



COMMITTED TO THE CLIMB

A 21-DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR YOUR FASTING JOURNEY

Name: _____

Grade: _____



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY ONE

“When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions.” Matthew 5:1-2 (MSG)

The Sermon of the Mount is one of the most important messages ever spoken, but it was only spoken directly to those who were committed.

Jesus spoke at a quiet place along the mountainside, teaching about prayer and fasting. And perhaps these were the perfect people to hear such a message. They were the committed climbers, the ones who were absolutely determined to get to a higher place with Jesus.

As you begin your fast, you may see a mountain before you. You may see quite a climb, and you may be unsure if you can make it.

But Jesus is there, your climbing *companion*. He’s alongside you, encouraging you, and helping you even when you slip. You’re in this together, even through the more challenging parts of the climb. And together, you’ll make it to that nice quiet place where you can look back at the path you’ve taken. It will be a wonderful moment, a place where you’ll hear and learn directly from Jesus.

You’ll make it up to the top because you’re committed, and you’re climbing with Him.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY TWO

“When you go without eating, do not look gloomy like those who only pretend to be holy. They make their faces look very sad. They want to show people they are fasting. What I’m about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward.”
Matthew 6:16 NIRV

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us how to fast. Here, he didn’t go into the details of what you don’t eat or what you do eat. The important thing to Jesus was this: your motivation. What is your reason for fasting?

Is it to get the attention of others? One translation of this scripture tells us that some people make a big production of it. They put on sad faces, and make a big deal out of it, all so that they can get attention. Imagine how they pretend to be holy: *“Oh, look at poor us, and how much suffering we’re doing!”*

In this passage, Jesus explained that if your attitude is like that, that’s all the reward you’ll ever get. Because if you are climbing this mountain because you want to be seen by everyone, you’re climbing the wrong mountain. Although everyone will see you up there, you won’t find God up there.

With the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was talking about fasting in secret. But regardless of whether you fast in secret or as a part of a church fast, the goal is simple: a closer relationship with Him, and not to let everyone know you’re fasting.

Before you start, as with everything, be careful of your motivation. Be sure you’re fasting for the right reason. The ultimate goal of fasting is a closer relationship with our Heavenly Father. When you seek Him with all your heart, you’ll reach the highest heights, where He’ll be waiting for you with open arms.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY THREE

“By the canal that flows toward Ahava, I announced a fast. I told the people not to eat any food. In that way, we made ourselves humble in God’s sight. We prayed that He would give us and our children a safe journey. We asked Him to keep safe everything we owned.” Ezra 8:21 NIRV

Before heading up the mountain, climbers have an important decision to make. Which is the best way to go? Where do you start, and what path do you follow? Such a decision is really important! It could mean facing a more difficult journey, or it could mean facing more dangers. Or, if you spend enough time preparing, it could mean a smooth trip upwards.

Some time ago, Ezra knew he had a similar decision to make. What path would the Israelites take, and could they make it all the way? Seriously, could they possibly avoid all those dangers along the journey?

Unlike climbers today, he didn’t look to a map of the mountain. Instead, he looked to God. Our Bible tells us that Ezra announced a fast for all of his people. It was a church fast, and together they would pray for a journey free of dangers. They prayed for safety for themselves, for their children, and all their possessions. Together, they joined in prayer and fasting with one common thought: that God would keep them safe.

It’s a good reason to fast and pray. As the year begins, we’re all facing a lot of unknowns in the coming months. But we can start our adventure on the right foot! Just as Ezra did, begin the upcoming journey with fasting and prayer. Reaching the end of the year safely is a good goal, isn’t it? Although that may seem a long way off, you can and will make it okay with God’s help and guidance. Seek His assistance with fasting and prayer. You can make it up the mountain together!



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY FOUR

*“She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”
Luke 2:37 NIV*

Climbers going up Mt. Everest are recommended to stay at the Everest Base Camp a few days first. You see, before you can go really high up to the tops of these mountains, you have to spend some time at a higher elevation, getting used to the atmosphere.

