

From The Desk of The Pastor

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe that 2023 is behind us and we stand at the beginning of another year. We are grateful to God for all that He has done, and we look forward to what the Lord has in store for us. One of the ways we can prepare to move forward into what God is in store is through the spiritual discipline of fasting.

This is our *sixth* year of the Daniel Fast, and I believe with each fasting season, we are growing and developing into becoming what God desires, both individually and collectively. There are several things for which I am seeking God for Bethel, including the purchase of property, as well as the growth of several ministries within our congregation. What are you seeking from God in this season?

This year's Daniel Fast Guide provides three biblical passages that illustrate believers overcoming obstacles in order to do God's will. The daily readings and weekly reflections provide an opportunity to learn how we too can overcome obstacles. I pray that this year's Daniel Fast will bring each of us closer to God, and align us to God's will for our lives.

Sincerely,

Mashod A. Evans, Sr.

Rev. Mashod A. Evans, Sr..

Servant of God

What is The Daniel Fast?

The Daniel Fast is a Biblically—based fast inspired by the Old Testament prophet, Daniel. According to the scriptures, Daniel abstained from meat, wine, and other delicacies while praying for God's favor, which came after twenty-days of fasting and praying. (Daniel 1:8-16, 10: 2-3) He only ate fruits, vegetables and whole foods and drank water.

As twenty-first century disciples, we can apply this same spiritual discipline as we seek God's favor, vision, protection, power and much more. During the Daniel Fast, faster abstain from the consumption of all meats, animal by-products (including eggs and dairy), fried foods, refined sugars, alcohol, and caffeine. The fasting is accompanied by a commitment to prayer, meditation, and study of God's word for the twenty-one days.

The purpose of the fast is to be strengthened spiritually, mentally and physically while seeking discernment and direction from God.

Essentials for The Daniel Fast

(adapted from The Daniel Plan www.thedanielplan.com)

FAITH God is the power and energy behind all positive transformations including lifestyle changes necessary for you to become healthy. As you complete The Daniel Fast, you will discover that you have a part to play in improving your spiritual, mental, and physical health, but God will energize your efforts and that you can rely on God's strength to do it (Philippians 4:13).

FOOD The Daniel Fast is about abundance, not deprivation. You will be invited to eat delicious whole foods that bring vitality and energy to your body and mind. It's all about learning that even your food choices can honor God and his purposes for your life (1 Corinthians 10:31).

FOCUS In a world where so many distractions compete for your attention, it is more important than ever to renew your mind with truth (Romans 12:2) and break negative thought patterns. Focus your thoughts on God's plan and priorities for your life. Express your gratitude to God and make the choice to dwell in God's goodness.

FRIENDS/FAMILY/COMMUNITY The Bible says God created the universe in such a way that we need each other. We pray that as we complete this spiritual journey together, that the bonds and connections of our church family will be strengthened. We also pray that during this fast you will make an initiative to connect with your individual families as well as your members of your community to uplift, encourage and inspire others.

FOOD TO BE INCLUDED IN THE DANIEL FAST

All fruits. Fruits include but are not limited to apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos,

tangerines, watermelon. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned (no sugar added).

All vegetables. Vegetables include but are not limited to artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned.

All whole grains, including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds, including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame, walnuts, cashews, and pecans. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

All legumes. Legumes include but are not limited to dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans. These can be fresh, frozen, canned or dried.

All quality oils including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, sesame.

Beverages: spring water, distilled water or other pure waters, herbal teas (non—caffeinated) all %100 fruit and vegetable juices.

Other: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

FOODS TO BE AVOIDED DURING DANIEL FAST

All meat and animal products including but not limited to beef, lamb, pork, poultry, wild game and fish * (see note below). All dairy products including but not limited to milk, cheese, cream, butter and eggs.

All sweeteners including but not limited to sugar, syrups, corn syrup, molasses, and artificial sweeteners.

All refined and processed food products including but not limited to leavened bread ,artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, yeast, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

Other: Alcohol, caffeine.

* **FISH OPTION:** For those who choose, fish can be consumed **twice a week**.

(Please note: 1. The fish allowance is for two *meals* per week, not two entire days per week. 2. This **does not** include shellfish; lobster, crab shrimp. 3. The fish cannot be fried.)

WEEK 1

This week's focus is **GOD'S CALL**. Each of us has a purpose for which God has created us, each of us has an assignment to which God calls us. Our job is to identify that purpose and to pursue it with passion. How do you know what God has called you to do? Fasting is one of the ways in which we can better hear from the Lord, and are able to accomplish what we have been called to do.

