



# Fasting Guide



## We live in challenging times.

People in our communities and around the world face hunger and poverty that is created and exacerbated by violence and conflict, extreme weather made more frequent by climate change, economic decline, inequitable institutional structures, and poor governing leadership. As Christians, we have a responsibility to try to address these causes.

In the Old Testament, Esther had access to the king in a critical moment when the Jewish people of the Persian Empire were facing genocide. As citizens and residents of the United States, we, too, have access to decision makers and the responsibility to use our voices to urge lawmakers to do all they can to pursue a world without hunger.

As Esther called on the Jewish people to fast and pray in the days leading up to her advocacy with the king, we are called to a deepened and sustained spiritual practice as we advocate with and for people who experience hunger and poverty. This document seeks to support you in your discernment around joining a fast.

**Bread for the Word is calling for a fast for the hunger hotspots around the world.**

We will begin on

**Wednesday, May 29, and fast for ten days, concluding on Friday, June 7.**

We will gather on Zoom for a time of prayer on Wednesday, June 5, at 8 p.m. for a time of prayer as a community. We hope that you will join us.

## 1 Pray About The Fast

Take a few moments to sit in prayer asking God how you might respond or participate at this time. Fasting is a spiritual discipline in which we humble ourselves and deprive ourselves of food or drink, or other items such as social media, for a predetermined period of time.

The purpose of this fast is for us to draw closer to God and to allow God to use us for God's purpose. We are calling on God to intervene in the actions of our elected officials so that the world can continue on the path to ending hunger and extreme poverty. We fast to be in solidarity with people who are struggling due to near-famine conditions in places such as South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, Gaza and beyond. We are conscious that this is a choice for us and that we are not trying to imitate the conditions of hunger for others.

## 2 Set Your Intentions

Set intentions around your fast so that you can get your mind properly focused and attuned to the actions you intend to take. A fast is not a hunger strike. Rather, it is an offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice, a holy gift to God (Romans 12:1b). Our hope is to clear our minds of distractions and listen for God's words to us.

**Here are a few questions to consider in setting your intentions:**

- Will you give up all food and drink?
- Will you drink water or juice?
- Perhaps you will skip lunch on fast days. Instead of giving up food, you may consider abstaining from television or your mobile phone or social media.

**Take a few moments and think through  
your intentions for the fast.**



### 3 Invite Others to Join

As people of faith, we believe there is power in gathering together to pray and fast. We encourage you to invite others to the fast with you, such as family, friends, church members, community members.



### 4 Prepare

The purpose of the fast is not to cause harm to our bodies, but to help us focus spiritually. Consult a physician when fasting from food. Observe ways that you might deprive yourself of something that is a distraction from God. **Create routines.**

Take some time to plan your schedule for the days you will fast.

- How will you begin your day?
- How will you spend mealtimes?
- How will you close the day?
- When will you spend time in reflection and prayer?

## 5 Pray the Days of the Fast

Here are some sample prayers to sustain you during your fast:

### COMMITTING TO FAST

*God our creator and sustainer, we give thanks that you call us to the work of ending hunger in our world. We gather together in these coming days for a time of fasting and prayer for the people in the hunger hotspots in the world, for the elected leaders who can make a difference, for leaders in the anti-hunger movement.*

*We ask that you be with us and guide us in this time. Focus our attention on you and your children who suffer from hunger due to climate and weather conditions, due to conflict and insecurity, due to displacement, due to economic shocks, due to political instability and unrest. We know that these are human-made problems, but they need your divine intervention. Intervene in our hearts, in our minds, in our voices, so that we might be agents of change in this world. Guide our actions as we pray for our elected leaders, for the leaders of our movement, and for activists around the globe who seek peace and an end to hunger in the land. We pray this in Jesus' name.*

Amen.

### ENDING THE FAST

*God our creator and sustainer, on this our final day in this period of fasting, we give thanks for your steadfast presence that has accompanied us along this way. We give thanks for all that we have learned and shared. Inspire us, O God, to take meaningful action for an end to hunger in these hotspots. Seal us in your love for us and for all your children of this world. We pray in Jesus' name,*

Amen.

### DURING THE FAST

*God of abundance, we come to you today in a time of restraint. Help us to restrain from eating or other practices that can cause us to be distracted from the suffering of the world. Break our hearts open as we hold in prayer all who hunger for food and nutrition, those on the brink of starvation, those who need your justice urgently. As we fast this day, may our hunger for food fuel our hunger for justice and peace. In Jesus' name we pray,*

Amen.

## 6 Spread the Word

As you fast, consider ways to communicate with others about your efforts. This is not about looking for praise or sympathy. Rather, this is about drawing attention to the impact of the actions of our elected leaders on the lives of people who are hungry, poor, and vulnerable in the United States and around the world.

## 7 Put Your Faith in Action

In the prayer that Jesus taught us, The Lord's Prayer, we pray, *"...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. ... And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*

Our spiritual disciplines do not end with prayer and fasting. We live into the words of this prayer; that God's will be done, that everyone is fed, and that we may not be tempted to think that it is not our responsibility to make sure everyone is fed. Make time to call your members of Congress.

**Make time to act** with, and for, our brothers and sisters who are experiencing hunger here and around the world.



We can end  
hunger in our time.

