world—the people I avoid or dismiss? How is Jesus inviting me to reach out with compassion?

Notes:

Day 6 - Monday, February 23, 2026

Scripture: Luke 5:27-32

Context: Jesus calls Levi, a despised tax collector, to follow him. Levi throws a great banquet, and Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees are scandalized. But Jesus says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Jesus doesn't distance himself from "those people"—he invites himself to their table.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You welcome sinners"

Exhale: "You welcome me"

Reflect: Do I see myself as a sinner in need of grace, or as someone who has it all together? Who are the "sinners" I look down on?

Notes:

Day 7 - Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38

Context: Jesus travels through towns and villages, teaching, preaching, and healing. When he sees the crowds, he doesn't see a burden or an interruption—he sees sheep without a shepherd. He feels compassion in his gut. And he tells his disciples to pray for more workers, because the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Give me Your eyes"

Exhale: "To see with compassion"

Reflect: When I look at people around me—especially those who are difficult or demanding—do I see them with compassion? What would it look like to pray for them instead of judging them?

Notes:

Day 8 - Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Scripture: Luke 7:11-17

Context: Jesus encounters a funeral procession. A widow's only son has died. In that culture, she has now lost everything—her security, her future, her hope. Jesus sees her and his heart breaks. "Don't cry," he says. Then he stops the funeral, touches the coffin (making himself unclean), and raises the son back to life. Compassion moves Jesus to restore what was lost.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You see my pain"

Exhale: "And You restore"

Reflect: Where am I grieving or feeling hopeless right now? How might Jesus be inviting me to trust him with what feels dead or lost?

Notes:

Day 9 - Thursday, February 26, 2026

Scripture: Mark 5:21-34

Context: A woman who has been bleeding for 12 years—unclean, untouchable, broke from medical expenses—reaches out in a crowd and touches Jesus' cloak. Jesus stops everything. He doesn't let her slink away anonymously healed. He calls her "daughter" and honors her faith publicly. Compassion doesn't just heal bodies—it restores dignity.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You see me"

Exhale: "You call me daughter/son"

Reflect: Have I ever felt invisible, unclean, or unworthy of love? How does Jesus' response to this woman change the way I see myself—and others who feel unseen?

Notes:

Day 10 - Friday, February 27, 2026

Scripture: John 4:4-26

Context: Jesus travels through Samaria—a place Jews avoided because Samaritans were considered heretics and enemies. He asks a Samaritan woman for water. She's shocked. But Jesus offers her "living water," which is eternal life. Despite her complicated past (five husbands, now living with a man who isn't her husband), Jesus doesn't condemn her. He sees her, speaks truth, and offers grace.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You cross boundaries"

Exhale: "To offer living water"

Reflect: What boundaries (racial, social, political) keep me from extending compassion? Who are the "Samaritans" in my life that I avoid or dismiss?

Notes:

Day 11 - Saturday, February 28, 2026

Scripture: Luke 15:1-7

Context: The Pharisees criticize Jesus for welcoming sinners and eating with them. So Jesus tells a parable: A shepherd has 100 sheep. One goes missing. What does he do? He leaves the 99 and searches for the one until he finds it. Then he rejoices. God's compassion pursues the lost, the wandering, the one who feels far away.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You pursue me"

Exhale: "You rejoice over me"

Reflect: Have I ever felt lost or far from God? How does it change me to know that God leaves the 99 to come find me?

Notes:

WEEK 3: THE WAY OF HUMILITY

March 1-7, 2026 (7 days)

Theme: Humility through self-denial

This week, we watch Jesus wash his disciples' feet, welcome little children, and teach that the greatest must become the servant of all. Fasting trains us in humility—it reminds us that we are not self-sufficient, that we need God for everything, even our daily bread.

Weekly Fast Challenge (Optional): Fast from Comfort

For one week, embrace small physical discomforts as a reminder of your dependence on God. This isn't about punishing yourself—it's about loosening the grip of your need for ease and control.

