

STARTFAST

There really is no better way to “reset your spiritual compass” and bring about refreshing in every area of our lives than through prayer and fasting. Whether you have done a season of prayer and fasting before, or if this is your first time, you can start where you are and experience what God has in store for you in a powerful way. As you read over this information, please consider how it applies to you and your personal circumstances and convictions. We pray that you will experience the presence and power of God in an extraordinary way as you commit yourself to a lifestyle of prayer and fasting.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS YOU AND EXPAND YOUR VISION FOR LIFE AS YOU SEEK HIM FIRST!

But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. Matthew 9:15

PRAYER

As you prepare it can be tempting to start thinking of a laundry list of prayers you’d love to see answered. But we really want to encourage you to keep this simple. Think about the top two or three things most pressing on your heart and zone in on those with God. Write these down in the space provided below, and be open to hearing what God wants to show you in those areas. The breakthroughs, miracles, and answers to your prayers will be by-products of drawing closer to Jesus. When praying, make your primary goal to know Jesus more and experience Him. Pray prayers of total surrender, and aim to glorify God with your life. Focus first on what’s right about Him, such as his goodness and His greatness, and see everything else through that filter. And most simply, make time to pray daily. Don’t overcomplicate this! Just talk to God. Have that place and time where you can seek Him every day. If you don’t plan to pray, you won’t. If you find it a challenge to disconnect from the busyness of your day, engaging in worship music is a great way to prepare your heart for prayer.

During this fast, I am praying and believing God for:

FASTING *IMPORTANT NOTE: Fasting requires reasonable precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician prior to beginning your fast, especially if you are taking any medication, have a chronic condition, or are pregnant or nursing a baby.*

As you prepare to fast, it is important to choose a fasting plan that works for you. While this section provides some general information about different types of fasts, as well as some suggestions on how to create your own fasting plan, it is important to mention that there is nothing more inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. These are simply guidelines and suggestions on different things you can do. Do not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. Keep the main thing the main thing, which is drawing closer to God. Remember, this is a time to disconnect enough from your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God. Here are a few tips to keep in mind before getting started:

1. START WHERE YOU ARE

We are all at different places in our walk with God. Likewise our jobs, daily schedules, and health conditions are all different and place various levels of demands on our energy. So most importantly, whether you’ve fasted before or this is your first time, start where you are. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but it’s very important to know your own body, know your options and, most importantly, seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. Remember, the goal of fasting is not just to do without food. The goal is to draw nearer to God.

2. CHOOSE YOUR TYPE OF FAST

While preparing for your fast, it is important to choose ahead of time what type of fast, or what combination, you will pursue. Not only will this help with making the necessary preparations to

implement your plan, but as you commit to a specific fast ahead of time and know how you’re going to do it, you will position yourself to finish strong. On the following pages we’ve listed some options and variations of fasts you can choose from. As you read over the information, please consider how it may or may not apply to your personal circumstances and convictions. You may choose to fast all twenty-one days. Or you may choose to fast several days out of the twenty-one days, such as three or four days a week throughout the twenty-one day period. Maybe you will do that and do three to seven consecutive days at the end. This is your personal decision and should be prayerfully considered as it applies to your circumstances.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FASTS

Prayer and fasting are not just about connecting to God but also about disconnecting from the world. Try to tune out some of the regular distractions from your day as much as possible. Replace that time with things that will nourish you spiritually.

DANIEL FAST*

The Daniel fast is a great model to follow and one that is extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline, and purification of the body and soul. It is probably one of the most commonly referred-to fasts; however, within the Daniel fast there is room for broad interpretation. In the book of Daniel we find two different times where the prophet Daniel fasted. Daniel 1 states that he only ate vegetables and water, and in Daniel 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, it does state that he ate no rich (or choice) foods, as well as no meat or wine. So based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or combinations of the two, constitute a Daniel fast. Again, it is important to mention that there is nothing inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. The foundation of the Daniel fast is fruits and vegetables. Some starchy vegetables and dairy could be included, but that depends on the individual. Your goal should be to seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do

JUICE FAST

A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices and water instead of solid food. Many people include whey protein in their liquid plan as well. This is one of the most popular and effective fasts. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids only, substituting one or two meals for liquids is a great alternative.

