

The background of the entire page is a deep blue with intricate, swirling, marbled patterns that resemble water or ink in motion.

// OVERFLOW

LIVING WATER FOR AN EMPTY AGE

SIMPLICITY & FASTING

GUIDE



OVERFLOW PODCAST

Subscribe to the Overflow Podcast on
Apple or Spotify featuring John Ortberg,
Ruth Haley Barton, and Justin Earley.



APPLE



SPOTIFY

DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES
ON EARTH, WHERE MOTHS AND VERMIN DESTROY,
AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL. BUT STORE
UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE
MOTHS AND VERMIN DO NOT DESTROY, AND WHERE
THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN AND STEAL. FOR WHERE
YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO.

MATTHEW 6:19-21



PEACHTREE

Fasting Day

THURSDAY, JULY 11

You are invited to join the congregation
of Peachtree Church as we fast together.

As we learn what it means to practice simplicity and fasting this month, please join us to practice fasting alongside others in your group and church.

A traditional fast means we abstain from food, or anything else for which we have an appetite, from sunrise to sunset. Instead of focusing our energy throughout the day on food or objects, we focus on our life before God. The Overflow Group activity this month is to use your time to prepare and reflect on our time of fasting.

Leading up to and during the Peachtree Fasting Day, we will resource you with fasting guidelines and best practices, intentional prayer prompts, and encouragements throughout the day.

To receive these resources and join us, please register below by scanning the QR code.



WHAT IS SIMPLICITY AND FASTING?



AS WITH ANY SPIRITUAL PRACTICE,
BOTH SIMPLICITY AND FASTING
ARE WAYS TO ATTUNE OUR HEARTS
TO THE DESIRES OF THE KINGDOM
OF GOD INSTEAD OF OUR
OWN KINGDOMS.

THIS MONTH WE WILL SEE HOW
SCRIPTURE BOTH TEACHES AND
CHALLENGES US TO ASSESS OUR
MOTIVES AS WE ENGAGE IN THESE
PRACTICES AND SEEK TO DELIGHT
IN GOD ALONE.

SIMPLICITY

Simplicity is how we practice storing treasures in heaven instead of on earth. By intentionally choosing to *have* less, we allow God to *do* more. We focus on his Spirit instead of possessions, enabling our hands and hearts to be accessible to the calling he places before us.

FASTING

Fasting is similar to simplicity in that it is a freeing practice. We typically think about fasting from food, and that is a great practice to incorporate. However, you can fast from any number of things that distract you from the presence of God. This month, we will focus on breaking free from what distracts us—food, electronics, or hobbies. The things we choose to fast from can be good, but anything that distracts us from God hinders our calling as his followers.

During May, when we looked at solitude and silence, we practiced quieting the noise of the world. This month, we will practice quieting the noise of our minds from wanting more, planning our next meal, or even thinking about our next commitment. We will choose to simplify, resist, and focus.



What do the words *simplify*, *resist*, and *focus* mean to you? What immediately comes to mind as something that distracts you that perhaps could be fasted from this month?

WHY ARE THESE TWO COMBINED?

Recall from previous months that this year in **Overflow** is designed to have practices that are both engaging and abstaining. Last month, we engaged in the practice of listening and discernment, leaning into the active practice of noticing and hearing God's voice and discerning his will for our lives. This month, our practice is that of abstaining—relinquishing control and desire in an effort to create space for the Spirit of God to move in our lives, meet us in our prayers, and quench our deep thirst for knowing him better.

OUR PROMISE

It is midyear, it is summertime, and you are either enjoying the slower pace, or your family is being thrown into the chaos of scheduling children's activities and camps. Or perhaps you are experiencing a little bit of both.

You can simplify your calendar, your life, and your commitments. You can fast from food, technology, and even from busyness. You can enjoy the longer days and soak in the goodness of God. You can do all this without missing out on anything life offers. This month's invitation is to abstain from chasing the world's treasures and find something much more precious in the process—room for Jesus.



