

FASTING LIKE DANIEL

A GUIDE TO THE DANIEL FAST



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE BETTER:

AS YOU READ EACH PASSAGE, DO THE FOLLOWING:

ASK– God to connect with you in this moment. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to help you understand what this passage means for your life. Clear your mind of all distractions and simply focus on what God wants to accomplish in this moment.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. At first, read the whole passage while taking notes of the words and phrases that stick out to you. Next, read it a second time, pausing at the parts that stick out to you.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. What connections do you see at this point in your life? How might God be speaking to you through these words? Imagine you're living in the time of Jesus. What would be your reaction to this passage? What does it mean for you today?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what resonated with you in two ways: individually and with your group.

DAY 01



**FASTING (N):
REFRAINING FROM
PHYSICAL FOOD
FOR A SPIRITUAL
PURPOSE.**



DAY 01

Introduction to the Daniel Fast

What exactly makes you... you? This is a question that philosophers have wrestled with since the beginning of time. Sure, you have a body, but you are not just a body. Yes, you have a soul, but you are not just a soul. You have a mind, but you are not just emotions and thoughts. You are the sum of all of those things, flowing together in perfect harmony.

As your Creator, Jesus understood this. That's why He calls us to, "Love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Like the notes of a chord, every part of you works together to create something amazing — completely connected and completely custom. You are made up of mind, personality (heart), body (strength), and spirit.

Have you ever noticed how your mind, soul, heart, and body all work together? If your mental health suffers, so does your physical health. If your activity decreases, you'll notice your brain in a fog. If your spiritual health declines, then your emotions will vary.

Your mental, physical, and emotional health play a big part in your spiritual health as well. They're not just connected, they're interconnected. Your body, mind, and spirit are deeply intertwined. That means that we can experience spiritual breakthroughs through physical disciplines. If you want to feel better physically, mentally, and spiritually, then you're invited on a life-changing experience that will deeply impact your whole being. What is it? It's called a fast.

Simply put, fasting is refraining from physical food for a spiritual purpose.

Theologian Richard Foster put it this way: Fasting is the voluntary denial of an otherwise normal function for the sake of an intense spiritual activity. There is nothing wrong with normal life functions, but there are times when we must set them aside to concentrate. Fasting helps us see what controls us.

Believe it or not, there is a direct link between your stomach, your mind, and your spirit. Throughout the Bible, we see that refraining from food for a period of time can bring you into a richer, deeper, more powerful relationship with God.

In this study, we will examine a popular spiritual exercise known as the Daniel Fast. This fast is based on the Old Testament book of Daniel — which we will be studying in our daily devotionals.

Please don't think of this as a diet. The focus of a fast is not losing weight. This 21-Day fast is meant to tame our cravings, refresh our spirits, and grow our faith. Every day you will choose Jesus over doughnuts, pizza, and tacos.

I know that sounds like a big sacrifice, but think of it this way: You may be missing out on some of God's biggest breakthroughs in your life because you've never completely tapped into His Spirit's power!

I cannot wait to celebrate the renewal God brings to your life and our church over the next 21 days!

So what will the next three weeks look like for us?

THE FOCUS

Fasting is a spiritual discipline designed to connect us more deeply with God. Fasting involves giving up something physical (ie: comfort food) for the sake of something Spiritual (ie: a fresh filling of God's Spirit). Over the next 21 days, we will sacrifice some of our regular food intake and replace it with Bible reading, prayer, and journaling. The overall goal is to work up a greater appetite for God Himself!

THE FAST – WHAT'S ENCOURAGED

We'll be participating in a partial fast called "The Daniel Fast." During this time, we will limit our diet to eating only fruits and vegetables. This principle was pulled from the life of Daniel, who chose to fast while under great stress. The result was breakthrough after breakthrough. The roadmap for this plan comes from the first chapter of Daniel, where the young prophet says, "Please test your servants... Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink" (Daniel 1:12).

It won't just be Kale and Spinach. Although we'll eliminate some common things from our daily diet, there are grocery carts full of delicious options available for you.

Fruit: Fresh or frozen (low-glycemic fruits in particular) are encouraged. Low-glycemic fruits include berries, apples, peaches, grapefruit, cherries, and grapes. Canned fruit is also an option, but only if there is no added sugar, coloring, or other preservatives.

Vegetables: Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables are all allowed on the diet plan, as long as there is no added salt. You can eat these—and even potatoes—in abundance.

Whole Grains: Go easy on the processed varieties and focus on cooking unrefined whole grains such as amaranth, barley, brown rice, quinoa, millet, oats, and wheat.

Leavened bread, or breads made with yeast, are not allowed, but if you can find whole-grain breads and flatbreads made without yeast, those do fit within the parameters.

