

A 5-WEEK GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS & CHURCHES



THE
daniel
fast

WORKBOOK

COMPANION TO THE BESTSELLING BOOK

susan gregory

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The Daniel Fast Workbook: A 5-Week Guide for Individuals, Groups, and Churches

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19 18 17 16 15 14 13
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Table of Contents

Before You Begin ix

Welcome to the Daniel Fast xi

How to Use This Workbook xv

SESSION 1: Preparation and Purpose 1

SESSION 2: Fasting and the Body 13
(FASTING DAYS 1–7)

SESSION 3: Fasting and the Soul 25
(FASTING DAYS 8–14)

SESSION 4: Fasting and the Spirit 39
(FASTING DAYS 15–21)

SESSION 5: Looking Forward after the Daniel Fast 53

Leader's Guide 65

About the Author 75

Before You Begin

THE DANIEL FAST includes a very healthy eating plan. However, please allow the Great Physician to work hand in hand with your earthly physician. Any time you make a significant change to your diet and exercise routines, it's a good idea to check with your health professional for his or her input.

Fasting should never harm the body. If you have special dietary needs—if you are pregnant or nursing, if you have a chronic illness such as cancer or diabetes, if you are a young person who is still growing or an athlete who expends more than typical amounts of energy on a regular basis—contact your health professional and modify the Daniel Fast eating plan in a way that is appropriate for your unique situation.

How to Use This Workbook

THE FIVE-WEEK STUDY plan outlined in this workbook is designed for both groups and individuals. Though it's structured around a twenty-one-day fast, feel free to adjust for a shorter or longer time of fasting as it suits your needs.

In addition to this guide and your Bible, you will want my book *The Daniel Fast*, which is the basis for the reading plan that follows. It includes the practical information you will need regarding what foods are allowed on the fast, as well as dozens of recipes, meal plans, and a twenty-one-day devotional. I encourage you to read *The Daniel Fast* in its entirety as part of your preparation for the fast, and then review the recommended content each week to dig deeper into your fasting experience. (Others may prefer to read the book for the first

time in week-by-week installments *during* the fast. This reading plan is adaptable for either approach.)

Because I have designed *The Daniel Fast Workbook* to mirror the questions and experiences you'll be having as you fast, you'll see that it is not a simple, chronological reading plan (such as, "Read Chapter 1 during Week 1, Chapter 2 during Week 2," etc.). Instead, my purpose is to equip you with the content that will be most useful to you at each weekly stage.

THE READING PLAN

Session 1: Preparation and Purpose

Read in *The Daniel Fast*:

- Chapter 1 ("Who Is the Daniel Fast Blogger?")
- Chapter 2 ("Dusting Off an Ancient Spiritual Discipline")
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Review food list, recipes, and meal plans

Session 2: Fasting and the Body (Fasting Days 1–7)

Read in *The Daniel Fast*:

- Pages 31–42 and 51–54 of Chapter 4 ("The Daniel Fast for Body, Soul, and Spirit")
- Chapter 5 ("Five Steps for a Successful Daniel Fast")
- Continue review of food list, recipes, and meal plans
- Begin the Twenty-One-Day Daniel Fast Devotional

Session 3: Fasting and the Soul (Fasting Days 8–14)

Read in *The Daniel Fast*:

- Pages 42–46 of Chapter 4 ("The Daniel Fast for Body, Soul, and Spirit")
- Continue the Twenty-One-Day Daniel Fast Devotional

Session 4: Fasting and the Spirit (Fasting Days 15–21)

Read in *The Daniel Fast*:

- Chapter 3 (“Daniel—Determined to Live for God in Enemy Territory”)
- Pages 46–51 of Chapter 4 (“The Daniel Fast for Body, Soul, and Spirit”)
- Continue and complete the Twenty-One-Day Daniel Fast Devotional

Session 5: Looking Forward after the Daniel Fast

Reread in *The Daniel Fast*:

- Pages 94–95 of Chapter 5 (“Five Steps for a Successful Daniel Fast”)

Celebrate and reflect on all you’ve learned

WHAT YOU’LL FIND EACH WEEK

Within each weekly session, you’ll find the following elements (along with a breakdown of how much time to allot for each element if you are meeting as a group; times are based on a 45–60 minute study):

- *The Daniel Fast* reading assignment for that week
- Getting Started: Introductory questions for discussion or reflection (5–10 minutes)
- Core Truths: A summary of the session’s theme (5 minutes)
- Setting the Scene: Scripture reading and study questions (10–15 minutes)
- Point to Ponder: A message from *The Daniel Fast* (3 minutes)
- Digging In: Understanding the scriptural application to the fast (10 minutes)

- Discovering and Doing: Practical next steps (10–15 minutes)
- Prayer (2 minutes)
- Tips: Advice for the week (review individually)

If you are fasting as part of a group, that's wonderful! As members of the body of Christ, you will find this to be an amazing spiritual opportunity to encourage, support, and hold each other accountable. Come prepared to discuss what you are feeling, learning, and overcoming through the fasting experience. And, group leaders, don't miss the Leader's Guide at the end of this book, which will help you guide members through the group experience.