Do a thought experiment: close your eyes and imagine you get to stand face-to-face with Jesus. You have the opportunity to look into his eyes. Imagine the warmth, the peace, and the freedom. What do you see there? What invitation is before you in the person and life of Jesus?

The goal this month is to recognize our own hunger for God. Hunger is the state of wanting or needing something (or someone) you do not have. We want to yearn for God.

WHEN WE FAST, WE ALLOW OUR BODY, OUR MINDS,
AND OUR SOULS TO EXPERIENCE OUR DEEP NEED FOR GOD
IN OUR LIVES. WE ECHO JESUS' WORDS:

**“I HAVE FOOD TO EAT THAT
YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.”**

JOHN 4:32

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH?



MOST SPIRITUAL PRACTICES
FIND THEIR ROOTS IN THE OLD
TESTAMENT. IT IS HELPFUL TO LOOK
BACK IN SCRIPTURE TO LEARN HOW
THESE PRACTICES BEGAN.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE
NUANCES OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE,
WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO
RECOGNIZE THE HISTORY
AND PLACE THAT THESE
STORIES ORIGINATED.

If you were to visit present day Israel today, you would hear many Jewish Israelis discuss biblical times in terms of the First or Second Temple Period. While this is a way to mark the Old Testament narrative, it is essential for Christian readers to understand the complicated past in the land of current-day Israel. While we will not delve into all the history, it is important to recognize major events in Israel's narrative.

First, it may be helpful to recall Israel's kingship. Remember from your Overflow reading last month that Saul was appointed as Israel's first king in 1 Samuel 10. You will remember that the Prophet Samuel was disheartened by the people's demand for an earthly king, but was told by God to anoint Saul and David as kings over the Israelites.

Consider the following first kings of Israel:

- King Saul (1 Samuel)
 - King David (2 Samuel 2)
 - King Solomon (1 Kings 2)
-

After Saul's death, David reigns as king over the Israelites and establishes the City of David near present-day Jerusalem. Though he constructs the city, he does not live to see the First Temple or city walls built. It is not until David's son, Solomon, takes the throne that the First Temple is constructed. Four years after King Solomon became ruler over Israel, he began construction on the First Temple—building it to the specifications given to King David by God. Seven years later, the Temple is complete (1 Kings 6).

While King Solomon built the First Temple, marking the First Temple Period, he also built two other things: the walls around the city and his palace (1 Kings 3). The walls and the Temple of God were huge endeavors for the Israelites, marked by sacrifices and trade

bargains. The building of the Temple, palace, and walls around Jerusalem symbolized a time of prosperity for the Jewish people in Judah and a time of unity under God.

Looking forward generations later, in **2 Kings 25**, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marches on Jerusalem, setting the city on fire, dismantling the Temple, tearing down the city walls, and scattering the Israelite people throughout the neighboring lands. This ends the era known as the “First Temple Period.”

It is not until the Book of Ezra, chapter 3, that we see construction begin on the Second Temple. Approximately 500 years before Jesus would walk in Jerusalem, the exiled Israelite people began returning to build the Second Temple, thus ushering in the “Second Temple Period.”



With that brief history, turn in your bible to the Book of Nehemiah and read Nehemiah 1:1-10. As you read, consider the following questions in your Overflow Journal.

- 1. Why is Nehemiah upset?**
- 2. What does Nehemiah do before God?**
- 3. What is his request?**

NEHEMIAH 1:4 SAYS,

**“WHEN I HEARD THESE THINGS, I SAT DOWN AND WEPT.
FOR SOME DAYS I MOURNED AND FASTED AND PRAYED
BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN.”**

Nehemiah was so distraught over the condition of his people back in Jerusalem, of his city being destroyed and the rebuilding being hindered, that his only response was to mourn, fast, and pray before God.



What type of self-control must be present to focus on God instead of the worldly goods in front of you?

Reflect: Is self-control a discipline in your life that is easy to access or one that needs more practice?

