

Thoughts about Fasting & Daniel's Fast

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In the Bible fasting is not an option. It's a given. Matthew 6:17 doesn't say, "If you fast," but rather "When you fast." Fasting has always been part of the lifestyle of believers, just like praying and studying the Bible.

However, is fasting just about denying oneself food or some other type of pleasure? No. It's much more!

A fast, without being combined with extra time in the Word and seeking God in prayer is more like dieting! And the biblical fast is not about dieting.

Referring to the outward type of fasting the hypocrites practiced, one Bible commentator writes, "Do we not often [even today] feel that there is something meritorious in the very inconveniences which we suffer in our acts of self denial? [However]...the pain and inconvenience which we may endure by the most rigid fasting are not meritorious in the sight of God. They are not that at which he aims by the appointment of fasting. He aims at justice, truth, benevolence, holiness (see Isa. 58:6-7); and he esteems the act of fasting to be of value only as it will be the means of leading us to reflect on our faults, and to amend our lives" (Albert Barnes, Notes on Bible, e-sword).

It's important to remember that we can't earn God's blessing or answers by prayer and fasting any more than we can earn our own Salvation. Fasting doesn't substitute for obedience or personal surrender. However it is a means of cleansing the heart of distractions and helping us have a more receptive frame of mind to what God wants to do in our life and through our prayers. And we are promised, "To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth" (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 59).

In the book *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, author Wesley Duewel writes: "The great leaders of the Reformation, in their spiritual warfare to restore purity to the church, naturally made great use of the biblical means of fasting. Martin Luther not only maintained the spiritual discipline of fasting one day a week but additionally fasted so often along with his three hours of daily prayer that he was often criticized for fasting too much. But he blessed the whole church and impacted the world for God by his prayers, fasting, and holy boldness. ... John Calvin was called an inveterate (habitual) faster—and lived to see God's power sweep Geneva. The Moravians fasted, as did the Hussites, Waldensians, Huguenots, and Scottish Covenanters. Except for prevailing prayer (that included fasting), we would have had no Reformation and no great awakenings over the centuries" (p. 181).

Ellen White has written a number of reasons why and when we should consider fasting. Consider the following:

- We should fast when searching out essential truths so our understanding is clear!¹
- We should fast when seeking heavenly wisdom that God has promised!²
- We should fast when seeking God’s direction in making important plans.³
- We should fast when dedicating our talents to God’s service.⁴
- We should fast when requesting God’s help in crisis.⁵
- We should fast with contending with demonic oppression.⁶
- We should fast when seeking God for more laborers for the harvest.⁷
- We should fast for unity among church members.⁸
- We should fast when seeking heart cleansing and spiritual renewal.⁹
- We should fast when seeking to overcome spiritual temptation.¹⁰
- We should fast when seeking to develop an appetite for plain food.¹¹
- We should fast when seeking to conquer disease (for a meal or two).¹²

In addition to fasting when specific problems or issues arise, I think there is also *an advance fasting* we should consider. This is what Christ did in the wilderness for 40 days *before* He started His ministry. This is what we should do *before* we make big decisions, or *before* we go forward in our work.

Prayer and fasting should go hand and hand! Prayer is the means by which we grasp the invisible things of God while fasting is the means by which we let loose and cast away the visible things that we are prone to depend upon. Ultimately, the goal of true fasting should be the fulfillment of Isaiah 58. This is the kind of fast that God is calling us to.

“The true fast is no mere formal service. The Scripture describes the fast that God has chosen, – ‘to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke;’ to ‘draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.’ Isaiah 58:6,10. Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew’s feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man.”¹³

The Daniel’s Fast & More Specifics

The Daniel Fast is based upon the prophet Daniel’s fasting experiences as recorded in the Bible. While we don’t know Daniel’s complete menu, we are told a few things. In Daniel 1, Daniel chose not to eat the royal food that he was being served and ate only vegetables and drank water. Another time (in Daniel 10:2-3) he deprived himself of choice food, meat, and wine as he sought the Lord in prayer. Most commentaries believe “choice food” would have been bread and sweets.

You will find some variation in the specific guidelines for the modern-day Daniel Fast, in what different people think you should or should not eat. **But our word of advice is, don't stress about the details. Just keep it simple.**

The intention of today's Daniel Fast is not to duplicate exactly what Daniel did but the spirit in which he did it. Daniel's passion for the Lord caused him to hunger and thirst more for spiritual food than for physical food, which should be the desire of anyone choosing to participate in this type of fast.

However, just to help you out, here's some more info on the fast and how some people would describe it and the foods to eat and foods to avoid.¹⁴

The Daniel Fast Guidelines

Try not to get too hung up on what you should and shouldn't eat. Remember, the most important part of the fast is that you deny yourself physically so that you may seek the Lord in prayer and grow closer to Him. Your particular fast may look a little different than someone else's, but that's ok. Some people may need to be stricter than others in their food choices so that their fast is a sacrifice for them. These food guidelines are meant to be just that – a guide. They are given to help you create boundaries for your fast.

The Modern day Daniel Fast Food List

- **All fruit** – fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.
- **All vegetables** – fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.
- **All whole grains** – amaranth, barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa, millet, and whole wheat.
- **All nuts & seeds** – almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds; unsweetened almond milk. Nut butters are also included.
- **All legumes** – canned or dried; black beans, black eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, and split peas.
- **All quality oils** – avocado, coconut, grape seed, olive, peanut, sesame, and walnut.
- **Beverages** - distilled water, filtered water, and spring water.
- **Other** – unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, or soy milk; herbs, spices, salt, unsweetened coconut flakes, seasonings, Bragg's Liquid Aminos, soy products, and tofu.

Foods to Avoid on the Daniel Fast

- **All meat & animal products**
- **All dairy products** – butter, cheese, cream, eggs, and milk.
- **All sweeteners** – agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, cane juice, honey, molasses, raw sugar, syrups, stevia, and sugar.

- **All leavened bread & yeast** – baked goods and Ezekiel bread (if it contains yeast and honey).
- **All refined & processed food products** – artificial flavorings, chemicals, food additives, preservatives, white flour, and white rice.
- **All deep-fried foods** – corn chips, French fries, and potato chips.
- **All solid fats** – margarine, shortening, etc.
- **Beverages** – carbonated drinks, coffee, energy drinks, herbal tea, and tea

For more inspiration on fasting, I recommend the book *The Daniels Fast for Spiritual Breakthrough* by Elmer L. Towns. Again though, remember that fasting for more effective prayer and spiritual breakthrough is not about *mastering a method* but about having a change of heart. Only as we listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings and allow Him to lead us into deeper surrender will our fasting truly be effective.

Hope this is a blessing as we continue forward on our knees!

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¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 187.

² *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 188.

³ *Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 364.

⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 134.

⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 517,518.

⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 431.

⁷ Letter 26, 1883, quoted in *Adventist Review*, Mar. 27, 1980, p. 8.

⁸ Letter 98, 1902, quoted in *Adventist Review*, Mar. 27, 1980, p. 8.

⁹ *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.

¹⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 202.

¹¹ *Counsels on Health*, p. 148; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 190; and G. D. Strunk, "Fasting," *Canadian Adventist Messenger*, vol. 27, No. 24 (Dec. 21, 1978), p. 5.

¹² *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189.

¹³ *Desire of Ages*, p. 278

¹⁴ Guidelines from: <http://www.ultimatedanielfast.com>