

21

DAYS OF
FASTING + PRAYER

EATING PLAN



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:

The 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. Just remember: find your personal Fast Zone.

When most people start fasting, there is typically some level of discomfort. However, it is possible to get used to the fasting routine pretty quickly. Quite simply, you must learn to fast in a way that works for you. While any true fast does involve abstinence from food or at least certain types of food, typically, different fasting combinations work better for different people. The goal to having a successful fast is all about finding what we like to call your Fast Zone, and that is different for everybody and can change depending on the season you are in.

The best way to describe your Fast Zone is that it's the place where you feel light and spiritually in tune. Your mind is easily focused on God and spiritual things. You have an increased spiritual energy — you can feel the fast working. Just like runners know what their target heart rate is to see the benefits of their physical training, the Fast Zone is similar in a spiritual sense.

Finding Your Fast Zone

Finding your Fast Zone helps you choose both the type and length of fast. Let's say you choose to go on a Daniel fast (only fruits and vegetables). Should you eat beans? If you can eat beans and stay in your Fast Zone, go ahead. But for some people eating beans takes them out of the zone. Should you eat peanut butter? Probably not. Peanut butter is more of an indulgence, and not many people can stay in a Fast Zone while enjoying indulgences.

Should you completely cut out caffeine? It depends. The great thing is, when you fast, your body automatically craves less caffeine. If you can stay in your Fast Zone with a little caffeine, great. If you are going on a longer fast and want to cut it out of your diet completely, that's great too. But ease yourself off and make it your goal to be completely caffeine free about two-thirds of the way into your fast.

If you drink coffee regularly, one of the worst mistakes you can make is to fast for one to three days and cut caffeine out abruptly and completely. Please don't do that or you will spend this time grumpy and in withdrawal instead of enjoying God's presence. Mixing things up a bit during a fast is what typically works best for people. For example, do a fruits and vegetables fast for a week. Then do all liquids for a while. Maybe even mix in a few days of only water if you think you are ready for that. Then go back to fruits and vegetables for a few days.

There isn't one approach that works the same for everyone. Follow the Holy Spirit, mix it up, find what works for you, and stay in your Fast Zone! Some people can't stay in a Fast Zone eating any type of solid food, so they prefer all liquids.

With today's protein drinks and juicing machines, it is so easy to get a healthy dose of all your nutritional needs even while taking in only liquids. Certain people can't do anything other than drink only water. If they eat a salad or drink a glass of juice, they get out of their zone. Or if they allow themselves to eat cantaloupe, they will end up eating twenty cantaloupes a day.

The goal is to stay in your fast zone!

Grocery List

Foods to include in your diet during the Daniel Fast:

All fruits: These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned (watch for added sugar). Apples, Coconuts, Limes, Pineapples, Apricots, Cranberries, Mangoes, Plums, Avocados, Dates, Melons, Prunes, Bananas, Figs, Mulberry, Raisins, Berries, Grapefruit, Nectarines, Raspberries, Blackberries, Grapes, Oranges, Etc.

All Vegetables: These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned (watch salt content). Artichokes, Collard greens, Mustard greens, Sprouts, Asparagus, Corn, Okra, Squashes, Beets, Cucumbers, Onions, Spinach, Plantains, Sweet potatoes, Etc.

Legumes:

Dried beans, Black eyed peas, Black beans, Green beans, Lentils, Cannellini, Green peas, Lupines, Pinto beans, Kidney beans, Split peas, Lentils, Peas, Peanuts (Only Natural Peanut Butter), Etc.

Seeds:

All nuts (raw, unsalted) ,Cashews, Sesame, Sprouts, Walnuts, Almonds, Ground flax , Sunflower, Natural Almond Butter

Whole Grains:

Whole wheat, Millet, Oats, Brown rice , Quinoa, Rolled Oats, Muesli, Plain Oatmeal- not instant, Whole wheat pasta, Barley, Whole wheat tortillas, Grits (no butter), Plain Rice cakes.

Liquids:

Water (spring, distilled, filtered)
Herbal (caffeine free) Tea
Unsweetened Soy Milk
Unsweetened Almond Milk
100% Fruit/Vegetable Juice (no added sugar)

Other:

Tofu
Small amounts of Ezekiel Bread
Soy products
Small amounts of Olive Oil
Herbs
Spices (read the label to be sure there are no added sugars)
Small amounts of Honey
Small amounts of Salt

Foods to Avoid

Foods to avoid on the Daniel Fast:

All animal products including all meat, poultry, fish...