WHAT WAS GOD'S RESPONSE TO NEHEMIAH?

In February, when we focused on prayer, we wrestled with the question of “Does God hear our prayers?” Through scripture and personal stories, we learned that God not only listens to your prayers but also answers them.

Many times, in life and scripture, fasting is coupled with praying. Ruth Haley Barton describes fasting as, “knowing that we do not live on bread and bread alone.”

We fast, pray, and focus on our reliance on God, just as Nehemiah did.



Read Nehemiah 2:1-10 and consider the following in your Overflow Journal:

1. How does God show Nehemiah favor?
2. How does God use Nehemiah to show favor to his people in Jerusalem?

Nehemiah is a Hebrew in a foreign land, born during the exile in Persia, and now serving the Persian King Artaxerxes. His distress shows to King Artaxerxes, and God uses his position of favor with a foreign king to extend favor to the people in Jerusalem. The story of Joseph in Egypt is similar. God uses Joseph's position with the Pharaoh to save the Canaanites from starvation, blessing people through tragedy.

If you continue reading in the Book of Nehemiah, you learn that he went on to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem at a staggering speed despite heavy opposition. He even served as governor of the city. Nehemiah's desperation for God's help opened opportunities of favor and blessing for Nehemiah himself and God's people at large.



Have you ever experienced anything so tragic that you were left to mourn and fast before God? What was that experience like for you? What was it like to be so vulnerable before God?

IS FASTING A NECESSARY DISCIPLINE?

Scripture does not try to persuade you to practice simplicity and fasting. It assumes you are practicing both in your spiritual life.

THE BOOK OF JOEL CHAPTER 2:12-13 SAYS,

**“EVEN NOW,” DECLARES THE LORD,
“RETURN TO ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART,
WITH FASTING AND WEeping AND MOURNING.**

**REND YOUR HEART
AND NOT YOUR GARMENTS.”**

What does it mean to you to seek God in desperation, in joy, in sorrow, and in delight?

You were made to worship God with everything you have. Not out of guilt or because it is one more thing to do in your day or in your rule of life, but because that is what we were made to do. Our bodies and souls are meant to seek God in all ways.

KEEP READING & LEARNING:

Daniel is another biblical character that is marked by his intense fasting and discipline to God. In fact, there is a secular fasting practice known as the *Daniel Fast* that takes its roots from the Book of Daniel. You are encouraged to continue exploring how God responds to those willing to sacrifice, fast, and live a simple life serving God alone by exploring the Book of Daniel this month.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?



SO FAR DURING OUR YEAR OF
OVERFLOW, WE HAVE LOOKED AT
THE DIFFERENT PARABLES AND
LITERARY DEVICES JESUS USED
TO TEACH. JESUS' MASTERY
OF STORYTELLING AND USE OF
PARABLES IS PART OF WHAT
MAKES OUR SCRIPTURES SO
BEAUTIFUL AND INTRIGUING.

JESUS TAUGHT WITH NOT ONLY HIS
WORDS, BUT WITH HIS LIFE.

Before he began his ministry or even preached a single message about God, he spent 40 days in the desert praying, fasting, and seeking God's presence.



Read Matthew 4:1-11 and consider the following in your Overflow Journal:

1. What characteristics describe Jesus when he is tempted, beginning in verse 4?
2. What does the devil offer Jesus for his loyalty?
3. How does Jesus respond to the devil? What does he quote?
4. Have you ever felt tempted by physical desires and had the courage to say no?

Do not miss what the scriptures tell us in this story. Though Jesus was physically weak and exhausted, his spiritual life and connection to God was stronger than ever. The devil perceived fleshly weakness and Jesus showed spiritual strength.

Jesus is shown three temptations: the appetite for the flesh (*hunger*), the appetite for pride (*testing God*), and the appetite for power (*earthly kingdom*). Each of us struggles to control our own wants and appetites for more of this world, and Jesus, in his gracious and loving way, tells us there is more waiting for us in God's invitation.