In our Bibles, there was a woman named Anna that spent a lot of time getting acclimated. The Bible says she spent all her time at the temple, worshipping night and day. She prayed, and she fasted too. She spent all her time at a higher level, getting prepared for something even greater.

As you pray and fast, you’re doing the same. When we fast and pray, we’re preparing for something greater. We’re acclimating, getting our bodies and spirits ready to ascend to new heights.

Anna was one of the first people to see Jesus in the flesh. It was no doubt a high point in her life. Are you ready for a high point in your life? As you fast and pray, you’re acclimating. You’re getting ready to elevate to a new level with Him.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY FIVE

"I look up to the mountains. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord. He is the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2 NIRV

In the scripture above, David is asking a rhetorical question. That basically means he already knows the answer. He asks, "Where does my help from?" The answer is something that you know too: it's God. Our Heavenly Father created the mountains, the heaven and the earth.

He's a wonderfully big God, the Creator of the Universe. But there's a great way to catch His attention: with prayer and fasting. We stop what we're doing, and give up the things we love to do just so we can pray with God. It's an important thing to do, because it changes our focus. We start focusing more on Him, instead of all the stuff around us. And when we focus on Him, we begin to realize how great He really is.

You may be facing mountain-sized challenges this year, but don't forget how big our God is. When you fast and pray, you're seeking Him first.

Where does your help come from? It comes from the Lord. He's the Maker of heaven and the earth.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY SIX

“Jesus replied, ‘Things that are impossible with people are possible with God.’ ”
Luke 18:27 NIRV

What are you praying for? Some people pray for healing for themselves, or for others. Some people pray for guidance in the new year, or perhaps they pray for good grades, for friends, or for help with the bills. Some people are praying for others, that they can experience God’s love like never before.

Whatever it is that you’re praying for, the chances may seem like one in a million. It may seem impossible. But we serve a God who is an expert at the impossible. Simply put, no mountain is too high, and no ocean too wide.

Don’t let the impossible stop you. Jesus said in Luke 18:27 (NIRV), *“Things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”* When we fast and pray, we’re getting in touch with the God who heals, helps, and saves. We’re connecting with our Heavenly Father, who makes the impossible possible.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY SEVEN

“God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.” Psalm 53:2 NIV

What a view! From the top of Mount Washington, you can see six states, and on a clear day, even the ocean as well. After a bit of effort and a good climb, you can see quite a distance. It’s definitely worth all the struggle it took to get there.

As you fast, and as you pray, you’re getting to a similar place. Sure, it may seem like a big climb. But just wait until you see the view! You won’t be able to see six states, but *will* be able to see things a lot more differently, and probably a lot more clearly.

You see, fasting and prayer brings us to a higher elevation. That’s a place where we can see farther ahead, and farther behind too. It’s a higher altitude where God shows us more.

But we can only get there with a bit of effort, right? Just like with climbing a mountain, you just have to keep moving one step forward at a time. Don’t give up, because soon you’ll be at the top.

And when you’re there, you’ll take in that incredible view, and suddenly get the big picture. You’ll see the wonder of His creation. Problems will suddenly seem smaller when you have a God’s eye view of things. Not only that, but you can also see more clearly the paths you need to take, and where they’ll lead to as well! There is so much to be gained when you reach a higher level with our Heavenly Father!

As you fast and pray, you’re heading up to that place. So don’t give up. Don’t stop praying. Soon, you’ll be at the top, and soon you’ll be seeing things much more clearly. And yes, soon you’ll be taking in quite a view.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY EIGHT

“Don’t you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is in you, and you have received the Spirit from God. You do not belong to yourselves.”
1 Corinthians 6:19 NIRV

In order to climb up a mountain, it goes without saying that you should probably stay healthy. Mountaineers that hope to find themselves on top of the peak need to be in pretty good shape.

Do you think anyone could ever get to the top of any big mountain if all they do is sit around and eat chocolate candy? As great as that sounds, the answer is obviously no.

