

# Spiritual Rhythms | Fasting

## #2: Fasting as a Rhythm

Selected passages

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- February 9, 2025

Our lives as Americans changed on one day, and most of us don't even know what that day is. It was a Tuesday. It was 248 years, five months, and eleven days ago. It was August 27, 1776. And the timeline of America had stopped, and there was a T in the intersection, and we were going to go left, or we were going to go right. And there were two consequences each way. We would be a country, or we would be part of Britain. The next 48 hours would decide.

Leading up to August 27, 1776 ... it's the first battle since the founders wrote on paper our ambition to become independent of Britain. And this is our first event with full combat. It was in New York on Long Island. And the colonial army was both surprised and desperately outnumbered. It didn't take long for the British troops to push back the colonial army to the point of being trapped on the west end of Long Island, where they were completely surrounded by land. Their backs were to the East River where the British fleet was waiting for them, cannons loaded.

There were 9,000 troops under General George Washington. And they didn't have a chance. They were pulverized. And at this point, there was no chance of victory. They were looking at survival. But there were really two alternatives. They could either surrender or they could die in combat. It appeared that the American Revolution was over before it started.

And then something mysterious happened. Scholars today still don't understand why a certain decision was made. The famous and ingenious head of the British army, General Howe, put a full stop to his attacking forces. Right when he had the colonial army, he said, "We need to stop and dig in for 48 hours." It went against all of his commanding officers, and no one knows to this day why he stopped. It was all but gone ... 48 hours.

During those 48 hours, an exceedingly violent storm came through the northeast and blew all the ships way up the East River. And General Washington saw this and thought, "Wait a minute. This opens up an opportunity for us to be able to retreat all the way to Manhattan, but we'll be caught."

The next night, this spooky, dense fog lowered itself upon those two islands there. And that's when Washington knew that this was God's work--He's arranging this. And so, he had a famous retreat where all 9,000 men make it to Manhattan, and they do it in the dead of night and didn't make a noise, apparently. Because the British troops didn't know what had happened until the next morning when the sun came up and the fog cleared. There was no one there in Brooklyn Heights.

It's called the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, but there wasn't a battle. Sometimes it's called the Battle of Long Beach. But that part of it was just a slaughter. Depending upon where you study history, they'll tell you that this was the most strategic retreat in the battle for American independence. If you study this in heaven, they'll tell you that there was a lot more to it. They'll say that this war for independence and this particular battle started months before in May—on May 15th and then May 17th. On May 17<sup>th</sup>, when General George Washington took over the military, he said, “This is how we start. We will submit to and obey the command of the First Continental Congress.” To be in the military, all the officers and every one of the men had to do this.

This was the order from the Continental Congress: “The Continental Congress having ordered Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> to be observed as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, humbly to supplicate the mercy of Almighty God, that it would please Him to pardon all our manifold sins and transgressions, and to prosper the arms of the United Colonies, and finally establish the peace and freedom of America upon a solid and lasting foundation” of God Almighty.

The battle for independence began with the colonial army on their knees. And they are begging God Almighty, the God of Hosts, the God of the Armies, to play a part. George Washington knew that they would need the God of creation, of storms and fogs, to even have a chance against the ominous threat of the British.

That famous retreat, the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, changed the momentum of the war, because they had lost so early and so terribly. They had hope now—not just because they realized that God was in this war, but they realized what kind of general they were following. The last man to leave Brooklyn Heights, the last person in the strategic retreat, was George Washington. He was the first and the last in everything he did.

The point is—I'm trying to show you that there is some kind of mystic, mysterious power when people pray and fast. We've been studying the various disciplines of the faith. We're

calling them rhythms. We want to make them regular lifestyle issues in our lives. We're seeing the power of habits—what you practice, you become.

## Prayer and Fasting

And our first month we looked at prayer. And now we're looking at fasting. We're not abandoning prayer—we're putting prayer and fasting together, because fasting and prayer is found throughout the Bible, and it is found throughout church history. Prayer and fasting, fasting and prayer ...

And last week we looked at the Bible and church history. We saw two types or two styles of prayer and fasting. One has to do with purposeful prayer and fasting in response to events in our lives that are overwhelming, like a war or an illness or some issue of care or concern. And we pray and fast.

