

What is Christian Fasting?

February 25, 2009, Ash Wednesday, will begin our Corporate 40 Day journey of fasting and praying. You may ask “What exactly is Christian Fasting”? Biblically, fasting is abstaining from food, drink, sleep, or sex, for a specific period of time. Turning away from the things the body craves in order for the inner man to concentrate on God in worship and praise. It is taking our eyes off the things of the world and an opportunity to demonstrate to God and ourselves that we are serious about our relationship with Him. Fasting is a **sacrificial** lifestyle before God.

Fasting and praying should go hand and hand. But often times this is not the case. You can fast without praying and you can pray and not fast. But it is when these two disciplines are combined and dedicated to Gods glory that they reach their full effectiveness.

The Bible describes four major types of fasting:

1. A **Normal** or **Regular** fast: refraining from eating all food. Most people continue to drink water or juice. When Jesus fasted in the wilderness, the Bible says, “After forty days and forty-nights, He hungered”. (It does not make reference that He was thirsty). Matthew 4:2.
2. A **Partial** Fast: refraining from certain types of foods or meals. In Daniel 10:2-3 it says, “At that time, I, Daniel, mourned, for three weeks. I ate no choice foods; no meat or wine touched my lips, and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. Daniel meals were restricted to vegetables and water (Daniel 1:12).
3. A **Complete** or **Absolute** fast: No food or drink. In Acts 9:9, Paul went on an absolute fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus :(“For three days he was blind, and did not eat nor drink anything.) Esther also called this type of fast, Esther 4:15-16 says, “Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go gather all the Jews who are in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days and three nights, day or night. 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, unless led by the Holy Spirit.
4. 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 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 does not tempt you because of your lack of self control.”

Fasting is the most powerful Spiritual discipline of all the Christian disciplines. Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform your life. The awesome power can be released through you as you fast through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. If done right and properly, fasting will not only prove to be a spiritual blessing, but physical blessing as well.

Fasting is the condition of the heart, not the number of days Fasting and prayer will fulfill II Chronicles 7:14. “*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*”

Because He lives

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