



FALL PRAYER & FASTING · SEPTEMBER 21-27, 2026

Incline Your Ear

Two days of preparation. Three days of prayer and fasting. Isaiah 55, for the whole church.

THIS WEEK

Come, everyone who thirsts.

For five days this fall, our whole church is going to stop and lean in. Not because something has gone wrong, but because Someone is worth it turning our full attention toward.

Isaiah 55 opens with a voice in a marketplace. A herald is shouting over the noise of a city that has plenty to sell and nothing that satisfies: *Come. Everyone who thirsts. Come and buy, without money.* It is addressed to tired people who have been spending their lives on the wrong things.

That is the invitation we are answering together. We fast because we want God more than we want comfort. We pray because he has promised to be found. And we do it as one church, on the same days, in every home and town where our people live.

This year there are no midweek gatherings. That is not a smaller ask. It is a bigger one. No room is carrying the week for you, and nobody is watching. Every campus, every household, every person is inclining the same ear toward the same voice, on the same days. Then on Sunday we come back together and celebrate what God has done.

This is not mainly a week for digging through our sin. It is a week for turning toward our God. Repentance will come, and it should, but it comes as it always comes, as the fruit of seeing him clearly. The aim is that by Sunday you would want Christ more than you did on Monday.

And everything Isaiah 55 invites us into, Jesus has already secured. The water is free because the Servant of Isaiah 53 was pierced. The covenant is sure because he was raised. So we come the only way anyone ever comes: thirsty, empty-handed, and completely welcome.

How the week is shaped

DAYS 1-2 Prepare your heart. Monday and Tuesday. No fasting yet. We clear the calendar, name our distractions, choose our fast, and ask God for one thing: a spiritual hunger for Himself.

DAYS 3-5 Pray and fast. Wednesday through Friday. The whole church fasts on the same three days. No gatherings, no sign-ups, no audience. A church seeking God together.

SUNDAY Celebrate. September 27. We gather again to worship, and seek the Face of God.

THIS WEEK

How to use this guide.

Each day has four simple moments.

MORNING Listen and read. A five to seven minute podcast episode walks through that day's portion of Isaiah 55. Then read the passage on the page and sit with the three questions. Do it before you look at anything else.

MIDDAY A psalm. The Psalms give us words for the full range of what we feel. Read the one named for that day, then pray it back to God slowly and in your own words.

A PRACTICE One concrete thing. Each day names something to actually do.

EVENING Review the day with God. An old and simple practice: look back over the hours, notice where you sensed him and where you missed him, and close with the prayer printed on the page.

Listen along. Scan to find the *Vox Prayer & Fasting* podcast on Spotify and everywhere else you listen. A new episode each morning of the week. voxchurch.org/resources/fall-2026-prayer-fasting

Before Monday

- Look at your calendar and take something off it. It is unwise to add fasting to an already over-busy week.
- Ask one person to walk through the week with you, and tell them what you are fasting from. With no gatherings this year, that one person matters more than usual.
- Read the next four pages on fasting before Wednesday. If food is not wise for you, decide now what you will set down instead.

What fasting is.

Fasting is going without food for a set time in order to seek God.

It is not a diet. It is not a hunger strike to force God's response. It is simply a way of focusing our whole selves on our need for God. Fasting creates a time to teach us to say no to good things in order to get the best Thing. It is a reminder that we are weak and in need of God's strength, and a time to intentionally pray.

Scripture treats it as ordinary. Moses fasted on the mountain (Exodus 34:28). David fasted for his child (2 Samuel 12:16). Elijah fasted on the way to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Ezra fasted before a dangerous journey (Ezra 8:21–23). Nehemiah fasted over a broken city (Nehemiah 1:4). Esther and the Jews of Susa fasted for three days (Esther 4:16). Daniel fasted over the future of his people (Daniel 9:3). Anna, in the temple, worshiped “with fasting and prayer night and day” (Luke 2:37). The church at Antioch fasted before sending out missionaries (Acts 13:2–3), and Paul and Barnabas fasted before appointing elders (Acts 14:23).

And then there is Jesus. He fasted forty days in the wilderness before he began his ministry (Matthew 4:2). And when he taught on the subject, he did not say *if* you fast. He said:

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites... But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret.”

