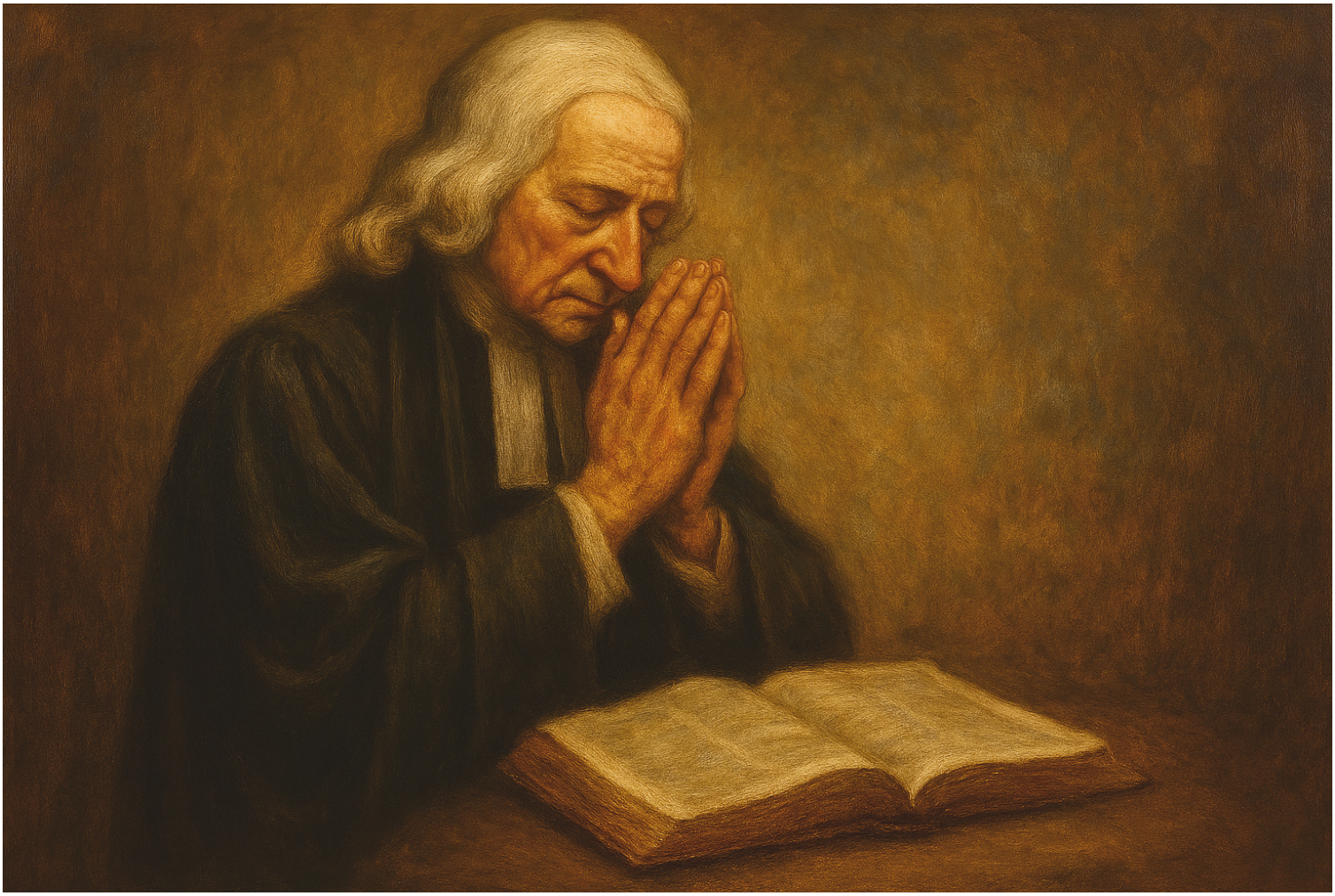
THE WESLEY FAST



WHAT IS FASTING?

In a general sense, fasting can mean a number of things: abstaining from food and drink, abstaining from food only, or abstaining from *certain* foods for a limited period of time. In the Christian sense, fasting is abstaining from food as a spiritual discipline.

Most Christians accompany fasting with prayer. Many Christians view fasting as a way to intensify prayer and increase its effectiveness. Some believe that by denying our physical hunger for a time,

our spiritual sensitivity is heightened or enhanced.

Essentially, fasting makes prayer more powerful, and can also help us hear God's voice more clearly.

WHAT IS THE WESLEY FAST?

For a portion of John Wesley's ministry, he advocated fasting on both Wednesday and Friday each week as a regular spiritual discipline. It's fairly well known that Wesley would not ordain anyone to the Methodist ministry who was unwilling to fast those days.

But as time passed, Wesley fasted mostly on Fridays, which was the Anglican norm. (Actually, as early as August 1739, he advocated Friday fasting for Methodists in his journal, according to the Anglican rule.)

Wesley usually began a Friday fast at sundown on Thursday. This was in continuity with Jewish and early Christian tradition, which both marked the beginning of the day at sundown, not midnight. Wesley typically ended his fast at 3:00 p.m. on Friday.

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVING THE WESLEY FAST

1. Be flexible and listen to the Holy Spirit. Don't get so caught up with the act of fasting itself that you forget why you're doing it in the first place.
2. Decide whether you're going to do a complete fast (water only), a no-solid-food fast that allows milk, juice, coffee and tea, a no-meat fast, or some other kind of fast. There are no fixed rules here but it's always good to try to keep the fast you set out to do. Some fasts are more difficult than others, and there will be times you may feel led to switch things up.
3. Plan on Friday as your regular fasting day, but use Wednesday and other days for additional fasting when you feel called to a time of deeper and more intense prayer. Remember, there's nothing "magic" about Friday. It's simply a historical day for fasting in many Christian traditions, largely because Jesus was crucified on a Friday. If for some reason another day of the week makes more sense for you, then fast on that day.
4. Only fast for more than one consecutive day after you've consulted with your doctor and only if you're sure you're physically able to handle it.

5. Make sure you drink plenty of water while fasting, no matter what kind of fast you choose.
6. The default Wesley Fast is observed from sundown Thursday till 3:00 Friday afternoon. Some Christians go till sundown on Friday. Do whichever you feel led to do in any given week.
7. Remember, there will be times when it makes sense to skip your Friday fast or move it to another day of the week. For example, if you have an opportunity to have lunch on a Friday with someone you've been wanting to connect with for a while, don't feel compelled to create an awkward situation by sticking to your fast. Just change your fast day that week. Guideline #1 applies here.

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