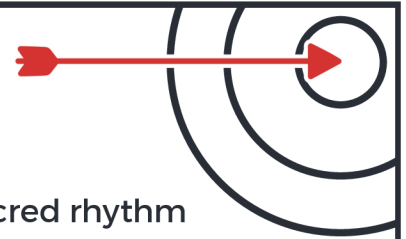


**FRESH START FAST 2026  
DEVOTIONAL**



## INTRODUCTION

As we begin this new year together, we are stepping into a sacred rhythm practiced by God’s people throughout Scripture—fasting. A corporate fast is more than a spiritual tradition or a churchwide challenge. It is an intentional reset. A time to quiet the noise, reorder our priorities, and create space for God to speak with clarity. Whether this is your first fast or one of many, you are stepping into a journey that has the potential to realign your heart, renew your mind, and refocus your life around the purposes of God.

Biblical fasting always involves two movements: laying something down and picking something up. We lay down food and other regular comforts—not to punish ourselves, but to sharpen our awareness and awaken our spirits. And we pick up prayer, Scripture, worship, and intentional reflection so that our hunger leads us back to the One who satisfies. In Scripture, fasting is not about earning God’s favor; it’s about posturing ourselves to hear His voice. Moses fasted for revelation. David fasted for repentance. Esther fasted for courage. The early church fasted for direction. Jesus Himself fasted before beginning His ministry. In every case, fasting was a way of saying, “Lord, I want You more than anything else.” We empty ourselves to be filled up with what God has for us.

This devotional was created to guide you through five key themes drawn from Ephesians 5—awareness, wisdom, time, clarity, and discernment. Each day will help you examine your life, confront places of drift or distraction, and step more intentionally into God’s purpose for you. You’ll reflect, pray, and take simple, practical steps that align your heart with God’s leading. Think of this devotional as a companion on the journey—something to steady you, encourage you, and challenge you as you fast.

As you commit to these next days, come with openness. Let the Lord search your heart. Let Him strengthen you where you feel weak and speak into places you’ve overlooked. Fasting is not about perfection—it’s about pursuit. And as you pursue Him, He promises to draw near.

May this season awaken something fresh in you. May your hunger lead you to Him. And may you begin this year with clarity, purpose, and a renewed desire to walk closely with Jesus.



## DAY 1 – AN EXAMINED LIFE

**Ephesians 5:15a – “So be careful how you live.”**

Living with purpose begins with paying attention. Paul’s words invite us to slow down long enough to truly see our lives—our choices, our patterns, our rhythms, our habits. Most people don’t drift into spiritual maturity or purposeful living. We drift into distraction. Purpose requires intentionality, and intentionality begins with awareness.

When Paul says, “Be careful how you live,” he’s not telling us to be fearful—he’s telling us to be thoughtful. To take ownership of the direction of our lives. To refuse to live on autopilot. To stop allowing our days to blur together without consideration of how God might want to use them.

If we’re honest, much of our life can be lived without much intention at all. We wake up, we go through routines, we make decisions out of habit rather than conviction. And sometimes we don’t even notice the gap between the life we are living and the life God invites us into.

Fasting helps reveal this. When we deny ourselves something we normally rely on, we suddenly become aware of things we hadn’t noticed—longings we’ve ignored, habits we’ve grown numb to, emotional impulses we’ve pushed aside, and areas where we’ve been spiritually drifting. Fasting has a way of waking us up.

Paul’s invitation is simple: Look carefully. Pay attention. Notice what’s happening within you and around you. Because you cannot change what you do not first acknowledge. And you cannot pursue purpose if you don’t know where you’re heading.

The examined life is not about shame—it’s about clarity. It’s about seeing clearly enough to walk wisely and live intentionally.

### **Reflection Question:**

- Where am I living on autopilot, and what is keeping me from living on purpose?

### **Purpose Challenge:**

Set three alarms throughout the day (morning, midday, evening). When each one goes off, pause for 30 seconds and ask: “Am I being intentional right now or drifting?” No judgment—just awareness.