SESSION 1:

Preparation and Purpose

READ IN *The Daniel Fast*:

- Chapter 1 (“Who Is the Daniel Fast Blogger?”)
- Chapter 2 (“Dusting Off an Ancient Spiritual Discipline”)
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Review food list, recipes, and meal plans

GETTING STARTED

- Why have you decided to participate in the Daniel Fast?

- Have you ever fasted before? If so, what challenges and rewards did you experience? If not, what are some

anticipations or concerns you have about embarking on the Daniel Fast?

- Fasting is known as a “spiritual discipline.” What does that phrase mean to you?
- What questions do you have about the fast? (Don’t try to answer them all now, but write down any questions and come back to them at the end of the session.)

CORE TRUTHS: DEFINING YOUR PURPOSE

The better you prepare for the Daniel Fast, the better your experience will be. During this week of planning and preparation before you begin the fast, you will accomplish the following practical steps:

- Decide what you will and will not eat on your Daniel Fast.
- Plan your meals for Week 1.
- Shop for and prepare some of the make-ahead meals for Week 1 of the Daniel Fast.

While much of this week's preparation is focused on food, you'll find the key to a successful fast actually lies much deeper. Here is the most crucial thing you will do this week:

- Ask God to speak to you about your purpose for the Daniel Fast, and invite Him to show you *His* purpose for your life.

When it comes to fasting, a well-established purpose or goal may be the most important thing to get you started on the right track and help you stay there. Your purpose is what will carry you through when your body (or mind) shouts, "Eat!" That's why it's important for your purpose to be personally meaningful. If your goal is not significant enough and compelling to you, it's easy to be tempted to quit or cheat when the going gets tough. But a targeted purpose can carry you through. Here's the simple truth: The more committed you are to your goal or purpose, the more successful you will be on your fast.

Take time during this session to ask God to show you a compelling purpose or goal for your Daniel Fast.

SETTING THE SCENE

Read Daniel 1:5-16 and 10:2-3 and reflect on the experiences of the prophet Daniel upon which we base our fast.

The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

⁶Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. ⁷The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

⁸But 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. ⁹Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. ¹⁰But 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."

¹¹Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ¹²"Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. ¹³"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."¹⁴The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵At 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. ¹⁶So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

4. What evidence do you see in these passages that God can use our time of fasting to speak and make Himself real to us? What can you do to prepare yourself to *listen* to what God may want to say to you during your fast?

POINT TO PONDER

“Even though you can eat during the Daniel Fast, it is no less effective than a complete fast. The power in fasting has less to do with food than with setting yourself apart for a specific period of time to focus more on the Lord, prayer, and worship. In other words, the power of fasting is found when you consecrate yourself to the Lord and discipline yourself to focus on Him. That’s how your spiritual experience is enhanced.” (*The Daniel Fast*, Chapter 2)

DIGGING IN

Read Psalm 139, Jeremiah 29:11, and James 1:2-5. As you begin to define your purpose for doing the Daniel Fast, what do these verses reveal about God’s investment in your life?

Here are some suggestions you may find helpful in determining the purpose for your fast:

1. Ask God to show you what your purpose should be. After you have prayed, be attentive to how the Holy Spirit might answer you. For example, over the next few days, He may

bring some issues or relationships to mind—or you may find yourself in a situation or a conversation that points you toward a compelling purpose for your fast. One thing is for certain: If you ask God for help, He will be faithful to guide you.

2. What are the top three issues in your life that cause you stress or concern? Ask yourself, *If I could change three things about my life, what would they be?*

3. What five things would you like to accomplish over the next twelve months?

4. What three new habits do you want to form?

5. What fears do you have that you want God to help you conquer?

6. What unforgiveness do you harbor in your heart that you need to deal with?

7. What areas are “out of order” in your life that you need to address?

Now consider your list and select one or two goals as your focus for prayer, study, and action during your Daniel Fast. This will be the purpose for your fast. What goal(s) have you selected?

