

30 DAY FAST

As we anticipate Easter this year, we want to intentionally create a bit of space in our lives to focus on Jesus and what he accomplished through his life, death and resurrection. One way we thought we could practice this is through a 30 day Digital Fast starting March 1st.

Our Fast

Motivated by our desire to grow as disciples of Jesus, we are inviting all who call Anthem home to a 30 day Digital Fast. Digital consumption may not be literal food, yet for most it's consumed far more than actual food. Not all digital consumption is bad, but we must face the reality that for most, our consumption of digital content in its many forms tends to create roadblocks and barriers between our relationship with Jesus and with one another. Fasting does not make us super spiritual and it is not a formula to get God to do what we want. Rather, it is a voluntary discipline, an opportunity to say no to some creature comforts in order that we might grow in our awareness and experience of God's presence through the Holy Spirit.

We are intentionally doing this together. Though we say this is voluntary and it is, that does not mean all of us are excited about the fast or that we are eager to do it. This will be hard and if you find yourself not wanting to do it, I'm right there with you. However, I know that if we walk through this together with the Holy Spirit we will see God move in significant ways in our church family.

For the month of March leading up to Easter Sunday we want to invite you to join us in a 30 Day Digital Fast. Not only are we saying no to personal consumption of electronics, but more importantly we want to create extra space to focus on Jesus and what he accomplished through his life, death and resurrection. We want to grow in awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives whom Jesus pours out on all who believe in his name!

PRACTICALLY, WHAT SHOULD WE GIVE UP?

We know that many use computers and phones for work. That is not what we have in mind. We are hoping to cut out all of the "extracurriculars" like digital entertainment, social-media, and games. It may be helpful to think in terms of solo/individual digital consumption.

Consider fasting from:

- Things you may scroll rather than search. (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat)
- News Apps/websites
- Things you may use to fill up the 5 minutes here and there between appointments or the next thing. (e.g. Netflix, Youtube, ESPN app, etc.)
- Any other electronic or digital thing you may regularly engage or consume.

You may consider:

- Deleting apps that you find yourself turning to regularly.
- Turning off all notifications except for your phone and text, AND using “Do Not Disturb” in the evenings and mornings.
- Limiting the rooms in your house where your phone may be. (Studies have shown that people who don’t charge their phones in their bedrooms are significantly happier than those who do.)
- No phones in bathrooms
- Keeping your phone in your pocket or in the car when waiting for anything (Dentist appointment, check out line, picking up kids)

WHERE DO I START, AND WHEN IS IT OVER?

Our 30 days of fasting will start on Friday, March 1st. Take the opportunity the week leading up to the fast to share with your community group. What are you excited about? Nervous about? What type of fast are you doing? We will be breaking the fast on Easter Sunday. Later on Sunday April 7th we want to share together how the Lord moved during our season of fasting.

HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THIS FAST?

Here are a few practical tips to prepare:

- Think about your plan, write it down, and share it with your community group, trusted friend or family. Begin your fast with a committed heart. This one is huge. We are doing this together. We are not bragging about what we are giving up, or lording it over anyone as any sort of spiritual superiority, but we also want to help one another through it. So make sure to share together how you will be fasting.
- Reflect on your own usage and entertainment habits. Identify where this will be particularly difficult. Use the attached assessment to help you prayerfully think through this.
- Look at your “screen time” app and make note of surprises.
- Consider how you will respond to the impulses and use your time. How can you press into your relationship with God and neighbor?
 - Print out bible verses you want to meditate on or memorize and keep them in your pocket.
 - Is there someone or something in particular you want to pray for?
 - Maybe you need to borrow or buy some board games, new books, or other forms of non-digital entertainment to enjoy with family and friends.
 - Consider ways to get your family and friends to linger longer around the table. Plan to do something fun and new (e.g. buy some candles and have one candlelit dinner per week.)

- Think ahead about other ways to prepare for this digital minimalism, so you don't find yourself running to your phone for non-digital activities. (e.g. Get an alarm clock so you don't keep your phone by your bed.)
- Plan ahead on what you will do if you inadvertently engage with something you're fasting from. We don't want to plan to fail and then give up. So think ahead on what you will do to get back on track.

WHAT TO DO WHILE FASTING?

Each time you feel the impulse to grab your phone or turn something on, use it as a prompt for prayer. Turn your heart to God and ask him to focus your attention on him and feed your spirit. Use your imagination to "see" yourself drawing strength from God himself.

Here are a few other things that can be incorporated into those prayer times:

- Break a Habit → Identify a specific sin or habit or pattern in your "flesh" that you want to break. Spend the fast in prayer for freedom in that area.
- Journal → Take a little time for self- reflection. Get your journal out or go for a walk and think about what this practice is revealing about you. Richard Foster said, "Fasting reveals the things that control us." If you just feel annoyed or bored, ask yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" Treat yourself compassionately, as God does, yet honestly as well. **Remember: the point isn't a guilt trip, but freedom.**
- Read Scripture → "Feed" on the word of God, like Jesus did in the wilderness.
- Pray
 - Ask God to be your source of comfort and strength
 - For our Church Family as we go through this together.
 - For our church to grow in awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives.