

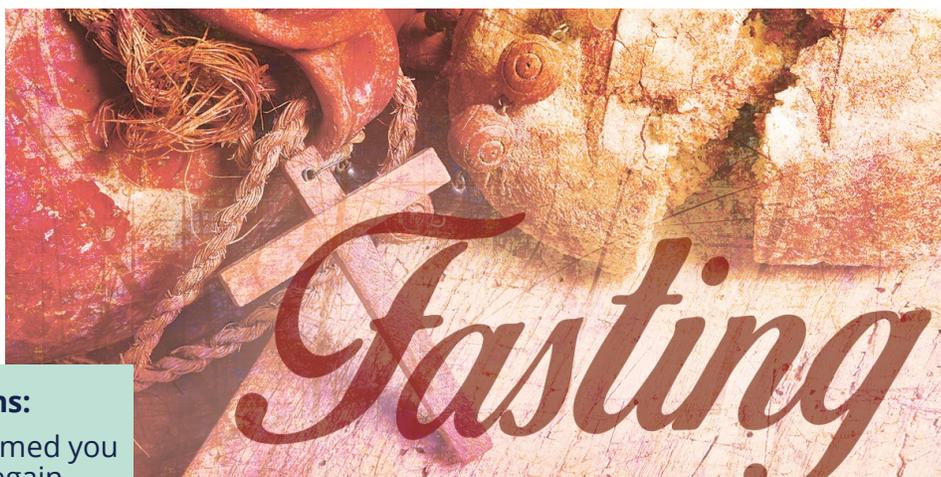
# MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

## Fasting as a Pathway to Spiritual Freedom

Few things go against our popular culture like the practice of fasting. Society teaches us that as long as it doesn't harm anyone else, we're free to indulge in whatever we want. The Bible has a different lesson though. Throughout the Old Testament, wayward Israelites frequently fasted to demonstrate their desire to return to the Lord's path. Prophets would sometimes declare a fast for the whole people in order to plead for God's mercy. In the Gospels, Jesus is shown to fast for a full forty days in the desert in order to prepare himself for the beginning of His ministry.

These examples show us the two main purposes that fasting serves in our lives. Firstly, engaging in self-denial is a powerful form of penance. It's a demonstration to God that we are sorry for our sins and that we want to change our ways. It's not something that God demands of us so much as a voluntary sacrifice that pleases Him. Secondly, as we fast from our worldly desires, we are forced to rely less on them and more on God. In doing so, we learn that we are masters of passions, not slaves to them.

Little pleasures, whether they be food or drink or entertainment, often play an outsized role in our lives. Fasting is a reminder that we are free, that these things do not control us. It teaches us that "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3, Mt 4:4). As we struggle to sustain our Lenten sacrifices, let us resist every temptation, calling to mind our sins and trusting more in God.



### Lenten Reflection Questions:

Has overindulgence ever harmed you in some way? How did you regain control?

What has been your experience with fasting? Was it frustrating or difficult? Were you able to grow through the experience?

What are you giving up for Lent this year? Could you go one step further?