

# The Daniel Fast

## WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is abstaining from something important to you (like food, drink or entertainment) for a period of time to direct your focus to God. There are several types of fasts including:

**Absolute fast** – no food or water

**Standard fast** – drinking water only

**Partial fast** – restricting certain foods (the Daniel fast falls in this category)

**Intermittent fast** – only eating during a limited window of time (1pm – 6pm)

**Soul fast** – abstaining from entertainment or activities like social media, shopping and watching television (good for those new to fasting or with health challenges that prevent them from a dietary fast)

## THE ORIGIN OF THE DANIEL FAST

In the bible, Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were captives brought to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar for education and military training because they were among the most talented and useful young men. The King offered them special choice food to eat. The King's special food included meat sacrificed to Babylonian gods. Daniel stood firm in his allegiance to God. He made a request to the King's guard that he and his friends only consume vegetables and water instead of the King's diet.

The guard was nervous about any health issues this would cause (he was afraid of what the King would do if there was a problem). But Daniel was persistent and asked for a 10 day test of the diet. At the

end of those 10 days, Daniel and his friends were physically and mentally superior compared to those who indulged in the King's food. The guard allowed Daniel and his friends to eat whole plant foods for the duration of their training. At the end of their training the King found them 10 times better than all others in every matter of wisdom and understanding (Daniel 1:1-20).

Daniel fasted again for 21 days abstaining from choice food, meat and wine as he sought the Lord in prayer (Daniel 10:2-3). From these passages we derive the 3 weeks of fasting and prayer and dietary guidelines.

Daniel 10:2-3. "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." These three weeks refer to the observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which take place during the first month of the year (Exodus 12:1-20).

Some also may cite the example in Daniel 1:8. However, in this verse Daniel did not want to eat the king's delicacies because it would have included food that was forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 11); to eat it would be defiling his body. Another reason would have been because the king's meats had probably been dedicated to the false Babylonian idols as was their practice. Daniel believed to do so would have been to acknowledge their idols as deities, against God's commandments.

## The Daniel Fast: Its Purpose

While the Daniel Fast is cleansing your body by omitting certain foods for a limited time, the deeper and true basis of intent is for spiritual connection. The purpose of Christian fasting is to seek a

more intimate relationship with God while ridding your physical body of unnatural, self-gratifying food and drink. Your focus is to be on God, not on the fleshly things of the world. Too often, the focus of fasting is on the lack of food. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God.

During the Daniel Fast you will want to concentrate on prayer, Bible study, and reflection. The Daniel Fast is a great way to enter into preparation for growing in the Lord.

### **The Daniel Fast: The Guidelines**

The basic guidelines for the Daniel Fast include eating:

fruits, nuts, vegetables, water only to drink (to flush out toxins) Some say natural fruit juices may be included if they contain no preservatives, sugars, etc., but even those juices should be very limited. Coffee and tea are not permitted.

The Daniel Fast should eliminate all meats, pastries, chips, breads, and fried food. Breads contain yeast, baking powder and so on; those are leavening agents and should be avoided. Leaven is symbolic of sin in certain scriptures (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

With these things listed, it is concluded that any food having artificial additives, chemicals, or that is processed should be totally avoided during the fast. Fruits and vegetables are the mainstay of the Daniel Fast and can be acceptably prepared in a variety of ways. Many fasting recipes and several cookbooks are designed for the Daniel Fast.

The Daniel Fast is a powerful spiritual discipline. With the coupling of fasting and prayer, one can open themselves to God's Holy Spirit. Having a sincere desire to seek God, you can come to Him with a contrite and repentant heart and He will minister to you in a powerful way. God's awesome power is transforming and you will know that with God, all things are possible.

It is important to note that the Bible nowhere commands believers to observe a Daniel fast. As a result, it is a matter of Christian freedom whether to observe a Daniel fast. At the same time, the Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial. The book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions (Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23). Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; Luke 5:33).

### **FOODS TO EAT ON THE DANIEL FAST**

Foods to include 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, Brussels 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, coconut, and sesame.

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

**Other**: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

## **FOODS TO AVOID ON THE DANIEL FAST**

All meat and animal products including but not limited to beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.

All dairy products including but not limited to milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.

All sweeteners including but not limited to sugar, raw sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, and cane juice.

All leavened bread including Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods.

All refined and processed food products including but not limited to artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

All deep fried foods including but not limited to potato chips, French fries, corn chips.

All solid fats including shortening, margarine, lard and foods high in fat.

Beverages including but not limited to carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

Remember to read the labels and choose fresh organic produce when available.

The Daniel Fast is a unique type of fast because you can actually eat, unlike a liquid fast where only water or juices are consumed. But just because you can have food doesn't mean the Daniel Fast is easy.

Fasting, in any form, is difficult because you're doing battle physically and spiritually. However, there are steps you can take to strengthen you for the fight. Following are ways you can prepare your heart, mind, and body for your 21-day Daniel Fast journey.

### **Spiritual Preparation**

#### 1. Pray

Begin praying for your fast even before it begins. Ask the Lord to reveal any unconfessed sin, unforgiveness, or rebellion. When He reveals it to you (and He will), confess your sin quickly and repent. Allow God to get your heart ready for what He wants to do in your life.

#### 2. Read verses on fasting.

Take time to study passages in the Bible that have to do with fasting. It will help you gain insight on people fasted, the ways God responded to their prayers, and what God requires of His people on a fast. Suggested passages are Isaiah 58, 2 Chron. 20:1-4, Ezra 8:21-23, Neh. 1:1-4, Est. 4:15-17, and Matt. 4:1-11).

#### 3. Buy a journal or use a notebook.

Use a journal or notebook for prayer requests, praises, and answers to prayer. Record what the Lord shows you through His Word.

