

# **M6 IN FOCUS**

## **Insight from Matthew 6**

**January 8 Crave (Fasting with Focus)**

**January 15 Closed Doors (Praying with Focus)**

**January 22 Conflicted (Serving with Focus)**

**January 29 Consumed (Following with Focus)**

## **The Daniel Fast**

**January 9-30, 2012**

### **Guide & Commitment Card**



**Join us as we begin the New Year with a Fresh Focus on God**

# The Daniel Fast: Background

The Daniel Fast has its origin in Daniel chapter 1 and 10 in the context of the Jewish Exile in Babylon.

## Daniel 1:8-14

*But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. <sup>9</sup> Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, <sup>10</sup> but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." <sup>11</sup> Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." <sup>14</sup> So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.*

## Daniel 10:2-3

*At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. <sup>3</sup> I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.*

In chapter 1, Daniel did not want to eat the king's food for two reasons. One, he did not want to defile his body by eating foods that violated the Mosaic Law. Two, he did not want to eat food that had been sacrificed to the false Babylonian gods. In chapter 10, Daniel was observing the Passover Celebration and Feast of Unleavened Bread, which occurs during the first month of the year according to the Jewish calendar.

# The Daniel Fast: Purpose

While the Daniel Fast is a healthy choice; its primary purpose is spiritual. Daniel's choices had a spiritual foundation that resulted in God's favor. Our focus should be on finding less pleasure in the things of this world and more satisfaction in God. Jesus affirms this in the **Sermon on the Mount**.

## Matthew 5:6

*Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

## Matthew 6:9-14

*"This, then, is how you should **pray**: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

## Matthew 6:16

*"When you **fast**, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

## Matthew 6:33

*But **seek** first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Too often, the focus on fasting is on the lack of food. Instead the purpose of fasting should be on a healthy hunger and thirst for the things of God. During the Daniel Fast most people identify one area that they choose to focus their prayer life on for greater impact.

Possible prayer focus areas can be a concern related to: health, finance, work, marriage, family, children, school, church, spiritual renewal, lost friends or family, future decisions and direction. We encourage you to pick one major item for your prayer focus and seek God's will in this area.

# The Daniel Fast: Guidelines

The basic guidelines for the Daniel Fast include eating: fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, quality oils (olive, canola, peanut, etc.) and water. Some natural juices may be included if they contain no artificial additives and sugars. Coffee, tea, alcohol, and carbonated beverages are not permitted.

The Daniel Fast should eliminate all meats, pastries, chips, breads, dairy products and fried food. Breads contain yeast, baking powder and so on; those are leavening agents and should be avoided. Leaven is symbolic of sin in some Bible passages (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Fruits and vegetables are the mainstay of the Daniel Fast and can be acceptably prepared in a variety of ways. Many fasting recipes and several cookbooks are designed for the Daniel Fast. The book, *The Daniel Fast, for Spiritual Breakthrough*, by Elmer Towns provides lots of good ideas. A quick internet search will offer several options or you can go to: <http://danielfast.wordpress.com/>.

**Please consult your doctor if you have any health concerns related to this fast.**

The Daniel Fast is very healthy and at the same time a very powerful spiritual discipline. Coupled with prayer and genuineness you can open yourself up to God's Spirit in a refreshing and powerful way.

It is important to note that the Bible nowhere commands believers to observe a Daniel fast. As a result, it is a matter of Christian freedom whether to observe a Daniel fast. At the same time, the Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial. Fasting and prayer are often linked together. The book of Acts shows the early church worshipping and fasting resulting in God's mission of redemption being accomplished through them.

## **Acts 13:2-3**

*While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."<sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

# The Daniel Fast: Commitment

The Daniel Fast is a serious commitment and a vow that you make to God. We encourage you to carefully and prayerfully consider this commitment.

It is a **time** commitment. Choose a start and end time for this commitment. If this is your first fast we encourage you to make a reasonable commitment that you will be able to honor.

It is a **lifestyle** commitment. Make the necessary household, work, school, diet and budget decisions that will help you and your family fulfill this commitment.

It is a **healthy** commitment. In a day and age that promotes healthy choices this commitment will provide your system with good nutrients and cleanse your body of unhealthy toxins and agents.

It is a **faith** commitment. We fully recognize that without faith we cannot please God and certainly our prayer life is powerless (Hebrews 11:6, Luke 11:22-24).

Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount that our commitment to God is important.

## **Matthew 5:33**

*Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.'*

# The Daniel Fast: Commitment Card

**Step 1:** Is this a commitment that you sense God is leading you to make? Circle: Yes or No!

**Step 2:** Check the fasting option God is leading you to make:

\_\_\_ **Option 1:** 10 Day Daniel Fast (could begin January 20<sup>th</sup> and end on January 30<sup>th</sup>)

\_\_\_ **Option 2:** 21 Day Daniel Fast (could begin January 9<sup>th</sup> and end on January 30<sup>th</sup>)

\_\_\_ **Option 3:** One Day Fast, Lunch Fast, Media Fast, other:

**Step 3:** What is your fasting time frame? Start date:

End dated:

**Step 4:** What is God leading me to pray about during this fast:

**Step 5:** Ask God to help you fulfill your commitment to Him.

*By the strength and grace of God I commit to the above fast.*

Signed:

Dated:

*Daniel resolved not to defile himself...*

Daniel 1:8