

Fasting Models



Isaiah 58 Model

*"This is the kind of fast day I'm after:
to break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed,
cancel debts.*

*What I'm interested in seeing you do is:
sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.*

*Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.*

Your righteousness will pave your way.

The God of glory will secure your passage.

Then when you pray, God will answer.

You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.' (58:6-9 MSG)

This fast focuses on social justice. Read Isaiah 58 and you will get the essence of what the prophet is calling God's people to do. Isaiah's oracle is a reaction to the self-righteous who were displaying their personal piety by bragging about how long they had fasted. Isaiah denounces the arrogance and pride, and calls the people to fast with the purpose of loving the world around them. In other words, go without food so that someone might have your food. Limit entertaining yourself so that you can encourage and help someone else. Jesus may have been referencing this when he said, "blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled."

Suggested Application:

1. Determine a time-frame (3 days, 1 meal, 14 days, etc.).
2. Give your coffee or breakfast money and to a local non-profit (Boedekker Park Ministry, Juvenile Detention Center Ministry, Larkin Street Youth, Etc.).
3. Give your lunch break to writing a congress representative or senator about a social justice

- issue you feel strongly about. Devote your lunchtime to writing a card of encouragement to someone you know who is hurting. Spend lunchtime at the nearest Fire Department, Police Department, or school by finding a public servant and thanking them for their community work.
4. Use your dinner money to buy a homeless man a coat.
 5. With the time and money that you would spend on entertainment over a weekend go out on the streets and share it with someone who is down and out. Serve with Boedekker Park on the streets, visit girls or boys in the juvenile detention center, or go to San Quentin.
 6. Take up a social justice cause—clean water acts, humanitarian aid acts, sexual exploitation of women and children, violence in Sunnydale-Hunters Point.
 7. Forgive a debt that someone owes you.
 8. Invite someone over to your house and share a meal with him or her.
 9. Give some of your clothes away.
 10. Share a conversation with someone who is down and out.
 11. Buy a pie for someone who has just experienced a loss in his or her family.

Daniel Model

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel . . . 2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. Daniel 10 (NKV).

The fast Daniel engaged in was for the purpose of gaining understanding and vision from God. We cannot be certain of Daniel's rationale for fasting only from pleasant foods. Perhaps his civic duties required focus and strength. Daniel, who was the Secretary of State, had demanding obligations. What we observe is Daniel eating just enough to give him strength, but not enough to enjoy. He fasts in a manner that gives him energy, but requires sacrifice. For three weeks he goes without meat, wine, and lotion. Some say he lived on a diet of lentils during this time. It should be noted that Daniel's life was a life of prayer and fasting. His vigilance and determination in prayer is present from his first days in Babylon, until the end of his life when he is placed in a lion's lair as punishment for praying. Perhaps this is why Daniel has more visions, supernatural experiences and revelation into the mystery of God, than any other Seer. Some have argued his prayer and fasting lifestyle made him sensitive to the spirit realm.

Suggested Application:

1. For 21 Days eat nothing that is pleasant or tasty.
 - a. A Lentil soup without salt and seasonings.
 - b. No meats.
 - c. No juices or beverages (only water).
 - d. No deserts or pleasant breads.
2. Pray three times a day (as Daniel did)—morning, noon and evening.

3. Seek God for wisdom, revelation, understanding, and truth.
4. Seek God for words to encourage His people with.
5. Seek God for insights into the times that we live in.
6. Read Scripture and pray the Psalms, particularly Psalms 120-134.
7. Study the life of Daniel. Pray the prayers of Daniel.

Classical Model

The classical fast is abstinence from all food and only drinking water. It is the most difficult. Any number of days can be selected for this. If going one day, it is typical to go from sunup to sundown. If going more than one day, ask the Lord to lead you. Ask Him how long He would like you to go. Spend time seeking God for direction. It is common for people to fast one meal, one day, three days, or one week. On rare occasions some have fasted 14 days, 21 days, 30 days and even 40 days. The important thing is to be sensitive to God and to your body.

