



MONTHLY FASTING *Guide*

Immanuel Christian Reformed Church

*O God, you are my God; earnestly I
seek you; my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there
is no water.*

Psalm 63:1

Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God...The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable.

John Piper

Purpose: To Express Concern for the Work of God

Just as a parent might fast and pray out of concern for a child, Christians may fast because of a burden for the broader work of God and the barriers to the gospel. This purpose is vividly modeled in Scripture by Nehemiah and Daniel.

Nehemiah's Prayer (Nehemiah 1 ESV)

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who have survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ They are your servants and your people, whom you have

redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Daniel's Prayer (Daniel 9:3–19 ESV) Then I turned my face to the Lord God, *seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting* and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done

anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

“O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and fury turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”

Overview of the 2026 Fasting Guide: Expressing Concern for the Work of God

This guide is a year-long resource to help individuals, families, and our congregation cultivate the biblical practice of fasting out of deep burden for God's work in the world—modeled powerfully by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1) and Daniel (Daniel 9:3–19), whose full prayers are included in the purpose section for reflection and inspiration.

Key Components:

- Monthly Themes: Each month has a specific focus (e.g., revival, missions, persecution, unreached peoples) tied to a Scripture passage (ESV quoted in full) and a 5-point prayer guide to direct your time with God.
- Personal Fasting Days: Every Monday of the month is suggested for fasting. Choose one, several, or all Mondays as the Spirit leads—flexible for health, schedule, and personal burden.
- Practical Guidance: A section adapted from David Mathis explains what biblical fasting is, why Jesus expects it, and six simple steps to begin (start small, plan prayer time, consider others, etc.).

How to Use the Guide:

1. Read the purpose section, especially Nehemiah's and Daniel's prayers, to stir your heart for God's kingdom concerns.
2. Each month, meditate on the focus, Scripture, and prayer guide during your chosen Monday fast(s).
3. Replace eating with intentional prayer—use the prompts to help you as you pray during your fast.
4. If new to fasting, follow the “How to Start Fasting” steps; adjust for health (e.g., partial fast, juice fast, or abstain from media instead).

The goal is not rigid rule-keeping but Spirit-led hunger for a deeper desire for God and His work, turning burdens into prayer, and prayer into action, just as Nehemiah and Daniel did. May 2026 be a year of deepened dependence on Him!

Suggested Fasting Days: Every Monday in 2026

Individuals and families may choose **one Monday per month, several, or all** as the Lord leads. Or, if not on Monday, pick any day of the week that is more feasible for you and your family.

January 2026

Mondays: 5, 12, 19, 26

Focus: Personal/Corporate revival

Scripture (ESV): 2 Chronicles 7:14 “if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Confession: Humble yourself—confess personal and corporate sins hindering God’s work.
2. Petition: Ask God to forgive and heal any spiritual apathy and division in our church.
3. Intercession: Pray for a fresh awareness of God, his holiness, and grace.
4. Personal Surrender: Seek God’s face in prayer and Bible meditation for your own revival.
5. Thanksgiving: Praise Him for God’s Means of Grace that are made available to us for our revival.
6. Pray: Ask that God would bring revitalization to Immanuel.
7. Plead: Ask God for continued renewal in the CRCNA

February 2026

Mondays: 2, 9, 16, 23

Focus: Family Revival

Scripture (ESV): Ephesians 5:22–28; 6:1–4

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Prayer Guide:

1. Wives: Pray so God would grant you the strength to honor your husband.
2. Husbands: Pray so God would strengthen you to love your wife as Christ loved the Church, leading sacrificially.
3. Children: Pray that God would grant you the ability to obey your parents, believing in God's reward.
4. Fathers: Pray that you would lead your family well.

