



SEASON TWO PRAYER JOURNAL

MAY 1ST - 7TH

THIS
JOURNAL
BELONGS
TO:
EMAIL:



Citylight's calendar functions in seasons. And in Season 2 (May – August), we want to spend the first week of this season (May 1-7) immersed in prayer and fasting.

As we've said in the past, "In the presence of God, the battle is won before it has begun." As we prepare for this season, we are tempted to rush into God's assignment without much time given to personal consecration. But much fruit from this season will be determined by our personal consecrations in these 7 days! So let us consecrate ourselves unto the Lord and come worship. Let's bring an offering of thanksgiving. A sacrifice of praise. A willing heart. Let's open the doors and worship!

Guide to prayer journal

This prayer journal will guide you to the prayers of Paul to the church of Thessalonians. It will help us how to pray and what to pray for in this season. This prayer journal is what you make out of it. Write out your praise and your lament, your confessions and your intercessions, your petitions, and your exaltations. Let every word be addressed to Him and how he is speaking to you. And when you look back on these pages, you will have a record of your face-to-face interactions with God!

Why fast?

Fasting is feasting. We fast so that we can feast on the presence of God (Ps. 36:7-9). We don't just fast from something, we fast for something. We fast from food for more desperation for God. We fast from social media for more focus on spiritual things. We fast from creature comforts for the opportunity to be more generous. We don't just refrain, we replace. So, as we implement the discipline of fasting, let's remember that this time is an opportunity for more. More of God, more impact on our city, more unity in our church.

Practical ways to fast this week

1. Fast from a meal or two everyday
2. Fast from social media or other phone usage
3. Fast from entertainment (tv, music, other media)
4. Fast from sugar or desserts
5. Fast from caffeine
6. Fast from reading any other book but the Bible in your spare time
7. Fast from creature comforts (Starbucks runs, eating out for lunch, random amazon purchases, etc...)
8. Fast from meat

For more info on fasting, read these two articles found in the back of this journal:

"Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting" by David Mathis

"The Benefits of Fasting" by Rebecca Vandoodewaard

Answer these questions to help you evaluate how you should fast this week.

1. What do I think about the most?

1. What do I look at the most?

1. What do I listen to the most?

1. Who do I enjoy spending time with the most?

1. What do I think it means to spend time in God's presence?

This week, I will fast from _____ ,
so that _____ .

DAY ONE.

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5 ESV

How can you thank God for Citylight Church from this passage?

How has he worked in you the most since being part of Citylight?

Pray now that Citylight Church would bring the gospel to Falls Church and Washington DC not just in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction!

PRAYER:

DAY TWO.

“Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 ESV

“God, make me increase and abound in love for people even when

_____.”

Write down names of people who you want to love more. Pray over each of them.

PRAYER:

DAY THREE.



“Brothers, pray for us...”

1 Thessalonians 5:25

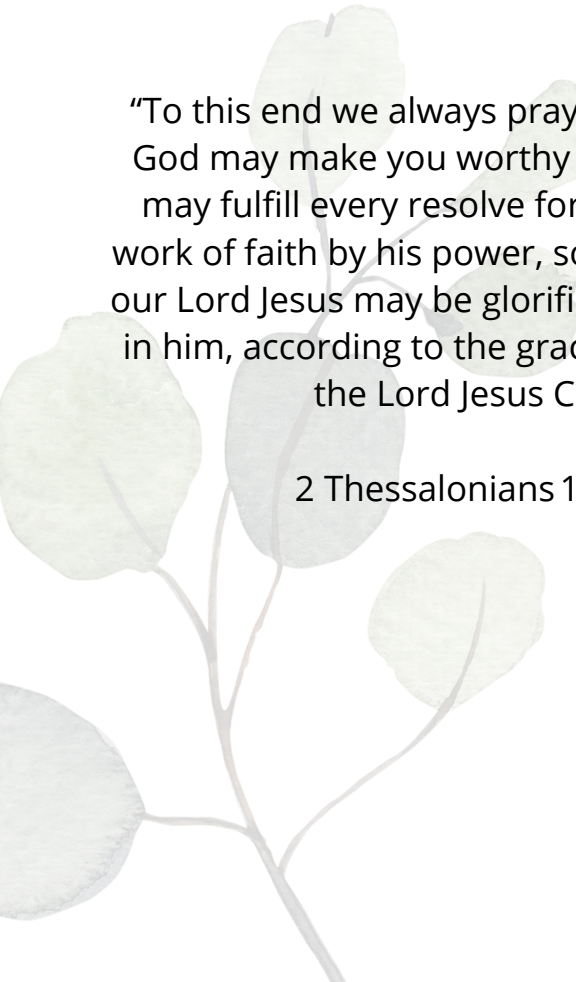
Who needs a prayer from you today? Wait on the Lord until someone comes to mind.

