

Recommended Reading for 40 Days

As a church, we are encouraging **EVERYONE** to read through **the four gospels and Acts**. If you want to supplement your reading, below are some suggestions. Most of them are available inexpensively on Amazon, or as e-books for Kindle or Nook.

1. *A Chance to Die* – Amy Carmichael
2. *A Hunger for God* – John Piper
3. *Amazing Grace* – Eric Metaxas
4. *A Passionate Commitment* – Crawford W. Loritts Jr.
5. *Celebration of Discipline* – Richard J. Foster
6. *Mere Christianity* – C.S. Lewis
7. *No Compromise* – Melody Green
8. *Pilgrim's Progress* – John Bunyan
9. *Renovation of the Heart* – Dallas Willard
10. *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* – Rosaria Butterfield
11. *The Autobiography of George Mueller* – George Mueller
12. *The Best of A. W. Tozer* – Tozer/Wiersbe
13. *The Knowledge of the Holy* – A. W. Tozer
14. *The Rest of God* – Mark Buchanan
15. *Through Gates of Splendor* – Elisabeth Eliot
16. *With Christ in the School of Prayer* – Andrew Murray

O, God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. – **Psalm 63: 1-5**



40 DAY Challenge!

March 12 - April 21

What the 40 Day Challenge is:

Are you tired of where you are spiritually? Do you want to restore a genuine hunger for God in your life?

1. A corporate fast – Food and/or Media
2. A corporate reading of Scripture – The four gospels and Acts
3. Prayer Vigils – March 15 and April 5, 7pm to Midnight
4. “10 Most Wanted” – 10 people you’ll pray for & share the gospel with in 2019.

First – *Get a prayer partner!!!*

Some things to consider fasting from:

1. Media (TV, Social Media, movies, videos, radio, magazines, etc.)
2. Internet (except for work or school)
3. Food (one day a week, one meal a day, weeklong, etc.)

Some additional disciplines to consider engaging in:

1. Spend time in the Scriptures daily – Our corporate reading is a good place to start!
2. Read an edifying Christian book – A recommended list is available
3. Memorize a verse a day for 40 days
4. Pray for 15 minutes each morning

My Prayer Partner: _____

The fast(s) I will commit to: _____

The disciplines I will engage in: _____

Extended fasting from food has risks; consult your doctor before attempting.

WHY FAST?

1. Fasting can reveal the things you value too much or are enslaved by, often represented by food.
2. Fasting strengthens your ability to keep from being mastered by lesser appetites. It is the “faithful enemy of fatal bondage to innocent things.” (John Piper)
3. Fasting can decrease your hunger for the world’s “snacks” and make you hungry for true food – feasting on God. (Remember – Jesus is the Bread of Life!)
4. Fasting focuses you – it can quiet your mind and open your ears and make you more sensitive to God’s voice, and thus is an aid in prayer and seeking God’s will (Acts 13:1-3)
5. Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded forty-day periods. Jesus fasted 40 days and reminded His followers to fast, “when you fast,” not if you fast.
6. Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the “first love” for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
7. Fasting is a biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). *It is a weapon against the proud flesh.* King David said, “I humble myself through fasting.”
8. Fasting invites the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition (often because you can see how much you use food or other things as an opiate), resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.
9. The time normally used for eating or other activities can be redirected to more devotional pursuits.
10. Because of these things, Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life-and make you a channel of revival to others.

Some Things of which to be aware:

1. Fasting can become a practice of the “theology of glory” – earning points with God; religious performance. (Lk. 18:10-14)
2. Fasting can be a source of self-righteousness and pride (Lk. 18:10-14). An attempt to subdue the flesh by denying the appetite can actually feed the flesh through pride.
3. A wrong view of fasting can lead to a Gnostic view of creation: The false idea that material things are inherently evil. (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
4. Fasting can be a manifestation of *asceticism* – the belief that earthly things should not be enjoyed and that extreme self-denial is meritorious (1 Cor. 8:8 addresses this, also Col. 2:20-21)

Additional resources for fasting: Please visit armitagechurch.org and click the 40 day Challenge Banner for additional fasting resources.

A HUNGER FOR GOD – John Piper

The birthplace of Christian fasting is homesickness for God. In the summer of 1967 I had been in love with Noël [his future wife] for a whole year. If you had told me then that we would have to wait another year and a half to marry, I would have protested firmly. For us, it seemed, the sooner the better. It was the summer before my senior year in college. I was working as a water safety instructor at a Christian athletic camp in South Carolina. She was hundreds of miles away working as a waitress. Never had I known an aching like this one. I had been homesick before, but never like this. Every day I would write her a letter and talk about this longing. In the late morning, just before lunch, there would be mail call. When I heard my name and saw the lavender envelope, my appetite would be taken away. Or, more accurately, my hunger for food was silenced by the hunger of my heart. Often, instead of eating lunch with the campers, I would take the letter to a quiet place in the woods and sit down on the leaves for a different kind of meal. It wasn’t the real thing. But the color, the smell, the script, the message, the signature were foretastes. And with them, week by week, I was strengthened in hope, and the reality just over the horizon was kept alive in my heart.

The Romance and the Resistance of Fasting

Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God. But the story of my heart-hunger to be with Noël could be misleading. It tells only half the story of Christian fasting. Half of Christian fasting is that our physical appetite is lost because our homesickness for God is so intense. The other half is that our homesickness for God is threatened because our physical appetites are so intense. In the first half, appetite is lost. In the second half, appetite is resisted. In the first, we yield to the higher hunger that is. In the second, we fight for the higher hunger that isn’t. Christian fasting is not only the spontaneous effect of a superior satisfaction in God; it is also a chosen weapon against every force in the world that would take that satisfaction away.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And being with you, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. – **Psalm 73: 25-26**