Reflect for a moment, what temptations do you have before you today, or maybe this week, that you need to ask for strength against? Take a moment to heed Jesus' example and pray for strength to focus on simplicity and fasting in the month ahead.

In your bible, read Matthew 6:16-24 and make notes on the following:



1. What challenge does Jesus give to those who fast before God?
2. What other spiritual practice is present in this fasting challenge?
3. What has power over the health of our bodies, according to Jesus in verse 22?

Much of our worldly cravings come from wanting more. Our eyes deceive our hearts into wanting the new car, the better kitchen, or the best new technology. Jesus gives us something to focus on: the temporality of all these treasures we crave.

How do we counteract this natural human condition? We practice simplicity with our lives. In this month's podcast episode with John Ortberg, he suggests that one way his family practices this discipline is by focusing on being generous and charitable in tangible ways. It is hard to serve money and be extremely generous with it simultaneously.



Take a few moments to consider how to practice simplicity through generosity. How can we train ourselves to be content with our earthly treasures and strive to store more in the eternal Kingdom?

A MODERN LOOK AT AN OLD PROBLEM

Perhaps you have noticed that more and more individuals are self-diagnosing themselves with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD for short. According to a “Time” article from 2023, Margaret Sibley, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Washington School of Medicine, specializes in working with adolescents and adults who have ADHD. Recently, she says she has been inundated with clients who do not actually have ADHD—they are just worried they do.

Instead, what seems to be happening is that as a whole we are struggling with shrinking attention spans. According to Adam Brown, co-director of the Center for Attention, Learning and Memory at St. Bonaventure University in New York, inattention has reached “epidemic” levels.

This is not a new problem, but it is being exacerbated by the influx of technology. After all, social media platforms and the Internet are designed to attract attention from you, making focusing on other things nearly impossible. Add to that the fact that these devices and connections are training us to respond immediately to emails, texts, and even purchasing desires.

Dr. Gloria Mark, a psychologist and the Chancellor’s Professor of Informatics at the University of California Irvine, studies how people interact with technology in their everyday lives and how it affects our attention spans, moods, and stress levels. She and her team began studying attention spans using mere stopwatches back in 2004. How long can we stay on task without checking those texts or emails? In 2004, the average was 2.5 minutes, by 2012 it was 75 seconds, and in the last five years the average has dropped to 47 seconds.

CAN WE DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

Brown says we can practice to reclaim our attention spans, and he suggests putting the phone away. Perhaps we can fast from technology to reclaim pieces of ourselves this month.

SIMPLICITY & FASTING APPLICATION

Richard Foster, author of *The Celebration of Discipline*, says that fasting reveals what controls us more than anything else.

The invitation this month is to consider what dictates your life most days.



Reflect on the schedule of your typical days. Perhaps you can recall the list you made in March as we looked at our days in preparation for practicing sabbath rest. What value in your life determines your day? Is your schedule motivated by progress, efficiency, family, or sporting activities?

Simplicity and **fasting** are practices of self-reflection and self-control.

These principles are easy to see how they could apply to others, but they are hard to apply to ourselves. A parent can teach their child to practice self-control, but how often do we permit ourselves to slip on our own self-discipline?

Practicing simplicity and fasting allows us to discover our idols. Much like the kings in the Old Testament, we can lose our way and turn from God's design for our lives. We get distracted by the riches of this world, and instead of giving our attention to God, we give it elsewhere.

Part of the growth opportunity this month is to become more self-aware about how attached we are to the things that will perish. How hard is it to fast from food or your favorite activity? How hard is it to choose the simpler option instead of always opting for the upgrade?

Then, in our wisdom, we practice contentedness. We practice keeping God at the center. We practice our focus.

WE TRAIN TO BE FREE OF OUR WORLDLY APPETITES THAT ALWAYS WANT MORE.