And this week we're going to look at the other kind of fasting, the other kind of prayer. And that is the rhythm of fasting—the regular practice of weekly praying and fasting together. I don't understand, but there's a mystery to the rhythm of fasting as it amplifies our prayers and our desire to become like Christ. There's some kind of additive that takes place in fasting that helps unstick what is stuck in our spiritual lives. It just happens.

## Guide to Fasting Cru.org

Now if you want to know more about frequently asked questions about fasting, I looked around this week, and I think the best resource I could send you to would be the Campus Crusade (or Cru) website on fasting. Go to [cru.org](http://cru.org), and then go to fasting. They've been doing this for years. The founder, Bill Bright, used to fast regularly every year.

And I'm going to look this week, not at purposeful fasting. I feel like that's an easy go-to. Sometimes you just need to be reminded: *Wow, a friend of mine is hospitalized. I will not just pray, but I'm going to fast and pray.* This week my hope is to show you and convince you that a regular weekly fast is powerful. A regularly scheduled fast is good for your soul.

Now in the hundreds of years before Jesus walked the earth, it became tradition for Jews to fast twice a week. That's why, when Jesus taught all His great teaching, when He was looking at the various spiritual disciplines, the rhythms of life, He said, "When you fast ..." He knew that

everyone was fasting already. He would fast. And then after the death and resurrection of Jesus, in the first 1,500 years of church history the church would fast twice a week. It was a regular part of life.

I grew up in a Catholic church. We fasted on Fridays. It was a regular part of our lives. Not so much now—but it’s becoming trendy again, because now people are finding out (maybe because we have better microscopes) the physical benefits of fasting. There are tremendous, good things that can happen to you by fasting regularly. It cleans out the toxins in our blood system, it increases metabolism, it lowers our insulin levels and inflammation and blood pressure. It strengthens our immune system. It slows the aging process. My favorite? It’s free. You actually make money by fasting. You don’t spend it on food.

And while it’s become more prevalent because it’s good for your body, I don’t think that’s why we’re meeting today. I want to show you how it’s good for your soul and spirit.

A rhythm of weekly fasting can help you grow in holiness. And holiness is somewhat of an obscure word, a church word. And so, around Grace, we say “Become like Christ in all of life.” Because that’s what “holiness” means. It’s becoming like Christ in all of life.

And fasting helps you become like Christ in all of life because, for one, Jesus would fast. And so, if He regularly fasted and we’re going to be like Him, we’ll regularly fast. But also, I want you to see that fasting is a means. It’s a way of becoming like Christ. It’s a way of becoming holy. It’s a tool we can use to sanctify our soul and spirit by managing our body. That’s the point here.

And for centuries and millennia, saints have enjoyed the power of fasting towards spiritual growth—towards becoming holy, becoming like Christ.

**Because it is sometimes necessary to check the delight of the flesh in respect to licit pleasures in order to keep it from yielding to illicit joys.**

**----St. Augustine of Hippo**

St. Augustine, one of the Church fathers, was asked why he fasted, why anyone should fast. He said, “Because it is sometimes necessary to check the delight of the flesh in respect to licit pleasures”—legitimate pleasures —“in order to keep it from yielding to illicit joys.”

It helps us flex the “no” muscle in our will, and sometimes the “yes” muscle in our will when that’s appropriate.

**Restrain from gluttony and you will the more easily restrain all the inclinations of the flesh.**

**---- Thomas à Kempis**

Thomas à Kempis said this: “Restrain from gluttony”—from eating and overeating—“and you will more easily restrain all the inclinations of the flesh.” If you could harness this one discipline, it’s going to show itself in other areas of your life.

**Fasting is a primary weapon in our war against “the flesh.”**

And so, here’s the big idea. Here’s the point of today. Fasting is a primary weapon in our war against “the flesh.” Now I put “in flesh” in quotes because the Bible talks about three sources of animosity that attack our spiritual lives. In the Bible it talks about three different sources. One is the world itself: it’s the value system, it’s the corrupt nature of this place. Because of the fall of mankind, it’s the fall of creation. And so, the world is corrupt and wants us to reject God. And then it says the devil and his demons are out to destroy us. And then, the third source of temptation is the flesh. All of mankind is bent. Our souls are torqued--generally speaking, and I would say, specifically.

So, we have a general consequence of the fall, the fall of humanity. Just read the newspaper. And then we have specific ones—multiple—towards me, towards you personally. It’s an area of personal weakness for you.