Practical Steps (choose one or more):

- Take cold showers this week
- Sit in a hard chair instead of your comfortable couch when praying or reading Scripture
- Sleep without a pillow (or with fewer blankets than you'd like)
- Walk or bike instead of driving when possible, even if it's less convenient
- Skip your morning coffee or tea (if you haven't already as part of your 40-day fast)
- Set your thermostat a bit cooler than you'd prefer

Why this matters: We live in a culture that idolizes comfort. We curate our environments to avoid any inconvenience or discomfort. But Jesus chose discomfort out of love for us. Small physical discomforts this week can become reminders: "I don't need perfect comfort. I need Jesus."

Reflection: Where am I most attached to comfort and control? What am I afraid will happen if I let go of it?

Day 12 - Sunday, March 1, 2026

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11

Context: Paul describes the mind of Christ: Though Jesus was God, he didn't cling to his divine privileges. Instead, he emptied himself, took on human flesh, and humbled himself to the point of death—even death on a cross. Because of this, God exalted him and gave him the name above all names. Humility leads to glory.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Empty me, Lord"

Exhale: "Fill me with Your love"

Reflect: Where am I clinging to my own status, rights, or reputation? What would it look like to have the same mindset as Christ?

Notes:

Day 13 - Monday, March 2, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 20:20-28

Context: The mother of James and John asks Jesus to let her sons sit at his right and left in his kingdom. The other disciples are indignant. But Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Not to be served"

Exhale: "But to serve"

Reflect: Am I more focused on being recognized or on serving others? Where is God inviting me to serve without seeking credit or applause?

Notes:

Day 14 - Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Scripture: John 13:1-17

Context: It's the night before Jesus dies. He gathers his disciples for a final meal. And then—shockingly—he takes off his outer robe, wraps a towel around his waist, and begins washing their feet. This is a slave's job. Peter protests, but Jesus insists: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." True greatness, Jesus shows us, looks like service.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Make me low"

Exhale: "Like You, O Lord"

Reflect: Where am I clinging to status, recognition, or the need to be right? What would it look like for me to "wash someone's feet" this week?

Notes:

Day 15 - Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Scripture: Luke 14:7-11

Context: Jesus is at a dinner party and notices how guests are jockeying for the seats of honor. So, he tells a parable: When you're invited to a banquet, don't take the place of honor. Someone more important might arrive, and you'll be humiliated. Instead, take the lowest place. Then the host will invite you to move up higher. "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I take the lowest place"

Exhale: "You lift me up"

Reflect: Where do I seek honor, recognition, or the best seat? What would it look like to choose humility instead?

Notes:

Day 16 - Thursday, March 5, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 18:1-5

Context: The disciples are arguing about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus calls a little child over and says, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom." Children have no status, no power, no credentials. They only have dependence and trust. That's what the kingdom requires.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I come as a child"

Exhale: "Dependent on You"

Reflect: In what areas of my life am I striving to prove myself or be seen as great? What would it mean to approach God—and others—with childlike humility?

Notes:

Day 17 - Friday, March 6, 2026

Scripture: Mark 10:13-16

Context: People are bringing little children to Jesus so he can touch and bless them. But the disciples rebuke them—don't bother the Teacher with children! Jesus is indignant. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Then he takes the children in his arms and blesses them.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I come to You"

Exhale: "As a child, beloved"

Reflect: Do I believe that I belong in Jesus' arms, or do I feel like I need to earn my way there? What would it mean to receive God's blessing like a child?

Notes:

Day 18 - Saturday, March 7, 2026

Scripture: Luke 22:24-27

Context: Even at the Last Supper, the disciples are arguing about which of them is the greatest. Jesus says, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; but you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. I am among you as one who serves."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Teach me to serve"

Exhale: "Like You, my Lord"

Reflect: Why is it so hard to let go of my need to be seen as important? How might God be inviting me to serve in ways that no one will notice or applaud?

Notes:

WEEK 4: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

March 8-14, 2026 (7 days)

Theme: Prayer and fasting together

This week, we explore Jesus' prayer life—how he prayed before dawn, all night before big decisions, and constantly throughout his ministry. Jesus taught that some things only happen through prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). The two practices go hand in hand.

Weekly Fast Challenge (Optional): Add a Contemplative Prayer Practice

Don't just fast this week, add a specific prayer practice to your daily rhythm. Fasting creates space; now fill that space intentionally with God's presence.

