

LET JESUS DISCIPLE YOU

Fasting

“When you fast” — hunger as a way of making room

SPEAKER Karen Goldapp

DATE Sunday, August 16, 2026

PASSAGES Matthew 4; Matthew 6; James 4; Job 23; 2 Corinthians 12; Luke 9

MESSAGE Begins at 1:05:11 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Fasting is not a spiritual hunger strike to get God’s attention, and it is not a cleanse with a Bible verse attached. It is deliberately setting down the thing that props you up, so that your spirit has room to be fed by God — and so that the humility, self-control, compassion and gratitude you can’t manufacture start to grow in you.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ♦ Jesus said “*when* you fast,” not “*if*.” It’s assumed, like giving and praying.
- ♦ The point of fasting is never the fasting. It’s opening your spirit to be fed by God.
- ♦ Fasting humbles you fast — which is precisely why it works on the pride you can’t see.
- ♦ Hunger makes you notice other hungry people. Give away the money you didn’t spend on food.
- ♦ Rest is part of the discipline, not a failure of it. “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”
- ♦ Some people should not fast — pregnancy, nursing, an eating disorder history, and certain metabolic conditions are hard stops. There are other ways in.
- ♦ Scarcity is a wound, not a fact. Fasting exposes it so it can be healed.

► 1:07:38

Karen introduced herself before she introduced her subject: a licensed clinical social worker with an EMDR practice here in Austin, married to Mark for fourteen years, mother of two daughters. She said she'd been asked to talk about fasting because she has actually done it — for years, badly and then better — and she wanted to give the church both the theology and the practicalities, including the parts nobody warns you about.

She began where Jesus began, in the wilderness, quoting Deuteronomy back at the tempter:

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

MATTHEW 4:4 ↗

► 1:08:12

“The goal of fasting isn’t fasting in and of itself. It’s to open our spirits to being fed by God.”

Fasting is everywhere — in scripture, and in our own history

► 1:10:57

Karen counted more than seventy mentions of fasting in the Bible. Moses and Elijah each fasted forty days. Whole nations fasted together — Samuel called one, and so did Jehoshaphat, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Joel, and even the king of Nineveh. Yom Kippur is a fast God himself initiated, roughly twenty-five hours, once a year. And individuals fasted for all kinds of reasons: David, the unnamed prophet of Judah, Ahab, Daniel.

► 1:11:30

Then she moved closer to home. Washington, Adams, Madison and Lincoln all issued national calls to fasting — Lincoln’s language was a day of “national humiliation, fasting, and prayer.” Her point was that this is not an exotic practice. It is a normal one we forgot.

What she actually means by fasting

► 1:12:42

Karen was specific so nobody would be confused: water only. No calories. A lot of water. Anywhere from twenty-four hours to about seven days. Her own longest was ten days. That is different — she said

this plainly — from a juice cleanse, a diet, or a New Year’s resolution. Those may be good for you. They are not this.

► 1:13:52

She started in college, through the Austin House of Prayer (now Christ the Reconciler), Hope’s student life, a campus house of prayer, and Res Week at UT — teaching from Dr. Hawthorne and Gino Hildebrandt shaped how she understood it. She admitted the obvious: fasting with a group carries you; fasting alone is much harder. Later, chronic health issues and an Amazon Prime documentary called *Fasting* brought her back to it, this time also as a matter of stewarding her body.

What happened in the middle of a seven-day fast

► 1:18:35

She described a specific moment. Mid-fast, hungry and low, she was reading Job and hit a verse that named exactly what she wanted to be true of her:

“I have not departed from his commands, but have treasured his words more than daily food.”

JOB 23:12 ↗ (NLT)

► 1:19:19

That same day a message came through Realm from a friend, Marty, saying something she could not have known to say. Karen’s response was Hagar’s, out in the wilderness of her own:

“You are the God who sees me... I have now seen the One who sees me.”

GENESIS 16:13 ↗

What it does to your body

► 1:20:02

Karen didn’t spiritualise past the physiology. Extended fasting triggers autophagy — the body’s process of clearing out damaged cells — which she compared, with a grin, to a Hail Mary pass that actually connects. It prompts production of new white blood cells, reduces inflammation, improves metabolic markers, and builds a kind of resilience. Stewarding the body is not a lesser motive; it’s part of the obedience.

Preparation, and the discipline of rest

► 1:21:50

Practical counsel, straight from experience. Eat lighter for a day or two beforehand. Meal-prep for your family so you're not cooking under duress — or arrange childcare, or take time off. Taper caffeine before you start rather than during, and don't combine a fast with alcohol. Tell your spouse and ask for support.

And then the part she said people resist most: **rest is part of it**. You will not be productive. You are not supposed to be. She quoted the verse she keeps coming back to:

“The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

EXODUS 14:14 ↗ (NIV)

Which is only what Jesus modelled anyway —

“the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.”

Who should *not* fast

► 1:25:00

Karen was emphatic here, and she said she'd rather be blunt than have someone hurt themselves trying to be obedient. Hard stops: if you are pregnant, trying to conceive, or breastfeeding; if you have any history of an eating disorder. For minors she counsels against food fasting — give up sweets instead, and pair it with a menu of coping skills (she pointed to Wes and Cindy as people to talk to). If you have no weight to lose, don't. If you have a metabolic condition, do it only under medical supervision. And for anyone uncertain, a liquid-only fast is a legitimate on-ramp rather than a compromise.

Self-denial: “I feel like a worthless lump — and this is good”

► 1:29:14

She was honest about the experience. Day three, you feel useless. Nothing gets done. You are, in her words, a worthless lump on the couch. And that, she said, is where the work happens — because you are practising saying no to yourself when there is no applause for it.

