

Fasting does not twist God's arm, but it does bend my knee.

Shane Idleman

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is the voluntary abstention from food (or some other desired object or activity).

The purposes of fasting include:

1. To subdue the flesh.

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

Colossians 3:5 NLT

2. To better prepare us for prayer and holy meditation

Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:23

3. To give evidence of humbling ourselves before God, when we would confess our guilt before him and seek his face.

On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!" The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow.

Jonah 3:4-5 NLT

4. To develop self-control (relates to item 1, "Subdue the flesh").

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

The purposes of fasting do **not** include attempting to earn bonus points with God. In Isaiah 58 we read:

*'We have fasted before you!' they say.
'Why aren't you impressed?
We have been very hard on ourselves,
and you don't even notice it!'*

Isaiah 58:3

Fasting, in this context, is also **not** for health or weight control purposes. Any health or weight-control benefit you experience is purely incidental to the purposes of fasting done as a spiritual discipline.

An article which you may find to be of interest:

<https://www.christianpost.com/voices/rediscovering-the-15-benefits-of-fasting.html>

While We're On The Subject

Fasting isn't necessarily or exclusively abstention from food. It can be from other things that are not necessarily sinful (except to the extent they end up displacing God as the center of our affections) but that are hindering your fellowship with God. Things like: social media, the internet generally, entertainment media, recreational shopping, news/politics, sportsball, overwork, etc. You might also want to consider limiting or even eliminating your consumption of some of these things.

What Is A “Daniel Fast?”

A Daniel Fast is patterned after what we read in the Bible in the Book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had conquered Jerusalem and taken a number of Israelites back to Babylon as captives. A number of young men were selected from these captives to be trained to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's royal palace. Nebuchadnezzar assigned to them a daily ration of wine and food.

In Daniel Chapter 1:8-16 we read:

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. But he responded, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded.”

Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. “Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,” Daniel said. “At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king’s food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.” The attendant agreed to Daniel’s suggestion and tested them for ten days.

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

Daniel's fast has been described thusly:

Daniel and his friends avoided the luxurious diet of the king's table as a way of protecting themselves from being ensnared by the temptations of the Babylonian culture. They used their distinctive diet as a way of retaining their distinctive identity as Jewish exiles and avoiding complete assimilation into Babylonian culture (which was the king's goal with these conquered subjects). With this restricted diet they continually reminded themselves, in this time of testing, that they were the people of God in a foreign land and that they were dependent for their food, indeed for their very lives, upon God, their Creator, not King Nebuchadnezzar.¹

A length of 21 days and abstention from alcoholic beverages comes from a passage a little further on in Daniel:

When this vision came to me, I, Daniel, had been in mourning for three whole weeks. All that time I had eaten no rich food. No meat or wine crossed my lips, and I used no fragrant lotions until those three weeks had passed.

Daniel 10:2–4

That's Interesting, But What Can I Eat?

Broadly speaking, if it comes from a plant you can eat it. If it comes from an animal it's off the menu. A Daniel Fast is like an old-time Lenten observance or vegan diet, only stricter.

Quantities are not limited by the Daniel Fast framework. You are at liberty to decide.

While not an exhaustive list (the dividing line is plant-based) here are general guidelines for foods included on a Daniel Fast:

Fresh, Frozen, Dried Or Canned Vegetables

Alfalfa sprouts, Artichokes, Asparagus, Avocados, Bean sprouts, Beans, Beets, Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, Cabbage, Capers, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Corn, Edamame, Eggplant, Garden cress, Garlic, Ginger root, Jicama, Kale, Legumes, Lettuce, Mushrooms, Okra, Onions, Parsnips, Peas, Peppers, Potatoes, Radishes, Summer squash, Sweet potatoes, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Winter squash, Yams,