Are there things that you are afraid to do without? What is the one thing that scares you to fast from? Ask the Lord to help you consider giving these things up for a set time this month. What barriers must be eliminated to help you focus on God instead of those things?

John Mark Comer puts it beautifully in his Practicing the Way guide,

**“OUR FIGHT IS NOT AGAINST THE BODY—THE BODY IS BROKEN,
BUT IT IS A GOOD GIFT. OUR FIGHT IS FOR THE BODY.
IT’S AGAINST THE FLESH, OR SINFUL APPETITES WITHIN US ALL.
AND FASTING IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL DISCIPLINES
OF THE WAY TO FREE OUR BODY AND SOUL FROM THE CHAINS
OF SIN AND THE PRISON OF SHAME.”**

GROUP PRACTICE



GROUP TIME THIS MONTH IS A SMALL
PART OF THE LARGER INVITATION
TO JOIN YOUR CHURCH FAMILY AS
WE FAST AS A CONGREGATION ON
THURSDAY, JULY 11. THIS MONTH
WE WILL REFLECT ON THE IMPACT
THESE PRACTICES ARE HAVING ON US
MONTH-TO-MONTH AND PREPARE TO
FAST TOGETHER.

TO BEGIN YOUR GROUP TIME
TOGETHER, WATCH THE
INTRODUCTION VIDEO BELOW.



SIMPLICITY & FASTING
INTRODUCTION VIDEO

In an effort to get us all settled into group time this month,
begin with a song.

Hillside Recording covered “Quiet” by Elevation Worship and it
is a beautiful reminder of the invitation we practiced in May.



Scan the QR code to watch the music video
on YouTube, or reflect with the lyrics below.

“QUIET” BY ELEVATION WORSHIP

Here we go again, my mind racing
And I can't seem to win
All these crazy thoughts and feelings
It's like it never ends
Until Your voice breaks through my noise
And I know I'm not alone, not alone

You will fight my battles
If I will just be still
Why would I keep running
When You're right here?

I'll just be quiet
And let You speak through the silence
Here I am, no more hiding
You are in this moment, I won't fight it
I'll be quiet

I don't need to know what comes next
Tomorrow's in Your hands
I can trust You with my future
'Cause You're already there

I hear Your voice call me forward
And I know I'm not alone, not alone

Away with the distractions
I wanna hear what's true
The only words that matter
They come from You

I'll just be quiet
And let You speak through the silence
Here I am, no more hiding
You are in this moment, I won't fight it
I'll be quiet

I'll just be quiet
And let You speak through the silence
Here I am, no more hiding
You are in this moment, I won't fight it
I'll be quiet
Quiet

God, You're here in the silence
Here I am, no more hiding
You are in this moment, I won't fight it
I'll be quiet

After a few moments of silent reflection, gather with your group and use the prompts below to recall our practices of listening and discernment from last month:

1. Last month, we made a list in our journals together about what commonalities we see in our stories of hearing from God. Reflecting on that list, did anyone have an experience of noticing God in their lives since we last met that they would like to offer the group?
2. How hard or easy was it to create the habit of noticing God in the seemingly small tasks of life this month?



Join Pastor Chuck Roberts and Bryan Benitez, Peachtree's Video Production Director, to learn more about simplicity and fasting. Scan the QR code, or visit PeachtreeChurch.com/Overflow or our YouTube channel.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A FAST:

While you are invited to do a full sunrise to sunset fast with the congregation this month, you are also invited to consider what you can fast from as an individual or even as a family unit.

We have done deep and intentional work this month about what distracts us, motivates us, and pushes us away from God.



Using your Overflow Journal, write three things that either captivates your appetite, distracts your intended purposes, or shortens your attention. Then, consider how you can fast from these things this month.

If you intend to fast as a family unit, consider making a list of things that distracts you from God and each other. How can you reorient yourself towards God this month? Reflect with your group or in your Overflow Journal.