WATER FAST

A water-only fast is the normal fast referred to in the Bible. This is how Jesus and the New Testament church fasted. A water fast is just that—no eating of any food or drinking of any liquids except water. Periodic water fasts can be very beneficial, but extreme precautions should be taken. For some people it is hard to perform effectively at their jobs and have energy for their families while drinking only water.

We recommend consulting your physician first, and water fasting only for a day or two unless you can get away or your job allows you to really disconnect so you can give your best energy to the fast. Remember, when Jesus went on His forty-day fast, He went by Himself out into the wilderness. Having said all that, there are some people who can water fast and work, and they function fine without much fatigue and are able to work well. You are blessed if you are one of these people.

TOTAL FAST

(WE STRONGLY DISCOURAGE A TOTAL FAST)

A total fast is where nothing—neither liquid, solid food, nor even water—is consumed for a very short period of time. There are examples of this type of fast in the Bible. It was an Old Covenant type of fast associated with mourning, such as after David and Bathsheba's baby died. After that sad event David engaged in a total fast for a week (2 Samuel 12). Under the New Covenant, we do not fast to mourn or to seek forgiveness. God has already forgiven us, and we are commanded to celebrate Jesus because He is alive. Plus, complete abstinence of food and water can be very dangerous to our health. Attempting to go without water for any period of time can be extremely harmful to the body.

3. BEGIN & BREAK THE FAST WELL

Depending on the type of fast you choose, it is very important to prepare your body ahead of time before beginning the fast. Take a week or so to transition into your fast; otherwise, you could get sick. For example, if you would like to go on a fruits and vegetables or juice fast, start eliminating meat, white grains, and refined sugars from your diet the week before. Also start to cut back quite a bit on dairy products and some of your caffeine intake. The same principle applies to breaking your fast. **When your fast is over, add foods back in very gradually.**

Please don't break your fast with a greasy cheeseburger! Because your body is so cleansed and detoxified, you will most likely get sick if you do that. There are also several supplements you can take that will help support the detox process during your fast. Your health-food store can give you recommendations.

FASTING WHILE PREGNANT OR NURSING

Strict fasting while pregnant or nursing also is not recommended. If you are in this incredible season of life but would like to participate in the twenty-one-day plan, here are some great options for you to consider—with the approval of your physician:

- a modified Daniel fast including whole grains, legumes, whey protein, calcium, and iron supplements
- fasting sweets, desserts and red meat

If you are a pregnant or nursing mother, your priority is the health and the development of the baby God has entrusted you with. Make that your guideline and go from there. And please consult your doctor.

FASTING & EATING DISORDERS

If you have struggled with an eating disorder, this situation is a battle of the mind you *can win* through Christ (Philippians 4:13). Remember, fasting is a tool used to get closer to God, and it actually should keep us from being preoccupied with food. If your method of fasting is going to cause you to obsess about what you eat in any way, you will need to change either your approach or your mindset. If giving up food is a stumbling block to you, then consider fasting of television, reading (other than the Bible, of course), social media, or shopping. There are many distractions and ways that we use to stay in control that we could eliminate from our daily routine. We do these things to distract ourselves from the real issues hurting us. If you can identify such other things, maybe you can give those up instead of food. Remember that you are covered by God's grace. God will show you what to do. His "yoke is easy" and His "burden is light" (Matt 11:30). His way will bring rest to your soul.

FINAL FASTING TIPS

Here are some other ideas that can help make your fasting experience more pleasant and helpful:

~ As you select your type of fast, make a fasting calendar that fits your plan. Determine what each day and week will look like.

~ Keep your fridge and pantry stocked with the items you need. Being unprepared to fast sets you up to give into temptation. Choose well when selecting products, stick to raw food as much as you can, and limit artificial ingredients.

~ Make it a priority to attend church during your fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult.

~ If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it.

*DANIEL FAST FOOD ITEMS

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

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, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

WHOLE GRAINS - 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

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

WATER - Spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.