Legumes: Dried or canned varieties are both allowed, but canned versions shouldn't have any salt or other additives. Types of legumes include black beans, chickpeas, lentils, and other bean varieties. These can also be eaten in abundance.

Nuts & Seeds: All nuts and seeds are allowed, as long as they are raw or dry-roasted without salt.

THE FAST – WHAT'S DISCOURAGED

Meat & Eggs: Animal protein of any kind is not allowed during the three-week fasting plan, as meat is specifically avoided in the Book of Daniel. Instead, participants are encouraged to obtain protein from legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.

Dairy: Dairy is also not allowed on this diet, but you can substitute unprocessed or homemade non-dairy milks in recipes.

Processed Foods: Any food that is processed beyond packaging is pretty much off-limits on The Daniel Fast. This includes fried foods, many frozen products, and even vegan-friendly packaged foods. This meal plan is all about emphasizing whole, unprocessed foods, so you'll even need to ditch your veggie burgers, unless you can make one from-scratch with approved ingredients.

If you have any condition which might prohibit you from being a part of the Daniel Fast, there are other options for you to implement the same spiritual discipline. For example: Eliminate caffeine, sweets, or social media.

The details are not as important as the Spirit in which you participate. Fasting is not about legalism; it's about love. We are eating clean and sacrificing some of our favorite foods in order to help us grow more reliant on God. If it was easy, then we wouldn't need God to get us through it. That's the point of the fast. Your hunger should be a reminder to seek God's strength. Craving should trigger you to start praying.

Prayer Prompt: As you begin this time of prayer and fasting, ask God to show you the things that are taking up space in your life where you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, ask God for the strength to put those things aside for the next 3 weeks and fill you instead with God-honoring focus during the fast.

A good place to start is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

DAY 02

**FASTING IS NOT A
MEANS OF PURSUING
GOD'S BLESSINGS. IT'S
JUST ABOUT PURSUING
GOD.**

DAY 02

Why Do We Fast? It's An Expectation.

READ: Matthew 6:16-17

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

We often assume that fasting is reserved for the super-spiritual. We imagine Christians sitting atop a misty mountainside exchanging dialogue with an audible voice from heaven. Maybe that's true for some people, but it's certainly not for most. Fasting is not some exclusive right of passage for the devout, rather, it's a way of life for all disciples — you included.

In Matthew 16, Jesus kicks off his statement with a simple phrase. He begins, "When you fast..." He didn't say "If you fast..." Rather, He said, "WHEN you fast." According to Jesus, fasting is an expectation. It's a central part of our Christian lifestyle. It's just something that Christians do — not something he has to convince them to do.

Why does God want us to fast? Because it opens us up to what God has for us. When we push aside distractions, God meets us in our weakness and our hunger. Yes, it is very difficult to put aside food or any period of time. It requires devotion and discipline. However, there is a promise within this passage. Jesus concludes, "... your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." When you fast privately, God rewards you publicly.

Here is a word of warning though. Fasting isn't about getting something from God. Rather, It's about giving ourselves to God. Yes, there is a promise of reward. However, that reward may not have a bright red bow while boasting a big price tag. Your reward may be renewed energy, peace of mind, or greater intimacy with God. Those are all greater than money can purchase. Fasting isn't about forcing God to move on your behalf — it's about God transforming you.

Fasting is not a means of pursuing God's blessings. It's just about pursuing God. Period. End of sentence.

Journal Prompt: Make a list of those things you are most concerned about when it comes to fasting. Confess those things to God. Now make a list of things you hope to gain from this time of focusing on God's blessings and your thankfulness.

DAY 03

**“DANIEL WAS
DETERMINED NOT TO
DEFILE HIMSELF.”
– DANIEL 1:9**

DAY 03

Why Do We Fast? To Purify Ourselves.

READ: Daniel 1:1-17

The book of Daniel tells the story of Daniel (obviously) who was a charismatic seventeen-year-old leader from the lineage of King David. He and his friends were forced to live in Babylon because his city of Jerusalem was seized and enslaved. The people of Israel were forced into exile under the harsh dictatorship of Babylon. This kingdom was completely opposed to Daniel's faith. They sought vengeance and ignored mercy. They loved war and hated peace. They worshipped idols and disgraced the God of Israel.

In the first chapter, Daniel was recruited to work for the government of King Nebuchadnezzar because of his strength, knowledge, and handsome looks. (Seriously, look at verse five!) During his orientation ceremony, he was offered a buffet of junk food with an open bar. I am sure there was a chocolate fountain or two. Daniel realized that the food was completely contrary to the kosher commandments in Jewish Scripture. Thus, he politely asked to not partake. Daniel 1:9 elaborates, "Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king."