Practical Steps (choose one):

Option 1: Lectio Divina (10-15 minutes)

- Read the day's Scripture passage slowly four times
- First reading: Listen for a word or phrase that stands out
- Second reading: Reflect on why that word resonates with you
- Third reading: Respond to God in prayer about what you've heard
- Fourth reading: Rest in God's presence, saying nothing

Option 2: Breath Prayer (Throughout the day)

- Use the daily breath prayer from this guide, or create your own
- Set hourly reminders on your phone to pause and pray
- Pray the breath prayer whenever you feel anxious, angry, or distracted

Option 3: Prayer Walk (15-20 minutes)

- Walk outside without headphones or distractions
- Notice what you see—trees, sky, people—and turn each observation into prayer
- Thank God for his creation; pray for the people you pass

Option 4: Silence & Solitude (10-20 minutes)

- Sit in a quiet place with no phone, book, or other distractions
- Set a timer so you don't worry about the clock
- Simply be present with God—no agenda, no words, just presence
- When your mind wanders (it will), gently return your attention to God

Why this matters: Prayer is conversation with God, and like any relationship, it requires intentional time and attention. This week, don't just fast from something—feast on God's presence through prayer.

Reflection: What keeps me from praying more? What would it take to make prayer a priority, not just an afterthought?

Day 19 - Sunday, March 8, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Context: Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. Don't pray like the hypocrites who love to be seen. Don't babble like the pagans who think they'll be heard for their many words. Instead, pray simply and sincerely. Then he teaches them the Lord's Prayer—a model for all our prayers. Prayer is intimate conversation with our Father.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Our Father"

Exhale: "Hear my prayer"

Reflect: Do I pray to be seen by others, or to be heard by God? What does it mean for me to pray "Our Father" instead of "My Father"?

Notes:

Day 20 - Monday, March 9, 2026

Scripture: Mark 1:35-39

Context: Jesus has just healed many people the night before—the whole town gathered at the door. He could have kept going, riding the wave of popularity. But instead, very early in the morning, while it's still dark, Jesus goes off alone to pray. When the disciples find him and say, "Everyone is looking for you," Jesus says, "Let's go somewhere else." Prayer, not applause, directs his mission.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "In the quiet"

Exhale: "I hear Your voice"

Reflect: Do I make time to be alone with God before the demands of the day rush in? What would it take to create a "very early in the morning" rhythm of prayer?

Notes:

Day 21 - Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Context: The disciples ask Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." So, he teaches them a simple prayer, then tells a parable about a friend who keeps knocking on a door at midnight until his neighbor gets up and gives him bread. The point: Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking. God is not annoyed by our persistence—he welcomes it.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I ask, seek, knock"

Exhale: "You answer, God"

Reflect: Do I pray with confidence that God hears me and will answer? Or do I give up too quickly? What am I asking God for right now?

Notes:

Day 22 - Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33

Context: After feeding the 5,000, Jesus sends his disciples across the lake while he goes up on a mountainside to pray. A storm comes, and the disciples are terrified. Jesus walks out to them on the water. Peter steps out in faith but begins to sink when he takes his eyes off Jesus. Jesus catches him. Prayer keeps us focused on Jesus in the storms.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Keep my eyes on You"

Exhale: "In the storm, Lord"

Reflect: What storms am I facing right now? Am I trying to face them on my own, or am I keeping my eyes on Jesus and crying out for help?

Notes:

Day 23 - Thursday, March 12, 2026

Scripture: Luke 6:12-16

Context: Jesus is about to choose his twelve apostles—a decision that will shape his entire ministry and the future of the church. What does he do? He goes up on a mountainside and spends the entire night in prayer. Big decisions require extended time with God. Prayer is not just a quick checklist item—it's deep communion with the Father.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I seek Your will"

Exhale: "Not my own"

Reflect: When I face big decisions, do I rush ahead or do I take time to pray and seek God's will? What decision am I facing right now that requires more prayer?

