

FOREWORD *by Candace Cameron Bure*

Erin Davis

F A S T I N G



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40 Devotions to Satisfy the Hungry Heart

FASTING



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To my Aunt Rhonda, whose love for food inspired mine and whose love for Jesus makes me hungry for more of Him.

Aunt Rhonda's Perfect Pie Crust

In a glass bowl add 2 cups of all-purpose flour plus 1/2 tsp. salt.

Make a well in the center with a spoon.

Pour 1/2 cup plus 1 tbl. Crisco oil into the well and begin mixing with a fork.

After partially mixed, add 1/4 cup milk and mix with your fingers until it forms a ball.

Divide in half and form 2 balls.

Roll each ball between two sheets of wax paper.

Flip over into a pie pan.

Peel off second sheet of wax paper.

Fill with filling (preferably fresh peaches).

Take the second ball and peel off one sheet of wax paper.

Flip over onto filling to form second crust.

Crimp edge and bake.

Enjoy!

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Though I am honored to have my name on the cover of this book, I acknowledge the many others who made it happen, made it better, and made it beautiful. I offer my deepest and most heartfelt appreciation to the many gifted and gracious people whose invisible fingerprints are all over the pages of this work including:

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Dear Reader, I've thought of you every day of this project. I've imagined your trials and triumphs related to food and faith and longed for you to find lasting satisfaction. Thank you for picking up this book.

Thank you for reading it. And thank you for realizing all I have to offer you is Jesus. *He is enough.*

Jesus, truly You satisfy the longing soul, and the hungry soul You fill with good things (Ps. 107:9). I love You and cannot wait to feast at Your banqueting table.

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FOREWORD

Food.
So many feelings. All the feelings.

Very few of us have a perfect relationship with food (okay, no one does).

For both women and men alike, the food struggle is like no other struggle or temptation because *we must eat to live*. I mean, think about your top distractions—you know, the things that trip you up. Now look at that list, and see which ones are necessary for you to stay alive. Probably none unless you listed water, and that's not likely. We can quiet every other distraction or preoccupation. It might be hard to quit, whatever it is, but it's not a matter of life or death.

And so the food remains in our lives. We can't just throw it out altogether. Which is why the food struggle is . . . I'm going to say it. Real.

I'm right there with you.

Some days I'm cruising along with healthy eating habits and patterns and then, before I know it, I veer off the wrong way and my relationship with food is not where it needs to be. What do I do? I work it out intentionally and diligently with God, through prayer and wise counsel. There are no shortcuts on the food journey. You know?

I'm guessing you're in the same boat as me for two reasons. One, you picked up this book with a spark of hope and two, this is a common struggle. Well guess what, you are holding an amazing tool—a forty-day devotional filled with “aha” moments about fasting and feasting. Page after page, day after day, Erin leads the reader to God's truth, His best and His charity for His children. This is not a diet book or a how-to book. This is a get-to book. We get-to learn from and lean into the One who created not only the whole world but the food within it, and said, “It is good.” The same One that created you and me and said, “It is very good.”

Side note—I first met Erin the summer of 2014 after I'd competed on Season 18 of *Dancing with the Stars*. I was getting ready to write my third book, when I suddenly knew I needed to write about something completely different than my original plan. I needed help, and that's when I was introduced to Erin. We spent a weekend locked in a hotel room in Santa Monica, California, talking about every aspect of my journey of being on that dancing show—how it related to Scripture and what God taught me each week. Erin helped me write *Dancing Through Life* and has been on speed dial and text favorites ever since.

I knew there was something extraordinary about her. Even though I've always lived the entertainment life in the big city and Erin lives on a farm with her husband and four boys (and never watches much television), you'd think we could be from the same family. She has a sensibility and relatability to perfectly pair faith and humor. A winning combination and a winning friendship! Above all, I love that Erin loves Jesus and serves up His truth with quirk and comedy. I'm still giggling over phrases tucked in this devotional such as, “when a plate of pancakes saved my life”! Keep your eye open for *punny* puns throughout. I mean, nothing makes a tough subject more palatable than a slice of humor, right?

Friend, hear me loud and clear: if anyone can set the table for a discussion around food, fasting, and feasting, no matter where you're at in your journey, it's Erin. Pull up a chair, and for forty days, experience some really solid spiritual nourishment. You won't regret it.

In this together,
Candace

INTRODUCTION

There are times when a warm croissant, a bright bowl of fruit, or a steaming cup of coffee feel like perfect, God-given gifts. There are other moments, perhaps more frequent, when food feels like our enemy and our relationship with it becomes a vortex of regret, frustration, and shame.

