



ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN CHURCH

*Shine like Stars in the Universe*

BEHOLDING • DISCIPLINES FOR IMAGERS

THURSDAY • MAY 14, 2026

*An Invitation to a Communal Fast*

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:16–18 (ESV)

## WHY WE ARE DOING THIS

Jesus assumed His disciples would fast. He did not say *if* you fast, but *when* you fast (Matthew 6:16).

Scripture records the people of God fasting for many reasons: seeking guidance, expressing grief, expressing repentance and return to God, overcoming temptation, expressing love and worship, and entering into spiritual warfare. Every form of biblical fasting has this in common: the creature voluntarily emptying itself to create space for God, at a level of need where its own resources have been recognized as insufficient.

*What is happening in your life right now — in your marriage, in your family, in your community, in your own soul — that is beyond the reach of ordinary spiritual engagement? Where is the grip that willpower has not broken? Where is the deeper hunger that you have been filling with everything except God?*

***Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God  
by finding in Him a source of life beyond food.***

## WHAT IS FASTING?

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*“Fasting is the voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity.”*

— Richard Foster

Foster’s definition is the classical one. But it is easy to hear it as subtraction — give something up, end of story — and miss what makes biblical fasting different from a diet.

Biblical fasting is not subtraction. It is **substitution**. It is not about what we give up — it is about what we replace it with. The hunger that food (or another normal function) would satisfy is deliberately turned toward God: toward prayer, Scripture, silence, encounter. The creature voluntarily empties itself to create space for God.

## WHAT WE ARE FASTING TOWARD

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Fasting is not aimed at fasting. It is aimed at God. The hours and meals you set aside are not the point — they create the space for the point. As you plan your fast, plan also what you will replace it with.

### USE THE TIME TO:

- Pray — with specificity, naming the grip you are bringing to God
- Read Scripture slowly — a Psalm, a Gospel passage, the texts from May 3 (Genesis 3, John 4, Matthew 4, Joel 2)
- Sit in silence — not as absence, but as presence with God
- Meditate — turn a single verse or phrase over before God for an extended time
- Confess — bring honestly into the light what you most want to keep in the dark
- Listen — with no agenda other than receiving
- Ask — for God’s strength in your weakness

## HOW DO I FAST ON MAY 14?

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On Thursday, May 14, our spiritual family is invited to fast together for the day. Choose the option below that fits your situation. There is no right way to be the most spiritual; there is only the way that puts you, honestly, in the posture of the creature bringing emptiness to God.

### OPTION 1 • TWO-MEAL FAST

Skip breakfast and lunch on Thursday. Drink water (or fruit juice if needed). Break the fast with a simple dinner of fruits and vegetables.

*Replace the time you would have spent eating breakfast and lunch with prayer, Scripture, silence, or meditation.*

### OPTION 2 • THREE-MEAL FAST

Fast from dinner Wednesday evening through dinner Thursday evening (or sunrise through sunset Thursday). Drink water throughout. Break the fast with a simple meal Thursday evening.

*Replace each missed meal with deliberate, targeted time with God. Three meals = three set times of prayer, Scripture, or silence.*

### OPTION 3 • ALTERNATIVE FAST

If fasting from food is not advisable for you — because of medical conditions, pregnancy, nursing, a history of disordered eating, or a doctor's direction — do not skip food. Instead, fast from a normal function whose absence will create real space and real difficulty:

- All screens — phone, social media, television, streaming — for the day
- News, podcasts, music — the constant input that fills every quiet moment
- Speech itself — a vow of silence for set hours, broken only by necessity
- A specific recurring comfort — coffee, snacking, the thing your hand reaches for without thinking

*An alternative fast is not the easier option — it is the right option for some bodies. Replace the time and attention you would have spent on what you set aside with the same targeted spiritual activity: prayer, Scripture, silence, meditation.*

## FASTING TOGETHER

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On May 14, you are not fasting alone. Whether you are at home, at work, or in your car between errands, others in your spiritual family are doing the same thing on the same day. The consumer culture's power is partly its universality — corporate fasting is one of the few practices that makes a collective counter-witness no individual fast can make alone.

### HOW TO FAST TOGETHER

- **On your own.** Most people will fast alone, with the knowledge that the rest of the family is fasting alongside them. This is the simplest faithful path.
- **In a small group.** Gather with two or three others in a home, an office break room, or a coffee shop (without the coffee) for one of the times you would normally have eaten. Pray together. Read Scripture together. Sit in silence together.
- **With your household.** Fast as a family. Use the missed meal time for table prayer or Scripture reading together. Children who cannot or should not fast can still participate in the time set aside for God.
- **Break the fast together.** If you are part of a small group or close friendship, consider gathering Thursday evening for a simple meal together.