MATTHEW 6:16–18

He set it beside giving and praying as one of three assumed practices of anyone who follows him. He also said his disciples would fast once he was gone: “The days will come when the bridegroom (Jesus) is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Matthew 9:15). We are living in those days.

So fasting is ordinary Christianity, largely forgotten, but one of the means of God's grace to draw us as a church closer into experiencing God together.

What fasting is for.

Scripture ties fasting to six things. You do not need all six this week. One is plenty.

1 To hunger for God. Fasting takes a good gift and sets it down so that our appetite reminds us of the better place to go. When Jesus was hungry in the wilderness he answered the tempter with Deuteronomy: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Fasting is inclining our ears to hear from God.

2 To humble ourselves. “I afflicted myself with fasting,” David wrote (Psalm 35:13). Fasting is the body agreeing with the soul that we are not self-sufficient. It puts us in the one posture God has promised to meet: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

3 To turn back to God. “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning” (Joel 2:12). Repentance in the Bible is rarely only a feeling. It is a decision to turn from something toward God. Sometimes we turn from what sustains normal life to confess we need God even more.

4 To strengthen our praying. Fasting does not manipulate God, it is a confession of our need. Ezra called a fast “that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey” (Ezra 8:21). Nehemiah fasted and wept for a city with broken walls (Nehemiah 1:4). When something matters enough, we stop eating over it.

5 To seek direction. “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said...” (Acts 13:2). Some of the clearest guidance in the New Testament came to a church that had cleared the room and gone quiet.

6 To stand with those who go without. Isaiah 58 is God’s own correction of fasting that has curdled into religious theater. “Is not this the fast that I choose... to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?” (Isaiah 58:6–7). A fast reminds us of those in need around us and compels us to help.

Notice what is underneath all six: God himself. Fasting is never an end. It is a means of getting to God, and it is worth nothing at all apart from that.

What fasting is not.

It is not a way to earn God's love. You cannot make him love you more than he already does in Christ. Nothing you give up this week buys anything. It was all bought already through Christ's finished work.

It is not a performance. Jesus was blunt about this: wash your face, and let it be seen by your Father and no one else (Matthew 6:17–18). The goal is to do this for God's eyes, not man's.

It is not a weight-loss plan. Same action, different aim, and a different result.

It is not a measure of your spiritual worth. If you break your fast at noon on Wednesday, you have not failed a test. Eat, thank God, and start again at the next meal.

How to participate.

Choose one of these before Wednesday. Write it down, and tell one person.

FULL FAST No food for 24 hours, water and other liquids only. Most people go dinner to dinner.

PARTIAL FAST Skip one or two meals each day, and give that time to prayer instead.

NON-FOOD FAST If fasting from food is unwise for your medical health, set aside something else to focus more time to intentionally pray: screens, social media, news, television, spending. Fast from what you actually reach for.

A day of fasting.

MORNING Before you look at your phone, listen to the day's episode and read the passage. Ask God for one thing.

THE HUNGER Let it be a bell rather than an emergency. Every time you feel it, pray one sentence, then go back to work. That may be twenty prayers before dinner. It is a good day.

EVENING Pray with someone. There is no gathering to come to this week, so make the call yourself: five minutes with your family, your roommate, your group, or a friend on the phone. Fasting alone is good. Fasting with the church is better, even at a distance.

BREAKING IT Gently, and with gratitude. Something small and unhurried. Not a celebration of survival, a thank-you.

Drink plenty of water. Expect a headache on the first day; it usually passes by afternoon. Caffeine withdrawal is real, so taper if you can. And expect to be quieter and slower than usual. That is not a side effect. That is much of the point.

A note on your body.

Fasting is a gift, not a test, and God is not impressed by anyone's endurance. Skipping food is not wise or safe for everyone, and choosing not to is not a lesser way to keep this week.

Talk with your doctor first if you have any medical conditions that a lack of food could exaggerate.

DAY ONE · PREPARE YOUR HEART

Monday, September 21 · No fasting today

Come, Everyone Who Thirsts

ISAIAH 55:1-3A · EPISODE 1

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! ... Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.”

