

AWAKENING

21 DAYS OF PRAYER, FASTING AND PERSONAL DEVOTION
JANUARY 10TH - 30TH, 2011

Youth Fasting Guide & 21 Day Devotional

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Your Fasting Guide

Like prayer and Bible reading, fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines of followers of Jesus. The next few paragraphs are here to help you get your mind around fasting, and help you get started in this powerful Christian habit! BTW: this is by no means meant to be a comprehensive guide. We'll stick with simple stuff, and if you want to know more, hit up some of the online resources at www.awake21.org.

What is fasting?

Biblical fasting is, very simply, denying oneself food for the sake of seeking and honoring God. Pastor Stovall Weems says that “prayer is connecting with God; fasting is disconnecting ourselves from the World.” That’s a great way to describe the feeling. You can fast from other things that keep you connected to the World, too. Things like TV, video games, social networking, chatrooms and more.

Why should I fast?

Over time, it’s very easy for our souls to get “gunked up”. Fasting is a way to give our bodies and our souls a deep cleaning. When we do, we find that not only do we feel better, but as we draw closer to God, we are more in tune with His voice.

How do I fast?

There are several different types of fasts. In this guide and over these next twenty one days, we have laid out a plan that will help you detach from some of the distractions of everyday life. This twenty-one day plan also involves cutting out some food items, and throws in a few days where you only drink liquids (like juices, smoothies and such) and other days where you’ll eat just fruits and vegetables.

The plan provided in this guide is just that – a guide. Feel free to mix it up, or create your own. The main thing is remember – don’t make this time all about what you eat, or don’t eat. This is all about drawing closer to God and replacing some of our common distractions with time to pray, read our Bibles and seek God like never before.

For this fasting guide, we are also outlining a fasting calendar. It’s a schedule which includes fasting from distractions as well as from food. On days where you will be fasting from facebook, TV, or other distractions, give ‘em up for the whole day. On days where you are fasting from food, or specific food items, do what you feel challenges you spiritually. Don’t hesitate to get out of your comfort zone. If you have fasted before, mix in a few extra days of fasting from food and go all liquids. Go for it! You’ll be glad you did.

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How should I prepare to fast?

For a 1-day fast, it doesn't take much preparation. It's best to slow down your eating before the fast, then pick it back up slowly by eating small, simple foods. For a longer fast, DEFINITELY prepare this way. It's smart to plan ahead and make sure you'll have plenty of the fruits, vegetables, juices, etc. on hand. If not, you're likely to overeat at your next meal, and that's never a good choice!

What should I do while fasting?

Drink lots of water. Pray. Read your Bible. Listen to worship music. Think. The space provided in this devotional for you to journal is designed to help you in all that.

How to Use this Journal:

Very simply, carve out a quiet time each day. It's best to do this in the morning. Why? Because once your day begins, there will be a million distractions. Learn to put God first in your day, and He will multiply your time. You'll find that you get more done in less time.

During your quiet time, go through the daily devotional this way:

1. Scripture: Read the Scripture passage and short commentary
2. Observe: Think about what you see that clicks with you. What do you think it means? Are you going through a similar situation?
3. Application: How do you think this Scripture applies to you, personally? What is God trying to say to you through His Word?
4. Prayer: Pray and ask Jesus to make those applications real. Is there something you need to change? Someone you need to speak to? Apologize to? A different way you need to act? Is there something God is asking you to do that you've never done before?

Yep, that flow spells: "SOAP." Wash your brain with the Word of God. Easy to remember. You can continue this practice in your daily time with Jesus.

Very important Notice:

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician prior to beginning your fast, especially if you are taking any medication, have a chronic condition, or are pregnant or nursing a baby.

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Day One

Fasting Item: Video Games

Daily Bible Reading: Matthew 12:9-13

Let Nothing Hold You Back

The Pharisees and the Sadducees (the religious leaders during Jesus' time) were trying to get Jesus in trouble so they could turn him over to the authorities. So they pointed out a man in the crowd with a disfigured hand and tested Jesus, asking if He would be willing to heal someone on the Sabbath (when any work was prohibited).

