



## Fasting for our finances in Lent 2024

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During Lent this year we invite you to join us in prayer and fasting, particularly focused on our finances as a church. In the future we will either need to substantially increase our income, or significantly cut back on the work we do together, to balance the budget so are calling out to God about this.

Please join us in praying about this at 10am on Wednesdays, either with others in Nick's office at the church, or wherever you are if you can't join us - perhaps you could set a reminder for 10am on your phone.

We particularly want to use the season of Lent to fast and pray about our finances. Fasting is a biblical practice of serious praying by giving something up and replacing that 'something' with prayer. It's a spiritual discipline in which we expect to meet with and hear from God as we fast. It's good for our relationship with God, regardless of the purpose of the fast, because we spend more time in prayer. In the Bible fasting is usually about giving up food, or certain foods, but we want to expand that to make it accessible to everyone. So we're inviting you to give something up as a fast during Lent.

Because Jesus' fasted for 40 days in the wilderness, Lent lasts for 40 days. Lent begins this year on 14th Feb, Ash Wednesday, through to Maundy Thursday on 28th March. Please will you join us in fasting for our finances this Lent, as well as for your own spiritual benefit? These fasts could be at a regular time each week / day, whatever you feel capable of doing.

Here are some suggestions of fasts you could consider, but if you have other ideas, please go with them:

Giving up eating meat\*  
Eating one fewer meal a day\*  
Stopping using social media  
Giving up a cup of tea or coffee  
Stopping watching a regular TV programme

Not using the internet  
Walking or cycling instead of driving somewhere  
Spending less time on a hobby  
Not going out for an evening  
Buying and reading a newspaper

\*If you are giving up food or meals, please ensure that you are still drinking plenty of fresh water and be sensible: do not give up more than one meal in any day. If you are fasting from meat, ensure that you eat a balanced diet of vegetables. Don't fast from food if you have a medical condition that would be affected.

During a time of fasting, we replace the activities we are giving up with prayers so please will you commit to praying about our financial situation during this season? If you give up something that leads to a financial saving for you, please would you consider donating that to the church as part of the answer to our praying? The rest of this booklet gives you resources to help you fast with colour-coded resources: prayers, bible readings and songs

Fasting doesn't have to be on your own. You could agree with a couple of friends to pray and fast together in the same way. You could do it at the same time but in separate locations, or you could do it together in the same place. If you are part of a home group you could use some of these activities together.

What follows are some resources you may like to use during your fasting and praying. These are not the only ways of doing it. Please go with what suits you and works for you. But whatever you do, please do include prayers about our church finances as that is the focus for the fast.

Bless you.

## At the start of your fast

You may like to use these prayers when you begin your time with God. If you are unable to fast you can simply use the prayers in your own times of prayer.

Jesus, help me not to focus on what I have given up, but on what you have given me. I turn my eyes to you, open my ears to hear you, and tune my heart to be in harmony with yours.



At this point you might like symbolically to place something down in front of you to represent your fast, or perhaps light a candle. Alternatively, you may find a 'holding cross' helpful – it sits neatly in your hand and is something you can feel as you pray. You can buy these at Greenspace and Christian Resources Project.

God - Father, Son and Spirit - I give to you what I fast from today. I give to you the time it would take. I give to you the attention I would normally give elsewhere. I give myself to you again now.

I am here for you. I am here with you.  
You are here for me. You are with me.

## During your fast

### *Bible readings*

You might like to focus on some of these passages from the Bible during your fast or find some of your own to use. All of these relate in some way to a passion for God and to ways in which Jesus spoke about money and how we use it.



Read the passage slowly. If you are somewhere on your own, it can help to read these out loud so you can hear the words. Now re-read

the same passage again, this time placing emphasis on different words. It can be helpful to do this several more times, with emphasis in different places. What might God say to you through the difference that comes from placing the emphasis differently?

(Psalm 42:1-2, NIVUK)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

(1 Chronicles 29:10-14, NIVUK)

<sup>10</sup>David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, 'Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.

<sup>11</sup>'Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. 'Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

<sup>12</sup>'Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. 'In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.

