

# 40 DAY ELECTRONIC FAST

As a church, we believe that God has challenged us to press into eliminating “hurry” in our lives. Too often we uncritically allow so many things to tyrannize us, causing us to feel busy, overwhelmed and ceaselessly hurried. This is not the “abundant life” Jesus promised. And we want to take steps to do something about it.

As we anticipate Easter this year, we thought this would be a unique opportunity to halt our frantic pace, catch our breath, and focus our attention on God, what he has done in Christ, and how he is calling us as a church to grow. One way we thought we could practice this is through an electronic fast. While this is not the typical fast that many think of, we think it could serve us to try to touch a nerve, and unmask one of the key idols in our lives that may be contributing to our frenetic pace.

## WHAT IS FASTING? AND WHY DO AN ELECTRONIC FAST?

Historically, fasting has meant abstaining from food; and in Christian practice it was done as a response to something happening in one’s life or the life of the community. We may be familiar with the experience of grief taking away our appetite. Similarly, fasting seeks to act out a physical response to things when our hearts are sometimes slow to respond. Fasting can be an expression of repentance, a response to a moment in which we feel we must earnestly seek God, a response to grief. Fasting can sometimes be a response to our need for spiritual discipline, a response to our corporate life together, even a response to poverty and injustice. A key aspect of fasting is that it is a response, *not* an instrumental practice in which we try to receive something. We go without food because of what has taken place in our hearts, and to physically act our hunger for God. We fast from good to give physical expression to our hunger for God and desire to feast on him. Fasting does not demand something from God, but rather is a demonstration of hearts being made ready for a work of God.

In response to our desire to eliminate hurry, we are calling an electronic fast. We want to highlight ways that we have fed our souls with counterfeit gods. We want to expose the ways we have depended on our distraction and digitally self-medicated. We want to emancipate ourselves from online masters, that we have unknowingly served for too long. Does that language seem too dramatic for the mundane habit of watching youtube or scrolling our pinterest or ESPN app? That may be part of the problem: we’ve believed the lie that our habits haven’t been forming our hearts without us knowing it.

## **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 electronic entertainment, personal social-media, and games.

Consider fasting from:

- Things you may scroll rather than search. (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat)
- 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 these apps during the fast.
- 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.)

## **WHERE DO I START, AND WHEN IS IT OVER?**

Our 40 days of fasting will start on Wednesday, March 4th. 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. On April 23rd, we will gather together to discuss what the fast was like, what we’ve learned, and most importantly how the fast impacted our relationship with God.

## **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. Begin your fast with a committed heart.
- 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.

**Our prayer is that this time will break old habits, lead to new ones, and lay the groundwork for us to experience and pursue refreshment from God and the abundant life Christ promised in Him.**

# Personal Technology Self-Assessment

*This worksheet is a tool to help you assess how and when you interact with technology, identify which uses are essential, and from which uses you should consider fasting.*

A. Place a checkmark beside the devices you personally use:

- Cell phone
- Laptop
- Desktop computer
- Tablet
- Television
- Other:

B. On the devices you checked above, **which types of apps or tasks do you engage in?** (Note that this list is **not** exhaustive – please add any missing from the list that are true for you! If you cannot think of anything, open your phone/device and it will show you.)

## Communication

- Texting - work
- Texting - personal
- Email - work
- Email – personal
- Workplace communication (slack, Microsoft teams)
- WhatsApp
- Skype
- Facetime
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

## Social Media

- Facebook - personal
- Instagram - personal
- Snapchat
- Facebook – business
- Instagram - business
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- TikTok
- Tumblr
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Media

- News Apps
- Dating apps
- Reddit
- Wikipedia
- Sports apps
- Podcasts
- Audiobooks
- Music apps/platforms
- Company apps
- Fitness apps/tracking
- Photo editing apps
- Yelp
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

## Gaming

- Mobile games
- Video games
- Portable gaming device
- Online Gaming
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**Video**

- Netflix
- Live/Recorded TV
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- Hulu
- Sporting events
- Disney+
- YouTube

**Shopping**

- Amazon
- Mobile food orders
- Clothing/household
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- Grocery

**Information Technology**

- Web searches (recipes, articles, coupons, news updates, sports scores)
- Navigation
- Mobile Banking
- Clock
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**Productivity & Task Management**

- Reminders
- E-learning apps or sites
- To Do lists
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- Notes

C. Look over the items you checked above and identify any that are **used for school or work exclusively**. Cross these out – you will not be fasting from these.

