

# *21 days*

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**P R A Y E R & F A S T I N G**

Experience God in a new, personal and powerful way.

## Why?

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Fasting is a biblical principle that runs throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days before he began his ministry. And he naturally assumed that his followers would fast when he said "When you fast, do not look like the hypocrites! They put on a sniveling face and neglect their appearance so that everyone will know they are fasting." (Mt. 6:16)

Throughout the Bible, individuals and groups (communities, cities, even nations) have fasted to seek God in a special way and to ask for His intervention.

In fasting, we seek the heart of God and align our own hearts with God. Fasting is a way of humbling ourselves before God and asking Him to examine and purify our own hearts.

In fasting, we are not trying to get something from God, but we are trying to realign our heart with Him and bring it into harmony with His heart. We consciously refrain from something that we would normally sometimes choose to satisfy the cravings of our soul and distract ourselves, in order to open the way to put ourselves more deeply under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We resist, so to speak, our desire for food to a deeper goal of experiencing God as our source.

## Was?

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We at ICF Munich have decided to call a special time of fasting and prayer at the beginning of the year to fast together as a church and to start the new year in a special way with God and to consecrate it to Him.

At this time, we want to pray consciously for people in our surroundings to come to know Jesus and for faith to spread in our cities, regions and country.

At the same time, it's our desire that everyone would use this time of fasting and prayer at the beginning of the year to lay down excess baggage, give God space and get to know his love better and more deeply.

We have decided on a three-week collective fasting period. Whether or not and how you want to engage in this time of fasting is up to you - and especially up to God (ask Him in prayer how you can shape this time of fasting and prayer in His spirit).

There are different ways to fast. In the Bible, it is mostly really about abstaining from food. Some drank only water, others ate only vegetables during their fast, or abstained from rich foods.

When you fast, prayerfully consider what and how you want to fast.

This fasting and prayer plan suggests a period of 21 days during which you can fast in a variety of ways. You can abstain from eating and solid food completely during this time, or you can abstain from one or two meals a day. You can fast on specific days within this fasting period or choose a shorter period. Below are examples of a few fasting variants and what you should pay attention to, so that you fast in a healthy way.

## How?

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### **Preparation and tips for fasting!**

Prepare well for your fast so that fasting honors God and can fulfill its purpose. Here are a few tips from our own experiences.

#### **1. Decide how you want to fast.**

There are different ways to fast. Some drink only water, others drink juice and broth or protein shakes and smoothies. Others reduce their diet to vegetarian or eat a vegan diet during their fast. We have summarized more info on the different variations for you at the end of this document. If you are older or have health problems, be sure to seek medical advice before you start fasting. Also, if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder, it may be better for you to continue eating in a healthy routine, perhaps only giving up certain favorite foods. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should definitely not give up balanced foods. Rather, fast from social media or television.

#### **2. What will you do instead?**

Fasting as a spiritual exercise is about seeking God. Take time to pray and read the Bible, perhaps especially during times when you would otherwise eat. In our YouVersion fasting plan, you will receive daily inspiration for the 21 days.

#### **3. Set a clear goal!**

What will you pray for? The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, „Without a vision (a clear, prophetic prayer goal), the people perish.“ Together with the Holy Spirit, set three to five prayer goals and put them in writing. Where do you need a breakthrough? Which friends are you praying for? How is your prayer concerned with God’s work in relation to your church, your city, or your country? “If I don’t know why I’m actually doing this, I’ll barely last until breakfast.”

#### **4. Fasting as a team**

Two are better than one! Consider teaming up with friends, such as your small group. For example, create your own small WhatsApp group and encourage each other. If you are a minor, discuss with your parents what and how you should fast. Young children should not usually fast food, but they may decide to give up their favorite sweet for three weeks.

#### **5. Determine the length of the fast ahead of time.**

Reflect with the Holy Spirit on how long you want to fast. Most people who start without considering how long they actually want to fast do not last long.

#### **6. Prepare physically**

Two days before the fast, limit your food intake to fruits and vegetables. If you are completely abstaining from solid food, it may be advisable to empty your bowels (e.g. with an enema or Glauber’s salt). Be prepared for the transition to challenge you physically and emotionally, and you may struggle with impatience, bad moods, anxiety, or physical discomfort such as dizziness or headaches. This is normal because the body cleanses itself and eliminates toxins during fasting.

## **7. Prepare for resistance**

During fasting, experience shows that you can almost bet that suddenly a colleague will bring birthday cake to the office, you will be invited to an opulent dinner, and the most delicious smells will waft around your nose at every turn. Fasting has spiritually intensive power, and you have an enemy who will do everything he can to keep you from fasting. Even Jesus was tempted during His fast. But don't worry: He passed every test and lives in you today with His strength and the power to overcome temptation. He already carried the victory back then on the cross over 2,000 years ago by rising from the dead.

