



# Prayer and Fasting

## Guide for Lent

February 29<sup>th</sup> – April 11<sup>th</sup>

## WHAT IS FASTING?

*Fasting, at its core, is something that we do to align our heart with God's heart.*

**“Then I proclaimed a fast at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God” – Ezra 8:21**

## WHY DO WE FAST?

*There are many reasons someone may choose to fast. Three reasons we see in scripture for fasting are below:*

### 1) To prepare us to hear from the Lord:

- a. **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.” – Acts 13:2**
- b. Fasting is not a requirement for hearing from the Lord, but it is an act which helps us remove other distractions for a time in order to better listen to what He has to say.

### 2) To prepare ourselves to act on what God tells us:

- a. **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. And if I perish, I perish. – Esther 4:16**
- b. There are many ways we can prepare ourselves for the work God is calling us to, but fasting is a primary biblical way of doing this. Daniel, Moses, Esther and Jesus (to name a few) all fasted as a means of preparing themselves to walk in faithfulness to God.

### 3) To lament over sin and brokenness:

- a. **“Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful. – Joel 2:12-13**
- b. Whether you are lamenting over your own sin or the brokenness of this world, fasting is a way to rend our hearts before the Lord, show repentance, and ask God to bring healing.

## HOW DO WE FAST?

*Practically, fasting can involve a variety of things, such as abstaining from food, giving up comforts, and/or setting aside time and energy to devote to service to the Lord. Ultimately, the act of fasting is not what is pleasing to the Lord, it is the state of our hearts while fasting that is pleasing to the Lord.*

**Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice...to set the oppressed free...? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter...and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear...and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. - Isaiah 58:5-9**

This week, I commit to fasting in the following way:

*Week 1: Ash Wednesday Feb. 29<sup>th</sup>– March 7<sup>th</sup>*

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## WEEK 1: Repentance and Rest

*This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”*

*– Isaiah 30:15*

### PRAYER FOCUS

We find courage to confess our sin and turn back to God when we recognize that we have a loving Father who, like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), welcomes us back with open arms and celebration when we come to him. Take time to come before the Lord this week to repent of sin that may be hindering your prayers and your relationship with God, ask for forgiveness, and ask God to purify your heart. The heart of repentance is humbling ourselves before God, admitting our insufficiency, and recognizing the sufficiency of Jesus who lived the perfect life on our behalf and who is able to give us desires after His own. Ask God to guard you, and the members and leadership of Waypoint Church, against sins both known and unknown.

**Use this space to write to God or make note of how He spoke to you this week:**

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## WEEK 3: Hearing from God

*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd – John 10:14 - 16*

### PRAYER FOCUS

The words of Jesus in the scripture above remind us that we have a Good Shepherd who laid down His life to make us His own and who knows us and wants us to know Him. Unlike sheep, we have the opportunity to know our Good Shepherd on an intimate level, to understand His nature more fully, and marvel in the reality that the one and only perfect God laid down His life for us, even while we were still in our sin (Romans 5:8). Take time this week to ask God to give you ears to hear from Him and then seek to create space for hearing from Him through reading His word, through prayer, and/or through fasting. Pray that other members of Waypoint church, and Waypoint leadership, will also hear clearly from God during this time.

**Use this space to write to God or make note of how He spoke to you This week:**

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## WEEK 4: Obedience

*Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. – John 14:23*

*Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”  
Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*

- *John 6:28-29*

### PRAYER FOCUS

When we hear the word “obedience” in our culture, we often feel the drudgery of working to earn acceptance or merit. However, the good news of Jesus says that even when we were disobedient sinners, Christ died for us. Only Jesus perfectly obeyed God. The Gospel is that He has transferred His perfect obedience to us. Therefore, Jesus says that the work of God is this: “to believe in the one he has sent.” Only when we are humbled to see this truth and rely on Him for His righteousness is the fruit of true obedience born in our lives. This week, meditate on the scriptures above and pray for God to open your eyes to the beauty of His unmerited gift of righteousness to you and pray that He would help you believe more fully in the One he has sent. If you have heard a specific command from God while praying and fasting this Lent, ask the Holy Spirit to help you walk in obedience to that.

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## WEEK 5: The Least of These

*He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. – Deuteronomy 10:18*

### PRAYER FOCUS

God humbles and identifies Himself with the least of these. Jesus said, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Pray this week for God to make our hearts more like His – to love those He loves and care for the vulnerable in our community. Pray for the various ministries that Waypoint and its members are involved in, including ministry to international students, women in crisis, children in foster care, backpack buddies, unreached people groups, and refugees (<https://www.waypointtrdu.com/serve-with-us>), and for how you can be involved in the work He is doing through His people.

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## WEEK 6: Jesus' Death and Resurrection

*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 9:15*

### PRAYER FOCUS

Use these final days of Lent to meditate and fast on the death and sacrifice of Christ, in preparation for the joy and feasting that we will soon enjoy upon celebrating His resurrection. Meditate on the following passages throughout the week, asking God to show you His glory:

- **Sunday:** Isaiah 52:13-54:12
- **Monday:** Luke 22, Colossians 1:15-22
- **Tuesday:** Luke 23, Philippians 2:5-11
- **Wednesday:** Colossians 2:13-15
- **Thursday:** Hebrews 2:9-18
- **Friday:** Psalm 22
- **Saturday:** Romans 5:6-11

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