Jesus, fully aware of their wicked hearts, took the opportunity to show the crowd that NOTHING would keep him from his task of reaching the lost. Until Jesus arrived on the scene, this man had been overlooked, teased and ignored. However, Jesus had bigger plans for his life.

-How often do you defend those who have no one to defend them? Or reach out to those who get teased constantly, or completely ignored?

-Pray for an opportunity to reach out to someone who needs it, and a chance to share a little bit of Christ-like love. And remember, when you see that opportunity, grab it right away – Jesus did.

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Day Two

Fasting Item: Television

Daily Bible Reading: Genesis 24:1-28

Above and Beyond

Rebekah is a beautiful example of what it means to be servant-hearted. She was probably very busy that day when she went out to the well – and most likely had a long list of things to complete before sundown. However, when a complete stranger asked her for water, she not only stopped what she was doing to happily help him, but she offered to go above and beyond what was asked of her.

Rebekah received many blessings from God after she showed she was willing to gracefully go out of her way to serve even a stranger. God used her to do great things in Israel!

-We are often asked to do things for others and slowly, angrily trudge through the task as if it were torture. How often do we joyfully complete our chores properly, finish our homework early and THEN offer to help cook dinner – just because we want to?

-How can you go above and beyond by serving someone unexpectedly?

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Day Three

Fasting Item: Fast Food

Daily Bible Reading: Philippians 2:1-4

Coming In Last

Paul's life is a beautiful example of focusing on others ALL the time. As he wrote this letter, he was chained up in prison, far away from every possible comfort. While he had many prime opportunities to write and complain about the conditions of his jail cell, or the disgusting food that was occasionally thrown to him, or the fresh collection of bruises from his guards, he chose instead to encourage his readers – reminding them to put *everyone* else before themselves. His perspective is a rare and very valuable one.

-When we are feeling imprisoned by whatever life has handed us, how often do we choose to encourage those around us, instead of venting and complaining about our own situation? How do we show that the needs of those around us are more important than our own?

-Pray that God would give you a new perspective on your surroundings – and that you would begin choosing to put your friends and family before yourself.

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Day Four

Fasting Item: Daniel Fast (Eat Fruits and Vegetables Only Today)

Daily Bible Reading: Luke 10:19

Above and Beyond

“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Spiritually speaking, life is a battlefield. Most of the battles that we fight are not “of the flesh”, meaning they don’t have to do with things in the natural, but instead, they are spiritual battles. (Ephesians 6:12)

As soldiers, God gives us armor and weapons (Ephesians 6:13-18) and he gives us the power to use the artillery he has given us. In this passage in Luke, serpents are symbolic of Satan, (Rev 12:9; Gen 3:1-14) and scorpions are symbolic of evil spirits/evil men. (Rev 9:1-5; 9:10)

No matter what we face, we can be encouraged that through Christ, we have authority and dominion over negative influence we encounter.

Prayer:

God, I thank you for your sacrifice that has brought me into a relationship with you. I pray your presence is strong in my life and that my life glorifies you. I pray that your power is made manifest in my life. Thank you for the confidence of knowing that you are for me, and are always with me. Amen.

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Day Five

Fasting Item: FB/MySpace/Twitter

Daily Bible Reading: Romans 8:37

Conquerors Through Love

Because of the fallen nature of world we live in, suffering is a byproduct of humanity. Romans 8:35 outlines things we often face. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, homelessness and sin are as much a part of our world today as they were when Paul wrote of them. However, it's important to remember that these obstacles, regardless of how painful they may be, cannot separate us from the love of God.

In fact, it is into this very world, full of pestilence and grief, that God sent his son to die on the cross. And it is this love that has given us the ability to conquer even the darkest of situations.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice and for overcoming even the darkest of situations. When I see darkness, show me how I can bring your light into that situation and show people the power of your love.

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Day Six

Fasting Item: Video Games

Daily Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 17:34-35

Prepared for Battle

Many times in life, we don't really understand why we have to face certain challenges. But it's sometimes those challenges that prepare us for what lies ahead.

