

Our Lenten Effort

Our Lenten effort rests on Christ's teaching in Matt. 6 - **Charity, Prayer, and Fasting**. At the heart is our focus on God (prayer) and serving others (charity). Fasting is simply a tool of self-discipline and self-moderation.

We should fast privately and never legalistically. Legalistic fasting focuses on the food itself and quickly becomes judgmental. Healthy self-discipline opens the door for us to focus on **God** and serve our **neighbor**.

In monasteries, the fast is very strict, and involves complex details about various foods, and if, when, & how food should be cooked. A general fasting rule for Orthodox Christians "in the world" is:

*Reduce the frequency & amount of food eaten
Abstain from meat, and abstain from or reduce dairy & alcohol*

If you are served food by someone else, always "EAT WHATEVER IS SET BEFORE YOU," and then resume your fast later. (Luke 10:8; 1 Cor. 10:27)

It is just as important to fast from shallow entertainment and electronics as from food.

With a basic self-discipline in place, we can then focus on **God** and **neighbor**, the real purpose of the season:

Read your Bible

Come to Lenten services

Give to a charity

Visit the sick

Forgive, forgive, forgive

Truly repent of a pesky sin

Invite someone to church

Pray with your family

Welcome a newcomer

Reconcile with someone

And take time to listen

