

Redeemer Fasting Guide

*O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich foods,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.
-Psalm 63:1-5*

Redeemer will be holding a church-wide time of prayer and fasting from Monday September 30th-Wednesday October 2nd. While we desire as many people as possible to join us in this fast, we are especially asking our members to consider fasting in some capacity for these three days. This fast will culminate in a time of corporate prayer and worship the night of October 2nd. To better prepare and equip all who desire to join us in this time of prayer and fasting, we are offering this guide to take out all of the guesswork. We will briefly cover what is fasting, why we should fast (including why Redeemer is fasting), and how to fast (including some fasting options). If you would like to learn even more about what the Bible says concerning fasting you can go listen to Bryan and Kevin's sermons on the spiritual discipline of fasting from May of this year (<https://www.redeemerstillwater.com/spiritual-discipline>)

What is Fasting?

David Mathis says that fasting is, “voluntarily going without food—or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God—for the sake of some spiritual purpose.” Fasting is definitely more than just abstaining from food or some other good gift, but it is not less than that. But we abstain from something good so we can pursue something greater: Christ Himself. We fast from food (or other gift) and feast on Jesus!

Why Fast?

Besides Jesus assuming we will fast (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15) there are multiple reasons to fast:

- Fasting fixes our eyes on Jesus and stirs our affections for Him.
- Fasting awakens and encourages our spiritual appetite for God.
- Fasting encourages us to find satisfaction in God alone.

- Fasting reveals the things our hearts truly hunger for and what has mastered us.
- Fasting reveals the sin and weakness within us and encourages us to pursue more of Jesus.

Donald S. Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* also gives the various spiritual purposes of fasting in the Bible:

- Strengthening prayer (Ezra 8:23; Joel 2:13; Acts 13:3)
- Seeking God's guidance (Judg. 20:26; Acts 14:23)
- Expressing grief (1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam. 1:11–12)
- Seeking deliverance or protection (2 Chron. 20:3–4; Ezra 8:21–23)
- Expressing repentance and returning to God (1 Sam. 7:6; Jonah 3:5–8)
- Humbling oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27–29; Ps. 35:13)
- Expressing concern for the work of God (Neh. 1:3–4; Dan. 9:3)
- Ministering to the needs of others (Isa. 58:3–7)
- Overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matt. 4:1–11)
- Expressing love and worship to God (Luke 2:37)

(Taken from *Habits of Grace* by David Mathis, pgs. 118-119)

Redeemer is choosing to fast together for a few days to help our congregation grow in this spiritual discipline and begin to implement it more on both an individual and corporate level. During these three days of prayer and fasting we want to focus on brokenness over sin (<https://www.redeemerstillwater.com/broken>), a desire for more of God's presence in our lives and church, and for people in Stillwater to place their trust and hope in Christ alone.

How to Fast

Fasting is simply voluntarily abstaining from food or any other good thing in our life that we regularly enjoy in order to intentionally pursue God through studying Scripture, prayer, and worship. Since this is the case, one can abstain from food, TV, movies, social media, casual internet surfing, podcasts, etc. The goal is to choose something that you regularly devote time, energy, and attention to, abstain from it for a predetermined amount of time, and pursue God during that time instead. The goal is *not* to choose something that feels easy to give up or to substitute what we are giving up with something other than pursuing God (e.g. don't choose to give up watching Netflix but spend that time on social media, don't choose to fast from breakfast if you already don't normally eat breakfast, etc.) You want to feel the effects of going without what you are giving up and intentionally turn your desire for food, entertainment, media, etc. to God and seek to be satisfied in Him alone.

If you do not fast regularly or have never fasted then start off small. Don't fast from food for three days if you've never even fasted from food for one day. Be realistic about what you will be able to give up in your fast while also challenging yourself. If

you cannot fast from food for health reasons then that is okay. There are other ways you can fast. If you want to fast from food then consider consulting with your doctor.

Fasting Options

Food

You can choose to fast from all food, eat only fruits and vegetables, or fast one or two meals a day from Monday-Wednesday. If you fast completely from food during that time consider drinking juice because then your body will get some nutrients and sugar while still feeling the effects of going without food. If you fast one or two meals each day then consider adding one of the other fasting options below in as well. Use the normal amount of time you would spend eating devoted to prayer and reading God's word.

We want to encourage everyone to fast from food on dinner Wednesday October 2nd. As a church body we can fast that meal together, spend time in prayer and worship, and then break fast together afterward at dinner. Disregard this if you cannot fast food for health reasons.

TV, Movies, and Streamed Media

If you normally spend time every day watching TV shows, movies, or streamed media (Netflix, YouTube. etc.) then you might want to consider completely giving those up during this three day fast. Spend the time you would normally be watching something in prayer and reading God's word.

Social Media and Internet

We all spend daily time casually surfing the internet and most of us spend some time on social media. At best this is often just a waste of time, at worst we are indulging sinful desires online. Consider giving these things up completely for three days and spend intentional time in prayer and reading God's word.

All 3

You can combine all three options and fast from one each day Monday-Wednesday. You could fast social media and the internet on Monday, TV/movies/streamed media on Tuesday, and food on Wednesday (either one, two, or all three meals that day). Spend the time you would normally spend in these activities in prayer and reading God's word.

We would encourage you to start and end your day in prayer and reading God's word during these three days of fasting.

Prayer Topics

Here are some topics of prayer to focus on during these three days of prayer and fasting:

- For God to search us and reveal to us sin in our lives (Ps. 139:23-24)
- Being broken over our sin and humbled by God's grace
- Growth in personal holiness
- Growth in discipleship at Redeemer
- The overall health of Redeemer
- For the gospel to transform people's lives in Stillwater
- For Redeemer members to boldly proclaim the gospel to others

Our prayer is that as you pray and fast with the rest of Redeemer you will see with greater clarity that God is far better than anything this world has to offer, and will live with a greater passion to follow Jesus and proclaim the good news to others!

"Fasting is peculiarly suited to glorify God in this way. It is fundamentally an offering of emptiness to God in hope. It is a sacrifice of need and hunger. It says, by its very nature, "Father, I am empty, but you are full. I am hungry, but you are the Bread of Heaven. I am thirsty, but you are the Fountain of Life. I am weak, but you are strong. I am poor, but you are rich. I am foolish, but you are wise. I am broken, but you are whole. I am dying, but your steadfast love is better than life" (see Psalm 63:3)."

-John Piper, *A Hunger For God: Desiring God Through Fasting and Prayer*