

Types of Fasting

The Bible describes four major types of fasting:

- **A Regular Fast** - Traditionally, a regular fast means refraining from eating all food. Most people still drink water or juice during a regular fast. When Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty.
- **A Partial Fast** - This type of fast generally refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. Daniel 10:2-3 says, "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." In Daniel 1:12, they restricted their diet to vegetables and water: "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink."
- **A Full Fast** - These fasts are complete - no food and no drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus: "For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16: "Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'" It is recommended that this type of fast be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time.
- **A Sexual Fast** - 1 Corinthians 7:3-6 says, "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

Although not mentioned in the Bible, Christians today commit to fasting from other activities as well. Some give up entertainment such as TV or movies to concentrate on prayer. Others fast from sleep or another activity for a specified period of time.