



January 25th - February 3rd



Welcome to the Dinner Table Gospel - The Fasting Edition!

You're invited to join Union Church in a fast as we begin the new year with our vision on Jesus. This 10-day fast is a strategic opportunity to turn our focus to God and His plan in the new year. We encourage you to involve the whole family during this time of humbling ourselves before the Lord.



union
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LOVE GOD. LOVE PEOPLE. PROVE IT.

What is a fast?

A fast is a biblical discipline that involves abstaining from food or drink for a specific period of time. It's a time to "starve the flesh and feed the soul," by replacing the time and desire usually spent on appetite and replacing it with prayer, Bible reading, and time spent with God.

This particular time of fasting will prepare our hearts for the new year and bring us into closer relationship with Him.

Why do we fast?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is mentioned in the Bible over 50 times. God's people, in both the Old and New Testaments, fasted as a way to cry out to God, seek His favor, humble themselves before Him, and pray for others, to name a few.

We fast because Jesus fasted. In Matthew chapter 4, Jesus went into the wilderness to fast. In chapter 6, He gives instructions on how God's people are supposed to behave when fasting. Those who follow Jesus, desire to live a life modeled after His. We follow His example of fasting and the examples of the leaders of the early church.

How do we fast?

From **January 25 - February 3**, Union will participate in a church wide "Daniel- type" fast and a time of prayer. A Daniel fast is a modified diet based on Daniel Chapter 10. The goal is to not replicate Daniel's diet, but his heart posture behind it. He was choosing to modify his diet and avoid "choice foods" while seeking the Lord.

Fasting as a family

Fasting is a discipline that can be introduced early in a child's life. While they may not necessarily participate in the diet restriction, they can be a part of prayer, meal preparation, and nightly discussions.

Before the fast, sit down with your children and discuss the definition of a fast. Look at examples from Scripture, such as when Esther

called for a 3-day fast (Esther 4:16) or when the Israelites prayed before their 900-mile trek to Jerusalem through difficult and dangerous territory (Ezra 8:21-23). Talk about how God answered their prayers.

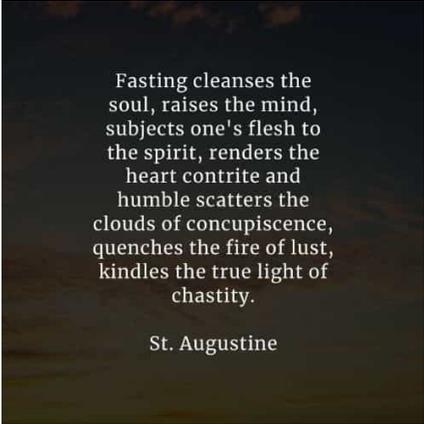
- Read the story of Daniel's 10-day test in Daniel 1 to give your children an idea of Daniel's character and how he refused to violate his convictions. Take a look at the account of Daniel's 21-day fast in Daniel 10. Explain how the modern -day Daniel Fast is following the prophet's example of devotion to prayer.

- Talk about which foods you are going to give up during your fast. Emphasize that such foods are not bad or wrong, but that you are abstaining from them temporarily as a way to honor the Lord.

- Make a list of people for whom you want to pray.

- Go grocery shopping together.

Even though it may mean more time at the supermarket (and more patience on your part!), make it a family event. Have older children select produce for you. Let a younger child hold the shopping list. You'll make your kids feel special, and they'll be more likely to be excited about the fast.¹



Fasting cleanses the
soul, raises the mind,
subjects one's flesh to
the spirit, renders the
heart contrite and
humble scatters the
clouds of concupiscence,
quenches the fire of lust,
kindles the true light of
chastity.

St. Augustine

Acceptable foods:

- All fruits and vegetables
- All legumes (beans, peas, lentils, etc.)
- Whole grains
- Nuts and Seeds
- Tofu
- Herbs and spices

Foods to avoid:

- All meat and animal products
- All dairy products
- All deep-fried foods
- All sweeteners: sugar, sugar substitutes, etc. (including honey)
- All leavened bread (nothing with yeast)
- Alcohol
- Coffee and other caffeinated drinks

Helpful Fasting Tips

Dedicate the time to the Lord: Fasting is a discipline, which means it's not easy! Pray hard; ask God to reveal Himself to you in fresh and radical ways.