In that day of battle, when David faced Goliath, and was even mocked for his lack of stature, it was David's past that gave him the confidence to face the giant. David remembered what God had already brought him through. His faith in God was strong, and he knew that with God on his side, there was no way he could be defeated.

There are no doubt "giants" we will face in our future. And if we allow the challenges we face today to build up our faith in God, they will prepare us for lies ahead. We can have confidence that God will empower us with the ability to face even the most extreme circumstances with supernatural authority and power.

Prayer:

Heavenly father, I trust that you will help me overcome every challenge I face. Help me learn from the things I am going through and allow them to strengthen my faith in you.

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Day Seven

Fasting Item: Television

Daily Bible Reading: Exodus 20:1-7

Putting God First

Our God is so worthy of all our honor, love and devotion, yet He gives us the ability to choose to do so, willingly. There is nothing more satisfying than living life with God at our center. Yet many times, we allow other things to settle in and become the focus of our worship.

Setting aside time like during this season of prayer, fasting and personal devotion gets us more in tune with God. If things have gotten a bit out of place, we can put them back into alignment as we draw closer to God.

Is God the top priority in your life today? If not, what is taking His place? How can you restore Him to that place of honor He desires?

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Day Eight

Fasting Item: Sweets

Daily Bible Reading: Joshua 1:9, Romans 8:35-39

Do Not Be Afraid

From pressures at school, to what we see on the news, and what we sometimes see our friends and families go through, it's easy to be afraid of the situations we encounter in this world. Life is sure to bring it's challenges, but we can face these challenges without fear. The key is to remember God's promises to us. He is always with us giving us His strength, and nothing can ever separate us from His mighty hands!

Looking back, what events have you been through where you could've trusted God more and how might the result changed? How does that effect the way you will face challenges in the future?

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Day Nine

Fasting Item: FB/MySpace/Twitter

Daily Bible Reading: Mark 12:30-31

Love Gives

Notice Jesus' response when asked what the greatest commandment was: loving God completely, and loving others as much as yourself.

One of the greatest expressions of love is that of giving. God loved the world, so he *gave* us His son.

(John 3:16) God loved...and God gave. One of the best ways we can show the love of God to others is to give of ourselves to them: give of our time, resources, love and abilities.

Do you love God and give yourself to Him completely? In what areas of your life are you holding back and why? In what ways could you show the love of God by giving to others?

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Day Ten

Fasting Item: Texting with friends

Daily Bible Reading: Proverbs 13:20

Steps Determine Destination

“You are who you hang out with.” Oldest phrase in the book...but it is true. If you hang with people who get in trouble you will get in trouble, no doubt! You hang with people who are angry and always upset...guess what, you will be too. On the flip side, when you associate with people who do good and positive things, you will too.

Take a look at your life and see who is helping you grow in a positive way? Who are the people in your life that are leading you down a bad path? Who do you need to separate from so that you don't become like them in the future?

Think about this, and decide what steps you can take now to move forward in that direction.

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Day Eleven

Fasting Item: No Meats

Daily Bible Reading: Proverbs 29:15

Learning From Correction

Correction and discipline are never comfortable, but they both have a way of developing our personal growth. As difficult as it may be, try to learn from those experiences.

Proverbs shows us clearly that if we handle these situations properly, we grow in wisdom. Yet when we are left to ourselves and don't follow the correction given to us, we are actually hurting ourselves more and more.

Look at the last time you got punished for something, what can you learn from that experience? Take what you have learned and apply it to your life, and be thankful for the lesson you were able to take from it.

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Day Twelve

Fasting Item: Television

Daily Bible Reading: Matthew 7:24-27

Living Life Solid

Take a second to visualize a hurricane blowing against a house. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that a building made of rock is going to stand up better to that hurricane than a wooden shack.

It's interesting that this is the example we see in this scripture in Matthew. Trusting in the world's system of doing things (popularity, money, people) is living your life in the wooden shack during the storm. But putting God first and living life according to His ways is like living in a house made of rock – you'll be solid!

Think about your life for a moment. Is the foundation and structure of your life built on God, or do you tend to trust more in other things? The storm will always come...when you're "house" goes through testing, will you be able to stand against it?