Fresh, Frozen, Dried Or Canned Fruits

Apples, Apricots, Bananas, Blackberries, Blueberries, Boysenberries, Cherries, Currants, Cranberries, Dates, Figs, Grapefruit, Grapes, Guava, Kiwi, Lemons, Limes, Mangoes, Melons, Nectarines, Olives, Oranges, Papayas, Peaches, Pears, Pineapples, Plums, Prunes, Raisins, Raspberries, Strawberries, Tangelos, Tangerines, Watermelon

¹ Crossway Bibles. ESV Study Bible (Kindle Locations 221626-221631). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

While fruit juice and dried fruit is included, check the label to make sure that no sugar or other sweetener has been added. Go easy on fruit juice, ounce-for-ounce some fruit juices (apple juice for example) have more sugar (fructose) than regular sugared soda (usually dextrose). Treat fruit juice like a serving of food, not a beverage.

Whole Grains And Legumes

Barley, Black Beans, Black Eyed Peas, Brown Rice, Buckwheat, Bulger, Cannellini Beans, Chickpeas, Corn, Dried Beans, Emmer, Grits, Kidney Beans, Lentils, Millet, Oats, Peas, Pinto Beans, Popcorn, Quinoa, Split Peas, White Beans, Whole Wheat (including whole wheat pasta), Wild Rice.

Read labels. Many products, bread being a conspicuous example, have some whole grains, but are not 100% whole grain. Most commercially-available bread also contains yeast (to make it rise) and sugar (to get the yeast started).

Liquid Plant-derived Oils

Canola, Corn, Grape, Olive, Peanut, Safflower, Soybean, Sunflower.

Nuts And Seeds

Almonds, Brazil Nuts, Cashews, Filberts, Flax Seeds, Peanuts, Pecans, Pumpkin Seeds, Sesame Seeds, Sunflower Seeds, Walnuts, Also nut butters including peanut butter (again, check the label, most nut butters have sugar and other ingredients added). Tip: While "natural" nut butters usually separate between oil and solids, after you initially stir them up to recombine the oil and solids, if you put it in the refrigerator the cold keeps the product from re-separating.

Other Included

Tofu, Soy Products, Seasonings, Salt, Herbs and Spices. Carefully examine any seasoning packets, for example chili seasoning mix typically contains numerous artificial ingredients and sugar of some kind.

Commercially-prepared food that does not contain any proscribed ingredients. Triscuit crackers, corn chips, whole wheat matzo, other "organic" crackers. Baked goods that do not contain refined flour or leavening. Salsa, pico de gallo, guacamole, hummus, vegetarian refried beans, etc. Just be sure to read the label very carefully as in our North American culture food manufacturers tend to put sugar and processed fats in almost everything.

Not Included On The Daniel Fast.

- Any meat and animal products including beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.
- Any dairy products including milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.
- Processed fats with vegetable origins like: margarine, cooking fats made using hydrogenated vegetable oil.

- Any refined sweeteners including white sugar, brown sugar, raw sugar, date sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, cane juice, stevia, agave nectar and artificial sweeteners.
- Any leavening agents (principally yeast and baking powder) and any leavened bread and baked goods. Leavening was proscribed for the time during Passover (Exodus 12:17-20) and is associated with sin (Matthew 16:5-12, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8). The grain offerings described in Leviticus were to be unleavened.
- Any refined or excessively processed food products including artificial flavorings, and artificial sweeteners, white rice, or white flour.
- Any animal fats like butter and lard, and fats which include artificial ingredients like margarine.
- Beverages other than water. This includes coffee or tea (whether caffeinated or decaffeinated), carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol. Treat fruit juice like a serving of food, not a beverage.
- Recreational drugs.

READ THE LABELS on prepared foods to make sure ingredients comply with the fast.

Judgment Calls

You maybe won't like this section because it requires you to exercise your judgment instead of presenting you with a black-and-white list of rules. Undertaking a fast or spiritual discipline of any kind requires you to exercise biblically-informed judgment. It is important to not turn your fast into a legalistic exercise where the spirit of the fast is diminished by worrying about minutiae.

