

This week you will:

- Do three or more one-hour movement and mindfulness sessions.
- Eat entirely plant-based foods for two days or more
- Do your 16-hour fast
- Prepare for the one-day fast
- Perform a one-day fast



Welcome to the PraXis Wellness Challenge Week Six: *The Mind*

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”  
[Romans 12:2]

Greek words for knowing, mentality, understanding, and even the heart will show up in English translations of the scripture simply as “mind.” In Romans and Ephesians the Greek word *nous* is translated into English as mind. For ancient mystics like St. Basil the Great, this word meant mind but also “attention”<sup>1</sup> and spiritual awareness. It is the highest faculty of human nature with which one “sees and comprehends God.”<sup>2</sup>

For the Eastern Church, a hard heart dulls the *nous*, while stillness, prayer, love, and self-discipline are “the four-horse chariot bearing the nous to heaven.”<sup>3</sup> Watchful (*neptic*) prayer, like the Jesus Prayer, steers the attention away from the distracting thoughts, and focuses it on the heart. This continuous act of drifting into distraction and returning the attention to the heart is the process of metanoia, a changing of the mind or heart: repentance. This process yields *catharsis*, a releasing of anguish, and *kenosis*, a self-emptying that purifies the heart.

Fasting awakens the nous to the physical cravings, what Paul called “the flesh,” that seems to govern us without our knowing. Movement brings our awareness away from our thoughts and into greater presence of the mind. At the same time, contemplative prayer allows us to connect the mind with the heart.

## **WEEK SIX THEME, SCRIPTURE, LECTIO DIVINA, AND YOGA FLOWS ARE HERE**

With last week’s recovery and adjustment period, you should now be prepared to head into the final stretch and take on the biggest challenge in the course, the one-day fast. For this week, is it less important to make progress on movement and mindfulness than it is to simply hold steady with your practice as it intersects with your one-day fast.

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<sup>1</sup> Letters 2, FC Vol. 13, p 7, Orthodox Psychotherapy, Hierotheos, p 138

<sup>2</sup> Philokalia, Vol. 4, p 181f

<sup>3</sup> St Thalassios, Philokalia, Vol. 2, p 308

## MOVEMENT

The movement challenge this week is to continue to work on maintaining a healthy, habituated movement practice. As we have said before, this can be participating in a PraXis session, in person, or [online](#).

This week if you are doing a movement session during your one-day fast, remember to take the intensity down, stay hydrated, and monitor your body. Do not take this as an opportunity to push yourself in a movement practice. Instead, take this as an opportunity to truly be mindful in your movement practice to see what impact, if any, the fast is having on your body during planned exercise.

## MINDFULNESS

Build in extra time for contemplation on the day of your one-day fast. Jesus and the Prophets fasted during important seasons of prayer, and this will be your best opportunity to follow closely in that spiritual practice. You will have another huge opportunity here to see what your body and your soul (*psyche*) are telling you when food is withdrawn.

If you feel up to a longer sit during your one-day fast, say, doubling your normal time, try it. But remember, like movement, this may put extra strain on you, so pay attention and do not exert yourself too much. The goal here for mindfulness is that the fast may make it easier, not harder, to pray. If that is the case, then try and sit for longer.

Observe what comes up without judgment. Let your thoughts, feelings, and sensations arise, recall your sacred word, and return to mental stillness. There is no need to journal or take “notes.” But your mindfulness session during your one-day fast is a good opportunity to get a general impression if anything has changed for you.

## FASTING

*“Preclinical studies consistently show the robust disease-modifying efficacy of intermittent fasting in animal models on a wide range of chronic disorders, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancers, and neurodegenerative brain diseases. Periodic flipping of the metabolic switch not only provides the ketones that are necessary to fuel cells during the fasting period but also elicits highly orchestrated systemic and cellular responses that carry over into the fed state to bolster mental and physical performance, as well as disease resistance.”*

– New England Journal of Medicine, 2019

*And after fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*

-Matthew 4:2

Welcome to the apex of the PraXis Wellness Challenge, the 24-hour fast. At this point, you should be well-versed in both scientific and spiritual reasons for fasting. This will be the greatest of your challenges. It can also be the most physically beneficial and spiritually fruitful exercise of this 8-week period.

The most important thing to keep in mind is *why* you are doing this challenge. This is a question only you can answer. The next most important thing is to keep the challenge in a healthy perspective. The fast is not for penance nor for pride. You are exploring a spiritual wellness practice. Go as far and as deep as you can. Challenge yourself but pay attention to what your body, soul, and God are telling you. That is the whole point. Listen. Obviously, you will tell yourself, “I want to eat something.” That is not the same as “stop this fast!” As thoughts arise, as urges swell up. Practice your mindfulness, acknowledge the sensations, and then give them time to pass on their own. Listen deeply and be slow to act. If you discern that you are repeatedly and consistently getting earnest indications to stop, do so without hesitation or regret.

Choose two days this week. One to prepare for the fast and one to fast. Stay busy. This could be in action through helping others, meditation, prayer, or journaling about your journey, or what you’re learning about yourself and your relationship with food. You will have a new lot of free time when you would normally be eating food. But do not plan a great deal of rigorous activity. Your movement sessions may be enough. Some people experience more, not less, energy during a fast. But don’t depend on it.

If you have a headache, it may be due to your body flushing out toxins. If you have trouble with blood sugar levels, this fast may not be for you. You can drink green tea for caffeine. It also works as an appetite suppressant. Be gentle and stay positive after the fast, and ease into eating. Try out some fruits and vegetables, then ease your way into eating a bigger meal.

Use the following [link for a step-by-step guide to the 24-hour fast: HERE](#).

This article has a lot of information in it that you do not need. But it is a good resource if you also want to look at variations to this and other fasts.

## Week 6 - The Mind

### Plant based, 16 hour fast, 1-3 day fast

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
<b>Stovetop Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal</b>  Like apple pie in oatmeal form	<b>Vegan Fall Harvest Salad</b>  With Kale and Pumpkin, brussel sprouts, pomegranate seeds and dijon mustard dressing	<b>Smoky Squash Chilli</b>  With quinoa, pinto and black beans, crushed fire roasted tomatoes and poblano pepper	<b>Green Juice (or store bought alternative)</b>  Green apples, celery, cucumber, kale, lemon & ginger

***Exagoreusis [the check-in]***

Check-in with Cornelius during your fasting period if you begin to have concerns.

Good luck and Godspeed be with you!

~ Maranatha

*“For to set the mind on the [cravings of] flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” [Romans, 8:6]*