This is one of the benefits of a fast. It can be hard to break away from candy and sugar, but when you do, you’re doing your body a big favor. Yes, eating healthy is taking good care of your body. That’s a great thing, because believe it or not, you *need* your body.

When we take care of our health, we make ourselves available for God and His purposes. Picture this: God wants Moses to come up the mountain to get the Ten Commandments, but Moses says, “Uh... I can’t do that. Maybe Joshua or somebody can carry me up?”

As ridiculous as that sounds, there’s a grain of truth there. Moses was physically fit, as were all the other heroes from the Bible. And God wants you to be fit as well. This is why a fast is so great for our bodies: it is like hitting the reset button on our eating habits. Once off the fast, you can return to eating a little more of what you did before, but hopefully making healthier choices.

And once that happens, you’ll be fit and ready to tackle those challenges that come your way. You’ll be on top of the world!



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY NINE

“Let us not become tired of doing good. At the right time we will gather a crop if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9 NIRV

There’s a popular expression mountain climbers have: “Every mountain top is within reach if you just keep climbing.”

The point is simply this: you’ll get there, if you just don’t give up. While fasting and praying, there might be a strong temptation to do just that: give up. Whatever goal you have might be a long ways off, and if you start focusing too hard on how far away things may seem, you might get overwhelmed. How can you possibly make it?

Just keep climbing. Don’t give up!

One way to be encouraged is this: look upon each step you take, and see how they are adding up. There’s another old expression that goes like this: “The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.”

Small choices add up, and pile upon one another until you have something amazing to look back upon. It might not seem like much now, but you have to see that big picture when all is said and done.

The greatest success for your life is not that far away, and in fact is getting closer every day with each small step you take. When you fast and you pray, you’re making sure those steps you take are pointed in the right direction. You’re also making sure your feet are planted firmly where they should be. Just keep going. Keep fasting. Keep praying. Keep climbing. And don’t give up!



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY TEN

“He must become greater; I must become less.” John 3:30 NIV

Without prayer, fasting is *not* fasting. It’s just a diet. While that may seem obvious, some people might miss the whole point of a fast! Of course, if you’re reading this devotional, we’re guessing you’re not one of those people.

Cutting back on sweets, or whatever it is we choose to have less of, is fine on its own. But the real strength and power comes when we pray, and spend more time with our Heavenly Father. You see? Less really is *more*.

When you decide to have less food, less candy, less television, or even less video games, you’re creating an opening in your schedule – and your heart! Why not fill it with more prayer, more reading, and more help for the church? You’re making more room for God in your life, and when you do that, you’re opening your life to miraculous power, amazing grace, indescribable love, and so much more that if we were to list it all, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that could be written.

Summed up in one phrase, fasting is this simple: “More of Him, Less of Me.” That’s what you’re doing on this fast. You’re making more room for God to be in your life. And trust us: that is never, *ever* a bad thing.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY ELEVEN

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21 NIV

Fasting isn't about losing weight. It's about gaining vision. It isn't about losing food, television, video games, social media, or any of those other cravings that you may be thinking a lot about. It's more about what you'll gain.

Consider this: you're a climber, and you're about to go to a new level, higher than you've ever been before. It's going to be exciting! On the counter before you is a hamburger, a video game controller, a cell phone, an ice cream, and some climbing gear. What do you pick up if you want to go higher?

It's not a trick question. You pick up the climbing gear, right? But in order to do that, you have to let go of all the other stuff for a while. You don't see pictures of mountain climbers struggling up the side of a steep ledge, while holding a bacon double cheeseburger!

And that's how it is with this fast. You're letting go of all of these other things, all because you're ready to go further.

A lot of the time, we tend to focus on what we're doing without. Our minds want to focus fully on craving sweets or anything else we may be giving up for a season. But during this fast, don't focus on what you'll be losing. Focus instead on what you'll be getting.

You could be dying for a banana split right now. But when you kill those desires, and instead focus on God, you'll be gaining so much more! Paul put it even better, in Philippians 1:21: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die *is gain*.”



