

DISCONNECT



THE CONTEXT

The technological development of the last few decades has been dazzling. Today's smartphones, which we hold in the palm of our hands, are millions of times more powerful than the computers that guided the first space shuttles to the Moon. This development is so rapid that we are having a hard time adapting to it. Technology is redefining the way we rest, work, communicate, travel, learn... In short, our entire lives are being redefined before we can even ask ourselves what we really want.

Sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists are beginning to ring the alarm. Digital technology promises to make our lives easier, more connected, more convenient, and more efficient. However, it tends to numb, exhaust, and isolate us. Technological tools are designed to maximize passive consumption (like watching TV or scrolling on a phone), rather than to foster creativity or active engagement. Technology diminishes our efforts, but also our creativity and our human and relational capacities in the long term. It can isolate us and distract us from the activities that deeply nourish our relationships and our souls.

For many of us, our phone is the first thing we look at when we wake up and the last thing we look at when we go to bed. We feel overwhelmed by life. We are inundated with a constant stream of information and notifications. Our lives are distracted and our attention spans are getting shorter and shorter.

Of course, technology is not inherently bad, but it needs to be put "in its rightful place." We need to make radical choices so that technology serves to enhance our love for God and others, not diminish them. We need to make the courageous choice to set boundaries and principles for using technology to enrich life rather than to escape reality. We want to ask the questions "why and how do we use technology?" and orient our response toward human flourishing (spiritual, emotional, and relational).

DIFFERENT FASTING OPTIONS

So that each person can adapt their fast to their situation, here are more details and different options.

1. FULL DIGITAL FAST

Turn your "smartphone" into a "dumbphone". Remove everything from your phone that you can do on a computer. Remove all apps that are meant for distraction rather than practical use.

Also removes the use of any other screen for entertainment purposes. For example: TV, video games, streaming.

Limit your use of digital technology to work-related apps and use them only during work hours, on your work device. Commit to not working outside of work hours.

If suitable, you can also undertake a traditional fast (see below).

Examples of Useful Apps vs. Distractions

Distraction: social media, email, news apps, games, video apps, internet browser, shopping apps, podcasts, audiobooks.

Practical use: phone, message, calendar, camera, music, GPS, notes, weather, banking or payment applications.



2. PARTIAL DIGITAL FASTING

This is the same as the full digital fast except that you allow yourself a few exceptions and the use of digital technology at pre-determined times.

Turn your "smartphone" into a "dumbphone". Remove everything from your phone that you can do on a computer. Remove all apps that are meant for distraction rather than practical use.



Limit your use of any other screen (TV, video games, streaming) to entertainment purposes on specific days and times during the week. For example, 1 hour of TV screen time per day between 8pm and 9pm.

Outside of these defined hours, limit your use of digital technology to work-related applications and only use these during work hours, on your work device.

If suitable, you can also undertake a traditional fast (see below)

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Distraction: social media, email, news apps, games, video apps, internet browser, shopping apps, podcasts, audiobooks.

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3. TRADITIONAL FASTING

If this digital fast is not for you because you do not use screens or use them very little, you can consider a traditional fast. This is also something you can add to your digital fast.

- Determine a number of foods that you will not consume during this period (eg: alcohol, sugar, coffee, meat, etc.)
- Determine a day of the week when you will do a complete fast (no food, only drinking water) or partial fast (skipping a meal).
- Set a wake-up time and a bedtime that allows you to go to bed early and wake up early so that you can both rest and also spend time reading the Bible and praying in the morning.

Please note that fasting from food should absolutely be avoided by anyone who has had eating disorders. If you are under 18, you must talk to your parents first.



THE BREAD CHALLENGE

In addition to these 40 days of fasting, take the challenge of reading the Bible every day using the BREAD reading plan.

At ICF-Geneva, this year, we started using the BREAD method to read the Bible. BREAD invites you to meditate on two Bible passages each day, with the help of a short step-by-step guide. Nothing will change your life more than dedicating yourself to meditating on the Word of God.