► 1:30:28

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

LUKE 9:23 ↗

She also read it in the Complete Jewish Bible, which sharpens it: “*let him say no to himself, take up his execution stake daily and keep following me*” (Luke 9:23, CJB). A twenty-year-old sermon of Dr. Hawthorne’s had stuck with her: fasting grows your capacity to govern *every* desire, not just appetite. Dave Ramsey’s version of the same idea — that adults learn to delay pleasure — is the secular echo.

Humility: the number two humbling influence in her life

► 1:32:40

Karen had Bri read an excerpt from John Mark Comer’s *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* about the wilderness: Jesus goes in fresh from the Father’s voice at his baptism and comes out of forty days of hunger stronger, not weaker. Weakness is where strength gets made.

► 1:38:18

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

JAMES 4:5–7 ↗

She mentioned a sermon from the Austin Stone arguing that humility is the limiting factor in spiritual growth — you grow only as far as your humility allows. Fasting collapses your self-sufficiency in about thirty-six hours, which is the point:

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

MATTHEW 26:41 ↗

► 1:41:40

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 ↗

“If you feel powerful all the time — if you’re never at the end of yourself — maybe the humility of fasting would be good for you.”

She also noted, from the disciples’ failure at the foot of the mountain, that some things don’t move by effort alone: “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting” (NKJV).

Compassion and gratitude

► 1:42:34

Hunger, Karen said, does something to your attention. You start noticing people who are hungry without choosing it. James is unsparing about employers who withhold wages while living in luxury (James 5:4–5), and Jesus made love the identifying mark:

“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

JOHN 13:34–35 ↗ (NLT)

Her concrete suggestion: take the grocery money you didn’t spend and give it away — Mobile Loaves & Fishes, the Central Texas Food Bank, Heifer International. She pointed to the widow who gave everything she had to live on, and to Tim Keller’s four counterfeit gods — power, control, approval, comfort — as a diagnostic for what your money is actually for.

Gratitude runs the same direction. Comfort received becomes comfort given (2 Corinthians 1:3–7), and she had the room say it out loud from Ephesians 1:3: he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

“When,” not “if”

► 1:49:24

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.”

MATTHEW 6:16 ↗

Karen’s reading of that: the warning is against performance, not against ever speaking of it. She encouraged leaders in particular to talk about fasting humbly, because a practice nobody mentions is a

practice nobody learns. Moses and Elijah, the two great fasters, are the two who show up on the mountain with Jesus.

Scarcity and abundance

► 1:50:18

She closed with the thing underneath everything else. Fasting surfaces a scarcity mindset — the conviction that there will not be enough, that you will not be okay. And scarcity, in her clinical experience, almost always originates in a hurt. It's trauma, and trauma is treatable: EMDR, inner healing prayer (Don Gavlick coordinates that ministry at Hope), real community. She had the congregation say together, "I have more than enough."

"I will never leave you nor forsake you."

HEBREWS 13:5 ↗, QUOTING DEUTERONOMY 31:6 ↗

► 1:52:50

"Our trauma, our scarcity mindset, will shackle us. Abundance is freedom. Abundance is joy and peace. Abundance is the person of Jesus."

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Matthew 13:44](#)
- [Matthew 4:4](#)
- [Job 23:12 \(NLT\)](#)
- [Genesis 16:13](#)
- [Exodus 14:14 \(NIV\)](#)
- [John 5:19](#)
- [Luke 9:23 \(also CJB\)](#)
- [Mark 9:29 \(NKJV\)](#)
- [Matthew 3:16–17](#)
- [Matthew 4:1–2](#)
- [James 4:5–7](#)
- [Matthew 26:41](#)
- [2 Corinthians 12:9](#)
- [James 5:4–5](#)
- [John 13:34–35 \(NLT\)](#)
- [Matthew 6:16](#)
- [Mark 12:41–44](#)
- [2 Corinthians 1:3–7](#)
- [Ephesians 1:3](#)
- [Matthew 17:1–3](#)
- [Hebrews 13:5 / Deuteronomy 31:6](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Jesus assumed his followers would fast. Why do you think it dropped out of ordinary Christian practice for so many of us?
2. Karen called fasting the number two humbling influence in her life. Where in your life do you feel most self-sufficient?
3. What would you do with the money and the time you didn't spend on food?
4. Where does a scarcity mindset show up in you — with money, food, time, or affection? Where might it have started?
5. If fasting from food isn't wise or safe for you, what else genuinely costs you something?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Karen Goldapp introduced herself as someone who has been a Christian her whole life. “I know that’s not a super exciting testimony,” she said, “but the good news is I’m an example that God sustains us for our whole lives.” She has been married fourteen years to her husband Mark and is mother to two daughters. Professionally she is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice, doing the trauma reprocessing therapy called EMDR and running consultation and trainings in it for other therapists. She started fasting in college, after learning about the practice through the Austin House of Prayer — now Christ the Reconciler.

BEFORE YOU FAST

Please **don't** if you are pregnant, trying to conceive, or nursing, or if you have any history of an eating disorder. Talk to a doctor first if you have a metabolic condition. A liquid-only fast is a good place to begin.

THE SERIES

Let Jesus Disciple You — working through the commands of Jesus.

- **Aug 9 — Repent and Believe**
- **Aug 16 — Fasting (you are here)**
- **Aug 23 — Make Disciples**
- **Aug 30 — Follow Me**

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGbfP2ESXPM&t=3911s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.