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY TWELVE

*“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”
Hebrews 11:6 NIV*

You just can't start climbing a mountain today without any kind of planning. It takes training, and it takes some effort ahead of time. Before you can get to that mountain peak experience, it takes quite a bit of learning and preparation.

That's what fasting is all about. Before Jesus began his ministry, he himself went off to the wilderness to pray and fast for forty days. Before getting the Ten Commandments, Moses fasted for forty days. Before getting a revelation from God, Daniel fasted for twenty-one days. The model is simple: fasting is the key that opens the door to something greater.

But fasting takes effort, doesn't it? All training does. Saying you want to get to the top is one thing, but if it's going to really happen, you have to do something about it.

So get your game face on, and get ready for an incredible training session! Yes, fasting takes effort. It takes sacrifice, and it can be quite a challenge. But once you start taking action, the Lord Himself will be with you for the climb. He'll be right there alongside you, every step of your journey. He sees the effort you're taking in every step, and yes, He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY THIRTEEN

“Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10 NIV

There are places on this earth that no man has ever stepped. Link Sar is the name of a mountain in Pakistan, about 23,100 feet tall. Until 2015, no one had ever stepped foot on top of any part of this mountain. In that year, two intrepid climbers finally made their way to the top of the western peak. It was an amazing climb, and as far as anyone knows, these are the only two people to set foot up there. Ever!

Perhaps that's part of the appeal of climbing, getting so extremely far away from everyone and anything. You're on your own up there, away from it all. Your focus is only on reaching some place higher, away from all the distractions of this world. Imagine being on top like that, looking over the beauty of God's creation, quiet and still.

In our Bibles, the Lord tells us to “Be still and know that I am God.” There's power in getting away from all of the busy activities in life. There's power in getting off of social media, turning off the television, and putting away the video games. There's power in setting aside certain foods. There's power in being still.

When we're still and quiet, alone with God, we can see the evidence of His work around us. Better still, we can hear His voice giving us guidance, comfort, and peace.

Sure, it takes a bit of time to get to that place where you're alone with Him. And you may not know many others that are willing to go that far. But He's there, waiting for you at the top, just hoping you'll set aside all the busyness of life. You can do it. Come on up there above it all, have a seat beside Him, and just be still.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY FOURTEEN

*"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way."
Psalm 37:23 KJV*

Climbing technique is important, but there are times the unexpected occurs, and you just have to throw that out the window. The most important thing is getting to the top. And with that in mind, it's important not to get so hung up about how you got there. Your footsteps are ordered of the Lord, so follow them on up!

Your fast has a goal, and that's to get closer to God. Each day you're praying more, reading the Bible more, and reading more from devotionals like this one. In order to do that, each day you're putting aside sweets, meat, or video games and television.

There is nothing in the Bible about television or video games. The word "candy" doesn't appear either. But the word "sacrifice" does. You see, to some people, giving up these things for a few weeks is clearly a sacrifice.

The point is this: don't get caught up in legalism. Do you know what that is? It's being so obsessed with the rules and the law that you miss out on the whole point of fasting. It's about giving more of yourself to God.

That happens when we give up something like food, or any of the other things we sacrifice. And that happens when we pray more, worship more, and read our Bibles more. When we do that, we'll get to our goal.

So what if you're doing it a little differently? If you're reading, praying, and worshipping more, then you're getting to the top. And that's all that matters, a closer relationship with our Heavenly Father.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY FIFTEEN

“Suppose either of them falls down. Then the one can help the other one up.”
Ecclesiastes 4:10 NIRV

You can do a solo climb, but the higher up you go, the best thing to do is to climb with a friend or two. Even better, the safest climbers are attached to one another by a long rope. You may have seen these mountaineers before, each climbing separately, but each tethered together by a strong cord. The reason is simple: if one person slips, then the others can keep that climber from falling. Together they motivate one another and help each other reach the top. Consider the first person to climb to the top of Mt. Everest. Nobody knows which person got there first, because Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the summit together *as a team*.