GROUP PRACTICE

The offer this month is for each group to join the church for the **Peachtree Fasting Day** on July 11, 2024. We invite you to use the day to be brave and see what feeds your appetite for more by giving up that which distracts you from your creator.



PEACHTREE Fasting Day

GROUP MEETING PRIOR TO JULY 11:

If your group is meeting before July 11, we invite you to spend some time together brainstorming what you can fast from that day. The invitation for our **Peachtree Fasting Day** is to give up anything the Lord has placed on your heart and safely fast from sunrise to sunset.

Please note: this does NOT have to be food; it can be a fast from anything that captures your desire and attention away from God.

If you choose to partake in a traditional food fast while the invitation is to fast from sunrise to sunset, please do what is safely within your ability. Meaning, if you can only tolerate a few hours of fasting, consider fasting a few hours each day during that week to experience fasting this month.

Disclaimer: Individual needs differ significantly when it comes to fasting from food. Please consult with your medical doctor if you plan to push yourself beyond reasonable fasting or if you have a medical condition that should be discussed prior to abstaining from food.

Fasting is often accompanied by intense moments of prayer. Take a few moments with your group this month to share any prayer requests that you can focus on during **Peachtree Fasting Day**. Recall that during February, we learned how powerful intercessory prayer can be. Invite your group members to pray alongside you in any requests and concerns you intend to lay before the Lord this month.

GROUP MEETING AFTER JULY 11:

If your group is meeting after Peachtree Fasting Day, we invite you to reflect together using the prompts below:

1. What one word would you offer to describe your experience of fasting with your church family?
2. Did you experience focus and attention while you fasted?

//OVERFLOW// FAMILIES

LIVING WATER FOR AN EMPTY AGE

The practices simplicity and fasting encourage us to look at our lives wholistically and see what we are prioritizing, not only as individuals, but as a family unit.

SIMPLICITY:

Clutter/Shopping:

- When thinking about simplicity, focus on buying things for their usefulness rather than their status. Think about where you shop the most. Can you go a month without shopping there? Encourage your family to give items away before shopping for new ones. Set aside a time for your kids to go through their toys and see what they can give away to one of our mission partners. Plan a yard sale to get rid of clothes before you head out to shop for back-to-school clothes this summer.

Calendar:

- Look at your family calendar and discern how you can “unhurry” your life. Prioritize family time and reduce the number of extracurriculars. Implement a family curfew so you have time together more often. Block off an hour each day or week where nothing is scheduled – no doctor’s appointments, meetings, play dates, phone calls. Use this time to check in on one another. Additionally, what could you incorporate that reflects a more peaceful uncluttered life with God? It could be a nature walk, picnic in the park, family drink, serving others, sharing a meal with a neighbor.

Each month, our Family Ministry Team will provide resources for your family to experience these practices in your home.

FASTING:

Meals:

- When we think of fasting, it's typical to think about what we eat. Use this month to give up sweets, soft drinks, or another treat to remind your family of the One who ultimately sustains us. This practice will look similar to the Lenten season leading into Easter Sunday.
- While it's easy to think of fasting as getting rid of something, we can also use this opportunity as families to add something beneficial to our daily rhythm. If you notice that your family eats out a lot or is often eating in the car between games, practices, or other events, set aside a couple nights this month to cook as a whole family. This reminds us that the time we spend as families sharing a meal matter!

Digital:

