

VOICES FASTING GUIDE

*To **ABIDE** in the vine, you have to **LISTEN** to the voice of the shepherd.
And when you truly hear His voice, you begin to decrease so He can increase.*
John 15:5 | John 10:27 | John 3:30

Before You Begin...

The Bible often compares followers of Jesus to sheep, and for good reason. Just like sheep, we naturally tend to follow the voices we hear most clearly. This means we are all following something, all the time. Whether we realize it or not, our daily lives—our habits, our comforts, the screens we scroll, and the fears we carry—are constantly shaping who we are becoming.

Because of this, the real question isn't whether or not we are being formed. We are. The real question is who or what is doing the forming.

Fasting provides a powerful answer to that question. It is a physical, tangible way of saying that the things that usually shape you will not have power over you today. By setting them aside, you are making space to remember that Jesus is enough.

Three themes run throughout this fast:

- ABIDING - Staying connected to the Vine no matter what.
- LISTENING - Tuning into the Shepherd's voice.
- HUMBLING - Decreasing ourselves so He can increase.

These themes come together in the Voices series and in the worship nights (July 31 for men, August 1 for women) where our overall theme is simple: humble ourselves and exalt Christ.

Each day follows the REAP method (Read, Examine, Apply, Pray) for studying the Bible. So, bring your Bible, bring your hunger, and come ready to ABIDE in the Shepherd's VOICE.

DAY 1 – COME TO THE VINE

The default state of life is decay. Not slow drift. Decay. Left to itself, a garden grows weeds. Left to itself, a muscle atrophies. And left to itself, a soul moves away from God, not toward Him.

Being renewed is a day by day decision. That's not a motivational slogan, it's 2 Corinthians 4:16. You have to choose being renewed over decaying. This is exactly what fasting is: a daily, physical decision to be renewed by returning to the Vine.

The vine is the source. The trellis is the structure: the practices, rhythms, and disciplines you build into your life that hold you in place long enough to be nourished. This fast is part of your trellis. It holds you close to Jesus when everything else is pulling you away.

"It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization in our own lives." – **William O. Paulsell**

THE REAP METHOD

READ: John 15:1–8 ESV and 2 Corinthians 4:16 ESV

EXAMINE: What does Jesus say happens to the branch that doesn't abide? What does that look like in your life?

APPLY: Where in your life are you trying to produce fruit on your own, without staying connected to the Vine? Name it specifically.

PRAY: *Lord, I confess the default in me is not toward you. Renew my inner self today. I come to the Vine. I need you more than I need food.*

TODAY'S PRACTICE – FASTING

Before you eat or drink anything today, write down two things: what you are fasting FROM and what you are fasting TOWARD.

DAY 2 – LISTEN TO HIM

Peter is on the mountain and he's already building tents. He's doing what we all do: getting busy, making plans, filling the silence with activity. And then God interrupts him with three words: LISTEN TO HIM.

The word obedience comes from the Latin *obedire*, which means "to listen to." You cannot obey a voice you're not actually hearing and most of us aren't hearing because we're not stopping long enough to listen. Life is full of noise, hurry, and crowds. The enemy doesn't need to get you to sin. He just needs to keep you moving (we don't say "busy" anymore around these parts.)

Fasting slows you down. It pulls you up the mountain. It clears the noise so you can hear what the cloud is saying. If we LOVE Him, we will LISTEN to Him. If we listen, we'll recognize His voice when it calls. That's what the Voices series is all about: whose voice are you actually following?

"Command from the cloud: Listen to Him." – **Pastor Jason Gerdes, ABIDE 2025**

THE REAP METHOD

READ: Matthew 17:1–8 ESV and Revelation 2:7 ESV

EXAMINE: What did the disciples see when they looked up? What has been blocking your view of Jesus lately?

APPLY: What has God been saying to you that you've been too busy or too afraid to act on? What is one step of obedience you can take today?

PRAY: *God, I want to hear you clearly. Tune out the noise. Give me ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. I fall on my face. Rise me up to see Jesus only.*

TODAY'S PRACTICE – SILENCE

Set a timer for 10 minutes. No phone. No music. No background noise. Sit in complete silence and ask: God, what are you saying to me? Write down whatever comes to mind and bring it back to Scripture.

DAY 3 – THE DESOLATE PLACE

The crowds were at their biggest and the demand was at its highest. So, that's exactly when Jesus left. Not because He didn't care, but because He knew you can't give what you don't have. He withdrew to desolate places and prayed so He could come back full. Jim Elliot, missionary martyr, once said: "The devil has made it his business to monopolize on three elements: noise, hurry and crowds." Sound like your week?

The enemy doesn't need your soul to blow up in a scandal. He just needs you to be too busy and too loud to hear God. Noise. Hurry. Crowds. That is the strategy.

