

Vision and Clarity of Purpose for the Year 2020



How to Do a Biblical Fast

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Biblical fasting can be defined as abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Simply going without food because it is not available or because of medical reasons is not biblical fasting. There must be a spiritual motivation to qualify a fast as Scriptural.

John Piper writes in his book *Hunger for God*: "Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God. Christian fasting is not only the spontaneous effect of superior satisfaction in God, it is also a chosen weapon against every force in the world that would take that satisfaction away."

Some Biblical Examples and Purposes of Fasting

- Jesus fasted to acknowledge His dependence and to gain spiritual strength through reliance on the Holy Spirit and God's Word. He did this before He began His public ministry (Luke 4:1,2).
- Nehemiah fasted for confession, repentance, and favor in the sight of the king to get permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4).
- David humbled himself for God to intervene because of injustice (Psalm 35:13). In 2 Samuel 12:17,23, he fasted for healing and miraculous intervention.
- Mordecai and the Jews fasted upon hearing news of Haman's wicked plot for their extermination (Esther 4:3).
- The Early Church fasted while worshiping and committing their ministry to the Lord. They also sought the Lord through fasting for guidance, confirmation and the appointment of elders (Acts 13:2; 14:23).
- Jesus expected His disciples to fast, but He did not command it (Matthew 6:16).

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Wrong Motivations in Fasting:

- To be seen by others (Matthew 6:18). "The critical issue is not whether people know you are fasting but whether you want them to know so that you can bask in their admiration."
- To be justified by God (Luke 18:12-14). There once were two men. One said, "I fast twice a week." The other said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Only one went down to his house justified.
- To be commended to God (1 Corinthians 8:8). Food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. Fasting does not cause us to "earn" something from God, but it helps us to be more receptive to what He wants to do in and through us.

Right Motivations for Fasting:

- Repentance.
- Spiritual strength against an enemy attack.
- To break demonic bondage. "This kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21, Holman Christian Standard Bible).
- To awaken a spiritual hunger for God that may be dulled because of a "desire for other things."
- To test and see what desires control us.
- To forfeit good things for the better and best.
- To express our ache for His return. Jesus said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about" (John 4:32, New International Version).
- To demonstrate our love and desire for God above all things (even His gifts).

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- To divide our bread with the poor. "To house the homeless poor, to loosen bonds of wickedness, to let the oppressed go free" (Isaiah 58:6,7).

There are three types of fasts commonly practiced by Christians:

1. **Partial fast** or "Daniel Fast"— Described in the book of Daniel where for three weeks he abstained only from "delicacies," meat and wine (Daniel 10:3).
2. **Supernatural fast** – These are total fasts--no food (solid or liquid) and no water. Paul went on an absolute fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus (Acts 9:9). Moses and Elijah engaged in a supernatural absolute fast of forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8). This kind of fast should be done with great care. Our bodies cannot go without water for more than three days.
3. **Complete fast** – Water or juice fasting, especially when fasting for an extended period. Juice fasts will provide you with more energy than water-only fasts and still lead you into the humbling experience of denying your desire for solid, chewable food.

Getting into a Fast: For new beginners in fasting, start slow. Progressive steps help our body to be accustomed to the drop-in food intake. You can start by fasting for one meal a day, one day a week or one week a month.

Before the Fast: Those planning for an extended fast (more than 14 days) should prepare mentally and physically by cutting down on food intake one week before the actual fast and take on a vegetarian diet to control cravings for food. You should reduce strong beverages like coffee, tea or coke as well. Drink plenty of water.

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During the Fast: Spend the time that you would normally use for meals to pray and seek the Lord. Keep a journal on what the Lord has been showing and speaking to you.

Continue to drink plenty of water. Apple or watermelon juices are great morale boosters. Sleep early--the first few days of the fast are usually the most challenging. Persevere through this period. Consult your doctor if you are unsure of any headaches or body reactions.

Ending the Fast: Breaking extended fasts should not be done abruptly. Start by taking small portions of food or liquids. Pace yourselves to return slowly to your normal diet in about a week.

The Daniel Fast: The Daniel Fast is based on verses from the Bible found in 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.

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

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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.

If you have a medical condition or are undergoing any medical treatments it is advisable to first consult your physician. You may also want to pray, consult a mature Christian or your pastor before fasting. Remember, fasting should be periodically and for limited days.