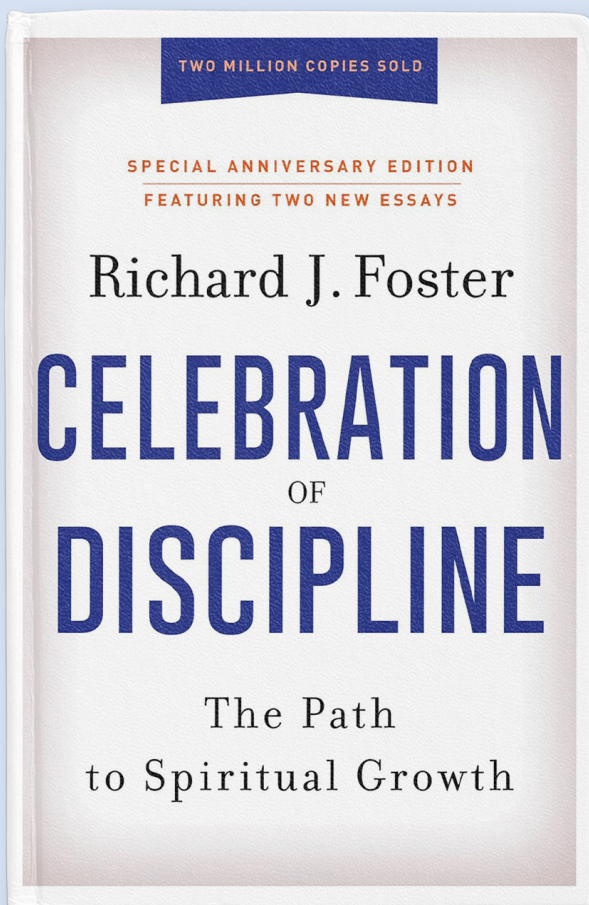
- Think of ways that you and your family are overloading yourselves with technology. We all take our phones, tablets, and screens with us everywhere we go. Allow this month to be a digital fast from the need to be surrounded by that noise. Start by counting how many TVs you have in your house! Is there a room where you can eliminate a TV? Create a “no phone zone” in your house where you dedicate a room for conversation or game nights—no TVs or phones allowed. Plan a family outing and leave your phones behind for the day or night!



Scan the QR code to watch members from our Family Ministry Team help you as you continue to discern what this practice could look like in your family.

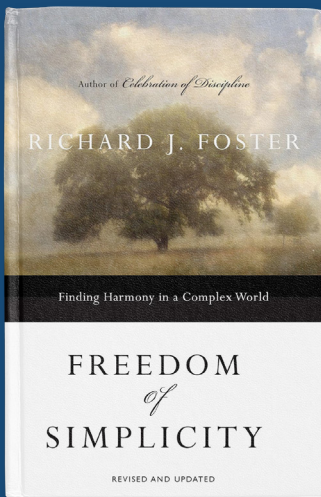
RESOURCES

Want to go deeper in simplicity and fasting Practices?
Consider reading the suggested resources:



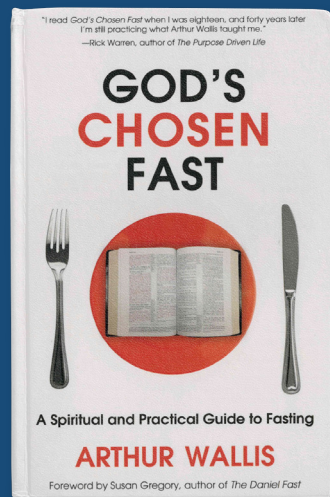
CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE

Richard J. Foster



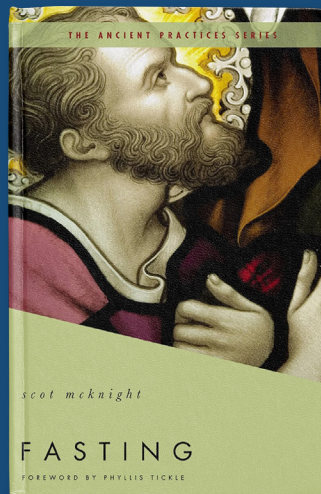
FREEDOM OF SIMPLICITY

Richard J. Foster



GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

Arthur Wallis



FASTING: THE ANCIENT PRACTICES

Scot McKnight

MAY GOD HIMSELF, THE GOD OF
PEACE, SANCTIFY YOU THROUGH
AND THROUGH. MAY YOUR WHOLE
SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY BE KEPT
BLAMELESS AT THE COMING OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23



PEACHTREE
CHURCH