God’s invitation is not aimed at the qualified. It is aimed at the thirsty and the broke: “he who has no money, come, buy and eat.” Then comes the question underneath everything: why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? That is a diagnosis, not a scolding. And Isaiah’s answer is not “want less.” It is “delight yourselves in rich food.”

Before you do anything else this week, admit that you are thirsty and empty-handed. That is the doorway into everything that follows.

Reflect

- 1** Where have I been spiritually thirsty lately? Confess it to God, not to shame yourself, but to bring the thirst to the right well.
- 2** What am I spending my labor on that has never once satisfied me?
- 3** What part of me still wants to pay for what God is giving away free?

PRACTICE Read all of Isaiah 55 slowly, out loud, start to finish. It takes only a few minutes.

MIDDAY Psalm 63. “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.”

TONIGHT A moment of silence and reflection: When did I feel most alive to God today? When did I feel most distant? Respond as the Spirit prompts.

Father, you are the fountain, and I have spent years digging my own wells. Give me thirst for you, and then fill it.

DAY TWO · PREPARE YOUR HEART

Tuesday, September 22 · No fasting yet. Choose your fast today

An Everlasting Covenant

ISAIAH 55:3B-5 · EPISODE 2

“...and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. ... a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God.”

Yesterday God said, “Come and eat.” Today he tells us why the offer holds. He does not hand us a program. He swears a covenant, “my steadfast, sure love for David,” the promise made to one king in 2 Samuel 7, now handed to a crowd with no money. Everlasting, and sure.

That is the ground you are standing on when you choose your fast today. And then the chapter turns outward: nations who never knew God come running, not because we became impressive, but “because of the Lord your God... for he has glorified you.”

Reflect

- 1 What am I still trying to earn from God that he has already sworn to give?
- 2 What one thing will I set down for the next three days so that my ear is free to listen?
- 3 Name one person, one street, or one town near you that does not yet know God. Start praying today.

PRACTICE Choose your fast for Wednesday through Friday. Write it down. Tell your family, your group, or a friend to hold you accountable.

MIDDAY Psalm 103. “The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.”

TONIGHT A moment of silence and reflection: Where did I live today as though God’s love had to be earned?

Lord, your love for me is steadfast and sure, and it does not depend on how well I keep this week. Teach me to want you because you are good.

DAY THREE · PRAY AND FAST

Wednesday, September 23 · The fast begins

Seek the Lord While He May Be Found

ISAIAH 55:6-7 · EPISODE 3

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near... let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

“While he may be found” is not a threat hanging over you. It is an open door with a bell on it. God is near today, and He is not reluctant. Verse 7 says he will “abundantly pardon,” which in Hebrew is closer to *He will multiply to forgive*.

The fast starts this morning, and so does the quiet. Nobody will see you keep it. We now spend this time as a church seeking God our Father who sees us in secret. Let your natural hunger remind you of your even greater need for God and let it keep pushing you to seek Him. Man does not live on bread alone, we live on the Word of God.

Reflect

- 1 What does it look like for me to actually seek God today, not merely think about seeking him?
- 2 Is there anywhere I am still hiding from a God who is eager to forgive?
- 3 Who around me is far from God? Commit to praying for them by name all day.

PRACTICE Let hunger be your alarm clock. Every time you feel it, stop and pray one sentence.

MIDDAY Psalm 42. “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.”

TONIGHT A moment of silence and reflection: Where did I sense God’s nearness today, and did I turn toward it, or past it? Then pray five minutes with one other person, in the room or on the phone.

You are near. Forgive me for living as though you were far. I am seeking you, and you have promised to be found.

DAY FOUR · PRAY AND FAST

Thursday, September 24 · Day two of the fast

My Word Will Not Return Empty

ISAIAH 55:8-11 · EPISODE 4

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose.”

We incline our ear because God has actually spoken, and what He says does things. His Word is like rain, not noise. It falls, it soaks in, and something grows that was not seen before.

Which also means His ways will not match yours. “My thoughts are not your thoughts” is not a rebuke. It is a relief. You are not listening to a bigger version of yourself. The God who created all things is looking into your life and speaking the Words of life that you and I have always needed. Today we quiet our souls and listen.

