

21 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

A January Reset

WHY WE FAST

For thousands of years, God's people have fasted as a way of **humbling themselves** before Him. Biblical fasting is the practice of voluntarily denying ourselves food (or other legitimate comforts) in order to **seek God with greater focus and dependence**.

Fasting is not about earning God's attention or manipulating His response. It is about **re-aligning our hearts** with Him.

Jesus assumed His followers would fast. In the Sermon on the Mount, He said "*when you fast...*" - not "*if you fast*" - and He warned against doing it for show (Matt 6:16-18). Fasting is meant to be quiet, sincere, and God-focused.

Each January, Grace United begins the year with **21 days of prayer and fasting** as a spiritual reset—placing God first, clarifying our desires, and re-ordering our lives around His presence.

WHAT FASTING IS — AND IS NOT

Fasting is:

- A biblical way to humble ourselves before God
- A tool for spiritual focus and attentiveness
- A discipline that exposes what we depend on
- A way to quiet distractions so we can hear God more clearly

Fasting is not:

- A hunger strike against God
- A way to prove spiritual maturity
- A competition or comparison
- A guarantee that God will answer prayers the way we want

Isaiah 58 reminds us that God rejects fasting that is merely external. If fasting does not lead us toward repentance, justice, generosity, and love for others, we have missed its purpose.

God is far more interested in a **softened heart** than an empty stomach.

WHY FAST AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR?

January is a natural moment of reset.

We fast at the beginning of the year because:

- We want **God to shape our desires** before the year shapes us
- We want to submit our plans, goals, and expectations to Him
- We want to begin the year **dependent, not self-sufficient**

Fasting helps us confront the subtle ways comfort, consumption, and control creep into our lives. It reminds us that *“man does not live on bread alone.”*

TYPES OF FASTS

(Choose One That Fits Your Season)

Not everyone fasts the same way.

The goal is **not equal sacrifice, but equal devotion**.

1. Complete Fast

- No food; water only
- Usually short-term (24 hours or a few days)
- Biblical examples include Jesus and Esther

This is best for those with prior fasting experience and no medical limitations.

2. Daniel / Partial Fast

- Simple, whole foods
- Typically vegetables, fruits, and water
- No meat, sweets, rich foods, or alcohol

This fast emphasizes simplicity over indulgence and works well for extended periods like 21 days.

3. Selective Food Fast

This is one of the most practical fasts for our cultural context.

Examples include removing:

- Sugar
- Flour
- Alcohol
- Ultra-processed or comfort foods

You still eat - but intentionally and simply. This fast targets modern dependencies and trains discipline without requiring complete abstinence.

4. Meal-Based Fast

- Skipping one meal per day
- Sunrise-to-sunset fasting
- One or more full fasting days each week

This is a great option for beginners or those with demanding schedules.

5. Distraction or Pleasure Fast

- Social media
- Streaming / entertainment
- Gaming
- Non-essential screen time

While not a traditional food fast, this kind of fast removes significant distractions and can dramatically increase spiritual attentiveness.

6. Corporate Unity Fast

During our 21 days, we are **fasting together**, even if we are **not fasting the same way**. What matters is shared focus, prayer, and humility - not uniform practice.

HOW TO APPROACH THE FAST

During the fast:

- Set aside **intentional time for prayer** and Scripture
- Use the church's **daily devotional** as your guide
- Begin with repentance and openness before God
- Write down insights, prayers, or promptings you sense

Fasting lowers the "noise" in our lives and helps us recognize God's voice more clearly.

HEALTH & WISDOM

If you have medical conditions, are pregnant, or take medications that require food, do not attempt a complete fast without **medical guidance**.

There is no spiritual value in harming your body.
Wisdom and humility always honor God.

IF YOU STRUGGLE OR FALL SHORT

Fasting is a discipline - it takes **practice**.

If you miss a day, eat something you planned not to, or struggle to stay focused:

- Do not quit
- Do not feel ashamed
- Simply return to the fast

God honors sincerity, **not perfection**.

A FINAL WORD

Fasting is not about deprivation - it's about **desire**.

As we begin this year together, may our hunger for God outweigh every other appetite. May these 21 days reset our hearts, renew our focus, and remind us that He alone is our source.

RESOURCES

1. Daily Devotionals – join us on our app or website.
2. Fasting Food Guides – many faithful guides are found on the web.
(Example: www.ultimatedanielfast.com)
3. Join us as we pray together daily during this time by accessing our Zoom link.