

Guidelines for a Daniel Fast

As you consider the potential for prayer with fasting, there are multiple methods for fasting. The following are guidelines one pastor shares with his church:

One meal each day—The fast is not about only giving up food, but also includes praying during mealtime. Jesus said, *“Could you not watch with me one hour?”* (Matthew 26:40). It takes about an hour to prepare a meal, travel to a restaurant, or get ready to eat. This is a perfect opportunity to pray. Those who work in hot, exhausting jobs cannot fast completely because they need their strength and stamina for physical exertion. However, they can sacrifice one meal a day for the Lord.

Two meals each day—Some people can pray for two hours each day, sacrificing two meals to the Lord.

Eat only veggies—The Daniel Fast involves giving up meats, desserts, and snacks, eating only the food that Daniel most likely ate. While the fast doesn’t give extra time to pray, it is a commitment of the heart that, when joined with prayer, moves the heart of God.

Give up television—Secular people might laugh at “fasting television” or “sacrificing television,” but it is a commitment to God to place loyalty to Christ first above all else. This is a spiritual choice in response to Christ, who promises, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33).

Give up sports—Giving up bowling league, golfing, fishing, jogging, or other activities for a season (such as 40 days) to pray during that time is a choice. It places spiritual exercise above physical exercise. *“Bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable for all things”* (1Timothy 4:8).

Give up pleasure reading—Beyond what you must read for your work or preparing for teaching the Word of God, pleasure reading could be turned into prayer time. You might also consider setting aside time you read the daily news.

Restrict mobile phone use and text messaging—While some of these communication devices are necessary, they are serious time robbers that could be placed aside for praying.

Use of devices for music, etc.—Some people have the opportunity to restrict their genre to Christian music only.

Facebook and other social media—These activities can consume a significant amount of time. Part of a fast could be to cease social media and use the time for prayer and intercession.

Other—There may be something that the Holy Spirit brings to mind that you could place aside for a season while you focus on more prayer.

Guidelines for a Daniel Fast from Food

The Daniel Fast from food is for the body, soul, and spirit. While some may want to consider alternative methods for expressing self-discipline for spiritual purposes, the following will assist those who wish to participate in a Daniel Fast by abstaining from food.

The Bible teaches us that we are a spirit, we have a soul, and we live in a body. The Daniel Fast affects all three parts of us as we enter a period of focused prayer and fasting.

The Body—Certainly, our bodies are affected as our diet is changed, for some in very dramatic ways, during the Daniel Fast. Many men and women experience detoxing from caffeine, chemicals, and sugar. The symptoms are most often headaches, leg cramps, fatigue, and malaise.

Most people lose weight during the Daniel Fast. And many report healings from diabetes, allergies, arthritis, and cancer.

The Soul—Frequently referred to as "the flesh" in the Bible, the soul is also greatly impacted during the Daniel Fast. The soul is the seat of our emotions, intellect, personality, and will. It is in the "soulful realm" where we experience cravings, frustration, anger, and even happiness.

During the Daniel Fast, your soul may very well rebel against the dramatic change in your diet. Experiencing and winning this battle over the flesh is often one of the most powerful lessons of the Daniel Fast.

The Spirit—Our spirit is that born-again part of us that surrenders to God and then abides with the Father and the Son. Our spirit is filled with the Holy Spirit when we yield to Him. During the Daniel Fast, we want to put our spirit in charge of the other two parts of us. When our flesh is acting out with a craving, we take control of it with our spirit (just as a parent takes control of a rebellious child).

What if you have health issues?

Fasting should never bring harm to the body. If you have concerns, consult your healthcare professional before starting the Daniel Food Fast or making any significant dietary changes.

The Daniel Food Fast is a very healthy way to eat! Therefore, health professionals will support this eating plan but may suggest a few modifications if you have health issues that require special attention. For example, pregnant and nursing mothers might be instructed to add fish, chicken, and cheese to the Daniel Food Fast, but otherwise, they should stay the course. Individuals with diabetes may need to increase their carbohydrate intake or include lean proteins such as chicken and fish. Additionally, individuals who are especially active, whether through sports, bodybuilding, or their vocation, may need to slightly adjust their eating plan.

I encourage you to check with your doctor... and by the way, being addicted to Snickers and Coke doesn't count as a special need!

What is the Daniel Fast?

The Daniel Fast is a biblically based partial fast. It is a method of fasting that men, women, and young people worldwide are using as they enter into the spiritual discipline of prayer and fasting.

There are two anchoring scriptures for the Daniel Fast. In Daniel 1, the Prophet ate only vegetables (that would have included fruits) and drank only water. So, from these scriptures, we get two of the guidelines for the fast:

1. Only fruits and vegetables
2. Only water for a beverage

Then, in Daniel 10, we read that the Prophet ate no meat, nor any precious bread or food, and he drank no wine for 21 days. Of course, the vast majority of Baptists are total abstainers from alcoholic beverages. So from this scripture, we get a third guideline:

3. No sweeteners and no bread

Another important guideline is drawn from Jewish fasting principles, where no leaven is used during the fast. So that's why yeast, baking powder, and the like are not allowed on the Daniel Fast.

Finally, with all the above puzzle pieces, we conclude that no artificial or processed foods or any chemicals are allowed on the Daniel Fast.

When asked about the eating plan on the Daniel Fast, I often say it is a "vegan diet with even more restrictions."

Be sure to read the labels of prepared foods to ensure they only include Daniel Fast-friendly ingredients.

An important question to ask yourself . . .

During your Daniel Fast, you will likely have times when you might want to "stretch the rules" a little. For example, even though the guidelines say we are to drink only water, you conclude that herbal teas are vegetables and water is water, and therefore, you will go ahead and drink herbal teas during the Daniel Fast.

However, I encourage you to learn a powerful spiritual lesson by asking yourself (and examining your heart) the question, "Why do you want the herbal teas?"

My guess is that the answer will be, "Well, I just want them. I can't drink only water. I have to have something else."

The Daniel Fast teaches us to deny our "selves" and instead put our spirit in control over our flesh. As you plan your meals and eat your food, keep in mind that the definition of a fast is *to deny food for a spiritual purpose*.