That’s what a church fast is like. We’re all in it together, working as a team to go to higher levels!

The Bible has examples of entire nations fasting together. In 1 Samuel 7:6, the prophet Samuel spoke to all the Israelites, and the entire country of Israel stopped eating food, repented and committed themselves to the Lord only. Can you imagine that? Just picture *this* entire country fasting! Imagine the President of the United States calling a fast, and everyone going through with it.

In Acts 13:2, we see how churches fasted as well, looking for guidance and direction. Soon after, the Lord sent Paul and Barnabas out on a mission to share God’s love with so many new places, it’s impossible to fit them all on this page!

The point is that our Bible has plenty of examples of places where people fast together. Honestly, it’s a great way to reach the top. When you’re feeling discouraged or weak, you have that life line with one another. They can help lift you up, and lift your spirits. And you can do the same for others as well. When one is slipping, another is there to help them rise up.

The important thing is getting closer with our Heavenly Father. And when you are climbing towards that goal together, it makes the effort easier, and more full of joy.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY SIXTEEN

“When you look for Me with all your heart, you will find Me.” Jeremiah 29:13 NIRV

Famous mountain climber George Mallory was asked a decent question: Why climb a mountain? His response was epic: “Because it’s there.”

Again, this makes no sense to anyone who is not a climber. But as Christians, it makes sense to us. You see, deep within all of us is a climber, and no, we’re not talking necessarily about mountains.

Here’s what that means: Each of us wants more out of life. We want to climb higher! We want to do more, see more, and be more. As Christians, our natural gut feeling is to seek out God with all our hearts. And just like with climbing upwards, that usually requires some energy.

Fasting is certainly one of those things that requires effort. By this point you know that very well! And just like those people who asked why climb a mountain, there are those with a very similar question: Why do a fast?

The answer is simple: “Because He’s there.” Fasting may seem like a difficult path to follow upwards, but the reward is incredible: God Himself is waiting there for us.

Some time ago, Jesus started out a message with these words: *“When you fast.”* Notice that he did not say *“if you fast.”* He wants us to do it, and the reason for this is important: fasting is a powerful way to get closer with our Heavenly Father.

God is looking upon us, watching for those that are searching for Him. And if we’re fasting and seeking Him out with all our hearts, our Bibles tell us we will most definitely find Him.

So why fast? Jesus told us to, and the answer is simple: Because He’s there.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY SEVENTEEN

“Do not be afraid, Daniel. You decided to get more understanding. You made yourself humble as you worshiped your God. Since the first day you did those things, your words were heard. I have come to give you an answer.” Daniel 10:12 NIRV

A lot of prayers are spoken on the mountain: prayers for guidance, prayers for healing, or prayers for humility and peace. Sometimes, the only thing you hear is an echo: your own voice bouncing back at you from the mountain ledges. As you struggle along, sometimes it seems like no one is listening at all. But don't give up, and don't worry – your prayers *are* being heard.

Daniel had been on his fasting journey upwards for roughly three weeks. Just like you, he was praying and fasting. All during the fast, nothing is said in the Bible other than what Daniel did: “I didn't eat any rich food. No meat or wine touched my lips. I didn't use any lotions at all until the three weeks were over.”

Nothing was happening. Nothing, that is, until that twenty-first day. Yes, after the fast, things changed quite a bit. Daniel got his answer! In fact, an angel told him, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. You decided to get more understanding. You made yourself humble as you worshiped your God. Since the first day you did those things, your words were heard. I have come to give you an answer.”

The obvious thing we learn from this angel's remarkable words is this: the very moment you began to humble yourself with prayer and fasting, God heard your prayer. In fact, the angel was sent right away to visit Daniel, but got delayed during the fast. Could that mean your answer is on the way even now as you read this? Oh yes, it could.

Fasting is a catalyst, a power source stronger than any energy drink or energy bar. It adds real strength to your prayers, and puts you in a different lane reserved for those who are really hungry for God. Even though all may be quiet, and the only feeling you have is that of an empty stomach, the simple truth is that an answer is on the way. You're living life in the fast lane!



