



PRAYERS FOR AN
EASTER FAST

Lake Forest Church • 2015

Join in the Fast...

Join with others in the Lake Forest Church tribe to prepare your spirit for Easter. When we fast, we voluntarily refrain from eating or drinking for a time, as a spiritual practice.

This special time of prayer and fasting, remembering our Savior's arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death, uses our physical hunger as a symbol of our spiritual hungers. It also serves as a vivid reminder of our many brothers and sisters who live with real, physical hunger every day.

Why do we choose to fast at Easter?

For three years, Jesus travels the Galilean countryside gathering disciples, healing the sick, teaching all who will listen, forgiving sins, and extending grace, proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom—where the last will be first, where lost sheep and lost coins matter, and where everyone is welcome at the table.

But the voices that cry, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" on Palm Sunday are quickly silenced by days of plotting and schemes, driven by fear, loathing, and distrust.

On Maundy Thursday, Roman troops assemble as Jesus celebrates the Passover with his friends. Later Jesus prays in a garden, suddenly alight with soldiers' torches. A sleepless night and a hasty trial conclude with Jesus nailed to a wooden cross, dying. The earth darkens; the temple curtain tears; and Jesus cries out, "It is finished." And so it is. With the death of Jesus, every hope is extinguished.

We fast because it keeps us from glossing over the hard parts of the story and heading straight for the joyous Alleluias of Easter. We fast because it makes Jesus' suffering and death more real. We fast because it forces us to remember, even when remembering is painful.

Guidelines for fasting:

1. If you have health concerns or particular dietary issues, seek your physician's advice and approval before fasting.
2. Begin your Easter Fast after dinner on Maundy Thursday, the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples. Following dinner, you will refrain from eating for at least 24 hours, missing breakfast, lunch and dinner on Good Friday.
3. You can break the fast:
 - with breakfast on Saturday morning
 - with communion during the 5pm Saturday Easter Service at LFC-Huntersville
 - with breakfast on Easter Sunday
 - whenever you need to...fasting is not be easy and you won't feel great, but don't fall ill
3. Drinking water and/or fruit juices during the fast is permissible and encouraged to avoid dehydration.
4. Fasting is a personal spiritual discipline, not a time to brag or make your sacrifice known to others. Continue in your daily routine as you fast.
5. Use the scripture readings and meditations in this booklet to remember Jesus' last day. During the periods when you would have been eating, instead be engaged in intercession for the hungry and in prayer, both silent and spoken.

Prayer to begin the fast (after Thursday dinner):

Lord, your body and your blood have been given for me. I have eaten the bread and sipped from the cup. On this day, as I remember your body broken and your blood shed for my sake and for the sake of all your people in all generations, fill me with your love. As I enter this time of remembrance and restraint, may my spiritual hunger match my physical hunger, growing through each hour.

Use this time to draw me closer to you, and keep me mindful of your children, nearby and throughout the world, who know the pain of hunger every day. In your precious name, I pray. Amen.

Prayer at bedtime (Thursday):

Lord, I am not so hungry yet, but as my head touches a soft pillow, let me not rest until I remember you, kneeling in prayer on the rocks in the Garden of Gethsemane. Were I with you there, would I sleep or would I flee?

As I close my eyes this night, let the darkness and the silence linger as I remember you, abandoned by your friends, praying to be spared, yet knowing what the coming hours would bring. I pray this night for all who are alone and all who are afraid, for those who dread the future, who long for other answers and different possibilities.

Bring comfort and make your presence known, in their lives and in mine. Amen.

Prayer at the hour of breakfast (Friday):

Lord, there is nothing on my table this morning and my stomach is already urging me to end my fast. I am ashamed to notice my hunger, though part of me would like my colleagues and my family and the clerk at the store to know what I am doing.

Share with me the crumbs of humility this morning, for there is nothing extraordinary about my small and optional sacrifice. As my day slides into routine, let my hunger pangs keep me from lapsing into complacency. Let my footsteps be heavy and let me feel the weight of the cross you carried through the city and out to Golgotha. Amen.

Prayer at lunchtime (Friday):

Lord, at this hour you hung on a cross, in pain so great I cannot imagine.

But more difficult for me to fathom than your anguish is the knowledge that you chose this pain and punishment. You chose to suffer, for my sins and for the sins of the whole world.

As my hunger grows this noon and my stomach begins to rumble, remind me that I have chosen this fast.

My discipline will not save anyone from sin, except perhaps myself, from gluttony. But it is enough to remember I am hungry because I choose to be, while so many people—men, women, and children—with faces and names and stories and love and hopes and hurts are hungry because they cannot find or afford good food to eat.

Use me, and use my physical hunger to increase my hunger and thirst for your kingdom. Through me, let your love be shown and your abundance shared, that each of your children may have enough and more. Amen.

Prayer while others eat dinner (Friday):

Lord, as darkness begins to cover the earth and I am full hungry, I know that in only a few hours, I will eat again. My fast will be complete. As I dream of taste and texture, of hot and cold, of rich "flavors and the comfort of a good meal, as I see ingredients in my mind's eye, and as I plan out all the many steps of preparation for the food I will enjoy, recall for me the preparations and ministrations of Joseph of Arimathea, who stepped forward when others dared not, and who prepared a place for your body.

Your life's breath gone, he tended your broken body without concern for himself, wrapping you in clean cloths when others, so recently had treated you with scorn and derision. How difficult was it for Joseph to claim you from the cross? What did he risk, and why would he do this for you? What risks are you asking of me? Grant me courage, strength, and conviction to do the tasks you set before me. Amen.

[OPTIONAL] Prayer for Holy Saturday at breakfast and lunch:

Lord, there is no disguising it now, my stomach aches. I'd surely like something to eat. Preferably a lot, and soon. Today, I think about your disciples, about Peter, James, Andrew, Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John and Bartholomew and) Thaddeus and all the others. How deep was their ache on that Sabbath so long ago?) They had followed you for years; they trusted you, they believed in you; they loved you.

But now you were gone, and they were so filled with doubt. Were you wrong? Were they? Hopeless, despairing, worried, and sad, what did they feel? How could they begin to imagine life after you had died? Let the ache I feel today remind me of the emptiness your disciples felt and be for me a taste of the emptiness I would feel without you in my life. Amen.

Prayer to end the fast (Saturday Morning; Saturday Evening; Easter Sunday Sunrise)

Lord, in my mind I see your followers dancing, racing, running to spread the word, to declare the good news of the empty tomb. You have risen! Alleluia! Let this food be for me a feast, a celebration of your victory over sin and death.

Make unstoppable and unending the joy I feel at this moment, even as I take with me the memory of hunger and doubt, of sorrow and fear, of despair and ache. Show me ways to bring joy; never let me stop bringing good news, sharing hope, and caring for your people. Nourish my soul as the food I eat nourishes my body. Use this food to prepare me for your service. Amen.

Taking Your Fast Further...

As you join us in this time of purposeful physical hunger, you will experience just a little of the hunger that 50 million Americans face regularly. But as you complete your fast and return to daily meals, so many of our brothers and sisters will not be able to do the same.

We invite you to remember the hungry by donating the money you would otherwise have spent for food during the fast to the hunger relief ministries of Society of St. Andrew, the ministry that prepared this guide. You may give with an online donation at www.endhunger.org/donate.htm.

Every dollar that you give will put 50 servings of nourishing food on the tables of those who need good food most.

Note: The devotional materials for this Easter Fast were prepared and used with permission by the Society of St. Andrew.