March 2026

Mondays: 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Focus: Evangelism from Burbank to the ends of the earth

Scripture (ESV): Matthew 28:19–20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Adoration: Worship Jesus for His authority right now, and that is the source of our evangelistic boldness.
2. Burden: Pray for...
 - a. People in your family who are not following Jesus.
 - b. Friends/neighbors who don't know Jesus
 - c. The billions who have never heard the gospel.
3. Empowerment: Ask for boldness and power to live into the reality that we are witnesses, not becoming witnesses.
4. Open Doors: Plead for spiritual barriers to fall.
5. Commitment: Offer yourself to God's mission daily.

April 2026

Mondays: 6, 13, 20, 27

Focus: Restoration and hope in places of apparent defeat

Scripture (ESV): Nehemiah 1:3–4 “And they said to me, ‘The remnant there in the province who have survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.’ As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Lament: Weep over spiritual brokenness in our lives, and in the lives of our loved ones.
2. Confession: Admit complacency and indifference to God’s kingdom.
3. Favor: Ask God for the opportunity to build and rebuild in God’s kingdom, with zealous devotion to the church.
4. Vision: Pray for workers at Immanuel who work behind the scenes and for the progress of the ministry at Immanuel.
5. Action: Ask God to help you see where there are areas you can join in the work.

May 2026

Mondays: 4, 11, 18, 25

Focus: God's glory among the nations

Scripture (ESV): Psalm 96:3 "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!"

Prayer Guide:

1. Believe: That the Church is focused first on God's worship before it's focused on God's mission.
2. Declaration: Proclaim God's worthiness to family and friends who know God, and those who don't know him.
3. Burden: Pray for unreached countries so that the gospel can go forth with power and might.
4. Zeal: Ask for passion for Christ's supremacy in all areas of life, so that we would be willing to give up all to follow him.
5. Joy: Intercede for salvation joy in every people from Burbank to the ends of the earth.

June 2026

Mondays: 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Focus: Church unity and leadership development locally and worldwide

Scripture (ESV): Ephesians 4:3–6 “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Praise: Thank God for the oneness of the Trinity we share in the bond of peace.
2. Unity: Pray for unity and against division so that we would always be centered on the gospel of Christ.
3. Leaders: Intercede for faithful elders and workers at Immanuel.
4. Equipping: Ask God to raise up leaders at Immanuel for the work of elder and deacon, and that God would raise up leaders in the greater Chicago Area, and to the ends of the earth.
5. Commitment: Pray so that God can show you ways you can continue to maintain unity in the bond of peace.

July 2026

Mondays: 6, 13, 20, 27

Focus: Persecuted believers in restricted nations

Scripture (ESV): Hebrews 13:3 “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Identification: Remember sufferers as though you belong to the same Body of Christ.
2. Strength: Ask for endurance, joy, and courage in our American context so that we would be bold precisely cause we have more freedoms.
3. Deliverance: Plead for protection and justice for our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted worldwide, especially in Nigeria and North Korea.
4. Growth: Pray against opposition and for the advancement of the gospel in hard places, both in the U.S. and abroad.
5. Solidarity: Ask God how we could better partner with our persecuted brothers and sisters.

August 2026

Mondays: 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Focus: Unreached and least-reached peoples

Scripture (ESV): Revelation 7:9 “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Vision: Meditate on the reality that we will worship God forever. That is our destiny, and we would yearn for that day when we are gathered with people from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.
2. Ask: Ask that God would grant us heavenly-mindedness, so that we would meditate more on our everlasting rest, and take courage to work our hardest now during our time on earth.
3. Urgency: Pray for the remaining unreached groups and for those working to reach them.
4. Breakthrough: Ask for the removal of spiritual strongholds.
5. Workers: Plead for laborers to be sent, and ask God if he would help you know if he is calling you to global missions.
6. Anticipation: Believe God will accomplish his glorious salvation to the ends of the earth.
7. Pray for missionaries, especially those that are partnered with Immanuel.