Fasting is the desolate place. It is the decision to leave the noise and find the Voice. It is silence and solitude built into your Rule of Life, not because you have to, but because you know you'll wither without it.

"Unless we plan for daily times of solitary silence before God, other things will rush in to fill our time like water into the Titanic." – **Donald Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life**

THE REAP METHOD

READ: Luke 5:12–16 ESV and Mark 1:35 ESV

EXAMINE: When did Jesus withdraw: before the crowds gathered, or after? Why does that timing matter?

APPLY: Where is "the desolate place" for you? When can you schedule it, even 20 minutes, this week?

PRAY: Jesus, you knew when to leave. Teach me that rhythm. Help me withdraw so I can return full. Meet me in the quiet. I'm showing up.

TODAY'S PRACTICE – DISCONNECT

Choose a one-hour window today to go completely tech-free. No phone, no TV, no podcasts (even the GPP). Sit with God. Bring a journal. Write what comes up, even if it's just silence.

DAY 4 – WHAT NEEDS TO GO

FAULTY FORMATION = Wrong Things over Time.

FRUITFUL FORMATION = Right Things over Time.

You are being formed either way. The question is whether you're being intentional about it. Fasting interrupts faulty formation. It is one of the most direct ways to say NO to what has been shaping you in the wrong direction. The habits, the comfort foods, the things you reach for when you're stressed or bored or lonely. Fasting takes those away and forces the question: what am I actually hungry for?

Isaiah 58 says the fast God is after doesn't just change what you eat. It breaks yokes. What yoke do you need broken? What needs to GO in your life so something new can GROW?

"Fasting is an ancient Christian discipline to break the power of the flesh in our life, our desires, sins, and cravings, and to feed on the Holy Spirit." – **John Mark Comer**

THE REAP METHOD

READ: Isaiah 58:1–7 ESV and Galatians 5:13–25 ESV

EXAMINE: What does God say makes a fast meaningful? What makes it hollow?

APPLY: What pattern of faulty formation is this fast beginning to expose in you? Be honest. Name it. Often, there is an unhealed wound underneath the pattern that God is exposing. What needs to GO in your life so the right things can GROW?

PRAY: *God, I don't want to just be hungry. I want to be free. Break what needs to be broken. Let this fast be the kind you choose: a yoke-breaker. Form me fruitfully.*

TODAY'S PRACTICE – SURRENDER

Write down one thing: a habit, a thought pattern, a comfort that has been forming you away from God. Put a line through it. That is your yoke. Ask God to break it this week.

DAY 5 – HE MUST INCREASE

John the Baptizer is at the height of his ministry. Crowds are following him. His disciples are worried that Jesus is gaining ground. And John's response? Jesus must increase, and I must decrease. That is the most countercultural sentence in the Bible. In a world of self-promotion, self-expression, and self-reliance, the voice crying in the wilderness says: less of me and more of Him.

Here's the question Voices puts to us: *Whose voice are you following?* Pride amplifies your own voice. Comparison amplifies someone else's. Fear amplifies the accuser's. But Humility amplifies His. A humble person has made room for Jesus to be heard above the noise.

Fasting is the physical act of humility. You are saying with your body what John said with his words: I decrease so He can increase. You make room. You get out of the way. And in the process, something surprising happens: you find that the life you've been holding onto so tightly is exactly the life Jesus was asking you to lay down. We SOW surrender. God GROWS something we never could have produced ourselves.

"The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me... I do not think more of myself or less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less." – **Tim Keller**

THE REAP METHOD

READ: Philippians 2:1–11 ESV, James 4:10 ESV, and John 3:22–30 ESV

EXAMINE: What does Jesus' example in Philippians 2 look like in actual practice, not just as a concept? Where in your life are you taking up more space than you should? Where is your voice louder than His?

APPLY: Identify one area where pride, comparison, or self-promotion has amplified your voice over His. What would it look like to decrease there today?

PRAY: *Lord, less of me. More of you. I don't want to be heard more than you are. Humble me.*

TODAY'S PRACTICE – HUMILITY

Spend time today intentionally quieting your own voice. No posting, no commentary, and no opinions pushed outward. Instead, reflect on how you can exalt Christ.

DAY 6 – THE SHEPHERD KNOWS YOUR NAME

The Shepherd doesn't just speak. He knows you. Not "knows of." He knows your name, your weakness, and your hunger. Yet, He still says come abide in my love.

Here's what abiding produces: JOY. Not just peace. Not just endurance. Full joy. Jesus said I have spoken these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full. The fruit that grows on a branch connected to the Vine is not religious duty; it's delight. It's the kind of joy that makes your fast feel like the most alive you've been in months.