Notes:

Day 24 - Friday, March 13, 2026

Scripture: John 17:1-26

Context: On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus prays—not for himself, but for his disciples and for all who will believe through their message. He prays for unity, for protection from evil, for joy, and for the world to know God's love. This is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus, and it shows us his heart: he prays for us.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Jesus prays for me"

Exhale: "I am held in His love"

Reflect: What does it mean to know that Jesus prays for me? How does that shape the way I pray for others?

Notes:

Day 25 - Saturday, March 14, 2026

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8

Context: Jesus tells a parable about a persistent widow who keeps coming to an unjust judge demanding justice. The judge finally gives in—not because he cares, but because she won't give up. Jesus' point: If an unjust judge will respond to persistence, how much more will our loving Father hear and answer our prayers? Don't give up praying.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I will not give up"

Exhale: "You hear my cry"

Reflect: Have I given up praying for something or someone? What would it look like to persist in prayer, trusting that God hears and cares?

Notes:

WEEK 5: THE COST OF LOVE

March 15-21, 2026 (7 days)

Theme: Sacrifice as an expression of love

This week, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem. He knows what's coming—betrayal, suffering, death. But he goes anyway, because love requires sacrifice. "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Weekly Fast Challenge (Optional): Fast from Something You Love & Give Sacrificially

This week, identify something you genuinely love—not just something convenient to give up—and fast from it. Then, take what you would have spent (time, money, energy) and give it away sacrificially.

Practical Steps:

If your 40-day fast is food-related:

- Calculate how much money you're saving by fasting from certain meals or foods
- Give that money to someone in need, a local food pantry, or a missions organization

If your 40-day fast is technology-related:

- Calculate the hours you're saving by not scrolling social media or watching TV
- Spend that time serving someone—babysit for a single parent, visit someone who's lonely, volunteer at a shelter

Other ideas:

- Fast from your favorite hobby this week and use that time to mentor someone or help a neighbor
- Fast from shopping and give what you would have spent to a cause you care about
- Fast from entertainment and invest in someone else's joy—plan something special for your spouse, kids, or a friend

Why this matters: Fasting isn't ultimately about self-improvement—it's about love. Jesus didn't fast to become a better version of himself; he sacrificed himself out of love for us. This week, let your fasting become an act of love toward others.

Reflection: What do I love that I'm afraid to give up? How might sacrificing something I love help me understand Jesus' love for me?

Day 26 - Sunday, March 15, 2026

Scripture: John 15:9-17

Context: Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death. He tells them, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." Then he says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Love is not just a feeling—it's a willingness to sacrifice everything.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You laid down Your life"

Exhale: "For love of me"

Reflect: What does it mean that Jesus calls me his friend? What would it look like for me to lay down my life—my time, comfort, preferences—out of love for others?

Notes:

Day 27 - Monday, March 16, 2026

Scripture: Mark 8:31-38

Context: Jesus begins to teach his disciples that he must suffer, be rejected, and be killed—and then rise again. Peter rebukes him. "Never, Lord!" But Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then he says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I take up my cross"

Exhale: "And follow You"

Reflect: What does it mean for me to "take up my cross"? What is Jesus asking me to deny or surrender in order to follow him?

Notes:

Day 28 - Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Scripture: Luke 14:25-33

Context: Large crowds are following Jesus, and he turns to them with a hard word: "Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." He tells parables about counting the cost—building a tower, going to war. Following Jesus isn't casual. It requires everything. But Jesus himself has already counted the cost for us.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I count the cost"

Exhale: "And choose You, Lord"

Reflect: What is my formation costing me right now? Am I holding anything back from Jesus?

Notes:

Day 29 - Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-26

Context: Jesus predicts his death for the first time. Peter pulls him aside and says, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" But Jesus rebukes him sharply. Then he teaches: "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." The way to life is through death. The way to gain is through loss.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I lose my life"

Exhale: "To find it in You"

Reflect: What am I trying to save or protect that God is asking me to release? How might losing my life lead to finding true life in Christ?

Notes:

Day 30 - Thursday, March 19, 2026

Scripture: John 12:23-26

Context: Jesus says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." But glory, in Jesus' kingdom, looks like death. "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Death leads to life. Sacrifice leads to fruitfulness. This is the way of the cross.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I die to self"

Exhale: "And live in You"

Reflect: What needs to die in me so that new life can grow? What seed is God asking me to release into the ground?