Pray a passage over him/her. Listen to the Spirit's leading in the passage that you will use.

Reach out to this person today. Let him/her know that you are praying for them.

PRAYER:

DAY FOUR.



"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Pray that God will make you worthy of his calling for His glory!

May every work of faith be by His power! Make a list of all your "work of faith" (from washing the dishes to sharing the gospel) and pray that His power will be evident in it.

PRAYER:



DAY FIVE.

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Pray that the word would "speed ahead" in Falls Church and in Washington DC through Citylight.

"God, establish me in. _____"

"God, direct me in your love so that _____"

PRAYER:

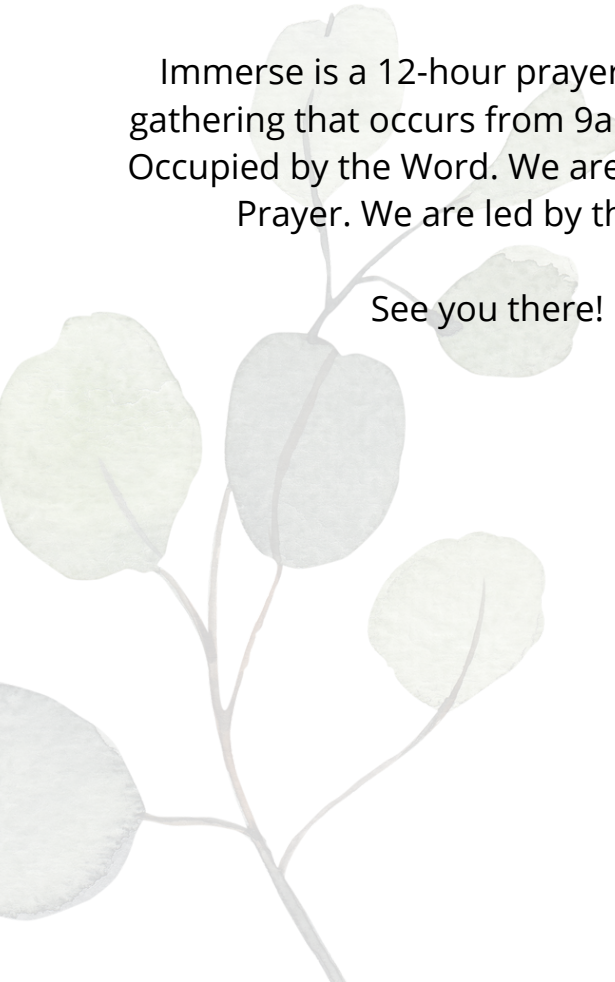
DAY SIX.

IMMERSE:

Immerse is a 12-hour prayer and worship gathering that occurs from 9am-9pm. We are Occupied by the Word. We are Dependent on Prayer. We are led by the Spirit.

See you there!

Use this space to journal during your time at Immerse. Reflect on how you've been doing with your fast. Write down anything he has been teaching you lately. What is God revealing to you? How is he calling you in this season?



THE BENEFITS OF FASTING

Rebecca VanDoodewaard

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/benefits-of-fasting>

In the health-conscious world, fasting is huge. There are books, studies, and TED talks on the advantages of deliberately giving up food for a time. In fact, folks at your gym are probably fasting more often than folks in your congregation. The North American church has largely lost the practice of fasting. And while health gurus advocate fasting for physical benefits, Christians need to recover fasting for spiritual purposes.

Now, fasting is not a pleasant thing. It is a discipline—something that Scripture associates with hardship. Intense prayer, repentance, and grief all accompany fasting (Judges 20:26; 2 Sam. 12:16; 2 Kings 18:6; Esther 4:16; Ezra 8:21; Mark 2:20; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2). Fasting is hard work. Like physical workouts, it takes effort, perseverance, determination, and often accountability. But just like a physical workout strengthens the body, fasting has enormous benefits for the Christian's soul. Here are just four of the many spiritual blessings that God has built into fasting.

First, fasting is a stark reminder that we are creatures dependent on something outside of ourselves for life. If we don't have food, we will die. We are weak. It is easy to forget this. Of course, we know this, we admit this, but in subtle ways we have bought into our culture's lie that we are in control. Fasting exposes those subtleties for the deceptions they are: we are creatures with a Creator.

A second benefit is self-control. Like a muscle, self-control gets stronger as you use it. Saying no to ice cream when you've been fasting for sixteen hours enlarges the fruit of self-control. The self-control that fasting requires also helps in other areas; sanctification in one quarter overflows to others.

Frequent, varied prayer is a third benefit of fasting. Fasting is a physical reminder to pray. A growling stomach is like a timer going off: time to pray again. Praying frequently for a person or situation means that prayers will become deeper. You can't pray one line over and over again all day; fasting's frequent prayer opens up different aspects and angles that we might not otherwise see.