Write your purpose on a card (or cards) and post it where you will see it regularly throughout the day. You may want to post a card on your bathroom mirror, so it’s one of the first things you see each morning, or on your computer monitor, where you can see it as you work. Maybe post a card on the refrigerator or the pantry door. Keeping your purpose firmly in mind will help you stay on track with the Daniel Fast.

DISCOVERING AND DOING

When we’re fasting, it’s easy to focus on what we’re *not* eating or what we *don’t* have. The enemy of our souls, Satan, will do everything he can to disrupt and derail our fast. One of his favorite tactics is to combine temptation with subtle suggestions of compromise. Just as he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden by asking, “Did God really say . . . ?” he may try to tempt you to start questioning the boundaries

and principles of the Daniel Fast. That's why it's important to plan your fast and stick to the plan. It's also critical to have your purpose clearly defined and visible throughout the fast.

The more you can prepare in advance—either by planning simple, easy-to-prepare meals or cooking ahead and freezing meals—the easier the twenty-one days of the fast will be. Don't become so concerned with meal plans and recipes that they become the primary focus of your planning and preparation. Remember, the key to a successful fast is getting your mind *off* the food and *onto* God. By establishing your food list and planning your meals in advance, you can eliminate a lot of the day-to-day decisions you'll have to make during the fast. The more you have planned in advance, the more productive the days of the fast will be.

Too much emphasis on recipes and meal plans can make the whole process seem daunting, but don't forget that the Daniel Fast lasts for only *three weeks*. If you simplify your menu by focusing on easy-to-prepare fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, the planning process shouldn't be difficult. And if you have identified and committed to your purpose, you will find yourself relying on God's will for you to get through the "valley" moments of fasting and enjoy the "peaks" of its many rewards.

1. What plans will you make this week for choosing and eating the right foods? (See *The Daniel Fast* for recipes and menus.)

2. What foods will you eat? Which ones will you avoid? Which recipes sound like ones you might want to try first?

3. What practical steps do you need to take this week (meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking ahead of time) to make sure you are well prepared to begin on day 1 of the fast?

4. One of the benefits of fasting is that it takes us out of our normal routines and creates an opportunity for us to reflect on our relationship with God and better connect with Him. But it won't just happen. We need to *decide*. How will you pray, meditate, and study during your fast?

5. Your plan should include establishing a specific time and place to have a one-on-one interaction with God, where interruptions and distractions are minimized. What is your time and place for Bible study and prayer?

6. It's not helpful to focus your attention on how you're feeling during a fast. But you *will* be feeling things (especially if you're new to fasting). Prepare for this by anticipating where you might be weak or vulnerable—and have a plan in place

for how you're going to deal with it. For example, you may want to ask a friend to encourage you to "stay the course" if you are tempted to quit or cheat. Who might that person be? Will you reach out and ask him or her to be available to you over the course of your fast? In addition to being a "phone call away," your accountability partner should be someone who will pray for you as you fast.

7. What will you do during the twenty-one days of the fast to supplement your healthy eating with stretching and exercise? Write a specific plan.

8. What will you do during the twenty-one days of the fast to reduce your stress and get plenty of rest? Write a specific plan.

PRAYER

Father, as we prepare our bodies and minds for a time of focusing more deeply on You, we pray that You will clear the path for us. Help us to continually choose You as we make our daily decisions about what to eat and how to spend our time and energy. Equip us this week with the gift of preparation as we think ahead to the next twenty-one days and consider

them a special and holy time set apart. And bless us with a strong sense of Your purpose—both for the goal that will carry us through the fast, and the abiding knowledge of Your will for our lives. Amen.

TIPS

- Starting today, begin tapering off your consumption of caffeine, sugar, and other foods not on the Daniel Fast. For example, you may want to progressively reduce the amount of coffee you drink each day or switch to half-caff or decaf.
- Each day, be sure to drink at least half a gallon (sixty-four ounces) of pure, filtered water.
- Get plenty of rest and a moderate amount of exercise.
- You may find it helpful to remove items from your pantry that you won't be using during the Daniel Fast and put them in a secure place out of the way. I call this "locking up our weaknesses." When trying to change or control the way we eat, the first line of defense is always availability. It's often easier to avoid temptation altogether than to rely on our ability to resist it. Also, planning your meals and knowing what you will eat plays a significant role in complying with the fast.
- To receive free resources, including the Daniel Fast Food List and Guidelines, the Daniel Fast Weekly Meal Planning Worksheet, and other helpful tools, go to www.daniel-fast.com. Enter your name and e-mail address in the form provided, and I'll send you the information right away.