HOW TO PREPARE?

To live this digital fast well, take care to warn those around you in advance.

There are also practical elements that can help you:

- Get the BREAD journal in paper format to help you meditate on the Bible.
- Find an alarm clock so you don't have to have your phone next to you during the night and when you wake up.
- If you have a smartwatch, find an analog watch to replace it.
- If necessary, set up an automatic response on your email box to indicate your working hours and when people can expect you to read and respond to your messages.
- Talk to your colleagues and manager about your plan to disconnect from digital technologies outside of work hours.
- Talk to your family and friends about your fast so they know what to expect and how to encourage you.
- Find people from church who you are fasting with and who you would like to see regularly to discuss how it is going.
- Get some books to accompany you in your fast (as much for your spiritual life and for understanding the effect of technology on you as for pleasure).

WHAT TO DO?

This fast invites us to a lifestyle in which we are aware of the present moment. It is a change that can often be destabilizing. To help you change your lifestyle, here are some suggestions for activities.

- Read a novel (or even lots of them!)
- Play board games with family or friends
- Take classes (dance, cooking, sports, etc.)
- Volunteer (think Love in Action or just serving in church)
- Go hiking or just walking, alone or with someone
- Reconnect with your old hobbies or find a new one
- If you are a parent, play with your children, intentionally leaving aside the notion of time and things to do.
- Invite people to share meals with you
- Spend time writing down your prayers and daily thoughts. Take time to notice how God speaks to you and what emotions you are going through.
- Use every opportunity to turn your attention to God.



RESOURCES

For parents and families:

- Andy Crouch, *The Tech Wise Family*

The research

- Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*
- Andy Crouch, *The Life We're Looking For*

Practical stuff

- Darren Whitehead, *The Digital Fast*
- Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*
- Catherine Price, *How to Break Up With Your Phone*

BREAD

SPEND SOME SIMPLE TIME EACH DAY BY LETTING YOURSELF BE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

BE STILL: Find a place where you can meet with God, ask Him to fill the space, and take a minute in silence. Turn your attention to Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer time.

READ: Read today's passage. Let the Holy Spirit guide your attention to a verse that stands out, intrigues you, surprises you, or interests you. Write that verse in the "READ" section.

ENCOUNTER: Meditate on what God has shown you in the passage by writing down and answering questions such as: What truth might God want to convey to me about Himself, myself, or others? Is God revealing a lie or a truth that He wants me to notice and respond to? What does God seem to be telling me?

APPLY: Now turn your attention outward. Think about how you might apply what God says to your day and write down how you will try to live that out.

DEVOTION: Finally, end by writing a simple prayer of devotion to God. Ask God to fill you up again and entrust your day to Him.

Here is the reading plan:

05.03.25: Ps 51; Mt 6, 1-6.16-18

06.03.25: Gn 39; Lc 9, 22-25

07.03.25: Gen 40; Mt 9, 14-15

08.03.25: Gn 41, 1-24; Lc 5, 27-32

09.03.25: Dt 6, 4-15; Lc 4, 1-13

10.03.25: Gen 41, 25-45; Mt 25, 31-46

11.03.25: Gen 41, 46-42, 5; Mt 6, 7-15

12.03.25: Gn 42, 6-17; Lc 11, 29-32

13.03.25: Gen 42, 18-28; Mt 7, 7-12

14.03.25: Gen 42, 29-fin; Mt 5, 20-26

15.03.25: Gen 43, 1-15; Mt 5, 43-48

16.03.25: Dt 26, 1-11; Lc 11, 23-26

17.03.25: Gn 43, 16-fin; Lc 6, 36-38

18.03.25: Gen 44, 1-17; Mt 23, 1-12

19.03.25: Ps 34; Lc 2, 41-51

20.03.25: Gn 45, 1-15; Lc 16, 19-31

21.03.25: Gen 45, 16-fin; Mt 21, 33-43.45-05.04.25: Ex 7, 8-fin; Jn 7, 40-53

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22.03.25: Gn 46, 1-7 and 28-end; Lc 15, 1-3; 11-32