Reflect

- 1 Where am I quietly demanding that God’s ways line up with mine?
- 2 What has God already said to me that I have not yet obeyed?
- 3 What am I asking God’s Word to accomplish: in me, in my family, in my town? Write verses down and begin praying the Scriptures.

PRACTICE Twenty minutes with an open Bible and a humble heart. Read. Stop. Listen. Write down verses you believe God is speaking to you now.

MIDDAY Psalm 19. “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.”

TONIGHT A moment of silence and reflection: Did I listen today, or only talk? What did I hear?

Your thoughts are higher than mine, and I am glad. Speak, Lord. I am listening, and I will obey.

DAY FIVE • PRAY AND FAST

Friday, September 25 • The last day of the fast

You Shall Go Out in Joy

ISAIAH 55:12-13 • EPISODE 5

“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace... Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle.”

The chapter does not end in a quiet room. It ends with people walking out into the world: mountains singing, trees clapping, and thorns replaced by cypress. Adam’s curse pushed thorns up out of the ground. Christ wore them on his head so that the ground could be healed.

A week of listening is meant to make us spiritually fruitful. Today, ask what God is sending you out with, and get ready to glorify God as a church as we gather on Sunday.

Reflect

- 1** What am I carrying out of this week? Write down what God has done in you over this time of prayer and fasting.
- 2** Where is there a thorn, in my life, my home, or my city, that only God can turn into a cypress?
- 3** How will I keep listening after today? Choose one practice from this week and keep it.

PRACTICE Write down, in one sentence, what God said to you this week. Share it with a friend and thank Him for speaking.

MIDDAY Psalm 96. “Declare his glory among the nations.”

TONIGHT Break your fast gently, and give thanks. Then look back over all five days. What has changed? What do I want to ask God to keep doing?

You have made me a witness. Send me out in joy and lead me forth in peace.

SUNDAY · CELEBRATION

Sunday, September 27 · The fast is over. Come and worship

Come to the Feast

ISAIAH 55:1-2 · ALL CAMPUSES

“Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”

Every fast in Scripture is pointed at a table. We began the week with a herald shouting *come and eat*, and we end it doing exactly that: gathered, glad, and full. The five days were never the point on their own. They were preparation for joy.

So come on Sunday the way you came on Monday, with empty hands, only now with five days of listening behind you. Sing like someone who has been thirsty. Bring your family. Bring the person you have been praying for since Monday. And bring testimonies of God’s goodness with you, because somebody in the room may need to hear it.

Reflect

- 1 What did God say to me this week that I need to say out loud to someone today?
- 2 Where did I meet God when nobody was watching, and how do I keep that going next week?
- 3 Who can I invite, or call today?

PRACTICE Come to church asking God to use you and seek to meet someone you don’t know and pray for them.

TOGETHER Worship with your campus. Give glory to God.

THEN Keep one practice.

You invited us to come and eat, and we came with nothing. Thank you for filling us. Send us out in joy.

TOGETHER

Praying as one church.

We are praying apart this week, and we are praying the same things. All week, all of us are asking God for these five.

- 1 For our hearts.** That Vox would be a church with an inclined ear, quick to listen, slow to be distracted, hungry for God himself.
- 2 For our homes.** For marriages that display the covenant love of Christ, for parents raising children in the faith, for singles, for the lonely, and for homes where only one person is praying.
- 3 For our campuses.** For our pastors, staff, and volunteers, for unity across all our locations, and for a spirit of prayer to become ordinary among us.
- 4 For our region.** For Connecticut and Massachusetts, that people who long ago concluded God is silent would hear him, and that the gospel would run through our cities.
- 5 For the nations.** “A nation that did not know you shall run to you” (Isaiah 55:5). For our global partners and missionaries, and for the day when the whole earth glorifies God.

After Sunday

Fasting weeks fail when they end on Friday. Before you close this guide, choose one practice from this week and keep it: one psalm at midday, one unhurried reading, one minute of silence before bed.

OUR CAMPUSES

Branford · Cheshire (launching) · Clinton · Greater Bridgeport · Hartford · Middletown · New Britain · New Haven · North Haven · Norwalk · Seymour · South Windsor · Springfield · Worcester · Online

"For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the Lord,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Isaiah 55:12-13

One church. One week. One ear turned toward the voice of God.