We read food labels, count calories, and keep lists of favorite recipes, but have you ever stopped to ponder: What does God's Word say about food? The answer might surprise you. It will certainly delight you.

When it comes to what the Bible says about my relationship with food, two words from Mark 9 whet my own appetite to understand. (You'll hear more about this on Day 1.) Like the first bite of chocolate cake, they left me craving more and sent me searching for:

- Other passages that call God's people to fast
- Other examples where the Bible uses food to teach us spiritual principles
- Other times when God invites His people to feast.

I found that God's Word is a smorgasbord that truly satisfies. I am so grateful we will spend the next forty days digging in together.

This book isn't a call to fast for the next forty days, nor is it a call to strictly feast. For now I hope you'll simply soak in God's Word and seek to understand His heart for how food and faith intersect. Sip slowly on Bible passages like a perfect cup of coffee. Really chew on the lessons God is teaching you through His Word.

Each daily devotional finishes with "Setting the Table" and "Inviting the Feast." The inspiration for those sections came from an unforgettable prayer I heard a long time ago. If I close my eyes and try to picture her, I cannot see the face of the woman I first heard offer these words to Jesus, but the memory of her prayer has stayed with me. I've repeated her prayer many times since. I hope you'll do the same.

Lord, we've set the table. We ask you to bring the feast.

Isn't that the Christian life in one bite? We do what we can. We bring our best intentions, our brightest devotions, our purest worship to Jesus as acts of setting the table. Then we wait with anticipation for Him to bring the feast, to fill our hearts with His truth, to fill our homes with life rhythms that truly honor Him. He always does. He always will.

You can set the table right now by opening your Bible and telling God you want to hear from Him. Abandon your ideas about what your relationship with food is "supposed to be." Lay down your guilt about what it has not been in the past. And then commit to meet with Him daily for the next forty days, expecting to be filled.

The Bible celebrates food as a gift while simultaneously inviting us to surrender every area of our lives to Christ's authority—including what we put on our plates. Rather than the yo-yo of loving food and then hating it, Scripture invites us into a different rhythm—**the rhythm of fasting and feasting.**

Hungry to Know Him More,
Erin

DAY 1

.....
FASTING
.....



THIS KIND

And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

—Mark 9:28–29 NKJV

My life has been changed by a footnote. Mark 9 focuses on an uncomfortable story about a daddy and his demon-possessed boy. Scratch that. The real focus of this passage, of every passage, is Jesus. This account puts His unmatched power over the things that torment us on full display.

READ MARK 9:14–29.

As remarkable as these events are, if you’re familiar with the Gospels, you know they’re not exactly outliers. The Bible records so many examples of Jesus healing the sick, driving out the demonic, and even (more than once) raising the dead. Maybe that’s why this particular miracle didn’t arrest my heart until my eyes drifted to the footnotes.

Scan the footnotes of Mark 9 for yourself. In reference to verse 29, do you find a notation that adds “and fasting”?

Some older translations of Scripture leave these two vital words in the text, while the rest relegate Christ's mention of fasting to an afterthought at the bottom of the page. For the sake of time, I won't pull on the thread that unravels the why. But I will focus on what matters most—we all have a "this kind."

The boy in this passage was controlled by a dark spirit that responded to prayer and fasting and nothing else. Not fretting. Not begging. Not bargaining. No, Jesus was clear, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Today, as we sit with our Bibles open, I wonder what "this kinds" you face. Is it a broken relationship that cannot be made right by your best efforts and deepest longings? A bruise on your heart that stays tender no matter how much time goes by? A pattern of sin you cannot break? A root of bitterness you cannot wrench free from the soil? A need you cannot meet? An enemy you cannot defeat?

Let's pause together for a moment and ask the Lord. *What are we most desperate to see driven out of our lives?*

With your "this kind" in mind, take a second look at Mark 9.

When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes disputing with them. When the whole crowd saw him, they were amazed and ran to greet him. He asked them, "What are you arguing with them about?"

Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you. He has a spirit that makes him unable to speak. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't."
(vv. 14–18)

Our attention is naturally drawn to the description of the boy convulsing. But look past the drama of his condition and the crowd that clamored for a miracle. Find the disciples. Can't you picture them standing sheepishly in the middle of the melee? Can't you see their eyes drop to their sandals as Jesus declared, "You unbelieving generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you?"

Can't you almost hear Him sigh as He said, "Bring him to me" (v. 19)?