Moses, Elijah and Jesus engaged in this kind of fast. The Day of Atonement was a fast of this nature, when all of Israel, except pregnant and ill persons, ate nothing from sunup to sundown. Jesus qualified this kind of fast with the following advice, "When you fast don't do it for pride sake or to be seen of men, but do it secretly and your heavenly Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6)

Suggested Application:

1. Set aside a day or days when you don't have to work.
2. Use the entire day for engaging in spiritual activities—praying the Psalms, reading Scripture, serving the needy, helping the church, listening to worship music, or worshipping through various art forms.
3. Set aside a 'watching'. The early church would spend entire evenings in prayer, which they called watchings. They would pray, read, sing, meditate, worship, and/or contemplate all night long.
4. Prepare your body well by starting and ending the fast properly (see article on the health aspects of fasting).
5. This fast can work as a heart cleanser. Praying Psalm 51 or 32 and seeking the Lord to cleanse and wash you from pride, lust, revenge, bitterness, anger, covetousness, etc.

Alternative Model

For those who cannot fast from food, due to health or other issues, this alternative form of fasting is especially beneficial in our high-tech, market-saturated, noise-polluted, fast-paced world. What sacrifices were to the Patriarchs, fasting is to us. The important element of fasting to the Patriarchs was that the sacrifice cost them something since it was a gift to God. David said, "I will not offer a sacrifice to God that does not cost me something." It was said of Abel that he offered an excellent or costly sacrifice to the Lord. There are many things in our life that we have come to depend on, or gravitate to in exchange for our relationship with God. These dependencies aren't just chemical, or food, but can often be habits of another ilk. Listed below are a few sacrifices you can offer to God in the form of a fast that would be most pleasing to Him.

1. **Fast from media.** Unplug the TV, turn off radio, and disconnect the internet. Push away from the newspaper, magazines, and books that are empty of soul and spirit. It's amazing how clear the voice of God comes through when all the noises of the marketplace are silenced, and we make room for God to speak. Try this for every Sunday throughout the 40, or for a week or for the entire 40 days. *As you do this, spend much time reading the Bible and spiritual books. Listen to music that is worshipful and inspiring.* Replace the talk radio, gossip TV, negative smutty news with vehicles of God's healing voice—sermons, Bible, books and devotionals. **AND ABOVE ALL ELSE** stop and listen for the voice of God. What is he saying to you? What dreams are you receiving? Journal all of this.
2. **Fast from consumerism.** It's amazing how much time and money we can spend on buying things and stuff that we never use. We just buy things to occupy our time. We are bored so we spend. We waste time and money. This distracts us from what our heavenly father is calling us to. Or we fall into the trap of thinking we need this or that to be happy. Go on a spending fast for 40 days and fast from buying the things you want. Purchase only what you absolutely need. Spend your time in devotion and your money on helping someone. Or visit a local hospital and pray for children or patients in need. Instead of consuming, find ways to give. Do a research project on consumerism in America, it will blow your mind.
3. **Fast from gossiping, pointless cell phone conversations, doubt talk, and fear thoughts.** Some people can waste hours on the phone or in meaningless conversations talking about people. Fast from saying anything negative or demeaning. Commit to speak only things that are of faith, hope and love. Commit to confess faith, hope and love.

Ultimate Model

The ultimate fast is a combination of everything above. In an eclectic fashion, put together your own fast that incorporates a little bit of each fast. For example, you may go on a Daniel Fast yet take your days off to fast in a classical manner. During the fast you may devote a couple of days to following the Isaiah challenge. On other days you may seek to follow Daniel's methods. Also,

during the whole fast you might cut TV, internet and radio consumption.

I usually fast this way. I will take a set amount of time for the fast and divide it up into Isaiah, Daniel, and Jesus' fasts. Typically, I abstain from all media. I spend much time in prayer, meditation, and Scripture reading. I name each person in the church—business, family, spirituality, and needs. I seek God's presence. I sing. I listen. I journal. I pray in the Spirit—glossolalia. I cry. I confess. I rebuke darkness. Resist the Evil Empire. Speak faith. Live love. Share hope. Declare the vision. Fall in love with God again. Call those things that are not as though they were. I dream and imagine. Tug God's kingdom to earth. Surrender me to Him. Prayer walk around the City. Listen for the Voice. Look for the Vision. Feel after the Spirit. Know the Word. I keep it less fixed and more spontaneous and relational. I set some goals, list some prayers, and make a schedule, but when the day is done I really just go with the flow.—Pastor Jeff