

## **Full and Partial Fasting (Daniel 1)**

### Expository Lessons from the Book of Daniel

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#### **I. Introduction to the Book of Daniel**

- a. This fall, I will be teaching 4 to 5 times in various house church and all-church settings from the Book of Daniel.
- b. Daniel is a spiritual giant. God uses in amazing ways. Filled with the Holy Spirit. Blessed with supernatural abilities. Miraculous protection. His character, courage, integrity, prayer life, and personal righteousness are a model for us all.
  - i. The time is around 550-600 BC. The temple had been destroyed, and Israel has been taken into captivity to Babylon. God is punishing His people, just like He promised He would if they turned away from Him and disobeyed His commands. People are living in a foreign nation and culture filled with idol worship and other evil.
  - ii. Sometimes, the light shines the brightest in the darkness. We see this in Daniel's life and example.
- c. One can divide the Book of Daniel into two parts
  - i. Chapters 1-6 cover events from his life while in captivity in Babylon.
  - ii. Chapters 7-12 mostly focus on various prophecies and visions of future events, at various times of Daniel's life (covered in Ch 1-6).
- d. Over the centuries, the Book of Daniel has been very important to Christians.
  - i. In the ANF volumes, the book is referenced nearly 250 times!
  - ii. As we go through these lessons, I hope we will discover together why this is such an inspiring and practical book for Christians.
- e. Last week we looked at the story of Susannah, found at the beginning of Daniel in the LXX.
  - i. Introduced to this remarkable woman. Married, with children, righteous, feared God, and beautiful. When two elders proposition her to lie with them or else be falsely accused of adultery (which will mean her death), she chooses to die rather than sin against God. (Many Christians facing intense persecution have taken great inspiration from Suzanna!). Right when she is about to be falsely executed, the young boy, Daniel, shows great wisdom to expose these two wicked men of their wickedness and deceit, rescuing innocent Suzanna from death.

- ii. This “scene” introduces us to Daniel. We now turn to the beginning of the story of the Jews being brought into captivity while Daniel is a young man.

## II. Daniel 1:1-5

- a. Jews displaced to Babylon.
- b. King Nebuchadnezzar selects promising, bright, handsome young men to be trained for his administration, including Daniel and his three friends. Three years of training/education will be required before they appear before the king and are examined.
  - i. This is important, as God will use this to vault Daniel (and his three friends) into high levels of the government to both reveal God’s glory and power and to face extreme persecution!
- c. Bonus: the young men get to eat from the king’s table!

## III. Daniel 1:6-21

- a. They are in a foreign land, idol worship, and all sorts of wickedness. The four are faced with all types of temptations, as we will see.
- b. First Test: the king’s food
  - i. Daniel “purposed in his heart” not to defile himself with the king’s food and drink.
  - ii. God shows Daniel mercy and compassion as he approaches the eunuch and asks that they be fed only vegetables and water.
  - iii. The eunuch is concerned that the king will see the four men’s “countenances gloomy” compared to the other young men and chop off the eunuch’s head (for doing a bad job feeding them)!
  - iv. Daniel says, don’t worry about it; just test us for 10 days and see what happens. Eunuch agrees.
  - v. The experiment goes very well.
    - 1. “they were more fit and stronger in body than the young men who ate at the king’s table.”
    - 2. The eunuch then demands all the young men to keep this vegetable and water diet! Further,
      - a. “God gave them understanding and insight in all letters and wisdom [their studies!], and He gave Daniel understanding in all visions and dreams.”

- b. They stand before the king for their final oral exam and are 10X better in wisdom and understanding than “all the enchanters and wise men in all his kingdom.”
- c. “Thus Daniel continued until the first year of the reign of King Cyrus.” (kept this diet for 25+ years?)
- vi. **Question:** What is the result of their determination not to defile themselves and to go on this vegetable and water diet?
  - 1. **Answer:** Blessings of health, physical strength, and wisdom, plus Daniel's ability to understand visions and dreams.
- c. This is a nice, interesting story, but is there anything significant for us to learn from it?
  - i. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
    - 1. All Scripture (to Timothy) was the Old Testament!
  - ii. Questions:
    - 1. What are we to learn from this story? Is there instruction, reproof, or correction here for us? Could there be a lesson in this story to help equip us for every good work?
    - 2. Why would eating the king's food and wine defile Daniel and his three friends? Are there foods that might defile us? Should we be on a vegetable and water diet?
    - 3. Did the vegetable diet make them 10 times wiser than all the other wise men of Babylon? (supernatural brain food?)
- d. “‘And Daniel purposed in his heart.’ Oh, blessed are they who thus kept the covenant of the fathers, and transgressed not the law given by Moses, but feared the God proclaimed by him. These, *though captives in a strange land, were not seduced by delicate meats, nor were they slaves to the pleasures of wine, nor were they caught by the bait of princely glory.* But they kept their mouth holy and pure, that pure speech might proceed from their pure mouths, and praise with such (mouths) the heavenly Father.” (ANF 5.185, *Fragments from Commentaries*, Hippolytus c. 170-236, leading elders in Rome, died a martyr.)
  - i. Not seduced by the king's food and wine