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

Body, Soul, Spirit Fast

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Body: 7 days of fruits, vegetables and water only (the Daniel Fast). The purpose of this fast is to clean out our system and train our physical bodies to eat and be healthier. The prayer focus during this period could be on healing of the body, mind, deliverance from addictions and habits etc.

Soul: 7 day fast from social media and potentially other forms of technology. The purpose of this fast is to re-focus the mind on Christ without outside influences. The emphasis during this period of time is to draw our attention to our purpose and calling through prayer, study and even fellowship. The time generally used on social media is to be re-allocated to other more healthy and useful endeavors.

Spirit: 7 day traditional fast of 6am-6pm. The purpose of this fast is to shut down the physical man and focus on feeding the spiritual man through prayer and God's word. This week's prayer focus will be the church, our families, and personal needs that we are believing the Lord for in 2020 etc.

Week One — Prayer for God's Blessing, Guidance, and Assurance; Sustainment and Security during times of change.

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Scriptures: Romans 8:28; Proverbs 19:21; 1 Cor. 9:26; Psalms 57:2; Exodus 9:16; Jeremiah 32:39; Psalm 91:1; Isaiah 26:3; Matthew 7:7; Psalm 55:22; Romans 12:12; Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19

Prayer Focus:

- the physical and spiritual condition of church members
- Healing and renewal for the sick, injured, and ailing
- the knowledge and guidance to move forward with our faith
- protection during our time of vulnerability and growth
- strength and fulfillment in marriages
- direction and patience for Searching Singles
- clarity and clear vision to with which to pursue the work of the Lord
- daily physical and spiritual sustenance
- financial provision to alleviate debt or financial oppression
- emotional and spiritual security as the Lord shows us new things
- strength and resources we need to live and guidance on how to use them

Week 2 - Prayer for our Spiritual Enlightenment and increase in our local church as we seek God's direction

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in Ministry; Financial security, Fiscal responsibility, and Wisdom to use resources wisely

Scriptures: Colossians 3:1-2; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 6:9-13; Ephesians 6:12; James 1:4; Isaiah 40:31; Romans 5:3-4; Psalms 92:12; Psalms 112:3; Proverbs 10:22; Philippians 4:19; Proverbs 11:28; Proverbs 28:20; Proverbs 3:9; Acts 20:35

Prayer focus:

- God's wisdom and guidance in the coming year.
- personal growth in our devotional walk with God.
- a more intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit
- God's purpose in your life to be revealed
- growth of all the church ministry groups
- total victory over every human weakness and ignorance that promotes poverty.
- for the Lord to usher us into an era of unfathomable supply from heaven.
- endowment of supernatural supply, contrary to the prevailing economic factors in the world or in my country.
- Pray that the Lord deliver us from the spirit of stinginess and unfaithfulness to the law of tithing
- Prayer against all those factors and forces that promote poverty in my family and the Church.

Week 3 - Prayer for Our Families and Community; Pray for the Leadership of our country; Pray for the opportunity to bring others to Christ

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Scriptures: Acts 13:37; Mark 16:15; Matt 5:15-16; Matt 28: 19-20; Romans 1:16; I Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 4:5; Mark 16:15; I Cor 1:17; Rom. 1:16; Mat. 28: 19-20; Mat. 9: 37-38

Prayer Focus:

- unity in the family and transparency among our church family
- the peace and fortification of those caring for family members who may be sick, injured, or unwell.
- God will protect marriages and the family from the enemy's desire to confuse and destroy.
- Pray for the future spouses of our single church members. That God would bring them together in His time to fulfill His purpose.
- for our single parents to be fortified, given the spiritual, emotional, and financial support they may need
- for a covering for our children as they move about in the world
- for unity within our community and safety for its inhabitants.
- for our community workers, first responders, school personnel, and administrators.
- for our clients, co-workers, employees, and/or employers.
- that our lives become a beacon to those who do not know Christ.
- we would be a Godly example to neighbors and coworkers
- for unity amongst races and cultures.
- for towns and cities to turn to God to solve problems of poverty, drug and alcohol addiction, alternative lifestyles, and violence.
- for those suffering with hate and anger towards those that are different from them.

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- for communities and families struggling with identity issues related to the LGBT agenda