Why was Jesus so uncharacteristically exasperated? Surely He was not mad at the boy who had been possessed since childhood (v. 21) or the dad who tenderly whimpered, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (v. 24). Could it be that His disciples had tried to solve this problem in their own strength? That they'd looked for a quick solution that allowed them to bypass admitting their desperate need for His help?

Sin has put every one of us on an uphill battle with pride. Prayer is not our default. We are ever grasping for bootstraps to pull ourselves up by, solutions dependent on our elbow grease, or effortless ways out of trouble.

Yet the "this kinds" remain.

Fasting is not just one more way we can wiggle our way out of the trials that constrict us. **God is far too good and too sovereign to be controlled.** Fasting is a step of surrender, a way to showcase that the "this kinds" in our life are beyond us. It's an outward expression of our inner desire to see God do what we cannot. Fasting throws our hands and our eyes up to the Lord as if to say, "I am powerless here, but You are able. You are God. I cannot move another step in this thing without You."

Do you identify with the tired father today? Are you worn out from trying to solve your biggest problems in your own strength? Consider this: Have prayer and fasting been your first and most often deployed weapon, or are they relegated to the footnotes of your life?

Maybe you see yourself in the disciples. You've rubbed plenty of elbow grease into an area of woundedness or weakness only to find it still festering. Do you shake your head and wonder, "Why couldn't [I] drive it out?" (v. 28). My question remains the same: Have prayer and fasting been your first and most often deployed weapon, or are they relegated to the footnotes of your life?

We all have "this kinds." This side of heaven we always will. But Jesus will always be able to drive out what we cannot. We fast and pray to let go of our strength and to tap into His.

DAY 2

FEASTING



TASTE AND SEE

Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him! You who are his holy ones, fear the LORD, for those who fear him lack nothing. Young lions lack food and go hungry, but those who seek the LORD will not lack any good thing.

—Psalm 34:8–10

Imagine a world where Christmas comes three times a day—a steady stream of gifts all day, every day. Exciting, right? Now take the mental leap with me from that scenario to your kitchen table. Picture the pile of presents God has delivered to that well-worn spot.

Recall Thanksgiving dinners loaded with juicy turkeys and steaming sides. Remember special birthday dinners where your family has blown out the candles atop so many cakes. Think of Sunday suppers and pizza nights, spilled milk, and sticky oatmeal gloop.

In hindsight those meals come to mind with a warm glow around them, don't they? Have you ever wondered why food is involved in so many of our best memories and most cherished relationships? Have you ever considered if that's by design instead of by default?

God never just fills our bellies. *He fills our homes. He fills our hearts.*

READ PSALM 34.

My own dining room table is a hand-me-down from my granny. She bought it in the sixties at a yard sale and stripped it and refinished it herself. It needs to be sanded and finished once again, but I can't bear to erase the spot where the stain from her coffee cup remains. It's a reminder of the blessings God gave me through her.

Many childhood memories involve the table. Some are fancy—candlelit meals eaten on fine china on Christmas Eve. Others are more pedestrian—piles of spaghetti on paper plates, ham sammies with the crust cut off. *All of them are gifts, given to me by a God who loves me.*

When David wanted to express his gratitude for God's blessings, he used food as a frame of reference. He could have said, "Look and see that the LORD is good." We can surely see God's gifts all around us. He could have said, "Listen and see that the LORD is good." We hear His goodness in a child's laughter, in a nightingale's song, in the roar of a waterfall or the dribble of a mountain stream. But David chose an alternate sense to call us to worship. He chose our sense of taste.

Taste and see that the LORD is good. (v. 8)

A few chapters later in Psalm 103, David uses eating imagery again to remind us of God's blessings.

He satisfies you with good things;
your youth is renewed like the eagle. (v. 5)

Satisfaction. Renewed energy. These are the benefits of food. What if each bite is a missionary, sent to remind us who He is and what He has done?

Here's a truth so simple we miss it daily—food is a blessing from God. Let me say it louder for the people in the back—food is a blessing from God!

We live in a culture with a volatile relationship with food. Either food is everything, the key that unlocks a happy, fulfilling life or food is the enemy, a monster we must tame at any cost. Perhaps it's because our bellies experience true hunger so rarely (if ever) that we forget that fundamentally food is a gift, graciously provided by a generous God so that we might taste and see that He is good.

Your morning cup of coffee? That's a gift.

Your breakfast? Yep, that's a gift, too.

Did you have a yummy salad for lunch or a sandwich with a bag of chips? Did you bless the Lord for giving you the gift of food once again?

As you make dinner plans, are you fixated on the ingredients you don't have or the fact that you have hungry mouths to feed again? Or are you reminded that God is good? That He still has good things in store for you today?