In the Bible, the Greek word that is sometimes translated “the flesh” is also translated as “sinful nature” or “self-indulgent.” It’s helpful to see this. “Self-indulgent”—that’s a great phrase. “Indulgent”—it means taking quite often legitimate expressions of pleasure and making them illegitimate. It’s instinctive things like a desire for food or sleep or self-preservation or even pleasure. Pleasure is a good thing. It feels good to feel good. But then it becomes demented. It becomes bent.

Quite often, one of the ways self-indulgence expresses itself is when the things that God has given us in order to turn out and love other people and help them enjoy what God has for their lives, we turn those inward and we make those good things, indulgences, turn bad, and we say, *It's all about me. It's all about making me feel good, right here and right now.*

St. Augustine called self-indulgence “disordered desires.” In other words, there was an ordered desire, and it becomes disordered. It becomes self-pleasuring.

Let me say it again. Here's the big point. Fasting is a primary weapon in our war against the flesh. Now that we've described the flesh, the Bible is clear that, when it comes to the evils of the flesh, we don't have a peace treaty in this life. There's not even a season of a cold war with these desires. There's a raging war all our life, from the day of our conception to the day of our death. We're going to fight the whole time. There are no gains with this and there is no negotiating. It's not a playful conversation or description that is in the Bible.

#### **Galatians 5:17**

**For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other ...**

Look what Paul says in Galatians. He starts off speaking generally and somewhat vague, but you'll see it escalate. In Galatians it says, “For the sinful nature”—there it is—“desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other ...”

#### **Galatians 5:24**

**Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

Okay, there's an argument going. No, it's not an argument. Look just a few verses down where it says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” “Crucified this flesh,” he says. It's a war.

### **Romans 8:13**

**For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

In Romans, he puts it this way. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” There’s a lot of death. Something is going to die. If you submit to the flesh, you will. Or you will kill the desires of the body.

### **1 Peter 2:11**

**Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

Peter doesn’t mince words either. Look what Peter says: “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against your very souls.”

They’re calling it a war.

In early church history, the fathers called this “mortification of the flesh.” And they used that word “mortify.” The root word of that is “mortal,” which means you can kill it. There’s no excuses here, there is no justification. The point of a regularly patterned fast is because you want to kill these desires of the flesh often, when they’re young and when they’re at their weakest state. Get them early. Crucify them. Nail them to the cross.

### **Three Ways Fasting Helps Us Become Like Christ**

A way of looking at this is that you are feeding your spirit, your soul and spirit, your metaphysical self, by starving your flesh. I want you to see these three ways that fasting is a major weapon in this war with the flesh. These are three ways that fasting serves us to become like Christ.

## 1. Fasting Reveals Out “Bent”

The first way it does that is that fasting reveals our personal bent. It reveals the way we’ve been torqued. Fasting is like a stress test. You know this. We call it being “hangry.” You do this for a little bit, and then what comes to the surface? That’s the deeds of the flesh. Fasting is like when you’re bird-hunting, and you send the bird dog out in front of you and all the quail fly up and come out of the bushes. *Wow, they were right there, right in front of me. Uh-huh.* They were always there. Ask your husband, your wife, or your neighbor. *This is your bent, but you don’t see it. And now you do.* Fasting brings that to our attention, but it was there all along.

**Fasting reveals the things that control us.**

**--Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline***

Richard Foster says this in his book on the disciplines: “Fasting reveals the things that control us.” And that realization is humbling. Actually, it’s humiliating. Maybe that’s why in that Continental Congress decree that called for fasting, it mentions humiliation and prayer. Because it brings a mirror to our character, and it shows us the things that are just not right.

What is our go-to? You can just fill in the blank for what your bent is.

*I’ve had an especially hard day today. Therefore, I get to \_\_\_\_\_. I get to have this kind of pleasure; I need to feel good; I have earned the right to be rewarded in some way. This is my time.* That’s what surfaces with us. And it can be a vice like anger. It can be a demented virtue, like working out or staying in shape when it becomes compulsive, it is in control of you. That’s the point.

Here’s what I want you to see—that by fasting in a rhythm—not for a purpose (actually, it’s for a different purpose)—fasting in a rhythm this way, weekly, is like bringing a self-inflicted bad set of circumstances to us, so that we have a bad day on purpose. It surfaces these vices so that we can deal with them—so that we can keep them on short leash, so that we can lock up the flesh and put in the cage for another week. It will stay there with weekly fasting.