Notes:

Day 31 - Friday, March 20, 2026

Scripture: Mark 10:32-45

Context: Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem. The disciples are astonished and afraid—they sense something momentous is about to happen. Jesus takes the Twelve aside and predicts his death for the third time. Then James and John ask to sit at his right and left in glory. Jesus says, "Can you drink the cup I drink?" They don't understand. The cup is suffering. The path to glory goes through the cross.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I will drink the cup"

Exhale: "You give me, Lord"

Reflect: Am I willing to share in Christ's sufferings? What does it mean for me to "drink the cup" Jesus offers?

Notes:

Day 32 - Saturday, March 21, 2026

Scripture: Luke 9:51-56

Context: "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." He knows what's coming—betrayal, suffering, death. But he doesn't turn back. He sets his face toward Jerusalem with determination. Love requires courage. Sacrifice requires resolve. Jesus chooses the cross out of love for us.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Give me courage"

Exhale: "To follow You"

Reflect: What would it look like for me to "resolutely set out" toward the hard thing God is calling me to do? Where do I need courage to love sacrificially?

Notes:

WEEKS 6 + 7: THE JOURNEY TO THE CROSS & HOLY WEEK

March 22-April 4, 2026 (14 days)

Theme: Walking with Jesus through his final days

These are the weeks where everything culminates. We've fasted, prayed, and walked with Jesus for five weeks. Now we prepare to enter the holiest week of the Christian year, the week when Jesus enters Jerusalem, cleanses the temple, shares a final meal with his disciples, prays in the garden, and goes to the cross.

Weekly Fast Challenge: Intensify Your Primary Fast

Don't add something new these two weeks. Instead, **deepen your commitment** to the fast you've been practicing for 40 days. Here are some ways to intensify:

If you've been fasting from food:

- Add a full-day fast (water only) on Good Friday
- Fast from all screens during meals this week to focus on Jesus' suffering
- Skip breakfast and lunch on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday

If you've been fasting from technology:

- Go completely phone-free from Maundy Thursday evening through Good Friday evening (except for emergencies)
- Delete social media apps for the entire week, not just avoiding them
- Unplug your TV and don't turn it back on until Easter morning

If you've been fasting from other things:

- Double down on your commitment—if you've been fasting from complaining, also fast from defensiveness or excuses this week
- If you've been fasting from shopping, also fast from browsing or window shopping
- If you've been fasting from caffeine, add a fast from sugar this week

Why this matters: Holy Week is not business as usual. Jesus didn't casually stroll to the cross—he resolutely set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing what awaited him. This week, we walk with him intentionally, soberly, and with full attention. Don't coast to the finish line. Enter fully into the mystery of Christ's suffering and sacrifice.

Special Practice for Good Friday:

- If at all possible, fast completely from food on Good Friday (water only)
- Spend time between noon and 3pm (the hours Jesus hung on the cross) in prayer, silence, or reading the Passion narrative
- Resist the urge to fill the silence with distraction—sit with the weight of what Jesus did for you

Reflection: What has this Lenten journey revealed to me about myself? About God? How has fasting and prayer changed me? As I walk toward the cross this week, what is Jesus inviting me to lay down at his feet?

Day 33 - Sunday, March 22, 2026

Scripture: John 12:1-11

Context: Six days before Passover, Jesus comes to Bethany where Lazarus lives—the man Jesus raised from the dead. Mary takes expensive perfume, pours it on Jesus' feet, and wipes his feet with her hair. The house is filled with fragrance. Judas complains about the waste. But Jesus says, "Leave her alone. She has done a beautiful thing. She is preparing me for burial." Extravagant love prepares for extravagant sacrifice.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I give You everything"

Exhale: "You are worth it all"

Reflect: Am I holding anything back from Jesus? What would it look like for me to love him extravagantly, without calculating the cost?