Day 1

Sunday, January 7

Join us for Church School at 8:30 a.m. and Morning Worship at 10 a.m.

Day 2

Monday, January 8

Read—1 Samuel 3: 1 - 6

Day 3

Tuesday, January 9

Read I Samuel 3:7 – 9

Day 4

Wednesday, January 10
Read I Samuel 3: 10 - 14

Day 5

Thursday, January 11
Read I Samuel 3: 15 – 18

Day 6

Friday, January 12
Read I Samuel 3: 19 – 21

Day 7

Saturday January 13
Read: Psalm 139: 1 – 5

What are your “ take—aways” from Week 1?

What do you think God is calling you to do in this season of your life?

- _____
- _____
- _____

WEEK 2

This week’s focus is on **RESISTANCE**. Why do we resist to do those things which God is calling us to do? Why do we refuse to go to the places God has instructed us to go? Through fasting, we are better able to discern the “strongholds” in our lives that has for each of us.

Day 8

Sunday, January 14
Join us for Church School at 8:30 a.m. and Morning Worship at 10 a.m.

Day 9

Monday, January 15

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Nation Holiday

Read—Jonah 1: 1 - 10

Day 10

Tuesday, January 16

Read—Jonah 1: 11 - 17

Day 11

Wednesday, January 17

Read—Jonah 2

Day 12

Thursday, January 18

Read—Jonah 3: 1 – 5

Day 13

Friday, January 19

Read—Jonah 3: 6 – 10

Day 14

Saturday, January 20

Read—Psalm 62: 6 – 14

What are your “ take—aways” from Week 2?

What is stopping you from doing what God is calling you to do in this season?

- _____
- _____
- _____

WEEK 3

During the third and final week of our fast, our theme is **MOVING FORWARD**. How do we move forward into the future that God has for us individually and collectively?

Day 15

Sunday, January 21

Join us for Church School at 8:30 a.m. and Morning Worship at 10 a.m.

Day 16

Monday, January 22

Read—Deuteronomy 8: 1—4

Day 17

Tuesday, January 23

Read—Deuteronomy 8: 5 - 10

Day 18

Wednesday, January 24

Read—Deuteronomy 8: 11 – 15

Day 19

Thursday, January 25

Read—Deuteronomy 8: 16 – 17

Day 20

Friday, January 26

Deuteronomy—8: 18 – 20

Day 21

Saturday, January 27

Read Psalm 111

What are your “ take—aways” from Week 3?

Where is God leading you in this season? What is your “next?”

- _____
- _____

Closing Prayer

Here we are God, at the end of our twenty—one day journey, and we are GRATEFUL! We are grateful for the road we have traveled, and for the power and presence of Your Holy Spirit that has been with us each and every step of the way. We are grateful for the grace You have given. Even when we fell short, when we messed up, when we threw in the towel, You did not give up on us.

We are grateful for the good and great things You have in store for each of us. Help us to know that this is not an end, but rather a beginning. A beginning of a renewed relationship with You, and a new level of service and faith. Thank You for bringing us to this point and place. However never allow us to be content and complacent. Encourage and equip us for new journeys, and new opportunities for worship, witnessing, and ministry. In Jesus' Name—AMEN

A SPECIAL NOTE FOR THOSE WITH LIMITATIONS

As we have shared, fasting is a spiritual discipline which brings us closer to God and closer to God's will for our lives. However, there are those for whom fasting from foods, even certain types of foods, (as with the Daniel Fast), can create or aggravate other medical conditions.

A very common medical concern is for diabetics, who like many Daniel fasters will fill the void of meat, meat products, and dairy, with foods high in natural sugar (fruit) and high in carbohydrates (potatoes, beans, whole grain pastas, brown rice, etc.), which can effect ones blood sugar level. For diabetics, we strongly encourage you to seek advice from your physician prior to starting the fast. You may need to modify the fast and focus on several items you can give up such as fried foods, or coffee.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS—Please consult your physician if you have any medical conditions which might make the fasting inadvisable. Some fasters may need to modify the fast in order to ensure a healthy and sustainable fast experience.

CHILDREN Parents have also asked if their children could/ should participate in the

Daniel Fast. Young children need proper nutrition to grow and be healthy and whole. While fasting as a family can be spiritually beneficial, young children (under the age of 12), should not be forced to participate. However families may sit down together and come up with alternatives to a complete Daniel Fast including;