## 2. Fasting Helps Develop Our Self-Mastery

It shows us what our bent is. The second thing that weekly or rhythmical fasting does is help us develop our own self-mastery. As I mentioned before, we have a “no” muscle that needs to gain strength, and we have a “yes” muscle. And the “no” and the “yes” muscles are our soul’s willpower. It’s self-control and self-discipline. A great definition of self-control is the ability to say no towards things that we want but are really bad for us. Chocolate, for example. It’s the ability to say no to something that you want that is bad for your soul. That’s self-control.

Self-discipline is the ability to say yes to things that you don’t want to do or don’t want that are good for your soul. Like broccoli. Self-control is saying no to chocolate and self-discipline is saying yes to broccoli. No to chocolate, yes to broccoli. (I know, it’s a terrible sermon. But this is where we need to be.)

Self-control plus self-discipline is self-mastery. Listen to this—this will help you visualize it. This self-mastery that fasting produces by doing it every week is like a weekly workout. If you only work out once every six months, you don’t get strong. You don’t get in shape. You probably end up in the doctor’s office. But if you work out weekly or two to three times a week, then that’s the rhythm of a workout, and that’s how your will becomes strong, the soul part of your strength. It’s the habit—it’s the power of habits. You do this regularly and you start getting used to suffering, and you’re not addicted to pleasure. What I love about it is that it reroutes your instinctive responses, particularly to events in your life. Instead of going straight to anger or to pity, you go to something that says, *You know what? Maybe God’s working in my life in some way.*

And if you’re doing that once or twice a week, then what happens is that when something happens in your life, whether it’s your choices or someone else’s choices or maybe the way God is working around you—and these are bad things that are happening—then what you’ve done is you’ve rewired things. And so, you’re going to think differently, you’re going to feel differently, and therefore you’re going to act differently, all because you’ve been practicing the rhythm of fasting. Your go-to will be, *You know what? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* It’s the power of our will being strong and in submission to God. That’s how we become like Christ.

## **Proverbs 16:32**

**Better a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.**

Look, I love this proverb. It's one of the first proverbs I ever read or memorized. (I wonder why.) "Better a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city."

**Two natures beat within my breast.  
One if foul, one is blessed.  
One I love and one I hate.  
The one I feed will dominate.**

**--Craig Massey, "The War Within"**

Or you know this poem, I bet: "Two natures beat within my breast. One is foul, one is blessed. One I love and one I hate. The one I feed will dominate."

Self-control and self-discipline over the flesh ... Fasting is a primary tool that we can use to defeat the flesh. Fasting is a primary tool that we can use to become like Christ. It does that by showing out bent. It does that by strengthening our soul.

### **3. Fasting Helps Target Our Self-Control**

And then, last, if you combine the first and second one, fasting helps target our self-mastery. So, we've been speaking in general terms. Now it's you particularly, me specifically.

#### **1 Peter 5:8**

**Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**

Look how in 1 Peter he's going to be talking about something, and you can see, generally speaking, the war that we're in. And then also think of it as to you especially. 1 Peter 5:8 says,

“Be self-controlled and alert.” There’s the command—to be self-controlled and alert. “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” He’s not messing around. There’s no subtlety here about the war. He’s saying, *Listen, you better stay in control, and you’d better be able to swivel your head and look around, or you’re going to be lunch.* The devil is like a roaring lion, and he is just looking for someone. Do you know who he’s looking for? Someone who can’t control their passions and someone who is naïve about his or her particular bent. That person will be easy prey. And that person will just surrender himself or herself to the way of the beast.

Our ability to control our passions and our wisdom to know what we’re bent with from birth until death is what distinguishes us from the animal kingdom.

In the old days they had newspapers, and in those newspapers, there was an advice column written by a woman by the name of Ann Landers. She was quite famous for her wit. Here’s one of the letters that Ann Landers received. This person said:

Dear Ann,

I have a problem. I’m a happily married man to a wonderful wife. *[You know what’s coming, right? We already hate this guy.]* We have two children. But I’ve also been seeing another young lady in the past six months, and here’s my problem. I love them both. What should I do?