Notes:

Day 34 - Monday, March 23, 2026

Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

Context: Jesus sends two disciples ahead to find a colt—a young donkey—for him to ride. This is a deliberate, prophetic act fulfilling Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey." Jesus is claiming to be Israel's king, but not the kind of king they expect. He comes in humility, not military might.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You are my King"

Exhale: "Humble and lowly"

Reflect: What kind of king do I want Jesus to be? Am I willing to follow a king who rides a donkey instead of a warhorse?

Notes:

Day 35 - Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

Context: Jesus enters Jerusalem. The crowds spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Hosanna means "save us now"—they're hoping Jesus will overthrow Rome and restore Israel's kingdom. But Jesus has come to save them from something far deeper than political oppression. He's come to save them from sin and death.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Hosanna, save us"

Exhale: "King Jesus, come"

Reflect: Do I want Jesus to be the kind of king I expect—or am I willing to follow the king he actually is?

Notes:

Day 36 - Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 21:12-17

Context: Jesus enters the temple and is enraged by what he sees: merchants selling animals at inflated prices, money changers exploiting the poor. He overturns tables and drives them out, quoting Scripture: "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers!" Then the blind and lame come to him in the temple, and he heals them. Jesus confronts corruption and restores what the temple was meant to be.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Cleanse my heart"

Exhale: "Make it Your home"

Reflect: What needs to be overturned in my life? What has taken God's place in the temple of my heart?

Notes:

Day 37 - Thursday, March 26, 2026

Scripture: Mark 11:20-25

Context: The next morning, Peter notices the fig tree Jesus cursed the day before. It has withered from the roots. Jesus uses this moment to teach about faith and prayer: "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and do not doubt, it will be done." Then he adds, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "I believe, help my unbelief"

Exhale: "I forgive as You forgive"

Reflect: Is there unforgiveness in my heart blocking my prayers? Who do I need to forgive?

Notes:

Day 38 - Friday, March 27, 2026

Scripture: Luke 20:1-8

Context: The religious leaders confront Jesus in the temple: "By what authority are you doing these things?" They're trying to trap him. If he says "God's authority," they'll accuse him of blasphemy. If he says "my own," they'll dismiss him. Jesus answers with a question: "Was John's baptism from heaven or from human origin?" They can't answer without incriminating themselves. Jesus refuses to play their game.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You are Lord"

Exhale: "I trust Your authority"

Reflect: Do I question Jesus' authority in my life? What areas am I still trying to control instead of surrendering to him?

Notes:

Day 39 - Saturday, March 28, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 21:28-32

Context: Jesus tells a parable about two sons. A father asks both to work in the vineyard. The first says no but later changes his mind and goes. The second says yes but never goes. Jesus asks, "Which one did the will of his father?" The religious leaders answer correctly: the first. Then Jesus says, "Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." Obedience matters more than empty words.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Not just words"

Exhale: "But obedience, Lord"

Reflect: Do I say yes to Jesus but then go my own way? Where is God calling me to move from words to action?

Notes:

Day 40 - Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026

Scripture: John 12:12-19

Context: The next day, the great crowd that had come for the festival hears that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. They take palm branches and go out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!" Jesus enters the city riding on a young donkey. The Pharisees say to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Blessed is the King"

Exhale: "Who comes in God's name"

Reflect: The same crowds who shout "Hosanna!" will soon shout "Crucify him!" Am I a fair-weather follower, or will I stay faithful when following Jesus becomes costly?

Notes:

Day 41 - Monday, March 30, 2026

Scripture: Mark 14:1-9

Context: It's now two days before Passover. The chief priests and teachers of the law are looking for a way to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. Meanwhile, at Bethany, a woman pours expensive perfume on Jesus' head. Some are indignant at the waste, but Jesus defends her: "She has done a beautiful thing to me. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "While darkness plots"

Exhale: "Love pours out freely"

Reflect: Do I see the darkness closing in around Jesus? Amid betrayal and death, what does it mean to offer love extravagantly?

Notes:

Day 42 - Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 26:14-16

Context: Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" They counted out thirty pieces of silver—the price of a slave. From then on, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over. Betrayal is brewing.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Guard my heart"

Exhale: "From betrayal, Lord"

Reflect: What leads Judas to betray Jesus? Is there anything in my life—disappointment, greed, pride—that could lead me to turn away from Jesus?