Fasting isn't just about food. You will probably never be offered unclean food that was blessed by a Babylonian goddess. However, culture is constantly trying to trick you into Babylonian behavior. You walk by a buffet of vices and choices every day. The spread is full of delightful-looking confections with dangerous consequences. Gossip is just a group-chat away. Vile videos are easily accessible. Selfishness is our culture's default setting. Culture is constantly encouraging you to "defile yourself" with addictive substances, the pursuit of prosperity, selfish ambitions, and, ultimately, finding purpose in all the wrong places.

Make the same choice as Daniel. Don't defile yourself with culture's confections. Swim against the cultural current. Respectfully reject anything that can come between you and God.

Journal Prompt: Make a list of common temptations around you. As you write each one, ask God to protect you from anything that defiles you and distracts you from God.

DAY 04

**FASTING IS NOT ABOUT
FOOD. IT'S ABOUT
FOCUS.**



DAY 04

Why Do We Fast? It Fixes Our Focus.

READ: Daniel 9:3

“As I prayed, I fasted and wore rough sackcloth, and I sprinkled myself with ashes.”

In Chapter 9, Daniel was in a dilemma. He was seeing vivid visions of terror and calamity coming upon his nation. For context, this takes place as the empire is being destroyed. It was undoubtedly terrifying and confusing. Seeing all the hurt and pain led the prophet to pray. The prayer in Daniel 9 provides us with a great model for how to pray during a crisis (Do you remember 2020?).

When Daniel was overwhelmed, he strived to fix his focus. How did he do it? With fasting! When we fast, it allows us to focus on God. It will help you focus on him more, which will change your perspectives and outlook. When you focus on what you cannot have, you will quickly lose sight of your primary focus — growing closer to Jesus. You need to get serious about your needs. It isn't just a whim or a casual thought. You need to let God see how important it is to you. Fasting isn't about food — it's about focus.

Fasting is powerful because it fixes our focus. Why? Fasting tells God you're serious about your prayer. Prayer is the petroleum behind your fast — let it fuel your fast. Without prayer, fasting is just a fad diet. Pray with expectation as you fast. God's deliverance may be on the other side of your dedication.

We see this throughout scripture. Jesus said some miracles could only happen through prayer and fasting, not by prayer alone. Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments. The Israelites fasted before they went into many of their major battles. Daniel fasted in order to receive guidance from God. Nehemiah fasted before he began a major building project. Jesus fasted in victory over temptation.

Prayer Prompt: Ask God to focus your prayer time this week and show you areas in your life where you may need a breakthrough. Thank him for his strength in your weakness and call on him for that extra measure of his grace to help you through this time.

DAY 05

**DO YOU WANT
TO BE HAPPY?
STAY HUNGRY.**



DAY 05

Why Do We Fast? It'll Bring Fulfillment.

I don't know about you, but there is a direct correlation between my emotions and my stomach. I am prone to "hanger." What is that, you ask? It's a portmanteau (basically where you smush two words together) of hunger and anger. When my stomach empties, my patience wanes. I get temperamental, grumpy, and start to spiral. Happiness? That's the last emotion on my list.

Fasting is all about replacing our physical hunger with spiritual hunger. There is a powerful passage that speaks to the outcome of spiritual hunger. No, it's not hanger. Rather, it's happiness. In Matthew 6:5, Jesus teaches, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

The greek word for "blessed" here is makarioi. It literally translates as "to make happy." Jesus is saying, "happy are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness." Jesus intentionally used the language of hunger and thirst in this passage. He is saying that we should crave the things of God like we crave bacon cheeseburgers.

If you want to be happy, you need to stay hungry. Not hungry for peanut butter or cookies. Rather, use this time of fasting to hunger after intimacy and closeness with God.

When your stomach grumbles, it's a trigger to seek God. Jesus used this language because he wants you to habitually seek righteousness the same way you do water after a long run. You need to make your spiritual health a habit. So what does it look like to routinely seek righteousness?

- Commit to praying — daily.
- Commit to reading scripture — daily.
- Commit to being involved in your community — constantly.

When you hunger after righteousness, you will be filled and fulfilled. Fulfillment is not found in a new Tesla, stacks of money, or even a circle of good friends. Fulfillment comes from a personal friendship with Jesus that is nourishing for your soul. Possessions, success, popularity, and money are enjoyable, you bet. However, they will always leave you desiring more. They're like junk food for your soul. Chasing fulfillment in anything other than God is like drinking salt water. You'll fill up, but you will never be filled.

Do you want to find fulfillment? Stay hungry.

Journal Prompt: What are 3 things you can do this week to strengthen your relationship with Jesus? Write them down and make a commitment.