## **8. Do not condemn yourself when you fail**

Despite your best intentions, what do you do if you break your fast and think now you might as well not do it at all? Don't give up. Even if you relapse several times, you can always get back up and keep going. Our righteousness comes through Jesus alone and God loves you just as you are with both your flaws and your beauty. Sometimes through our failures we learn the very lesson we need at the particular moment. It is in failure that we realize that God is a loving Father who walks the journey with us. He cheers us on, rejoices with us, comforts us, and always loves us with unchanging love. Hit the reset button and pick up where you left off.

## **9. Fast in secret**

Jesus once said, „But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fasting will not be obvious to men, but only to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.“ Mt 6, 17-18. Don't tell everyone that you are fasting, but if someone asks, of course you can be honest.

## **10. Rest**

Fasting is a special time for the body, mind and spirit. Plan for plenty of rest and, when possible, slow down a bit. Of course, you can continue to exercise as it suits you.

## **11. Break your fast the healthy way**

Start eating slowly again in the first few days after fasting, e.g. with fruit juice or light soups in the first few days. During a light juice fast or a water fast, the digestive system shuts down and needs to slowly get used to eating again. It can be dangerous if you eat too much too soon. (It's a good idea to check with a medical professional or find a guidebook on fasting).

## **12. Expect God to speak**

...through His Word, in dreams, visions, and revelations. Daniel prepared to receive revelation from God through fasting (Daniel 10:1). The Bible also speaks of a fasting reward (Matthew 6:18). Expect God to seek fellowship with you and communicate with you in a special way.

## **13. What is the point?**

You may have the impression that fasting „doesn't accomplish anything.“ Breakthroughs often come after fasting, not only during it, and sometimes God uses our fasting time in different ways than we expect. Don't listen to the lie that nothing happened. It is my conviction that every fast done in faith will be rewarded.

## **Types of fasting:**

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### **Water fast**

According to Luke 4:2, Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness and ate nothing for 40 days. He drank only water. Fasting with water is especially challenging physically, but many relate that they experience it as a very special time and that hunger pangs settle very quickly as digestion is completely at a standstill. Since the body does not get any energy from food, it is important to get enough rest. In the case of a longer period of water fasting, one should inform oneself well beforehand how to prepare such a period well by means of reduction and build-up days and, in the case of health concerns, also consult a doctor. In the Bible there are also people who not only abstained from food but also from water, e.g. Moses or the people of Israel in Esther's time.

### **Juice fast**

A juice fast is a fast in which you drink mainly water and supplement it with one or two glasses of juice a day and otherwise do not eat any food. This type of fasting gives you more energy than a water-only fast. Many prefer this type of fasting because hunger can be decreased and at the same time maintain a certain level of energy so that you can still cope well with normal everyday life. If possible use freshly squeezed juices. There are a lot of good books with tips and tricks for juice fasting and we recommend to get one or seek advice from a medical professional.

### **Smoothie fasting**

With smoothie fasting, you get all the nutrients you need to function, but in liquid form. In smoothie fasting, you can use anything: Protein powder, fruits, vegetables, milk and of course you can have warm vegetable soup. You simply give up the pleasure of chewing and eating solid food.

### **Daniel Fast**

The Daniel Fast is a very well-known type of fasting and is performed according to the pattern narrated in Daniel 1:12 and Daniel 10:2-3. In this type of fasting, you can fulfill all the demands of life while denying yourself some of the delights typically found in your diet. This type of fasting is also very healthy for your body. A Daniel fast is essentially a vegan diet plan with additional restrictions. It is a plant-based diet where the only beverage is water.

### **Media Fast**

If you're not able (or don't feel led by the Holy Spirit) to choose one of the fasts associated with abstaining from food, abstaining from something else, such as media, may be an option. In 2019, the average German spent about two hours a day on social media. It only takes about 71 hours to read the entire Bible at read-aloud speed. If you replace your social media/Netflix time with Bible reading, you could read the entire Bible in 36 days!

## Other fasting options

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You could fast a certain favorite food, sugar coffee, or anything else you normally spend time on for 21 days. Be creative. Ask the Lord what He wants when it comes to your planned fast.

\*If you are fasting on just water, juice and smoothies, consider detoxifying your body a few days before the fast to prepare it for the fast. You can find more tips on how to prepare your body for fasting in books on therapeutic fasting or on the Internet.

Regardless of which type of fast you choose, instead of your normal meal times (or social media times), take plenty of time to pray and read the Word of God. Spiritual fasting is about reaching out to God with all that you are - otherwise it's just a diet. Fasting creates a vacuum in your soul. Fill that void by feeding on God during your fast. If you would otherwise distract yourself with social media, pray instead. Instead of eating, saturate yourself with God's Word. If you would have resorted to chocolate for comfort, go to God for comfort.

We're glad if this information has encouraged you to join us during this fasting period!