Increase your time in the Word: God's Word is "alive and active." When we starve the flesh to feed the soul, our hearts are primed to hear Him in a new way.

Make it a priority to attend church either in person or online: Being around other believers on the same mission will motivate you when fasting becomes difficult.

Join our Facebook Group: Community is one of the best ways to find support and encouragement during a fast. If you're not already in a group, join our Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/unionsmallgroup> for more recipes and support.

Resources:

www.daniel-fast.com

www.ultimatedanielfast.com

1. Feola, Kristen. *How to Fast as a Family*. Crosswalk. Dec. 27, 2011. <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/fasting-as-a-family.html>.

Encouragement

Congratulations on making the decision to fast. It's not an easy one, but it will be fulfilling. Fasting teaches us so much about ourselves and about God.

There are going to be times where that mean, little voice starts to remind you of all the things you can't have. Change the language. Instead of feeling bad about the things you can't have, tell yourself that you CHOOSE not to have those things out of submission to God. When you become the master of those negative thoughts, it starts to shut down the enemy's lies. We don't tend to feel deprived of the things we choose to avoid. We feel deprived when we think control is taken away and we can't have them. Take that control back. You are doing a mighty thing before the Lord.

Over the next 10 days, pay attention to where you may be feeling weak during this fasting journey. What has been exposed and made raw by having to deny yourself? Bring it before the Lord. Allow His grace to be sufficient for you. No amount of decadent food, fine wine, or even relationships, can fill and satisfy like the Spirit can.

As our bodies are detoxing, our emotional side might be detoxing as well. Allow the Spirit to work from the inside out. We tend to stuff hurts and disappointments and stress deep down, and then top it off with a huge ice cream sundae, or Oreos, or a bag of chips. With many of our coping mechanisms gone, let's turn to the best and most amazing mechanism there is - God. Allow the tears to come, even if you don't know why they're there. Allow yourself to process the feelings you tend to hide behind food. Bring it all before Him. God will start to show Himself to us, like the sun coming out from behind the clouds. But you need to stick it out; remember your "why". James 4:10 says to "humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up." Isn't that what this fast is all about? Humbling ourselves before the Lord; expecting and anticipating His movement in our lives and the lives of those we love.

Mexican Rice and Beans

This dish is sure to be a Daniel Fast favorite, especially if you like spicy foods (I'd rate this one as mild to medium on the heat scale). But if you don't do spice, you can always omit the cayenne pepper and use diced tomatoes instead of the tomatoes and green chilies.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup diced red onions
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups brown rice, uncooked
- 1 10-ounce can diced tomatoes and green chilies (Ro-tel)
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 15.5-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley or 1 teaspoon dried parsley

Instructions

1. Rinse rice in a strainer under cold running water for 30 seconds, swirling the rice around with your hand. Drain, and set aside. Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onions, and cook until soft and translucent. Add garlic, and cook one minute, stirring frequently so garlic doesn't burn.
2. Pour in water, rice, tomatoes and chilies, cumin, and cayenne pepper. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat and cover. Simmer 45-55 minutes or until rice is tender and nearly all of the liquid is absorbed. Add beans, and stir well. Cook another 8-10 minutes. Add parsley, and serve.

Black-eyed Peas and Potato Soup

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup sliced celery
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 4 cups Vegetable Broth or water see Recipe Notes
- 1 15-ounce can black-eyed peas, rinsed & drained
- 2 cups cubed potatoes
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley or 2 teaspoons dried parsley
- 1/2 tablespoon dried chives
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

Instructions

Heat olive oil in a large stock pot over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, and celery. Cook until vegetables are softened. Stir in garlic, and cook 1 minute. Add vegetable broth, black-eyed peas, potatoes, parsley, chives, cayenne pepper, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer 30 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: about 1 cup)

Notes

- For a chunkier soup with a little more texture, place half in a food processor or blender.
- Substitute black-eyed peas with great northern beans, cannellini beans, or navy beans.

Key Dates

- January 25 - Fast starts
- January 27 - Prayer time at the Danville Campus 6 pm.
- January 31 - Final week of The Right to Choose series
- February 3 - Last day of the fast and prayer time at the Danville Campus 6 pm.

