

Biblical Examples of Fasting

1. Moses Fasted Before Receiving the Commandments – Deuteronomy 9:9-18

Moses fasted for 40 days when he went up to the mountain to receive the commandments of God written on stone tablets. This was an unusual and miraculous fast if we take it at face value. Moses says that he did not eat food nor drink water during the 40 days (Deuteronomy 9:9). Let's assume that means he did not drink anything else either. A human body cannot survive extended periods of time without water unless God works some kind of miracle. After he came down from the mountain of God and saw the people transgressing the commandments that were just given, Moses angrily breaks the tablets of stone. After a time he ascends the mountain once again and proceeds to fast another 40 days without food and water before receiving the law once more (Deuteronomy 9:18, 25, 26; 10:10).

2. David Mourning His Child's Illness – 2 Samuel 12:1-23

After David had committed adultery with Bathsheba he learned that she was pregnant. David had her husband executed so that he could take her to be his wife. At some point after the baby was born Nathan the prophet confronted David about his sin. David confessed and repented (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

Even though David repented before God, there were still consequences for his actions. The prophet told David that the child would die. After the prophet left, the young boy became very ill. David immediately went into prayer and fasting for his son. He knew that God said the child would die, but he had

Biblical Examples of Fasting

hoped that he might find grace in the eyes of God. David refused to eat while the child was ill. After the seventh day his son died. When David's servants told him about the child's death, David cleaned himself up, ceased from his mourning and began to eat once again (2 Samuel 12:15-20). The servants were surprised by the actions of the king. But David said that now that the child had died, there was nothing that could be done. He would one day see his son again in Heaven (2 Samuel 12:23).

3. Elijah Fasted While Escaping Jezebel – 1 Kings 19:4-8

Wicked Queen Jezebel threatened to kill the prophet [Elijah](#) after he won the great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Elijah fled to Beer-sheba where he left his servant. Then he traveled alone another day into the wilderness. Elijah found a juniper tree and rested. He prayed to God to allow him to die. He did not really want to die. If he did he could have stayed where he was and let the queen take care of him. Elijah was very discouraged and lay down for a nap. An angel came and fed him (1 Kings 19:5, 6). Elijah took the food and then went back to sleep. After being fed by the angel a second time, Elijah prepared for a great journey. The Bible says that Elijah traveled for 40 days in the strength of that food until he arrived at Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:7, 8). This is the same mountain where Moses received the 10 Commandments. It was called Mount Sinai during Moses' time.

4. Ezra Fasted While Mourning Over Sin – Ezra 10:6-17

The Jews began to return to Israel after the Babylonian captivity. Yet they had disobeyed God's laws during their

Biblical Examples of Fasting

captivity. Ezra gathered the people together to confront them for their sins. Ezra 10:6 does not say specifically how long his fast was (though there is indication that it lasted 3 days while waiting for the people to gather). The Bible does tell us that he did not eat any bread and only drank water during this fast. He fasted because he was mourning the sins of those who had been carried away from Israel but had finally returned.

5. Esther Fasted for the Safety of the Jews – Esther 4:15-17

Mordecai heard that the Jews were to be exterminated from the kingdom of Ahasuerus. This kingdom stretched from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1). The reason for the genocide was because one man, Haman, did not like Mordecai and his family. He felt that Mordecai did not show him proper respect. [Queen Esther](#) was a Jew but Haman did not know this.

Mordecai came to his cousin Esther to ask her to petition the king to spare the Jews. Because of royal tradition, it was not appropriate for Esther to enter the king's court without an invitation. Even as queen she could be executed for approaching the king without an invitation (Esther 4:11).

Mordecai told Esther that God may have given her the position in the kingdom that she had for the sole purpose of saving the Jewish race (Esther 4:14). She agreed to approach the king, but she asked Mordecai to spread the word to the Jews that they should fast for 3 days without food or drink. She fasted in the same manner. Thankfully Esther was accepted into the presence of the king and the Jewish people were saved.

6. Darius Fasted For the Safety of Daniel – Daniel 6:18-23

Biblical Examples of Fasting

King Darius was tricked into signing a law that put his friend Daniel in grave danger. A law was proposed that for 30 days no one could pray to, or ask help from, any deity or power except the king. The men who wrote the law knew that Daniel prayed three times a day to God. They had the king sign the law so that they could trap Daniel and get rid of him from the kingdom (Daniel 6:4-9). The punishment for this crime was to be cast into a den of lions. Of course Daniel was caught praying to God. He was brought before the king who had no ability to back out of the law even though Daniel was his friend. King Darius said that he hoped Daniel's God would be powerful enough to save Daniel from being eaten. Then Darius went to his home and fasted (Daniel 6:18). The Bible does not say what this fast included but it seems to indicate it was more than just food. We are told that the king did not allow music to be played that night. He also did not sleep. The king forfeited more than food for his fast. King Darius was relieved to find that Daniel survived the night. Darius then proclaimed that Daniel's God was the true God. The king even declared that God's power was greater than all the kingdoms of the earth. He proclaimed that God's kingdom would be established forever (Daniel 6:25-28).

7. Daniel Fasted for an Answer to Prayer – Daniel 10:1-3

Daniel fasted and prayed for understanding of a vision in Daniel 10. Verses 2 and 3 tell us that this fast was for 3 weeks. The vision Daniel saw showed what would become of the people of God in the future. A "Daniel Fast" is characterized by only eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Daniel abstained from "pleasant bread," meat, and wine. These words, along with Daniel's other fast (Daniel 1:12, 15, 16), are the basis for what many call a "Daniel fast."

Biblical Examples of Fasting

It is a type of fasting that is characterized by only eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains. The only drink approved for the fast is water. There are variations in what foods are considered appropriate on this fast, but those are the generally accepted guidelines.

8. Jesus Fasted Before Temptation by Satan – Matthew 4:1-2

Before Jesus was tempted by Satan and before He started His public ministry, He fasted 40 days. The Bible says that Jesus was lead by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1). This verse indicates that the purpose of Christ going into the wilderness was for the temptation that would come. Verse 2 tells us that for 40 days and nights before He was subjected to a personal attack by Satan, Jesus fasted. Though physically weak (Jesus was hungry), Jesus was spiritually well prepared for the temptation that followed.

9. Paul Fasted After His Conversion – Acts 9:1-9

Saul was a man who persecuted Christians. He had gotten permission from the Jewish leadership to go to Damascus and arrest any who claimed allegiance to Christ. Along the way to Damascus Saul (whose name was later changed to Paul) had a personal encounter with the Lord. We call this [his conversion](#) on the road to Damascus. Part of this encounter involved a bright light which left Paul blinded. Paul was in Damascus for 3 days without sight. He also did not eat or drink (Acts 9:9). This could have been because of repentance or shock for everything that had recently transpired. Either way, Paul sacrificed food and drink for 3 days in exchanged for a relationship with the Lord.

Biblical Examples of Fasting

10. Church Elders in Antioch Fasted Before Sending out Missionaries – Acts 13:1-3

Barnabas took Paul to Antioch. The older Christian saw something in the new convert that others could not see. Barnabas actively worked to train Paul in the teachings of Christianity. After a time of fasting and prayer the Holy Spirit told the leaders of the church to separate Paul and Barnabas for a special work (Acts 13:2, 3). These two men were sent from the church as the first missionaries. Barnabas and Paul began their missionary journey by preaching everywhere they went.