- ii. Not caught by the bait of princely glory (as they arose in the ranks of government)
  - iii. They kept their mouths holy (set apart for special purposes) so they could have pure speech and glorify God with their mouths!
- e. Focussing on food and wine, what about this? Didn't Jesus declare all foods clean?
- i. Read **Mark 7:14-22**
  - ii. Jesus' point: the Jews are no longer under the dietary laws of Moses (His disciples are not defiling themselves when not washing their hands before they eat).
  - iii. **Question:** As Christians, can we eat anything? Are there ways we can defile our bodies by what we eat?
    1. A rock?
    2. A poisonous mushroom?
    3. A cocaine-lased brownie?
    4. A marijuana-lased brownie in MA? (Story of a brother taking marijuana for medicinal reasons)
- f. Wisdom of Sirach
- i. **Wisdom of Sirach 31:12-30**
    1. Gluttony, greed of the eye, eating like a human (!), discipline in eating.
    2. Healthy sleep depends on moderate eating, rising early in good spirits vs. sleeplessness, nausea, and indigestion when you stuff yourself
    3. Wine in moderation brings joy and gladness; too much brings bitterness, irritation, and anger.
  - ii. **Wisdom of Sirach 37:27-31**
    1. Not everything is profitable for everyone.
    2. "test your soul and see what is bad for it and do not give in to that...."
    3. How do I feel after I eat? (content, good, grateful, or bloated, crashing, nausea, indigestion, etc.)

g. Paul

i. Read **Philippians 3:17-19**

1. Characteristic of someone who is an enemy of the cross: their god is their belly; minds set on earthly things.

ii. Read **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

1. Context: the sin of sexual immorality, but starts with food. Consider the principal.
2. Paul says he will not be brought under the power of anything that is lawful (but not helpful).
3. The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord. God will raise up our bodies.
4. We can sin against our body.
5. Our bodies are temples of the holy spirit.
6. We are not our own.
7. We are to glorify God with our bodies, which belong to God.
8. Can't commit sexual immorality!
9. Are we glorifying God with our bodies through our eating?

h. Casey Means, *Good Energy*.

- i. Connection between our health and the food that we eat.
- ii. How "real food" (nonprocessed) can significantly improve our metabolic function and prevent all types of diseases: depression, anxiety, insomnia, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's, dementia, and cancer.
- iii. The food we eat literally becomes the cells of our body!
- iv. See also Tucker Carlson's interview with Casey and Calley Means at <https://youtu.be/mUH4Co2wE-I?si=0emEKffle83 -Eed>
- v. God gave us food as a blessing. Elders are to practice hospitality (sharing food with others is important to God). We are to feed the hungry. We are to give thanks for this wonderful gift as God sustains us.
  1. Are we eating real food? How healthy is the food we are eating?

2. Start reading labels. Educate yourself.
3. Am I glorifying God with my body? Or am I pounding my body (and that of my children) with stuff that it was not designed to eat because it has been processed and re-engineered in a way that makes it very different than what God provided/intended?

#### IV. Other Examples of Daniel's Fasting

##### a. Read **Daniel 9:1-26**

- i. 1<sup>st</sup> year of King Darius, Daniel is older (Nebuchadnezzar at least 25 years, Belshazzar, Darius, then Cyrus)
- ii. Confessing sin, begging for mercy
- iii. Hear! Forgive! Act! Do not delay!
- iv. By your mercy, not our righteousness. Position of humility, prayer, and fasting.
- v. This type of prayer and fasting taps into the power of angels!
  1. (compare to Pharisees who fasted 2x a week and tithed for the poor, yet proud, wicked, rebuked)
- vi. Angel Gabriel appears after hearing Daniel's prayers.
  1. And the end will come to sin, lawlessness will be wiped out, ushering in an everlasting righteousness; and the Anointed One (the Christ) shall be put to death.