Last, fasting creates a spiritual seriousness. Perhaps this is because we do begin to see deeper into things as we pray. But perhaps it is also because fasting is a physical investment in spiritual battles. We can give our money or our time to the local church, and so we ought to. But fasting is giving ourselves in a silent, immeasurable way. No one can see the physical sacrifice or the spiritual results—which we might not even recognize or understand.

Fasting from food for regular, limited amounts of time will bring us far more benefits than just physical ones. It will draw us more often into the throne room of heaven to plead in Jesus' name. There are times (pregnancy, illness, etc.) when fasting would be unwise. But for most of us, fasting is a gift that is there for the taking. Are we taking it seriously?

Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting

Article by

David Mathis

Executive Editor, desiringGod.org

Fasting has fallen on hard times — at least, it seems, among our overstuffed bellies in the American church. I speak as one of the well-fed.

Sure, you'll find your exceptions here and there. Some pockets even prize the countercultural enough to steer their vehicles into the ditch of asceticism. But they are vastly outnumbered by the rest of us veering toward the opposite shoulder. The dangers of asceticism are great — surpassed only by those of overindulgence.

Our problem might be how we think of fasting. If the accent is on abstinence, and fasting is some mere duty to perform, then only the most iron-willed among us will get over the social and self-pampering hurdles to actually put this discipline into practice.

But if we are awakened to see fasting for the joy it can bring, as a means of God's grace to strengthen and sharpen Godward affections, then we might find ourselves holding a powerful new tool for enriching our enjoyment of Jesus.

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God.

"Fasting is for those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God."

The Scriptures include many forms of fasting: personal and communal, public and private, congregational and national, regular and occasional, partial and absolute. Typically, we think of fasting as "a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes" (Don Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 160).

We can fast from good things other than food and drink as well. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "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." But normal Christian fasting means privately and occasionally choosing to go without food (though not water) for some special period of time (whether a day or three or seven) in view of some specific spiritual purpose.

According to Whitney, fasting's spiritual purposes include:

- strengthening prayer (Ezra 8:23; Joel 2:13; Acts 13:3)
- seeking God's guidance (Judges 20:26; Acts 14:23)
- expressing grief (1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:11–12)
- seeking deliverance or protection (2 Chronicles 20:3–4; Ezra 8:21–23)
- expressing repentance and returning to God (1 Samuel 7:6; Jonah 3:5–8)
- humbling oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27–29; Psalm 35:13)
- expressing concern for the work of God (Nehemiah 1:3–4; Daniel 9:3)
- ministering to the needs of others (Isaiah 58:3–7)
- overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God (Matthew 4:1–11)
- expressing love and worship to God (Luke 2:37)

Whitney captures it like this: “Fasting can be an expression of finding your greatest pleasure and enjoyment in life from God” (176). And he quotes a helpful phrase from Matthew Henry, who says that fasting serves to “put an edge upon devout affections.”

Jesus Assumes We'll Fast

While the New Testament includes no mandate that Christians fast on certain days or with specific frequency, Jesus clearly assumes we will fast. It's a tool too powerful to leave endlessly on the shelf collecting dust. While many biblical texts mention fasting, the two most important come just chapters apart in Matthew's Gospel.

“Jesus doesn't say ‘if you fast,’ but ‘when you fast.’”

The first is Matthew 6:16–18, which comes in sequence with Jesus's teachings on generosity and prayer. Fasting is as basic to Christianity as giving to others and asking from God. The key here is that Jesus doesn't say “if you fast,” but “when you fast.”

Second is Matthew 9:14–15, which Richard Foster says may be “the most important statement in the New Testament on whether or not Christians should fast today” (Celebration of Discipline, 53). Jesus's answer is a resounding yes.

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” (Matthew 9:14–15)

When Jesus, our bridegroom, was here on earth among his disciples, it was a time for the discipline of feasting. But now that he is “taken away” from his disciples, “they will fast.” Not “they might, if they ever get around to it,” but “they will.”

Which is confirmed by the pattern of fasting that emerged right away in the early church (Acts 9:9; 13:2; 14:23).

Put an Edge on Your Feelings

What makes fasting such a gift is its ability, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to focus our feelings and their expression toward God in prayer. Fasting walks arm in arm with prayer — as John Piper says, she is “the hungry handmaiden of prayer,” who “both reveals and remedies.”

“Fasting, like the gospel, isn't for the self-sufficient. It's for the poor in spirit.”

She reveals the measure of food's mastery over us — or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God. And she remedies by intensifying the earnestness of our prayer and saying with our whole body what prayer says with the heart: I long to be satisfied in God alone! (*When I Don't Desire God*, 171)

That burn in your gut, that rolling fire in your belly, demanding that you feed it more food, signals game time for fasting as a means of grace. Only as we voluntarily embrace the pain of an empty stomach do we see how much we've allowed our belly to be our god (Philippians 3:19).