<sup>13</sup>'Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

<sup>14</sup>'But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.'

(Micah 6:8, NIVUK)

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly (or prudently) with your God.

(Matthew 13:44-46, NIVUK)

[Jesus said,] <sup>44</sup> 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

<sup>45</sup> 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.'

(Matthew 17:26b-27, NIVUK)

Jesus said to [Peter]. <sup>27</sup> 'But so that we may not cause offence, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.'

(Matthew 25:14-18, NIVUK)

[Jesus said,] <sup>14</sup> 'Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.'

## Prayers for our finances:

We invite you to use this prayer during your fast to focus your prayers on our finances as a church: that way we will all be praying in the same way. There is also a suggestion that you spend some time in silence. This may be complete silence, or you may like music playing in the background. The point of the silence is that we stop 'talking' to give God space to speak.

What I have given up is nothing compared to what you have given me: You are my creator, and I am 'fearfully and wonderfully made' in your image

You love me without limit, even when I don't feel lovely or loveable

You have given Jesus to die for me so that I might live with you

You have given me your Spirit so that you are with me always.

So, in the truth of your generosity I pray with my sisters and brothers: Generous God, while the state of our finances concern us as a church, because you are our God we have resolved not to be worried:

We rely on you more than the size of our bank balances

We trust you more than our income

We hope in you more than in grants and gifts

We love you more than the work you give us to do

We honour your provision to this church through the generosity of people in this church – past and present.

We recognise that you have resources beyond our imagining.

We anticipate your provision in ways we would not expect.

We declare our willingness to do things differently if that is what you want.

Give us boldness to trust you when the way ahead is not clear.

Give us wisdom to know how to proceed when we are uncertain.

Give us discernment to know what you are saying to us at this time.

Give us courage to make difficult choices when you call us to.

Give us grateful hearts when you release the resources we need

Spend some time in silence. Use the item you laid down earlier, or the candle, or something that reminds you of God as a focal point – look at it. If you are using a holding cross, feel it in your hand. When you become aware that your mind has wandered look again at that focal point. You may like to repeat this simple prayer.

Master, speak, your servant is listening

## Songs

You could create your own playlist of songs and music that help you to reflect and pray. You may like to include these, or sing them to yourself:

Faithful One so unchanging  
Ageless One You're  
my Rock of peace  
Lord of all I depend on You  
I call out to You again and again  
I call out to You again and again

You are my Rock  
in times of trouble  
You lift me up when I fall down  
All through the storm  
Your love is the anchor  
My hope is in You alone

Brian Doerksen

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1. Great is Thy faithfulness  
O God my Father  
There is no shadow  
Of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not  
Thy compassions they fail not  
As Thou hast been  
Thou forever wilt be

*Great is Thy faithfulness  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning  
New mercies I see  
All I have needed  
Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Lord unto me*

2. Summer and winter  
And springtime and harvest  
Sun moon and stars  
In their courses above  
Join with all nature  
In manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness  
Mercy and love
3. Pardon for sin  
And a peace that endureth  
Thy own dear presence  
To cheer and to guide  
Strength for today  
And bright hope for  
tomorrow  
Blessings all mine  
With ten thousand beside

Thomas Obediah Chisholm

## Lent prayers from the Baptist Union book 'Gathering for Worship'

Lord, we remember the depth of your love for us, and we repent of our half-hearted discipleship.

We have been called to deny ourselves:

forgive us for putting self-interest before the interests of your kingdom;

forgive us that Christ's Lordship in our hearts has been challenged by our ambition, our appetites, our desires, and our needs;

forgive us for the times when self-interest hindered our care for others.

Lord, we have been called to carry a cross:

forgive us for complaining when it has weighed heavily upon us;

forgive us that, having received so much, we have sacrificed so little;

forgive us for the limits we have set to Christian love;

forgive us that we have settled for mediocrity, resisting the fire and passion of Christ's love upon the cross.

Lord of Lent, come to your Church and ask us your hard questions.

Are we faithfully proclaiming your gospel? Are we demonstrating in our life together the justice of your kingdom?

Have we welcomed the weak and given prominence to the poor?