- Vinegar — Produced by fermenting fruit or grains. The alcohol from fermentation is then turned into vinegar with acetic acid bacteria. You decide whether or not the fact that vinegar is produced from alcohol which is the product of yeast (which after all is a single-cell animal) acting on fruit or gains is a disqualifier.
- Herbal teas — For example, what's the difference between eating barley, and drinking barley tea (which is essentially water in which barley has been cooked)? Using mint leaves in a recipe vs. making tea out of them. You decide about herbal teas as long as they don't contain stimulants.
- Fats which are solid at room temperature which are derived from plants: palm, cocoanut, etc.

“Processed” Foods

Virtually all food is “processed” in some way. When you peel and cook vegetables you “process” them.

Processed food, additives, and preservatives are where the Daniel Fast concept bumps up against various theories and philosophies of whether or not something is “healthy,” or “processed.”

Is a can of mixed vegetables, which was “processed” by being canned, to which calcium carbonate (chalk) has been added as a preservative acceptable? How about vegetarian/vegan meat substitutes with ingredients lists that read like chemistry experiments? Pretty much all vegetable oils are “processed” in that the base seed or fruit had to be “processed” to extract the oil (the whole discussion of which oils may be “bad” or unhealthy for whatever reason is outside the scope of this explainer).

It’s up to you to pray for guidance and decide whether an additive, preservative, or process alters the food to the point where the spirit of the Daniel Fast is damaged. Rule of thumb: If your great-grandmother would recognize it as food, it’s probably OK (provided it’s plant- and not animal-based); if it comes wrapped in plastic or cellophane, and contains at least one ingredient your great-grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food, or that you wouldn’t find in a “normal” home kitchen, it’s almost certainly “processed.”

Additionally, when it comes to processed foods ask yourself “What difference does it make who fried the potato?” That is, if it’s OK for you to slice a potato very thin and fry it in vegetable oil at home creating homemade potato chips, would it be OK for you to eat *plain* potato chips (flavored potato chips typically contain sugar and artificial ingredients) that were prepared in a factory by frying potatoes in vegetable oil? Or French fries fried in vegetable oil (which is pretty uniformly the case nowadays) at a restaurant? This applies to all kinds of commercially-available “processed foods” and is an area where you have to exercise prayerful individual judgment.

Cautionary Notes

If you have or even suspect you may have any medical condition that might be adversely affected by your participating in a Daniel Fast, get the advice of a qualified healthcare professional.

Doing a web search on the phrase “Daniel Fast” returns an avalanche of information. Some good, some mediocre, some counter-productive. You’re even likely to come across information that’s weird, has occult overtones, is legalistic, and/or is unbiblical. Plus, the term “Daniel Fast” has been commercialized and what the proprietors of some sites are interested in is selling you books and other merch (not inherently evil, but also not disinterested). This is one reason for this explainer. This is also why we are not recommending any “Daniel Fast” websites (although in the Recipes section of this explainer there are some links to recipe resources). Search the internet at your own peril.

Daniel Fast Compliant Quick Recipes.

Apple-Cinnamon Oatmeal

Make oatmeal according to package directions, only use apple juice instead of water. Garnish with cinnamon. Add dried fruit and nuts if desired.

Fruit and Veggie Smoothie

Ingredients: Frozen bananas, Frozen strawberries, Frozen pineapple, Handful of fresh spinach, Handful of fresh kale Water

Blend and enjoy! (Really can be any mix of fruits, veggies)

Johnny Cakes

This recipe is the basic, hard-times, Depression-era version of Johnny Cakes:

- 1 cup corn meal
- $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt
- Olive oil as desired.

Mix the warm water into the corn meal. Add more or less water depending on how much you want the cakes to flatten out on the griddle. You can also add a tablespoon or two of olive oil to the mix which will make a moister, if somewhat greasy, Johnny Cake.

Scoop onto medium-hot griddle greased with olive oil. Mash down to about $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick cakes if your mix is cookie-dough consistency. Pour out to 4" cakes if your mix is pancake batter consistency.