Notes:

Day 43 - Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Scripture: Luke 22:7-13

Context: The day of Unleavened Bread arrives, when the Passover lamb must be sacrificed. Jesus sends Peter and John ahead: "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." They ask, "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" Jesus gives them detailed instructions, and everything happens just as he said. The stage is being set for the Last Supper—Jesus' final meal with his disciples before he becomes the Passover Lamb.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "You are the Lamb"

Exhale: "Slain for me"

Reflect: What does it mean that Jesus is the Passover Lamb? How does his sacrifice set me free?

Notes:

Day 44 - Maundy Thursday, April 2, 2026

Scripture: John 13:21-38

Context: At the Last Supper, Jesus is troubled in spirit and says, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." The disciples are bewildered. Jesus dips bread and gives it to Judas, saying, "What you are about to do, do quickly." Judas leaves to betray him. Then Jesus tells Peter, "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But even in betrayal and denial, Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "Even when I fail"

Exhale: "You love me still"

Reflect: Have I ever betrayed or denied Jesus? How does his love remain constant even when I fall short?

Notes:

Day 45 - Good Friday, April 3, 2026

Scripture: Luke 23:32-49

Context: Two criminals are crucified with Jesus, one on his right and one on his left. One mocks him, but the other says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replies, "Today you will be with me in paradise." From noon until three, darkness covers the land. Jesus cries out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," and breathes his last. The centurion praises God, saying, "Surely this was a righteous man."

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "By Your wounds"

Exhale: "I am healed"

Reflect: What did it cost Jesus to save me? How does the cross change everything?

Notes:

Day 46 - Holy Saturday, April 4, 2026

Scripture: Matthew 27:57-66

Context: As evening approaches, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy disciple, asks Pilate for Jesus' body. He wraps it in clean linen and places it in his own new tomb cut out of rock. He rolls a big stone in front of the entrance. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sit opposite the tomb. The chief priests and Pharisees post guards to make sure no one steals the body. And then... silence. Saturday is the day of waiting.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "In the silence"

Exhale: "I wait for You"

Reflect: Have I ever felt the silence of Holy Saturday—when God seems absent and hope feels lost? How does knowing Sunday is coming change the way I endure Saturday?

Notes:

EASTER SUNDAY, April 5, 2026

Scripture: John 20:1-18

Context: Early on the first day of the week, while it is still dark, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and sees that the stone has been removed. She runs to tell Peter and John. They race to the tomb and find it empty—only the burial cloths remain. Mary stays at the tomb weeping. Then Jesus appears to her and says, "Mary." She recognizes him immediately: "Rabboni!" (Teacher). Jesus tells her, "Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: "He is risen"

Exhale: "He is risen indeed"

Reflect: How has this Lenten journey changed me? What has God revealed to me in the wilderness, at the cross, and now at the empty tomb?

Notes:

Beyond Lent: Continuing the Journey

Congratulations! You've walked through 46 days of fasting, prayer, and Scripture reading. You've made space for God. You've denied yourself. You've drawn near to Jesus through his wilderness, his ministry, and his journey to the cross and empty tomb.

But now what?

Lent is a season, but the spiritual disciplines you've practiced—fasting, prayer, Scripture reading, self-denial—are meant to be **lifelong rhythms**, not just 40-day experiments. The question is: What will you carry forward?

Reflect on Your Lenten Journey

Before you move on, take some time to reflect on what God has done in you during this season. Consider journaling through these questions:

1. **What did I fast from?** How did that fast create space for God in my life?
2. **What was the hardest part of fasting?** What did that difficulty reveal about me—my attachments, fears, or idols?
3. **What was the most meaningful part of this Lenten journey?** Was there a particular Scripture, prayer, or moment when God felt especially near?
4. **How has my prayer life changed?** Am I more aware of God's presence throughout the day?
5. **What has God revealed to me about himself during Lent?** About myself?
6. **What do I want to continue beyond Lent?** What practices do I sense God inviting me to keep?

