



21 Days of Prayer and Fasting January 8-28, 2017

Christian Fasting - What is it?

Biblically, fasting is abstaining from food, drink, sleep or sex to focus on a period of spiritual growth. Specifically, we humbly deny something of the flesh to glorify God, enhance our spirit, and go deeper in our prayer life. Connecting to God and Disconnecting from the World.

Christian Fasting - Focus Deeper on God

Christian fasting isn't some kind of a "work" that's commanded by Christ or required by Scripture. However, that doesn't mean that fasting isn't recommended as a part of our spiritual growth. The Book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions ([Acts 13:4](#); [14:23](#)). Fasting and prayer are often linked together ([Luke 2:37](#); [5:33](#)). Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. However, the purpose of fasting is to take our eyes off the things of this world and instead focus on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God and to ourselves that we are serious about our relationship with Him. Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast. Anything you can temporarily give up in order to better focus on God can be considered a fast ([1 Corinthians 7:1-5](#)). Fasting should be limited to a set time, especially when the fasting is from food. Extended periods of time without eating are harmful to the body. Fasting is not intended to punish our flesh, but to focus on God.

Fasting should not be considered a "dieting method" either. We shouldn't fast to lose weight, but rather to gain deeper fellowship with God. Yes, anyone can fast. Some may not be able to fast from food (diabetics, for example), but everyone can temporarily give up something in order to focus on God. Even unplugging the television for a period of time can be an effective fast.

Yes, it's a good idea for believers to fast from time to time. Fasting is not required in Scripture, but it's highly recommended. The primary Biblical reason to fast is to develop a closer walk with God. By taking our eyes off the things of this world, we can focus better on Christ.

Daniel Fast Background and Guidelines

The Daniel Fast is a plant-based partial fast. It is based on the Prophet Daniel when he was under the rule of Babylonian kings for their personal service. Daniel recorded three occasions of fasting, though he likely fasted many more times since he was a man of God.

Daniel 10:2, 3 is where we find the model for the 21-day Daniel Fast. From this passage, guidelines have developed over the years by Christians who use this as a form of fasting.

No Pleasant Food: This would include breads, sugars and sweet foods.

No Meat: All animal products are restricted on the Daniel Fast. That includes meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products (milk, eggs, cheese, butter, etc.)

No Wine: This restriction, coupled with previous fasts where Daniel drank only water (which is typical for biblical fasting), is where today's Daniel Fast finds its roots for water only.

Spiritual Fasting: The Daniel Fast is a restriction of food for spiritual purposes. So the fast addresses not only the body, but also ones spirit and soul.

"In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Daniel 10:2, 3

One of the great things about the Daniel Fast is that you are not limited to any specific amount of food, but rather to the kinds of food you can eat. The Daniel Fast is mostly limited to fruits, vegetables and water that are sugar-free and chemical free.

Foods to include in your diet during the Daniel Fast:

All fruits. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are not limited to apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon.

All vegetables. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are not limited to artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

All whole grains, including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds, including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

All legumes. These can be canned or dried. Legumes include but are not limited to dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

All quality oils including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.

In Summary:

The most important thing concerning this time of prayer and fasting, is that we use it to connect with God and disconnect from the world.

Don't get caught up in the do's and don't of the fast.

Don't be legalistic.

Don't get discouraged if you are unable to follow the fast completely.

Our purpose in it all is to pursue and prioritize God, trusting that is going to impact, influence and determine the rest of 2017.

Special Note: if you have health issues, please be sure to contact your health professional for advice before committing to any fast, including the Daniel Fast.