##### b. Read **Daniel 10:1-6, 10-14**

- i. 3<sup>rd</sup> year of *Cyrus*. Three weeks of partial fasting (no meat or wine or desirable food), and then a great vision comes to him.
- ii. "...from the first day you set your heart to understand and *to afflict yourself before your God* [fasting!], your words were heard; and I came because of your words....."
- iii. Great spiritual battle raging between Gabriel and Satan or some other angel of darkness.
- iv. An angel comes and strengthens Daniel.
- v. Great spiritual power and action due to Daniel's partial fast and prayer.

## V. What Did Jesus Teach Us About Fasting?

- a. Jesus fasted
  - i. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.” (**Matthew 4:1-2**)
  - ii. The first temptation was with food.
  - iii. Jesus engages in great spiritual battle with the enemy while NOT eating.
    1. This is good. He overcomes.
    2. “Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.” (vs. 11)
  - iv. **Question:** did Jesus fast at other times? (I think so!)
- b. Jesus’ disciples will fast
  - i. Read **Matthew 9:14-15**
- c. How we should fast
  - i. Read **Matthew 6:16-18**
  - ii. Don’t disfigure your faces; don’t appear to be like those who fast (weak, tired, afflicted!)
  - iii. Do it in secret, and your Father will reward you!
- d. My journey with fasting. It is hard. Be patient. Let God lead you. This is something we will learn with practice, and God will help us. Very powerful, simple, but difficult. We are tapping into great spiritual power, and there will be spiritual opposition!
  - i. Try different things. Times. Try a partial fast.
  - ii. Be patient. I think Daniel grew in his fasting over many decades. Became a “good faster”!

## VI. Early Christian quotes on food and fasting

- a. “There is discrimination to be employed in reference to food. It is to be simple, truly plain, suiting precisely simple and artless children – as ministering to life, not to luxury.” (Clement of Alexandria, an early Christian teacher, c. 195, ANF 2.237)

- b. "They emasculate plain food, namely bread. For they strain off the nourishing part of the grain, so that the necessary part of food becomes a matter of reproach to luxury." (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195, ANF 2.238)
  - i. Removing the bran and wheat germ, the good stuff with all the nutrients that God made for us, for the sake of "luxury"!
- c. The early Christians fasted on Wednesdays (Jesus' betrayal) and Fridays (Jesus' crucifixion), time of mourning and sharing in "suffering". But, an elder could be removed from his position if he fasted on Sunday (day of resurrection, rejoicing, gladness)!
- d. Tertullian, *On Fasting*, ANF 4.107, c. 160-230, Carthage Africa
  - i. Speaks of the "partial fast" or "Xerophagy" (zi-rof-uh-jee)
    - 1. "dry eating", from Greek ξηρός "dry" and φαγεῖν "eat"; is a form of ancient Christian fasting in which a believer fasts from food and water until sunset, as well as abstains from meat, alcohol and succulent fruits for the one meal that is consumed after sunset.
  - ii. Tertullian references the stories we read from Daniel today to make the point that partial fasts are very powerful.
    - 1. **Daniel 1**
      - a. The four's vegetable and water diet was blessed as they were "more handsome" (stronger, more fit) and spiritually blessed with knowledge in every kind of literature, and Daniel with understanding and ability to see mysteries hidden from others (in dreams).
    - 2. **Daniel 10**
      - a. Gabriel came when Daniel fasted from meat and wine and good-tasting food as it demonstrated Daniel's humility to afflict himself, and this attracted the ears of God.
- e. From the *Pastor of Hermes* in the first half of the second century (ANF 2.35). Explains what a good fast is (note this is a partial fast!), echoing the famous fasting passage in **Isaiah 58**:
  - i. First, obey the commands of the Lord! Then...
  - ii. "... be on your guard against every evil word, and every evil desire, and purify your heart from all the vanities of this world. If you guard against these things, your fasting will be perfect. And you will do also



as follows. Having fulfilled what is written, in the day on which you fast you will taste *nothing but bread and water*; and having reckoned up the price of the dishes of that day which you intended to have eaten, you will give it to a widow, or an orphan, or to some person in want....”

## VII. Conclusion

- a. Jesus said his disciples would fast when He was taken away from them.
  - i. Let’s get on or continue the journey to learn how to do this, taking inspiration from those who have gone before us, including Daniel!
- b. Daniel, as a young man, practiced a partial fast and continued this and full-fasting through his old age. He is blessed for his humility, self-denial, and self-affliction, with health, power, wisdom, and miraculous protection.
  - i. Let us tap into these blessings through our own fasting!
- c. Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with his eating.
  - i. Let’s consider what we put in our mouths. How do we feel afterward? Are we glorifying God with our bodies?
  - ii. Let us not be seduced by the king’s food and drink!
  - iii. Let’s nourish our bodies with real food to strengthen us for the work God has prepared for us. This may require fasting from some foods!