And those mercies? They are new every morning. Not recycled. New. Whatever you brought into this fast, guilt, shame, exhaustion, or distance from God, this morning is a new and fresh start.

Great is His faithfulness. Not, "great is YOUR effort..." Great is HIS faithfulness.

"Ultimately we fast simply because we want God more than we want anything this world has to offer us." – John Piper

THE REAP METHOD

READ: John 10:1–27 ESV, Lamentations 3:22–23 ESV, and John 15:9–17 ESV

EXAMINE: What does the Shepherd do that a hired hand won't? When have you experienced genuine joy in your relationship with Jesus? Where has it dried up? What changed?

APPLY: Who in your life needs to experience the love of Jesus through you this week? Name one person. What is one concrete thing you'll do?

PRAY: Shepherd, I want to know your voice so well I recognize it anywhere. Fill me with your joy. Let what grows in me overflow to someone else today.

TODAY'S PRACTICE – BLESS

Practice one step of BLESS today: Begin with prayer for someone by name. Or listen to someone, really listen, with no fixing. Or eat with someone (if you're not fasting from all food) and have a real conversation. Let your fast make you more present to people, not less.

DAY 7 – DENY, TAKE UP, FOLLOW

The 7 days of fasting are ending, but the invitation to listen to the Shepherd's voice is permanent. The question is no longer "how do I break the fast?" It's instead, "how do I keep living attuned to Jesus like this?"

A Rule of Life is your answer. Not a list of rules. A rhythm. An intentional structure that keeps you connected to the Vine when life gets loud again, and it will. Your Rule of Life should give you margin to notice Jesus and others, not simply fill your schedule with to-do's.

Sometimes the best things we decide to do are the to-don'ts. Without margin, your kindness has no place to land.

The Revolution Rule of Life has four areas: GOSPEL (how you grow in your relationship with God), RELATIONSHIPS (who you do life with), OBEDIENCE (the limits and rhythms you submit to), and WORKS (how you serve and work for God's glory). Fasting belongs in Obedience as a regular practice, not just a January or August event.

"To say yes to Jesus' invitation to apprentice under Him is to say no to countless other invitations." – **John Mark Comer**

THE REAP METHOD

READ: Matthew 16:24–27 ESV

EXAMINE: How will you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus after this fast?

APPLY: What is one practice from this week you want to carry into your everyday Rule of Life? What are you willing to say NO to so you can say YES to that?

PRAY: *God, don't let me undo what you've done this week. Build a rule of life in me. Let abiding in your voice become my way of life, not just my fast. I choose the Vine.*

TODAY'S PRACTICE – RULE OF LIFE

Write down one practice you will keep after this fast: a weekly media fast, a daily REAP, a regular silence window, a FOURmation Group. Make it specific and put it in your calendar.

RESOURCES FOR CONTINUED GROWTH

The REAP Method

R — READ: Open your Bible. Ask God to open your eyes to His Word and your heart to what He wants to say. As you read: What is happening in this passage? What do you see about God? What do you see about people?

E — EXAMINE: Reflect. Who is writing, and who are they writing to? What do you learn about God's character? What wrong beliefs does this challenge? What jumps out?

A — APPLY: What truth do you need to believe? What false belief do you need to drop? How will you live differently today? What is one thing the Spirit is calling you to do?

P — PRAY: Respond to God with His words and yours. Praise Him. Confess. Ask. Let Scripture shape your prayer, not the other way around.

The BLESS Strategy

B — BEGIN WITH PRAYER: Ask God: how do you want me to bless the people in the places you've sent me?

L — LISTEN: Stop talking. Listen to the people around you, their pain, their hopes, their questions.

E — EAT: Have a meal with someone. Sit down. Stay. Relationships are built at the table.

S — SERVE: When you listen and eat with people, they'll show you exactly how to love them.

S — STORY: When the time is right, share how Jesus changed your life.

A Quick Guide to Fasting

Start small. If you're new to fasting, start with one meal. Jesus fasted for 40 days. You're not Jesus. You don't have to start there.

Replace, don't just remove. Every time you feel hungry, let that be your cue to pray. Hunger is your alarm clock. Use it.

Tell someone. Though scripture reminds us not to boast in our fast, fasting in community is powerful. Ask for accountability from a friend, a spouse, or your FOURmation Group.

Fast from more than food. Media, social media, a specific comfort or habit. Anything you reach for instead of God is a candidate. Food is the anchor. Fasting in the Bible always involves food, but we encourage you to also take the chaos of media out of your life during a fast.

Kinds of Fasting

- One meal per day
- Sunrise to sunset (partial day)
- Full 24-hour fast from food
- Daniel fast (vegetables and water only, no sweets or meat)
- Media fast (no social media, TV, or news)
- Combined fast (food and media)
- Extended fast (multiple days)