D. Look over the remaining items. Identify which of these are used for any of the following reasons and cross them out. These are most likely not areas you should fast from. *(Notice, however, as you go through if any of these might be being overused for non-essential reasons. Make a note of these.)*

- 1) To communicate with loved ones for necessary or important reasons (for example, staying connected with out of town family members, communicating with your children, etc)
- 2) To provide essential information for practical purposes (for example, navigation, mobile banking, health apps)

E. **The items that remain most likely represent the ways you engage with screen time for entertainment only.** Circle the remaining items and answer the following questions about them:

- 1) Consider the reason(s) you utilize personal technology. What need does it fulfill? (ex. entertainment, distraction, avoidance of tasks, connection, self affirmation)



**Take some time now to reflect, and pray over what you have written above.**

7) Describe what you will personally fast from starting March 4th.

You are encouraged to **pray over your list** and **share it** with a friend, spouse, accountability partner or community group. Encourage one another during this journey and expect that God will show up in big ways!

## Community Bible Reading

Day	Date	Old Testament	New Testament
Wed	3/4/20	1 Kings 15	Acts 22
Thur	3/5/20	1 Kings 16	Acts 23
Fri	3/6/20	1 Kings 17	Acts 24
Sat	3/7/20	Psalms 62	X
Sun	3/8/20	X	X
Mon	3/9/20	1 Kings 18	Acts 25
Tue	3/10/20	1 Kings 19	Acts 26
Wed	3/11/20	1 Kings 20	Acts 27
Thu	3/12/20	1 Kings 21	Acts 28
Fri	3/13/20	1 Kings 22	Romans 1
Sat	3/14/20	Psalms 63	X
Sun	3/15/20	X	X
Mon	3/16/20	2 Kings 1	Romans 2
Tue	3/17/20	2 Kings 2	Romans 3
Wed	3/18/20	2 Kings 3	Romans 4
Thu	3/19/20	2 Kings 4	Romans 5
Fri	3/20/20	2 Kings 5	Romans 6
Sat	3/21/20	Psalms 64	X
Sun	3/22/20	X	X
Mon	3/23/20	2 Kings 6	Romans 7

Day	Date	Old Testament	New Testament
Tue	3/24/20	2 Kings 7	Romans 8
Wed	3/25/20	2 Kings 8	Romans 9
Thu	3/26/20	2 Kings 9	Romans 10
Fri	3/27/20	2 Kings 10	Romans 11
Sat	3/28/20	Psalms 65	X
Sun	3/29/20	X	X
Mon	3/30/20	2 Kings 11	Romans 12
Tue	3/31/20	2 Kings 12	Romans 13
Wed	4/1/20	2 Kings 13	Romans 14
Thu	4/2/20	2 Kings 14	Romans 15
Fri	4/3/20	2 Kings 15	Romans 16
Sat	4/4/20	Psalms 66	X
Sun	4/5/20	X	X
Mon	4/6/20	2 Kings 16	1 Corinthians 1
Tue	4/7/20	2 Kings 17	1 Corinthians 2
Wed	4/8/20	2 Kings 18	1 Corinthians 3
Thu	4/9/20	2 Kings 19	1 Corinthians 4
Fri	4/10/20	2 Kings 20	1 Corinthians 5
Sat	4/11/20	Psalms 67	X
Sun	4/12/20	X	X