Don't veer into guilt. That's not the action step the psalmist calls us to. Instead, ask the Lord to help you see food as a gift from Him, to use what you taste to help you see—He really is good. “He satisfies you with good things.”

SETTING THE TABLE, INVITING THE FEAST

*Use the prayer prompts below to ask the Lord
to do an abundant work in your life.*

Setting the Table

Jesus, as I consider Your Word, I am reminded that You are a good God. Thank You for the many blessings You've given me today including . . .

Inviting the Feast

Lord, I forget that even the food on my table is a gift from You. Teach me to be mindful of Your many blessings. Help me more often to taste and see that You are good.

DAY 3

.....
FASTING
.....



BECOMING A SPIRITUAL TRIATHLETE

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

—Matthew 4:1–2

Having a strong personal aversion to discomfort, I greatly admire those with the fortitude to push their bodies to the limit. Soldiers who fight through the rigor of basic training have my mad respect. Triathletes with the inner grit required to swim, cycle, and run mile after mile earn my genuine awe.

Though you won't catch me "pushing through the pain" or winning feats of strength, I hope to become a spiritual triathlete, capable of running the race of faith with great endurance.

READ MATTHEW 4:1–11.

Three observations jump off the page at me about the timing of Jesus' wilderness fast.

First, the fast followed a moment of remarkable victory. Matthew 3 records Jesus' baptism (vv. 13–17). The heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and the Father boomed His approval from heaven. This was a supernatural event! Still, Jesus did not immediately begin His earthly ministry after His submersion in the Jordan. There is a gap between His commissioning and His mission. *Jesus spent that gap fasting.*

Second, the fast preceded an intense battle with the devil. This was a series of skirmishes in a war of cosmic significance. We don't see the Enemy come at Jesus this directly or doggedly again in the Gospel accounts. Because He is sovereign, Jesus knew the fight was coming. Fasting is how He chose to prepare.

Third, Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. Let's park there together today.

Have you ever noticed that the number forty is a pattern repeated often in Scripture?

Moses lived forty years in Egypt (Acts 7:23) and forty years in the desert before he was chosen to lead Israel out of slavery (Acts 7:30). Twice he met with the Lord on Mount Sinai for a period of forty days and forty nights (Exod. 24:18; 34:28). The second time he entered a dramatic fast, "he did not eat food or drink water" while he "wrote the Ten Commandments, the words of the covenant, on the tablets" (Exod. 34:28).

The Israelite spies investigated the promised land for forty days (Num. 13:25), and when the children of Israel responded with disbelief, they were sentenced to a period of wandering for—you guessed it—forty years. Jonah prophesied that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days (Jonah 3:4). Ezekiel laid on his right side for forty days in lament for the sins of Judah (Ezek. 4:6). Elijah fasted for forty days as he journeyed to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8).

In each case, the number forty represents a period of great testing. More often than not, day forty-one brought spiritual battles and kingdom victories.

Flip back to Matthew 4. Zero in on verse 17.

From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Soldiers train to fight. Triathletes train to compete. Jesus fasted to prepare to turn the world upside down.

Fitness experts have long celebrated the value of a forty-day regimen to realign our habits. If this is how realignment works in a person’s body, it’s not hard to believe that the same might be true for a person’s spirit. The Bible doesn’t specify that every fast must last for forty days. Perhaps the significance of forty is less about the number and more about the commitment it represents. A forty-day fast is more than a fleeting notion; it goes beyond the inconvenience of a hunger pang or two. A forty-day fast requires an all-in commitment of body and spirit.

At the moment I’m writing this sentence, I’ve completed two forty-day juice fasts. Both preceded the launch of ministry efforts so significant and demanding, rigorous “training” was required. The length of the fast tested my commitment. The intensity of the fast led me to a place of total dependency on Jesus I wouldn’t have acknowledged on day ten or twenty.

Though always uncomfortable, fasting is a discipline God can use to help us develop our spiritual muscles and prepare us for the battles that lie ahead. Do you want to withstand the Enemy’s attacks with faith and fortitude? Consider Jesus. Give Him your awe, but don’t stop there. As a follower of Jesus who wants to live like Jesus lived, take time today to consider: Is there a pattern in His forty-day fast worth repeating in your own life?

Inviting the Feast

Lord, I don't want the Christian life to be uncomfortable. I often resist the Holy Spirit when He moves to stretch me in the areas I need to be developed. Show me some ways I can grow in this.

Write down any spiritual disciplines the Lord brings to mind.