White rice

White bread

All deep fried foods

Caffeine

Coffee (including decaf b/c contains small amount of caffeine)

Carbonated beverages

Energy drinks

Refined foods

Processed foods

Food additives

Refined sugar

Sugar substitutes

Raw sugar

Syrups

Molasses

Cane juice

White flour

Margarine

Shortening

High fat products

Butter

All leavened breads

Baked goods

All dairy

Milk

Cheese

Yogurt

Cream

Eggs

Alcohol

Mayonnaise

Granola Bars (unless they are unsweetened and entirely whole grain)

Frequently Asked Questions

What about prepared foods?

Read the labels of all prepared foods. Remember the Daniel Fast is sugar - free and chemical free. So, if you use any canned fruits, vegetables, packaged foods, or prepared sauces you must read the label to be aware about just what is in there.

What about pasta?

Make sure the label says whole grain pasta with no additives (watch for sugar). Whole grain pasta offers 7 grams of protein per serving (3/4 cup of dried pasta).

I know it says raw, unsalted nuts, but what about roasted nuts?

The goal would be to stick to raw, unsalted nuts. But these are harder to find so in a pinch just make sure you get plain roasted, unsalted nuts with no preservatives.

How do I get enough protein in my diet while on the fast?

The following are protein- rich foods that are allowed on the Daniel Fast- almonds, sunflower seeds, lentils, quinoa, brown rice, split peas, whole grains, and tofu.

What kind of peanut butter is allowed?

A natural peanut butter with no additives-watch for sugars including molasses. Smucker's creamy natural peanut butter has nothing but peanuts in it.

What about popcorn?

Corn is listed in the vegetables to eat list. You can use a pot on the stove-here is a recipe.

- 1) Put two tbsp. of olive oil in the bottom of a large pot.
- 2) Add enough popcorn to cover the bottom of the pan.
- 3) Turn heat to medium high. Look for the first popcorn kernel to pop.
- 4) Put the lid on the pot. Using potholders shake the pot over the burner.
- 5) Continue shaking until you no longer hear kernels popping. Remove from heat.

How can I identify whole grain foods?

Typically if the ingredient lists "whole wheat", "rolled oats", or "whole corn" as the first ingredient, the product is a whole grain food item. Another way to identify whole grains in the foods you eat is to look in the nutritional facts information and check if the food item contains dietary fiber. If it contains a significant amount, it most likely contains whole grains. "Wheat flour" is not a whole grain and therefore does not indicate a whole grain product.

What about salad dressing?

Olive oil and lemon, lime, vinaigrettes with no additives, or vegan dressings are an option.

Do I need to eat organic foods while on the fast?

No, but if you are able to eat organic- that is a great option!

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I go out to eat?

Well, we think you can go anywhere and order cautiously, asking lots of questions to the wait staff, knowing ahead of time that you may be ordering a salad with olive oil and a baked potato with no extras.

What about bread?

We are recommending the Ezekiel bread found in the freezer section of your grocery/health food store.

How much can I eat?

As long as they are the appropriate foods, we are recommending eating until satisfied with no limits.

Fasting While Nursing Or Pregnant

Strict fasting while pregnant or nursing 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 and desserts
- fasting red meat
- fasting certain diversions (television shows, movies, social media — such as Facebook/Twitter, video games, and so on)

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 And 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.

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.

To keep your energy up throughout the day, it's important to eat or drink every two and a half to three hours. If you go longer than that, you can experience an energy lull and be tempted to over-stuff yourself at your next meal. Even if you're fasting on fruits and vegetables, over-stuffing is never a smart thing to do.

It is very important to drink lots of water while fasting. Drinking about one hundred ounces of water per day will help to support your critical liver function. The liver is the filter for the body, so when you don't drink enough water, the liver doesn't function at its highest capacity.

Select your food items wisely. The key is to prepare a plan ahead of the fast, to not get legalistic about it, and to choose menu items well. For example, if you prefer dressing on your salads, choose a healthy, organic option with natural ingredients— and don't pour a gallon of it on your plate.

If you're drinking fruit juices, try to go as natural as possible, and don't drink ones heavily processed and laden with sugar. Remember to not let food become the focus of your fast, but make wise eating choices.

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 online church during your twenty - one - day fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult. NCA has several events and gatherings happening online every day of the week. Stay connected! (NCAMADISON.COM/EVENTS)
- 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.