

## “Fasting and Finding Strength,” by Dr. Chris Jones

Fasting and Faith go hand in hand. They are at the root of our active self-sacrifice to grow spiritually, and to better understand our place in the world family.

Right now, millions of people around the world are fasting. For Christians, Lent is a special season of prayer, reflection, and sacrifice. During these 40 days leading up to Easter, many give up certain foods, habits, or luxuries to grow closer to God.

But Christians are not alone in this practice. Our Muslim neighbors have now begun Ramadan, a holy month of fasting from sunrise to sunset. Although Passover for Jews does not begin until April, many Jewish people are preparing for this sacred festival, a time that includes fasting and reflection. Hindus, Buddhists, and others also fast as part of their faith.

**Fasting is a powerful way to remind ourselves of what truly matters.** When we set aside things we normally enjoy—whether it’s food, sweets, social media, or entertainment—we make more room for prayer, gratitude, and caring for others. Instead of focusing on what we lack, we focus on God and the people around us.

Former Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd, in his book *The Power of Prayer and Fasting*, described fasting as an essential spiritual discipline that can bring clarity, renewal, and a deeper connection to God. Floyd, a longtime advocate for fasting, encouraged believers to embrace it not just as a personal sacrifice but as a way to seek God’s direction in their lives and communities. His teachings emphasize that fasting is about more than just giving up food—it is about surrendering to God and allowing Him to work in us in new and powerful ways.

In Arkansas, we also have deep tradition of fasting among our leaders. The late Dale Bumpers, a former governor and U.S. senator, known for his deep moral convictions, often reflected on fasting as a means of spiritual renewal. Many Arkansans—whether they’re leaders, everyday citizens, or community members—have embraced fasting to seek guidance, grow spiritually, and strengthen their faith.

As an ordained minister, I too am fasting this Lent. Fasting is not always easy, but it helps me reflect on my purpose and how I can better serve others. Beyond personal growth, fasting has

benefits for our communities. When we fast, we can use the time and resources we would normally spend on food or entertainment to help those in need. Many people donate money saved from fasting to feed the hungry or support charities. Fasting also teaches patience, self-control, and empathy—qualities that bring us closer together.

One of the most important lessons of fasting: We are all connected. No matter our background, race, or beliefs, we all experience hunger, struggle, and the need for spiritual renewal. That's why I encourage us to not only fast for ourselves but to pray and fast for one another. Let's pray for our families, our communities, and even those who may seem different from us. Imagine the good that could come if we all lifted each other up in prayer, love, and support!

This Lent and Ramadan, I invite you to join me in fasting, praying, and finding new ways to serve. It does not need to be for religious reasons, just join.

Whether through giving up something small or making time to help someone in need, every act of faith makes a difference. Let's use this season to grow, give, and love—together.

Share your thoughts and comments at [chrisjoneslistens@gmail.com](mailto:chrisjoneslistens@gmail.com).