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Day Thirteen

Fasting Item: FB/MySpace/Twitter

Daily Bible Reading: James 4:5-17 NLT

Power to Overcome

Some temptations we face in life are very real. But the Bible says God gives us MORE than enough strength to stand against those desires. God is on our side and wants us to succeed in being faithful to Him. He doesn't want us to go through life always bound by those things that can harm us.

This scripture in James says, that as we humble ourselves and come to God, he will lift us up. Living faithful is living completely dependent on God. It may be difficult to resist the temptations of this world from day to day, but how awesome is it to know that our God has provided us with everlasting power to stand strong and devoted to Him!

Think about an example of when you have recognized that God had given you strength to stand against an evil desire. What area(s) of your life are you not depending on God for completely? Reflect on the passage and take time to draw close to God in prayer.

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Day Fourteen

Fasting Item: Fast Food

Daily Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:10-13, 20 (NLT)

Faithfulness in Action

In this scripture, Paul gives a quick glimpse of how he and Apollos lived in the name of serving Christ. He says that they went hungry and thirsty without enough clothes to keep them warm. They endured beatings because of serving the Lord. They didn't have homes of their own. They worked hard and blessed the people who cursed them. They were patient with people who abused them and they responded in a gentle manner when people speak poorly of them. Wow, these are attributes of true faithfulness!

In vs. 20, Paul says that the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk but it is living by God's power. It is not possible to live faithful just by talking as if you do. You must live it out - by the power of God and His Holy Spirit. Even though we may never have to go through the same level of difficulty that Paul and Apollos did, when the world and everything in it is against you and you respond in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord, you are acting out true faithfulness!

Reflect and pray for God to reveal areas in your life that need to be guided by His Holy Spirit.

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Day Fifteen

Fasting Item: Sweets

Daily Bible Reading: Matthew 25:14-29

A Faithful Servant

God has provided everyone with special talents and gifts. It is important to remember that one day, we will all be held responsible for how we are using what God has given us. The Bible says that “those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away.”

What special talents, gifts, and responsibilities has God entrusted you with? How are you being faithful by using what God has entrusted you with to further His kingdom?

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Day Sixteen

Fasting Item: Daniel fast (eat only fruits and vegetables today)

Daily Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Thoughts

Have you ever realized that some things just aren't what they seem? We often have a tendency of exaggerating what is real and letting our minds play tricks on us. Maybe you notice that you get really angry when you shouldn't, or find yourself lusting after someone or something. God tells us that we must take each thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. We must be able to know the difference between a "lie" and a "truth" in our mind, so that we can control what we think about, and experience the freedom and power that God gives us over our flesh.

What do you think "take each thought captive" really means? Make a list of the negative thoughts that you have experienced and next to them write a truth, or a promise that God gives us.

(For example: Lie – "I am not very good looking and there is nothing special about me." Truth – "I am beautiful, am a great singer, and God made me perfect in His image for a specific purpose.")

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Day Seventeen

Fasting Item: Television

Daily Bible Reading: Proverbs 18:21

Words

It is often said that what lives in your heart comes out of your mouth. Using foul language, speaking degrading words to another, and spreading lies, all come from a hurt and fearful heart. We all, however, carry around wounds from our past, but that doesn't give us permission to speak carelessly and perpetuate the pain and anger to others.

God tells us that life and death are in the power of the tongue. Our words can make or break someone. Ironically whatever you speak will also live IN you. If you talk bad about others, complain all the time, or constantly express anger, that negativity will begin to grow in your spirit, and suffocate you with darkness.

Think of a time when you fought with someone and said things you didn't mean. Maybe you put someone down to make yourself feel better or win the battle. We challenge you this week to find one person that you may be thinking of right now.

Write their name down here _____ . Regardless of who was right or wrong, apologize for your words and tell them something that you like or appreciate about them.