September 2026

Mondays: 7, 14, 21, 28

Focus: City-wide and country-wide repentance and awakening

Scripture (ESV): Habakkuk 3:2 “O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Awe: Reflect on God's merciful deeds and the revivals that he has accomplished in the past.
2. Revival: Ask Him to revive His work now, and that the church would be more energized about gospel growth, more than politics or other topics that distract from true revival.
3. Mercy: Ask God that he would have mercy on our city and our nation.
4. Repentance: Beg God that there would be a genuine turning from sin from our family room to city hall to the president's house and the halls of Congress.
5. Awakening: Pray for salvation to sweep across our city and our nation.

October 2026

Mondays: 5, 12, 19, 26

Focus: Mission mobilization and sending

Scripture (ESV): Acts 13:2–3 “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Worship: Ask God to raise leaders so that worship of the one true God would happen where it currently doesn't.
2. Calling: Ask God to call new workers at Immanuel and .
3. Sending: Pray that God would raise missionaries from amongst us.
4. Support: Intercede for God's provision to the work of missions locally and globally.
5. Obedience: Offer yourself to the work of missions, and ask God for clarity if you don't know where to begin.
6. Church Planting: Pray that God would cause churches to be planted in the greater Chicagoland area both Reformed and not Reformed, but solid on the gospel.

November 2026

Mondays: 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Focus: The persecuted church

Scripture (ESV): 2 Timothy 3:12 “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Prayer Guide:

1. Reality: Acknowledge persecution's certainty for our lives as Christian, and that we would embrace suffering.
2. Grace: Pray for perseverance during the moments of suffering so that we can place our hope, not in this world, but in the world to come.
3. Witness: Ask that persecution would result in more convincing testimony about the truth of the gospel.
4. Freedom: Plead for open doors locally and abroad.
5. Eternal View: Thank God for His assured reward.

December 2026

Mondays: 7, 14, 21, 28

Focus: Advancement of God's kingdom in the coming year

Scripture (ESV): Daniel 9:3–4 “Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, ‘O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.’”

Prayer Guide:

1. Awe: Address God as great and awesome, who doesn't just govern our world, but the entire cosmos.
2. Confession: Confess personal and corporate sins hindering His kingdom.
3. Mercy: Ask that God would grant mercy for the waywardness of our hearts.
4. Vision: Pray that God would grant us a vision of our eternal resting place so that we could throw our lives to the work of the gospel in 2027.
5. Hope: Ask God to grant us the ability to anticipate the gospel's hope during this season of Advent.

How to Start Fasting

(Adapted from David Mathis)

Fasting is voluntarily going without food—or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God—for the sake of some spiritual purpose. Jesus assumes His followers will fast (“when you fast,” Matthew 6:16) because we have tasted the goodness of God and are desperately hungry for more of Him.

Fasting is a radical, temporary measure for this age—to stretch our hearts beyond present pain, battle sin, and express longing for Christ. When Jesus returns, fasting will end, and He will throw a feast.

Here are six simple pieces of advice to begin:

1. **Start small.** Begin with one meal a week, then two, then a full day. Consider a juice fast (juice and water only) to ease in while still feeling the effects.
2. **Plan what you'll do instead of eating.** Have a specific spiritual purpose and a plan for prayer, Scripture meditation, or acts of love during mealtimes. Without a purpose and plan, it's just going hungry.
3. **Consider how it will affect others.** Fasting should increase love for others. Inform family, colleagues, or roommates ahead of time so your absence doesn't become unloving.
4. **Try different kinds of fasting.** Personal or communal, private or public, regular or occasional, full or partial. Consider fasting together as a family, small group, or church for shared burdens.

- 5. Fast from something other than food.** If health prevents food fasting, abstain from television, social media, or another legitimate enjoyment to bend your heart toward Jesus.
- 6. Don't think of white elephants.** When hunger pangs come, turn your attention to Jesus or His great cause. Christian fasting transposes hunger into longing for God and His kingdom.

May the Lord stir fresh burdens for His work in 2026, making our concern for food secondary to our hunger for Him.