



A Family Guide to *Fasting*

Offering Our Whole Selves to God,
Growing in Holiness, and Standing With
the Poor



First Methodist
MANSFIELD



WELCOME

This guide is for parents, leaders, and volunteers who are helping form the faith of the next generation at First Methodist Mansfield.

In 2026, our church is reclaiming the spiritual practice of fasting, not as a rule to follow, but as a gift that shapes us into people who love God more deeply, live more faithfully, and care more compassionately for others. Fasting is not about becoming more impressive Christians.

It is about becoming more available to God.

This guide will help you:

- Understand the heart behind fasting
- Explain fasting to kids and teens in safe, age-appropriate ways
- Lead families into this practice with wisdom and care
- Connect fasting to prayer, holiness, and compassion for the poor



Our church-wide goals

In 2026, First Methodist Mansfield is practicing fasting with three purposes:

WHY WE ARE FASTING IN 2026

1

To offer our whole selves to God

We are reclaiming a theology of the body. Our bodies are not separate from our faith. They are part of how we worship, pray, and follow Jesus. Fasting helps reset the purpose of our bodies, not as tools for comfort or consumption, but as instruments of devotion.

2

To grow in holiness

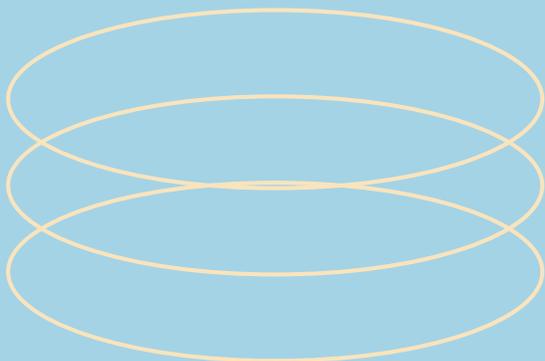
John Wesley taught that fasting is a means of grace. It can remove barriers to spiritual growth. It reveals what often stays hidden in us, our impatience, our dependence on comfort, our distractions.

Fasting does not make us holy. God does. But fasting can open our hearts so God can work more freely within us.

3

To stand with the poor

Fasting connects us to the suffering of others. When we feel hunger, we remember those who do not choose it. We grow in empathy, generosity, and justice.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Jesus: Fasting is a normal part of faith

Jesus teaches:

"When you fast... your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

(Matthew 6:16–18)

Jesus assumes His followers will fast. He does not command it as a burden, but describes it as a practice of humility and sincerity. Fasting is meant to be hidden, quiet, and rooted in love for God, not in performance or comparison.

Paul: Offer your whole self to God

Paul writes:

"Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship."

(Romans 12:1)

Fasting is one way we offer our bodies to God. We say with our physical selves what we believe with our hearts: "God, You matter more than my comfort."

God's heart: Fasting that leads to compassion

Isaiah reminds us that fasting opens our eyes:

"When you share your bread with the hungry... then your light will rise in the darkness."

(Isaiah 58)

Fasting does not only draw us closer to God. It draws us closer to others. When we feel hunger, we remember those who live with hunger every day. Fasting forms compassion.



01. WHEN WE FAST,

We temporarily set aside physical nourishment so that we can become more attentive to God. We create space to listen, to pray, and to remember that our lives are sustained not only by food, but by God's presence and grace

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" Matthew 4:4

02. FASTING HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE LIFE OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

It is a way we offer our whole selves to God, body, heart, and soul.

Fasting teaches us:

- That we depend on God for everything
- That our desires do not control us
- That our hearts can be shaped and softened
- That God is enough