## DAY 2 – WISDOM VS. FOOLISHNESS

**Ephesians 5:15b – “Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise.”**

Scripture never treats wisdom as optional. Wisdom is the difference between a purposeful life and a wasted one. Paul isn’t insulting anyone—he’s drawing a sharp contrast between two paths: the wise path and the foolish one.

In Scripture, wisdom isn’t about intelligence or education. It’s about orientation. It’s about living with God at the center of your decisions. It’s about choosing the long view over the instant gratification. It’s about aligning your life with truth, not trends.

Foolishness, on the other hand, is not stupidity. It’s carelessness. It’s unexamined living. It’s going with the flow of culture. It’s living for what feels good instead of what is good. It’s reacting instead of reflecting.

Purpose demands wisdom because purpose is rarely the easiest path. It requires discipline, surrender, and spiritual clarity. The world is full of distractions that masquerade as fulfillment. Foolishness is often subtle.

This is why Paul says, “Don’t live like fools.” Not don’t act like fools, but don’t live like them. Foolishness is a lifestyle, not a moment.

During fasting, you may feel the tension between the wise and foolish paths more acutely. The part of you that reaches for comfort or instant relief will suddenly feel louder. But this is where wisdom grows—in the space between desire and decision.

Wisdom says, “Not everything is beneficial.” Wisdom asks, “What is the wise thing to do in light of who God is calling me to be?” Wisdom chooses long-term fruit over short-term comfort.

And wisdom is something God gives generously to those who ask (James 1:5).

### **Reflection Question:**

- Where do I need more wisdom in my life, and in what areas have I adopted the world’s foolishness?

### **Purpose Challenge:**

Choose one decision today—big or small—and slow down long enough to ask this question before acting: “What is the wise thing to do here?” Let that intentional pause guide your action.





## DAY 3 – REDEEMING THE TIME

**Ephesians 5:16 – “Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.”**

Time is one of the most valuable gifts God gives us—and one of the easiest to waste. Paul reminds us that living with purpose means treating time as holy, not disposable. The phrase “make the most of every opportunity” literally means to redeem the time—to buy back what would otherwise be lost.

We all know how easily time slips away: Scrolling, overthinking, procrastinating, avoiding what matters, filling our schedules but not our souls.

We often underestimate the spiritual power of our daily decisions. What we do with our time shapes who we become. And Paul adds urgency by saying these are “evil days”—meaning the world around us is not neutral. Culture will gladly waste your time for you.

Intentional living requires a shift: From wasting time → to investing time. From drifting through days → to stepping into divine moments.

God is often speaking, nudging, and inviting us into opportunities to love, serve, grow, obey, repent, forgive, encourage, and worship—but we must be awake to recognize them.

Fasting sharpens that awareness. When we quiet the noise and remove comforts, our spiritual senses heighten. We begin to see open doors we once walked past. We notice the divine interruptions. We sense God’s activity in the ordinary.

Redeeming the time doesn’t mean overpacking your schedule. It means aligning your time with God’s purposes. It means recognizing every day as a gift and every moment as an opportunity to glorify God.

### **Reflection Question:**

- In what ways am I wasting time instead of redeeming it and making the most of every opportunity?

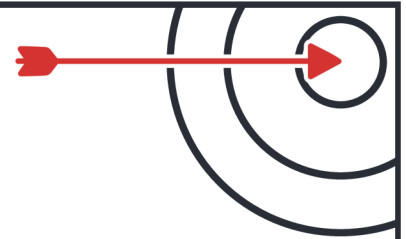
### **Purpose Challenge:**

Identify one common time-waster in your day (scrolling, mindless snacking, procrastination, etc.) and replace just 10 minutes of it with something purposeful—prayer, Scripture reading, encouraging someone, or serving a need.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, teach me to redeem the time. Help me see the opportunities You place before me—big and small. Free me from the habits that waste time and lead me into rhythms that honor You. Make me attentive, present, and responsive to Your leading. Amen.