23.03.25: Dt 30, 15-20; Lc 15, 11-32

24.03.25: Ps 119, 81-96; Lc 4, 24-30

25.03.25: Ps 119, 97-112; Lc 1, 26-38

26.03.25: Gen 49, 1-32; Mt 5, 17-19

27.03.25: Gen 49, 33-50; Luke 11, 14-23

28.03.25: Ex 1, 1-14; Mc 12, 28b-34

29.03.25: Ex 1, 22-2, 10; Lc 18, 9-14

30.03.25: Ex 16, 2-18; Jn 6, 1-15

31.03.25: Ex 2, 11-22; Jn 4, 43-54

01.04.25: Ex 2, 23-3, 20; Jn 5, 1-16

02.04.25: Ex 4, 1-23; Jn 5, 17-30

03.04.25: Ex 4, 27-6, 1; Jn 5, 31-47

04.04.25: Ex 6, 2-13; Jn 7, 2.10.14.25-

30

06.04.25: Nb 21, 4-9; Jn 3, 14-21

07.04.25: Ex 8, 1-19; Jn 8, 12-20

08.04.25: Ex 8, 20-fin; Jn 8, 21-30

09.04.25: Ex 9, 1-12; Jn 8, 31-42

10.04.25: Ex 9, 13-fin; Jn 8, 51-59

11.04.25: Ex 10; Jn 10, 31-42

11.04.25: Ex 10; Jn 10, 31-42

12.04.25: Ex 11; Jn 11, 45-57

13.04.25: Zac 9, 9-10; Lc 19, 29-40

14.04.25: Is 42, 1-7; Jn 12, 1-11

15.04.25: Is 49, 1-6; Jn 13, 21-33.36-38

16.04.25: Es 50, 4-9a; Matthew 26, 14-25

17.04.25: Ex 12, 1-14; Jn 13, 1-15

18.04.25: Is 52, 13 – 53; Jn 18, 1 – 19,

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19.04.25: Gn 1, 1-2, 2; Lc 24, 1-12

20.04.25: And 10, 36-43; John 20, 1-9

BREAD

EXAMPLE

Genesis 42, 29-end

14.03.25

Matthew 5, 20-26

Be still (Silence)

Read (Lecture)

"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment."

Encounter

What kind of anger is in my heart? God is not satisfied that I "didn't kill anyone," He wants to completely uproot the anger in my heart! Jesus gives me access to a life without bitterness!

Apply (Application)

Where is the anger in my life? In my relationships with my coworkers, I can see resentment and grudges. God, you are calling me to release this anger before you and do an act of service for them today at work.

Devote (Devotion)

Lord, forgive me for my anger towards my colleagues. I give you my heart, give me I pray your love that transforms me deeply!

Meditation program

TO SUPPORT YOU DURING THIS LENT, HERE ARE THE THEMES FOR EACH WEEK (WHICH WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE CONNECT PROGRAMS)

PHASE 1: OBSERVE (Wednesday 05.03-11.03)

- As you enter the fast, become aware of how screens are affecting you.
- Make the decision to use digital technology for the love of God and your neighbor.
- Bible passage to meditate on: Luke 10, 38-42

PHASE 2: LIMIT (Wednesday 12.03-01.04)

- Set strict limits and refine the application of your fast.
- Bible passage to meditate on: Colossians 3, 2

PHASE 3: REPLACE (Wednesday 02.04-15.04)

- You were made for relationships! With God and with others.
- Establish new routines, practices, and habits that help you thrive, giving your full attention to God and the people around you.
- Bible passage to meditate on: Philippians 4:8

PHASE 4: REINVENT (Wednesday 04.16-04.20)

- What habits should you reinstate in your daily life? Make radical life choices to live in a healthy way, out of love for God and others.
- Bible passage to meditate on: Romans 12:2