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY EIGHTEEN

“It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God’s mouth.” Matthew 4:4 (MSG)

Have you heard of the Death Zone? It’s a height that is so far up, there isn’t enough oxygen in the air for climbers as they try to ascend the mountains. Many climbers actually bring tanks of oxygen with them to breath as they enter this world above the clouds. Some attempt the climb without these tanks, but there’s no question that the air is so thin up there that you can’t stay there long.

The reason is simple: we can’t live without oxygen. But there’s something we all need more than even that: God.

Some time ago, Jesus was fasting, similar to what you’re doing now. Satan came to Jesus at the end of a fast, even taking him up to the peak of a high mountain. During this test, Satan told him to turn some stones into bread. Jesus replied, “It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God’s mouth.”

More than bread and even more than oxygen, we are dependent on God. In the Bible, Psalm 95:4 tells us He formed the mountain peaks, and holds them in His hands. He is the Rock that we run to, and our salvation. Put simply, He is everything, and without Him we are nothing.

That’s one reason why fasting is so powerful. When you fast, you’re telling God He’s important in your life. In fact, He’s more important in your life than even food. Your actions prove just that when you set aside food or sweets just to spend time with the Lord, reading or praying.

And when you’re showing Him that, you can be very sure of this one thing: He’s listening to your prayers very closely.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY NINETEEN

“I made myself humble by going without food.” Psalm 35:13 NIRV

The book of Isaiah tells us that in the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

The thing about mountains is this: they’re high up. And that’s precisely where the Lord should be on your list of what’s most important. He should be at the top! The Bible tells us to seek Him first, and then everything will be added unto you. That means look to God first, and let Him worry about all your needs and wants.

Unfortunately, we tend to put ourselves up on an even higher mountain. There’s a strong pull to do the things we would rather do than those things we know we *should* do. We want to sit around and play video games, or even spend our money going out to eat or see a movie. And while there’s nothing wrong with that, the big question is this: are you putting God first? Are you sacrificing your time with God in order to watch a football game? Are you giving up time with the Lord just so you can spend time checking your social media account?

The great thing about a fast is that it puts God first. It humbles you, and makes you lower – not high up like the mountains. A fast reminds you of where God’s proper place should be in your life. When you do that, you’re putting Him first.

Don’t forget that He put you first when Jesus went to the cross. Keep fasting, and seeking Him. Put God’s kingdom first. Do what He wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY TWENTY

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:14 KJV

Climbers have to be ready for just about anything! It could be an avalanche. Or a misstep. Or illness. Or a sudden storm. Or ... well, let's just face it: climbers have to be ready for anything the moment they decide they're going up the mountain.

It is almost comedic how the very moment that a fast is started, temptation comes. Seriously! You could be fasting sweets, and suddenly out of nowhere, your best friends want to treat you to ice cream. Or you've made a commitment to stop watching television for a bit, and sure enough, there's this new TV show that everyone is talking about, and you've just got to see it, right?

You see, once you've made a decision to start this climb, just like a mountaineer, you have to be ready. You have to expect temptation to come, and if you're prepared for it, you can overcome it!

Just know it's coming. Temptation can be like an avalanche, tumbling down towards you while saying, "I want this, and I want that! I want it all!"

But you can avoid it! Your spirit is wanting something greater. So like that mountain climber, you need to be prepared for anything. You've made a commitment to get there, so get ready. There's a wonderful reward waiting for those who can overcome. It's time to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It's time to elevate to something greater!



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

DAY TWENTY-ONE

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord. He said, ‘Who will I send? Who will go for us?’ I said, ‘Here I am. Send me!’” Isaiah 6:8 NIRV

The mountain peak is within sight, and you’ve almost made it to your goal. Just a few more steps, and then you can reach that place where only the dedicated can go. You’ll be at a higher place than you’ve ever been, and you’ll be able to look back on the path that got you here.