## DAY 4 – RECLAIMING YOUR MIND

**Ephesians 5:17a – “Don’t act thoughtlessly...”**

Our actions flow from our thoughts. When Paul warns us not to act thoughtlessly, he’s addressing something deeper than behavior—he’s addressing mental and spiritual clutter.

Thoughtless living happens when our mind is overwhelmed, distracted, scattered, or burdened. When we are mentally overloaded, our actions become impulsive rather than intentional. We react instead of respond. We drift instead of decide. We follow emotions instead of the Spirit.

Purposeful living requires a reclaimed mind—a mind renewed by truth, anchored in Christ, and governed by the Spirit.

But our minds are noisy places. We carry worries from yesterday. We anticipate anxieties about tomorrow. We rehearse conversations, failures, or fears. We absorb constant noise from screens, news, and notifications. We rush, we multitask, we overthink... and we wonder why our actions feel chaotic.

Fasting brings clarity. Not because it makes life easier, but because it removes some of the mental fog we don’t realize we’ve been living under. As the noise decreases, the Spirit’s voice becomes clearer. Thoughts that once felt tangled begin to separate. Priorities reorient. Peace emerges.

Paul’s call is simple: Don’t be thoughtless. Be mindful. Be present. Be aware. Let your actions be the fruit of a settled, Spirit-led mind.

### **Reflection Question:**

- What thoughts, distractions, or anxieties are currently cluttering my mind and influencing the way I act?

### **Purpose Challenge:**

Practice a “60-second reset” at least once today:

- Close your eyes
- Breathe deeply
- Name the thoughts filling your mind
- Surrender each one to the Lord

End by saying: “Lord, renew my mind.” This helps silence clutter and re-center on Christ.

### **Prayer:**

Holy Spirit, calm my mind. Clear the clutter of fear, distraction, and anxiety. Renew my thoughts with Your truth. Lead me to act with intention, guided by Your presence rather than my impulses. Restore my peace and focus. Amen.





## DAY 5 – KNOWING GOD’S WILL

**Ephesians 5:17b – “...but understand what the Lord wants you to do.”**

The culmination of living on purpose is this: Understanding what God wants you to do. Not in a vague, general sense—but personally, specifically, relationally.

God is not playing hide-and-seek with His will. He delights in revealing His heart, His direction, and His purpose to those who seek Him. And fasting is one of the clearest ways we posture ourselves to hear Him.

Understanding God’s will involves three things:

### 1. Surrender

We cannot discern God’s will while clinging to our own. God reveals His path to the surrendered heart—the one willing to obey before it even knows the details.

### 2. Alignment with Scripture

God’s will is always consistent with His Word. The Spirit illuminates Scripture, making God’s desires clear and compelling.

### 3. Sensitivity to the Spirit

God leads through gentle nudges, peace, conviction, open doors, closed doors, and the still small voice of the Spirit. Learning His voice takes time, but fasting tunes our spiritual hearing.

When your heart is surrendered, your mind is clear, your time is redeemed, and your life is examined—purpose becomes visible. Your steps become ordered. Your decisions become intentional. Your future becomes aligned with God’s design.

This is the kind of life Paul invites us into. A life not ruled by impulse or culture, but directed by the God who created you with purpose.

### **Reflection Question:**

- Am I living for myself, or am I submitting to the purpose and plans God has for me?

### **Purpose Challenge:**

Take five minutes today to sit in silence and ask God: “Lord, what do You want me to do today?” Then listen. Write down whatever comes to mind—names, ideas, promptings, steps—and commit to obeying at least one of them before the day ends.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, I lay down my plans, preferences, and desires. Align my heart with Your will. Show me what You want me to do—today, this week, and in this next season. Lead me with clarity and courage. I choose to live for You, and I trust that Your purpose for my life is good. Amen.