Come to your Church to spring-clean our ways of life, our structures and priorities.

Point out to us the cobwebs, the dirt, the extravagance, and the waste.

Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.

Lord of Lent, renew our lives.

Lord of Lent, come to the nations and challenge our idolatries.

Spring-clean the sordid cupboard of this world's false gods. Sweep out the false pride,

the self-seeking, the deceit, corruption and lies.



May the kingdoms of this earth seek justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

May we look beyond immediate advantage to seek the common good, and be drawn to it, as a lark to the dawn.

Especially we ask for your cleansing hand in ...

Lord of Lent, renew our lives.

Lord of Lent, look with compassion on those whose minds are full of anxiety and bewilderment.

We remember people who are lonely, imprisoned, despairing, and humiliated.

Clear away from them all unnecessary feelings of fear, guilt, and self-hatred.

Assure them that when you spring-clean our hearts and minds you know what you are doing, for you have been there, one of us, and you are to be trusted.

Lord of Lent, renew our lives.

For ourselves, Lord, we pray that your spring-cleaning would be thorough and true this Lent.

Show us clearly these effortless sins we no longer even notice and help us to address the sins which sit on our shoulders every day, our constant companions.

Give us both discipline in dealing with some faults and gentleness in dealing with others and help us to know the difference.

Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.

Lord of Lent, renew our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord, lead us into the wilderness that we may meet you in the flame that burns but does not destroy. Help us to put aside our business and stress and to rediscover silence.

Help us to shut out the clamouring voices that are around us and inside us,

and listen only for your voice.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Through prayer, lead us into a deeper communion with you and nurture within us

a greater concern for your world.

In silence and prayer, help us to find you and to be found by you, that we might be remade in the likeness of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

## Concluding your fast

As your time is draws to a close, use these prayers to link you back into the rest of your day, and remind you that God is with you.

Before anything else: Thank you Lord

Beside everything else: Thank you Lord

Instead of anything else: Thank you Lord

Instead of everything else: Thank you Lord

With anything else: Thank you Lord

Without everything else: Thank you Lord

Within anything else: Thank you Lord

Beyond everything else: Thank you Lord

Lord of Creation, create in us new rhythms of life:

Composed of hours that bring sustenance rather than cause stress;

of days that deliver peace rather than destroys it;

and of time that tickles our souls rather than tackles us to the ground.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness and protect you through the storm. May he bring you home rejoicing at the wonders he has shown you. May he bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.

## Remember, God speaks...

If you sense that God has said something to you, write it down now before you forget it.

If it is something for you, keep it somewhere safe and return to it often to see whether God has more to say to you on that subject.

If it is for someone else, hold it for a while and pray about how you may sensitively share it with them.

If it relates to us as a church, please let Nick or one of the Elders have it so that we can discern together what God is saying.

Bless you for fasting with us.



## Further sources of resources

In addition to the many books that have been written about Lent and offering Lent courses, these websites may be helpful to you personally.

### *24-7 Prayer*

There are excellent resources on their website

[https://www.24-7prayer.com/prayer\\_guide/recommended-prayer-resources/](https://www.24-7prayer.com/prayer_guide/recommended-prayer-resources/)

In particular you may like to use their **Lectio 365** devotional app (there's one for families too), or the **Inner Room** app, which focuses on praying. You can install these on your phone. Last year there were specific Lent resources within the Inner Room app. These all have the advantage that they can be played as audio if you prefer to listen rather than read.

24-7 have some excellent books about prayer and spending time with God. You can see them described on their website, and these books can be ordered through Christian Resources Project as well as online. Nick recommends 'How to hear God' and 'God on Mute' by Pete Greig.

[https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource\\_cat/books/#Books](https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource_cat/books/#Books)

### *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity*

LICC have a range of '**prayer journeys**' that you can follow, some of which are designed for the 40 days of Lent.

<https://licc.org.uk/ourresources/prayer-journeys/>

### *Christian Aid*

If you would like to explore world and UK poverty during Lent Christian Aid have **Act on Poverty** resources.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/act-on-poverty>