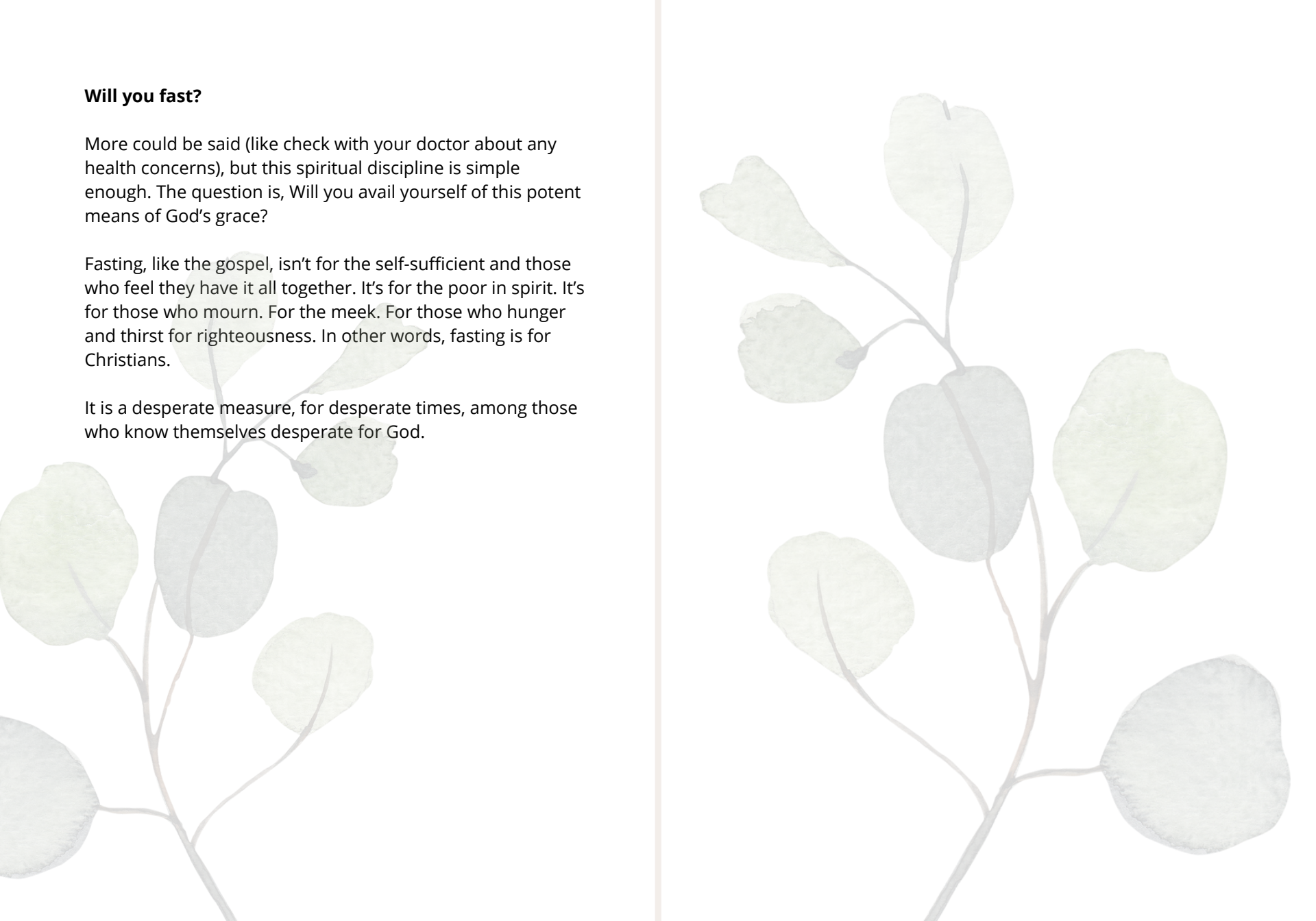
And in that gnawing ache of growing hunger is the engine of fasting, generating the reminder to bend our longings for food Godward and inspire intensified longings for Jesus. Fasting, says Piper, is the physical exclamation point at the end of the sentence, “This much, O God, I want you!” (*Hunger for God*, 25–26).

Will you fast?

More could be said (like check with your doctor about any health concerns), but this spiritual discipline is simple enough. The question is, Will you avail yourself of this potent means of God's grace?

Fasting, like the gospel, isn't for the self-sufficient and those who feel they have it all together. It's for the poor in spirit. It's for those who mourn. For the meek. For those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In other words, fasting is for Christians.

It is a desperate measure, for desperate times, among those who know themselves desperate for God.



Notes.

