

# 21 DAYS OF FASTING & PRAYER

*A Simple "How-To"*



**DANIEL 9:3**

**“SO I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO GOD, TO SEEK HIM BY PRAYER AND PETITIONS, WITH FASTING, AND SACKCLOTH AND ASHES.”**

## 21 DAYS TO BREAKTHROUGH

Almost every year, we hear a lot of people and ministries talk about starting the year with 21 days of fasting and prayer. If you've ever wondered why that is or how to get started, this guide will give you a crash course in what the bible says about fasting and prayer, and how to complete a 21 day fast.

In the pages to follow, I'll dig into Daniel's 21 day fast, after which many modern fasts are modeled. The book of Daniel teaches that in a time of great need, Daniel turned his attention to God for 21 days. God answered him with a breakthrough in his situation. The story of Daniel is an excellent example of how God desires to be present in our lives. By simply turning our attention away from the things around us, and towards Him, we give Him the opportunity to do the impossible on our behalf.

# KEY OBJECTIVES FOR 21 DAYS

*What Is Our Focus?*

## **Daniel 9:3**

**“So I turned my attention to God, to seek Him by prayer and petitions, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes.”**

In this verse, Daniel reveals 4 objectives for his 21 days of fasting and prayer. These are the things he set out to do when he began. We too should have these at the forefront of our minds as we embark on a time of drawing nearer to God:

### **Turn our attention to God**

One of the reasons a 21 day fast is so beneficial, is that it is a time of turning our attention to God. It is a perfect way to set Him as a priority and seek direction for the year.

### **Seek Him by prayer and petitions**

Prayer is a pivotal part of these 21 days. Prayer is the main way we communicate with God, feel his presence, and make known to Him our requests and petitions.

### **Seek Him through fasting**

To put it simply, fasting is sacrificing food or other enjoyments in order to remove distractions and facilitate turning our attention to God. Later in this guide, we will discuss various types of fasting.

### **Sackcloth and Ashes**

In the bible, sackcloth and ashes represent repentance. As our focus on God increases, one of our goals should be to leave behind sinful habits, thoughts, and attributes that do not please God. As we pray, God reveals these things to us so that we may grow in relationship with Him.

## DANIEL 10:3

**“IN THOSE DAYS I, DANIEL, WAS MOURNING FOR THREE WEEKS. I ATE NO DELICACIES, NO MEAT OR WINE ENTERED MY MOUTH, NOR DID I ANOINT MYSELF AT ALL, FOR THE FULL THREE WEEKS.”**

The Word teaches that for 21 days Daniel mourned and abstained from things he normally enjoyed. In the same way, we can assume this attitude as we begin our fast; mourning our sinful nature and the things in our lives that pain the heart of God.

*James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."*

While it may seem strange that God would want us to mourn and weep, this isn't the same sadness that we feel when we are depressed. The Bible says that godly sorrow brings us to repentance and salvation (2 Cor. 7:9-11) The point is to evaluate the things in our life that have sabotaged our relationship with God. As well as abstain from pleasures of the flesh so that our spirits grow strong enough to turn from our sin.

There is a biblical principle at work here: whatever you feed will grow. Everyday as we feed our bodies, our bodies use that food for fuel. When we fast, we put a pause on physical fuel in order to fuel our spirit. As James 4:8 says, "*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.*" Fasting is a way to draw near, and humble ourselves. It is a way of deeming our needs as less important than God's voice.

# OUR "WHY"

*What We Can Accomplish in 21 Days*

**Daniel 9:18**

**"We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act!"**

During his time of prayer and fasting, Daniel saw God do 4 things in his life:

## **His prayers were HEARD (Daniel 10:11)**

We know that God is good and He answers prayer! In fact, the bible says that there are many things that we do not have simply because we do not ask. (James 4:2-3) During this time of dedication and prayer, we can see amazing results and miraculous answers to prayer!

## **God sends HELP (Daniel 10:12)**

Crisis and difficult situations are a perfect time to dedicate some time to prayer and fasting. The bible says the Lord is near to the broken hearted and he sends help to those who call on Him. (Psalm 34:18)

## **He obtained VICTORY (Daniel 10:13)**

Prayer and fasting are poison to the enemies plans against you. Daniel not only escaped the wrath of the king, but was saved from the impossible: a den of lions. What impossible things will God deliver you from during these 3 weeks?

## **Your vision becomes clear (Daniel 10:14)**

My favorite reason for beginning the year with fasting and prayer is that God is always faithful to make clear to me what He wants for me during the year. As I incline my ear to him, He is always faithful to speak.

# PRAYER

*Daily Communication With God*

As you embark on this journey, prayer will be the most important part of the next 21 days. Without prayer, fasting is just going hungry, and a relationship with God is impossible. After all, where there is no communication, there can be no relationship, and no lasting change in your life. Prayer releases the power of God over your life.

The bible shows us that Daniel made it a point to pray in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening (Daniel 6:10). Praying throughout the day is a great way to keep your focus on God.