But even more than just seeing farther, you’ll also be able to hear better up here on top of the world. You see, down at the base of the mountain, there are so many distractions. That’s why we climb. That’s why we fast. We set all that aside with the hope of getting closer with God. And yes, where you’re at now, it’s easier to hear from that one voice that truly matters: His voice.

With fasting and prayer, you’re at a higher place, and have found the signal! Just like with a radio station, once you’ve got that signal located, you can keep listening wherever you go. It’s true: even *after* your fast, you’ll know how to hear His voice better.

And if you lose the signal, don’t panic! You know what to do: just start climbing again. The truth is that a fast helps us all hear from Him so much better. This is why Jesus told us “when” and not “if” you fast. It’s an important part of our Christian life. Just ask Daniel, Moses, Paul, Cornelius, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Moses, David, and Elijah. They were climbers just like you! The Bible tells us how each of them fasted and prayed, all for many different reasons.

If they were here with you today, they’d first of all congratulate you for making it to the top. But afterwards, they’d tell you this: fasting and prayer is a powerful way to see and hear from our Heavenly Father.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

FASTING:

Seeking Guidance in the New Year

Why start the new year with a fast? The answer is simple: we need His help and His guidance. In our Bibles, Moses thought the same thing:

“I went up the mountain. I went there to receive the tablets of the covenant law. They were made out of stone. It was the covenant the Lord had made with you. I stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. I didn’t eat any food or drink any water.” Deuteronomy 9:9 NIRV

Moses fasted, and the Lord gave us the Ten Commandments, His laws to guide us and keep us safe. But much later, the church leaders in Antioch prayed and fasted for guidance too:

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke. ‘Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me,’ he said. ‘I have appointed them to do special work.’ ” Acts 13:2 NIRV

Paul and Barnabas received their guidance from the Holy Spirit after a church fast. And of course, fasting is a great way to begin something important. We look to Jesus, who began his ministry here with a forty day fast:

“The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert. There the devil tempted him. After 40 days and 40 nights of going without eating, Jesus was hungry.” Matthew 4:1-2 NIRV

Paul knew this was the best thing to do, so he followed Jesus’ example. In fact, he said he fasted regularly. Here, you can see how he began his own ministry with a fast.

“He didn’t eat or drink anything.” Acts 9:9 NIRV

As they started out their journeys, it makes perfect sense for us to start the new year with a fast. We’re setting out into something new, a new year filled with unanswered questions, hidden challenges, and dreams not realized yet. Starting out the year with fasting and prayer is doing the best possible thing: seeking Him first for His guidance, and His help.



FASTING: COMMITTED TO CLIMB

FASTING:

Seeking Protection in the New Year

As the new year approaches, we certainly need guidance. But we also desperately need His protection. In our Bibles, Ezra knew exactly who to turn to:

“By the canal that flows toward Ahava, I announced a fast. I told the people not to eat any food. In that way, we made ourselves humble in God’s sight. We prayed that He would give us and our children a safe journey. We asked Him to keep safe everything we owned.” Ezra 8:21 NIRV

As the new year approaches, we’ve got a journey of 365 days ahead of us. There are temptations and snares, but also clear paths to safety. Ezra fasted and prayed with all of God’s people, because he knew he’d need the Lord’s help along the journey. But he wasn’t the only one in the Bible that fasted and prayed for safety. Listen to Esther’s request:

“Go. Gather together all the Jews who are in Susa. And fast for my benefit. Don’t eat or drink anything for three days. Don’t do it night or day. I and my attendants will fast just as you do. Then I’ll go to the king. I’ll do it even though it’s against the law. And if I have to die, I’ll die.” Esther 4:16 NIRV

Esther was about to make some bold moves, and she knew she needed the Lord’s help. Even though she was queen, she humbled herself with fasting and prayer. And yes, God helped her in one of Israel’s darkest hours.

Fasting and prayer may make no sense to those who don’t understand it. But if we could hear from these heroes from the Bible who did it, they’d all agree on this one point: fasting and prayer is an incredibly powerful tool. It can give us His guidance, and it can give us His protection.