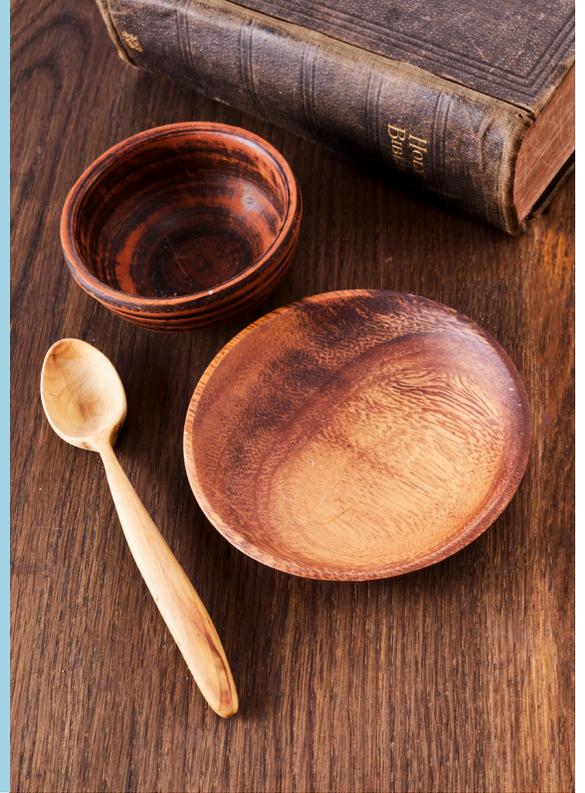
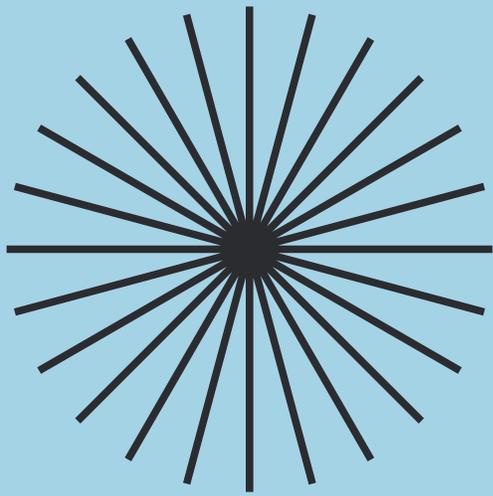
03. WHY WE FAST

This is why fasting is not a solitary discipline only. It is a communal one. When we fast together as a church, we are saying, "We want to grow together. We want to listen together. We want to become more like Christ together."

THE HEART BEHIND FASTING



*Fasting is not about
deprivation.
It is about devotion.*



OUR WEEKLY CHURCH PRACTICE

Adults

We fast weekly on Wednesdays.

- 24 Hour Fast: sundown Tuesday to sundown Wednesday
- Lunch Time Fast: eat breakfast Wednesday, skip lunch, eat dinner

During this time, we are encouraged to pray, reflect, and listen for God.



FASTING FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Children and teens are not asked to fast in the same way as adults. Their bodies are still growing, and God cares deeply about their health.

Instead, we invite them into the heart of fasting in age-appropriate ways.

For Kids

Kids learn this idea:

"We give something up to make more room for God."

Safe practices:

- Skipping a snack
- Giving up sweets or dessert for a day
- Choosing water instead of soda or juice

Each time they do this, they are invited to pray.

For Teens

Teens can begin to practice fasting more intentionally.

Options include:

- Giving up sweets or soda for a day
- Fasting from one meal on Wednesdays, with parental approval

Teens should always:

- Drink water
- Never fast in extreme ways
- Talk with parents or leaders if unsure

Prayer for Fasting

1

Breath Prayer for Kids

"Inhale: Jesus, You love me.
Exhale: Thank You for feeding me."

2

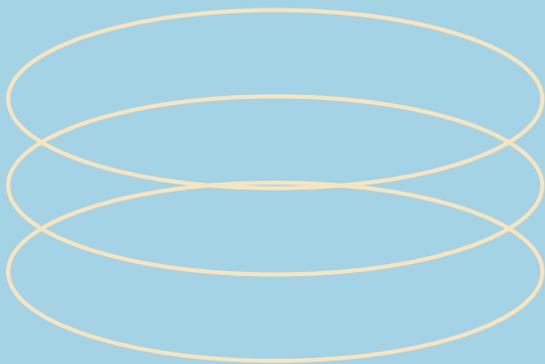
Breath Prayer for Teens

"Inhale: Jesus, You are enough.
Exhale: Help me trust You."

3

Breath Prayer for Adults

"Inhale: Jesus, Bread of Life.
Exhale: Feed my hungry soul."





REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION

Use these prompts as a family or group:

- What did I notice when I went without something today?
- Did it help me think about God more?
- Was anything hard about it? What did that show me about myself?
- Who did I pray for during that time?

Encourage honesty. There is no right answer.

Fasting is not about perfection.
It is about love.
Every time we choose God over
comfort, we grow. Every prayer
whispered in hunger matters.
Every child who pauses to pray
instead of snack is learning what
it means to trust God.
As a church family, we are
learning together. May this
practice shape us into people
who love deeply, live faithfully,
and walk humbly with our God.