I prefer this than monitoring the amount of time I pray (saying I will pray an hour, or 30 minutes a day). I believe connection and consistency does more to keep your focus on God than aiming to fill a stretch of time with prayer.

In John 15:7 Jesus says "*If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.*" This shows us the what gives power to prayer over all else is staying in the presence of God. Rather than reciting vain repetitions, or worrying about having the perfect prayers, focus on centering your heart and mind, and coming before the presence of God.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*" Make it a point to look for the presence of God throughout these 21 days. He promises that it will not be in vain.

**DANIEL 9:4**

**"LORD, THE GREAT AND AWESOME GOD, WHO KEEPS HIS COVENANT OF LOVE WITH THOSE WHO LOVE HIM AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS"**

# FASTING

## *Killing The Flesh to Grow the Spirit*

### **John 3:30**

**"He must increase, but I must decrease."**

Fasting is sacrificing something in your flesh with the purpose of focusing on the spirit and causing change in the spiritual part of your life. It is decreasing so that He may increase in you. It teaches us to focus on things beyond the physical realm. As it says in Matthew 4:4 *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

Jesus taught his disciples that there are some spirits that can only be cast out through fasting and prayer (Mark 9:29). This is because as your flesh decreases, your spiritual strength receives a boost. This is why it's so important not only to fast, but pray and read the word as well.

The bible does not make specific rules about what one should fast or how long. I believe this is because it's a personal decision, and different for every person. The Holy Spirit should be the one to lead each person in the way they should fast. Just as each relationship is unique, how God leads different people to fast may be unique. Of course, it is different when you are coming together in agreement with your church or group, in which case it's possible that the church has an agreed upon fast, as the Lord leads the Pastor. There are several examples of specific fasts that we see modeled in the bible:

### **Fasting Food**

1. Partial Fast - restricting some foods, or drinking only liquids (Daniel 10:3)
2. Complete Fast - restricting all food and sometimes water (Luke 4:10)

### **Fasting Sleep**

Sacrificing sleep to wake early or stay up and pray (Psalm 5:3).

### **Fasting Marital Relations**

1 Corinthians 7:5 teaches that at times married couples may agree to abstain from physical intimacy in order to focus on prayer. This, however, is the only fast that the bible specifies should be agreed upon by both spouses.

While each of these fasts are very different, they have various things in common:

1. They each involve sacrificing things craved by the flesh, not things that don't matter or would not be easily missed. It is not considered fasting to go without something that you do not like or will not think about. Food, sex, sweets, and sleep are some examples of things that will force us to exercise will-power and dependence on God.
2. In each of these fasts, the timing was set before hand. Whether fasting for a set amount of days, hours, or weeks, it is not wise to start a fast without a goal end-time. If you do this, you might give in as soon as you have the desire for what you are fasting. The whole point is to teach your body that your desire for God is greater than the wants of your flesh.
3. Lastly, your fast should be something between you and the Lord. The bible clearly warns against bragging about your spirituality to others.

### **MATTHEW 6:6**

**"BUT WHEN YOU FAST, ANOINT YOUR HEAD AND WASH YOUR FACE, THAT YOUR FASTING MAY NOT BE SEEN BY OTHERS BUT BY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET. AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU."**



# TIPS & REVIEW

## *How to Ensure Success*

As a final review, here is an overview of ways to ensure success on your 21 day fast:

1. Pray daily, and aim for constant communion with God (set an alarm for a daily date with God if it will help)
2. Make sure you are reading God's word
3. Seek guidance from the Holy Spirit as to what to fast and how long to fast
4. Be clear about your objective, talk to God about what you want to accomplish with your fast

JOEL 1:14

"CONSECRATE A FAST; CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY. GATHER THE ELDERS AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND CRY OUT TO THE LORD."

## 21 PRAYER TOPICS & THEMES:

1. Repentance
2. Ability to hear God's Voice
3. Freedom from sin and addictions
4. Emotional healing
5. Forgiving others
6. Peace
7. Clarity and to know your purpose
8. Vision for the upcoming year
9. To move in spiritual gifts
10. Rescue from crisis
11. Provision and prosperity
12. For your marriage or future spouse
13. For your children or future children
14. For your family members & friends
15. For your pastor and leaders
16. Freedom from toxic relationships or patterns
17. For those that do not know Christ
18. For our world leaders
19. For the poor and orphaned
20. For greater understanding of His word
21. For God's will for your life to be revealed and fulfilled

# FINAL WORDS

**I hope this helps guide you into a successful 21 day journey of fasting, prayer, and hearing God's voice. I pray that, as Daniel did, you receive a breakthrough. I declare divine intervention, and miraculous provision over your life. I declare supernatural clarity, and clear vision over your year. I declare healing over your body, mind, and emotions.**

**My hope is that as the word says in Ephesians 3:20, that the Lord does "exceedingly and abundantly above all that you ask or even what you imagine according to (His) power in you." And I pray that as you decrease in your flesh, that power increases exponentially.**

With Love,