Cook about 5-to-7 minutes per side.

Eat with applesauce, peanut butter, olive oil.

Ketchup

Most of the ketchup you buy in the store will contain some kind of sugar or artificial sweetener. In a quart sized container with lid blend one 15 oz can of tomato sauce and one 6 oz can of tomato paste. Add 2 tbsp of cider vinegar (or omit depending on what you decided about vinegar) and other seasonings to taste. Goes well with fried potatoes.

Oatmeal Applesauce Cookies

Grind up 1 cup of oatmeal in a food processor, blender, or food mill. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ -to- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of applesauce to form a dough. Add raisins, walnuts, etc. to taste. On a cookie sheet greased with olive oil, or lined with parchment bake at 350 for 25 minutes.

Potatoes — Baked or microwaved

Bake or microwave potatoes as you usually do. Dress with olive oil and salt to taste. Can be done with regular or sweet potatoes.

Potatoes — Fried

Preheat a frying pan medium/medium high. Put in about an ounce of olive oil. Cut a baked or microwaved potato into $\frac{1}{4}$ "-to- $\frac{1}{2}$ " slices. Fry 3-4 minutes per side or to the desired degree of brownness. Can be done with regular or sweet potatoes.

Potatoes — Air Fried

Cut a potato into $\frac{1}{4}$ "-to- $\frac{1}{2}$ " slices. Toss with 1 tbsp of olive oil. Add spices like paprika, salt, garlic to taste. Air fry for 10 minutes at 400. Can be done with regular or sweet potatoes (sweet potatoes take an additional 3-5 minutes in the air-fryer).

Quick Vegetable Soup

Mix one 15 oz can of diced tomatoes with one 15 oz can mixed vegetables. Heat and eat.

Quinoa Salad**Ingredients**

- 1 cup dried quinoa
- 3/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1 lb Kale (no stems, shredded)
- 3/4 cup dried sugar-free cranberries
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

Instructions

1. Bring 1 cup quinoa and 2 cups water to a boil in a small sauce pot. Once boiling, reduce to a simmer and cover the pot. Simmer until all of the water is absorbed. Fluff quinoa with a fork.
2. Pour cooked quinoa, toasted almonds and dried cranberries into the bowl with the kale. Toss to combine fully and serve!

Notes

*Can add Daniel Fast approved dressings or lemon juice for added flavor. Best if eaten immediately, does not store well for more than a day or two.

Vegan Pasta

Ingredients

- 1 lb whole wheat pasta (your choice of style). Check the label to make sure it is entirely whole wheat.
- 1 can tomato sauce
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 can tomato paste
- ½ cup diced mushrooms
- ½ cup sliced black olives
- Olive oil

Add or subtract vegetable ingredients like mushrooms, olives as you like. Possibilities include: artichoke hearts, onions, garlic, capers, celery, bell peppers, etc.

Preparation

Saute the mushrooms in olive oil in a large (12") frying pan. When the mushrooms are the way you like them, add the tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, tomato paste, and black olives. Reduce heat to low and stir every couple of minutes to prevent sticking.

Prepare the pasta according to label directions.

When the pasta is cooked to your liking, remove from heat, drain, add some olive oil and stir. Serve.

Vegan Potato Soup

Ingredients

- 1 large yellow onion diced
- ½ cup celery diced
- 2 carrots diced
- 4 yukon gold potatoes cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 cups unsweetened almond milk
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoon parsley chopped

Instructions

Add all ingredients together in a large pot. Bring the soup to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover the pot and cook for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are soft and can easily be pierced with a fork.

STORAGE: store leftovers in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days; NOTE: the soup thickens the longer it sits, so you'll probably have to add extra liquid to it if you're reheating it.

Useful Websites

Egg substitutes for baking

https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/egg-substitutes#TOC_TITLE_HDR_18

Vegan Recipes

<https://danielsplate.com/>