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Day Eighteen

Fasting Item: Liquids Only Today (drink water, juices and smoothies)

Daily Bible Reading: Matthew 26:41

Actions

Sometimes it is very difficult to do the right thing. We find ourselves getting lazy, cutting corners, and making selfish decisions that temporarily satisfy the desires of our flesh, regardless of the consequences. God tells us, however, that the spirit we have inside of us always wants to do the right thing. So when we put God first in our actions, we give His spirit the power to take over, which gives us the strength to say no and stay away from the bad decisions.

Think of some bad choices that you've made. Was it worth it? What would have happened if you had thought of God first instead of yourself? How can you do things differently in the future?

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Day Nineteen

Fasting Item: FB/MySpace/Twitter

Daily Bible Reading: Galatians 6:7-9

Reap What You Sow

Most of us have heard that old saying that “what goes around comes around.” According to today’s scripture, it sounds like that saying’s pretty true, because whatever you put into a relationship or anything for that matter...is what you’ll get out of it.

We have to be intentional each day to only speak words of encouragement and kindness into others, because that is exactly what we need and want for ourselves. Yes, this sort of discipline can become extremely difficult at times, but verse 9 is telling us not to lose heart because we will be greatly rewarded in God’s perfect timing.

Who are the people in your life you could speak words of encouragement and love to, instead of fiery darts? What will you say in your next encounter with them?

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Day Twenty

Fasting Item: Video Games

Daily Bible Reading: Galatians 5:22-23

Good Fruit? Bad Fruit?

Fruit is what a person produces, or doesn't produce, and by it, you may understand their walk in life. Either they are producing great fruit, as what's described in these verses, or they are producing the complete opposite.

We need friends to surround us who are going to be by our side in a moment's time and be that love, peace, and joy in our lives.

Who are you surrounding yourself around? What kind of fruit are they producing, good or bad? If you are surrounded by a crowd of bad fruited people, what can you do to share God's love and gentleness to them?

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Day Twenty-One

Fasting Item: Television/FB/Twitter/MySpace/Texting

Daily Bible Reading: James 1:19

Lend Me An Ear

Picture this: a world where everyone patiently listened to a friend tell them about their day, and no one got angry for silly reasons. Wouldn't that be awesome?

Everyone needs a friend to talk to and blurt out what's bothering you that day. Remember, if you are that ear for someone, chances are they will be more than glad to listen to your crazy day too. Talking to a friend usually helps release frustration and anger so it doesn't bottle up too much. Let's get better at listening to what others are saying, and talking things through.

Who are the one or two people who you listen to? Are they the same as those you talk to about what's going on in your life? How can you be a better listener?

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The Next Twenty-One Days

We want to encourage you to be just as intentional about the next twenty-one days...and the twenty-one days after that...and so on. Remember, keeping the fire and zeal for God burning in your heart is what will keep your relationship with Him fresh and new. It will allow you to continue serving and obeying Him from a position of want to, and you will experience the joy of your salvation everyday—regardless of what life brings your way.

The principles you have practiced in these twenty-one days are very easy to sustain long-term. Prayer, fasting, and personal devotion are all quite simple to incorporate into your everyday life. Over these last twenty-one days, you've created space for God to fill. The best way to continue in these same practices is to keep that space open indefinitely. Don't allow it to close up! Protect that time and space with God and make it your priority each day.

Just like reading your Bible, praying, and attending church, fasting is also a lifestyle. We encourage you to establish a frequency and consistency of fasting in your life. Remember, this is not a legalistic thing. This is an "I get to experience God" thing. It is like going into heaven for a tune up, so we can keep our passion for God and enjoyment of Him at a high level. We encourage you to do the same. Figure out what works for you, commit to it, and make it a part of your life.

Every January, through Awakening we receive hundreds of testimonies from people who have participated in the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting. If you have a personal story you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you and celebrate what God has done in your life through *Awakening*. Visit us online at www.awake21.org and click on "Share Your Story With Us"

Don't ever settle for anything less than a life full of passion and spiritual zeal for God. Keep the fire for God burning in your heart and do whatever it takes to feed your spiritual hunger for God.

The tendency of fire is to go out;

watch the fire on the altar of your heart.

Anyone who has tended a fireplace knows

that it needs to be stirred up occasionally.

– William Booth

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