Signed: Confused

P. S. Don’t give me any of that morality stuff.

So, Ann wrote back:

Dear Confused,

The only difference between animals and humans is morality. I suggest you consult your local veterinarian.

Maybe she could be a guest speaker here. Huh? Wow.

Look at the three truths in this passage that Peter is giving us. It's telling us this about the war we're in. One, self-control and self-mastery is essential. Be in control. Second, be alert—not just generally speaking but for you, what vice is especially pronounced in your soul and spirit? Then third, he says this is a spiritual war.

Remember I mentioned that there are three sources of temptation and evil in our lives: the world, our flesh, and the devil. Peter is saying that here is two out of three. You're fighting a war on two fronts. Do you know yourself? Fasting helps target your personal self-mastery so that what maybe is sometimes a weakness for you can in some respects be a strength. You're keeping this passion on a short leash in a cage. You're killing it often, regularly, when it's young and weak. You're not letting it roam and grow strong and then say, *Hmmm ... wonder what happened.*

And this isn't secular willpower. This is a spiritual thing in two different ways: the devil himself, and the flesh within us. These are the things that we just get pummeled by. This is the first step that every one of us knows if we've been in a twelve-step program. The first step is, *Lord, there is something that is bigger and stronger than my willpower, and it's this.* We have a different fill-in-the-blank, a different vice. But it's that first step that we all go to and say, *God, you need to get in here to fix this.* For some it's greed, for others it's anger, for some it's food, sometimes it's work-aholism. For some it's just melancholy. Some people go to self-pity. It's laziness for the sluggard. Spending ... whatever it is. *Your vice is not an issue with me. My vice is killing me.*

The first step is finding out what your vice is. I've been working on this series for months now. If you remember, my first lesson on prayer was on death by cynicism. So now I'm fasting weekly, and this is what I'm bringing to it. I'm saying, *Lord, cynicism is a beast that's bigger than me. It's going to kill me, it's going to kill everyone around me. You've got to help me fix this from the inside out. I need Your help. My discipline isn't enough for this.*

### Application

So, here's our homework. And it's somewhat similar to last week's, because it's like fasting for a purpose; we've just changed the purpose. It's a rhythm of fasting. So here we go, everybody at Grace. Here's our homework.

## 1. Pick a Day

The first one is to pick a day of the week that you're going to do this. Again, I'll remind you, win—especially if you're new to fasting, you want to win. Just maybe skip one meal, and then maybe work your way up to skipping two meals. You could do a partial fast. I know a lot of people who do a juice fast. I know people that cram a turkey in a blender, and they call that a juice fast. You're not supposed to gain weight on this thing.

We talked about this last week—you can work your way towards a total fast where you take in nothing, no water, no fluids, no eating. That's varsity level. That will get you thinking.

And then some of you may be unable to do a physical food fast, and you could fast from the internet or some kind of media or entertainment, or some kind of other discipline that's required.

## 2. Pick a Vice

You pick a day you're going to do that. Second, you pick a vice. You're going to fast for a purpose, not like before, which is somewhat unusual, but for holiness. And you're going to be on alert. This is helping your self-will, but you're also being on alert to seeing what's going to surface and how you can—part three—memorize and meditate on Scripture.

## 3. Memorize and Meditate on Scripture

You're going to have extra time if you're not cooking meals, and you're going to have regular reminders. And every time you have a hunger pang, you're going to these passages that are specifically tied to what your issue may be. Or sometimes it's a simple prayer, like I said: *Holy Spirit, You need to get in here. I don't need help; I need a miracle. I don't need to change by some certain disciplines or routine; I need to change my soul. I need You to make something supernatural happen.*

Keep in mind, you're not just trying to be a better citizen, or honestly, in some respects, even a better believer. The goal is to become more intimate with and closer to the Father because of the Son who died and was raised so that you could know that Lord God. And you're being

empowered by God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now lives within the redeemed soul, and now you have access to that.

Fasting is turning your body from an enemy into an ally, to help strengthen the non-physical part of you, the soul and the spirit. It's there to help you fight and battle the flesh. That's what you're doing with fasting.

So, that's our assignment: to pick a day and pick an issue, a purpose, a vice, and then maybe apply some spiritual truth to that.

## **Fasting Is Hard**

Let me remind you that fasting is hard. No doubt, fasting is hard. Let me give you three obvious reasons. One is that, if it's new, everything new is particularly hard, whether it's sewing or swimming. And that's why you really need to win early, so that you can be encouraged by that.