#### 4. Write down prayer requests.

What do you want to see God do during your fast? Take time to identify your primary motivations for fasting. Record your prayer requests in your journal or on a separate piece of paper. Keep the list visible, and pray over those needs throughout your fast. Make sure you include requests for others and not just your own requests.

#### 5. Find a prayer partner.

It's important to have a trusted friend or family member who can be your prayer partner during your fast. Ideally, you should choose someone who is doing the fast with you, but it's certainly not a requirement. The key is to ask someone who will lift you up and keep you accountable.

### **Physical Preparation**

#### 1. Ease into the fast.

Start cutting back on restricted foods about a week before the fast begins. Reduce your intake of caffeine, meat, dairy, sugar, and processed foods. Doing so will help your body adjust to the Daniel Fast and also reduce the severity of any unpleasant side effects. Trust me, the temptation to eat everything you can't have on the fast will be strong, but splurging will only make the transition much more difficult. Also, it's a good idea to increase your water consumption before your fast begins.

## 2. Plan your meals for the first week.

The key to success with the food portion of the Daniel Fast is proper planning. It will save you time in the long run and help prevent the frustration of trying to decide at the last minute what to eat. Having a plan will also keep you from indulging in foods that don't fall within the Daniel Fast guidelines.

## 3. Make a grocery list for the first week.

Putting a list together before you go to the grocery store will make your shopping much more efficient. Again, I provide a grocery shopping list for each meal plan in my book, *The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast*.

## 4. Get your kitchen ready.

Make sure you have the proper appliances (ex. blender, cutting board, food processor, etc.) and utensils (ex. knives, spatula, garlic press, etc.) before embarking on this three-week adventure. When preparing recipes, having the tools you need will make everything much easier.

## 5. Prepare food ahead of time.

Look at the first week's recipes on your meal plan to find ways you can speed up food preparation and make it more efficient. For example, if you're making Taco Soup for dinner on Sunday, go ahead and prepare the Taco Seasoning on Saturday, so it's ready to go.

## 6. Cook and freeze meals.

Every time I do the Daniel Fast, I carve out a few hours the weekend before the fast begins and make a few meals, such as Baked Oatmeal, Black Bean Chili Bake, and Tuscan Soup. Then I freeze half of each recipe. That way I have food when I don't have time to cook or need a quick go-to meal. You'll really appreciate this step when you reach the third week of your fast!

Proper preparation is the key to making your fast successful. My book, *The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast*, provides the resources you need. It includes 21 daily devotions, 100+ Daniel Fast recipes, grocery shopping lists, meal plans, and more! You can find *The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast* in bookstores or online.

When you do your part in getting ready, God will do the rest!

But any physical challenges you may encounter on the Daniel Fast pale in comparison to the wonderful spiritual benefits you receive. You can expect to:

Hear God's voice more clearly— You're probably not going to hear the Lord speak audibly to you on a fast, although that would definitely be an amazing side effect! God typically chooses to communicate with us in a variety of other ways – through the Bible, other believers, prayer, and our circumstances. As you spend focused time in prayer and in God's Word on the Daniel Fast, you'll have greater understanding of truth as you're led by the Holy Spirit.

Become more spiritually sensitive – Fasting changes your

perspective and allows you to “see” things differently and more clearly. I believe it’s partly due to the fact that you’re hungry, which causes you to realize how dependent you are on the Lord for strength. When I’m on a fast, I’m usually more in tune with the struggles of people around me, which causes me to pray more fervently for them.

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Participate in the suffering of Christ – Jesus fasted from all food for 40 days and nights in the wilderness in preparation for his public ministry (Matt. 4:1-11). When you and I commit to a fast, even a partial fast, we’re choosing to undergo one of the spiritual

disciplines Jesus practiced while on Earth. By following Christ’s example, we are becoming more like Him, which leads to great joy and blessing. “Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world” (1 Peter 4:13 NLT).

Enjoy God’s favor – Even though the Bible doesn’t contain a direct command to fast, God’s Word indicates that fasting should be a regular discipline in the believer’s life. The Lord is pleased when His children seek Him wholeheartedly, and He promises to reward our efforts when we do.

Know God in a deeper way – The main goal of a three-week Daniel Fast is to grow closer to the Lord. As you devote yourself to studying the Bible and spending time in prayer, you’ll learn more about the Lord and His ways.

The Daniel Fast is a unique, life-changing experience. If you’ve never participated in the three-week journey, you can see why it’s such a powerful spiritual discipline. Focus on all the benefits of drawing closer to the Lord, and trust Him to help you with any unexpected trials along the way. Yes, doing the Daniel Fast is a sacrifice, but it’s one that will hopefully, draw you close to God and heal you physically and spiritually along the way.

# FAQ

If you are pregnant, a nursing mother or have health issues that prevent you from fasting, consult a doctor prior to starting the Daniel Fast.

## **Can I eat prepared foods?**

Yes! Be sure to read the labels to ensure there are no added sugars or chemicals.

## **Can I eat pasta?**

Yes! Read the label. It should be whole grain, vegetable or legume based with no eggs, additives or sugar. Eat pasta in moderation. Remember your diet during the fast should consist of mostly vegetables and fruits.

## **Can I eat bread?**

Whole wheat products are safe on the Daniel Fast, including bread. Make sure the bread isn't made with yeast and sugar.

## **Can I eat honey or agave?**

The Daniel Fast does not include added sugars like honey and agave.

## **Can I go out to eat?**

Absolutely! There are tons of options for dining out during the fast (Chipotle is one of my favorites). Try to check out the menu beforehand so you know what options are suitable for the Daniel Fast.

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