Continuing Spiritual Disciplines Beyond Lent

The early Methodists fasted twice a week—Wednesdays and Fridays—as a regular rhythm of spiritual life. You don't have to do that, but consider what ongoing practice of fasting might look like for you.

Options for Ongoing Fasting:

Weekly Fast

- Fast from one meal every week (perhaps Friday lunch, in remembrance of Good Friday)
- Or skip breakfast one day a week and use that time to pray

Monthly Fast

- Choose one day per month to fast completely (water only) and spend extra time in prayer
- Or fast from technology for 24 hours once a month

Seasonal Fast

- In addition to Lent, consider fasting during Advent (the four weeks before Christmas) or another season that's meaningful to you

Situational Fast

- Fast when you're facing a big decision and need clarity
- Fast when you're praying for someone who's suffering or in crisis
- Fast when you feel spiritually dry and need to reorient your heart toward God

Remember: Fasting is not about legalism or earning God's favor. It's a **means of grace**—a practice that positions you to receive God's transforming presence. Fast when it serves that purpose, not out of obligation.

Continuing Daily Scripture & Prayer

You've spent 46 days reading Scripture daily using the BREAD method. Don't stop now! Consider:

Continue with a Bible Reading Plan

- Use a one-year or two-year Bible reading plan to work through the whole Bible
- Or choose a book of the Bible (like Romans, Psalms, or the Gospel of John) and read through it slowly using the BREAD method

Join or Start a Bible Study

- Invite your Table Community or a few friends to study Scripture together
- Discuss what you're learning and how you're applying it to your lives

Keep Using the BREAD Method

- Set aside 10-15 minutes each morning (or evening) for Scripture reading
- Use the BREAD method to slow down and encounter God, not just check off a reading

Maintain a Breath Prayer Practice

- Choose a new breath prayer each week or month
- Pray it throughout the day—in the car, at work, before bed
- Let it become the soundtrack of your daily walk with God

The Rhythm of Feasting and Fasting

The Christian life is not all fasting. It's a rhythm of **fasting and feasting**—times of self-denial and times of celebration, Lent and Easter, Good Friday and resurrection Sunday.

After a season of fasting, it's right and good to **feast**. Enjoy the goodness of God's creation. Celebrate with friends and family. Give thanks for food, for technology, for the comforts and blessings of life.

But don't let feasting become mindless consumption. Stay intentional. Stay grateful. And when you sense that you're reaching for comfort more than for God, return to the practice of fasting.

The goal is not to live in perpetual self-denial. The goal is to live in freedom—free from the tyranny of our appetites, free to enjoy God's gifts without being enslaved by them, free to say "no" to lesser things so we can say "yes" to God.

Resources for Continued Growth

If you want to go deeper in your understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines, here are some recommended resources:

Books:

- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard
- *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* by Tyler Staton
- *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton
- *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard
- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer
- *Liturgy of the Ordinary* by Tish Harrison Warren

Online:

- Pray As You Go (app/website): Daily audio prayer and Scripture reflection
- Lectio 365 (app): Morning and evening prayer in the contemplative tradition
- Dwell (app): Bible app, including an audio feature (Orchard has a subscription, talk to Nick or Leiah about free access)
- The Bible Project (bibleproject.com): Videos and resources for understanding Scripture

At Orchard Church:

- Join a Table Community for ongoing formation and accountability
- Attend our monthly Sunday Suppers (2nd Sunday of each month) to build community
- Talk to Pastor Nick or Pastor Leiah about spiritual direction or mentorship

A Final Word

Thank you for journeying through Lent with us. Thank you for making space. Thank you for showing up, day after day, even when it was hard.

God has met you in the wilderness. He has walked with you to the cross. And now, he invites you into resurrection life—a life marked by freedom, joy, and ever-deepening intimacy with him.

The practices you've learned during Lent are not a spiritual to-do list. They're an **invitation into relationship**. They're ways of saying, "God, I want you. I need you. I'm making space for you in my life."

Keep making space. Keep fasting and feasting. Keep praying and reading Scripture. Keep following Jesus, one step at a time.

And remember: **You are beloved. You are enough. And Christ is risen.**

Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus,

Pastor Nick, Pastor Leiah, and the Orchard Church Family