The second reason fasting for holiness is hard is because you're picking a fight with the flesh. And if you haven't done much in this area, the flesh is strong, and it's on a long rope, and it dominates. And now you're saying, *Back in your cage*.

And third, I want to remind you that this is a spiritual event. Because we're at war, we're in a battle. And it's all the way to death. This is a gladiator moment here. The devil and your flesh are working against your desire to become holy. You're fighting a war on two fronts, friends. It's going to be hard.

I want to tell you how when it becomes spiritual, it changes. I mean, I've fasted for once a week, often it's not hard for me. It's just a thing. I can miss meals and forget. I can just forget to eat sometimes. Don't hate me, okay? I've got other stuff ... But if I'm fasting for physical reasons, it's not a problem. The minute I say, *Oh, Thursday I'm going to fast for spiritual reasons*, I'm telling you, friends, I wake up Thursday morning and I'm thinking, *Oh, I haven't eaten in months. What's happened? I need three eggs right now. I can't believe this is happening to me. Woe is me, God. Dear God!*

Once it becomes a spiritual event, then my flesh and the devil himself say, *No, we're not letting you in there. Good for you. Miss a few meals for your immune system. But this? I'm getting into this fast*. It's a spiritual thing. I'm just reminding you—it's real.

Fasting is hard, and the more you do it, the stronger you get. It's hard. It's a pathway to freedom. Fasting is hard.

And if the Apostle Peter were here, he'd say, *You know what else is hard? Being devoured by a roaring lion because you lack self-control and you were naïve about how the devil himself is coming after you in an area of vice that everyone knows about. The quail were right there all the time, and you ignored that.* That's hard. Choose your hard.

You've probably seen that little poem on the internet, right?

*Marriage is hard.*

*Divorce is hard.*

*Choose your hard.*

*Being out of shape is hard.*

*Being in shape is hard.*

*Choose your hard.*

*Being in debt and living that way is hard.*

*Disciplining your spending and keeping a budget is hard.*

*Just choose your hard.*

And then it concludes with, *"Life will never be easy It will often be hard. But quite often we get to choose our hard. Choose wisely."*

So, we don't pretend to understand the why and the how of fasting. But fasting energizes, it amplifies, our desire to become like Christ in all of life. Somehow, fasting as a routine is like an additive that helps unstick what's been stuck in our spiritual evolution. Somehow, something is happening. I wonder if when we start fasting in a rhythm, God looks at us and says, *Oh, they're serious. They want to stop being so angry. Well, okay. Let's get in there.*

I don't know—I'm not saying I know. Maybe it's just in our own life: we start missing some meals and we start fasting on a regular basis, and we say to ourselves, *No. This is the end of cynicism. I'm not living like this anymore. It never worked before. It's only ruining the joy I have the potential to experience. So, yeah, I'm serious with myself.*

I don't know—maybe it's both. But when we pang for food, it's like when we pant for something our body needs. It's as though our soul is supposed to be doing that as well. **"As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for You, O Lord."**

My encouragement today is that we would all seriously consider regularly fasting. Let's get in shape. Fasting is a major weapon in our war against the flesh. It's the hammer that drives the nail that crucifies the flesh. Pick up the hammer. Get good with it. If we all did that—wow.

Would you join me this week? Let's get together and not eat a meal together. I'm cooking, I'm buying ... yep.

Let's pray.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for giving us the opportunity to pray to You and for giving us a vision of what it would be like to be like You in all of life. Lord, I'd ask this. Father, I'd ask that Your Spirit would empower us in a great way through fasting. I'd ask, Lord, that Your Spirit would be used to arrange circumstances so that we would get an early win; that especially people who are new to this would see a cause and effect--not understand how or why--but would just see that when they discipline themselves in this way, they can see what You want to work on, what thing in our lives You want to become more like Christ; that they would see the power of the "no" muscle growing and the "yes" muscle advancing.*

*Lord, I'd ask that You would help us win early, often, that we would be encouraged by this rhythm of regular fasting. Thank You, Lord for making our bodies connect to our souls and spirits in ways that we can help our spirit by taming our body, and vice versa. So, Lord, I'd ask that we as a church participate in this adventure of fasting regularly. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*