

BREAKTHROUGH

FASTING AND PRAYER

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus instructs us on fasting. He says, *“When you fast...”* not if you fast.... This tells us that fasting is something we ALL should do! A simple way to explain fasting to your kids is to compare fasting to going on a long car ride to visit someone special. We’re willing to be a little bored or uncomfortable for a while in order to spend time with them. When we fast we may be giving something up for a short time but we’re doing it in order to spend more time with our Heavenly Father. Biblical fasting is to abstain from food. Fasting is challenging individually, but can present unique challenges when fasting as a family.

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS TO FAST WITH YOUR CHILD OR STUDENT:

- **Fast From Sweets.** Lead them in a sugar fast (no candy, cake, pastries). Choose healthy foods for snacking. Instead of cookies, choose carrots. Instead of soda, choose water. Instead of fast food, choose nutritious meals.
- **Fast From One Food.** No – this isn’t a free pass to not eat vegetables. But your child can help choose: A favorite **after-school snack**, a preferred **lunchbox item** (string cheese, gummies, yogurt tubes) a beloved **weekend treat** (pizza night, ice cream night, donuts).
- **Abstain from Digital Media.** While not a biblical fast, abstaining from technology may be appropriate when abstaining from food for your child is not medically advised. This could be as simple as not using the DVD player in your minivan or completely abstaining from all technology for the week.

Pro Tip: Grow from short to more intensive fasts. Avoid starting with an intense no (fill in the blank) fast that will be unachievable. Start small and build on successes.

FAST AND ADD GOD:

- If you’re fasting dessert, schedule a specific time after dinner, together or individually, to read the Bible, pray or journal.
- If you’re abstaining from screen time, take some of the time you would have spent on those devices and read a chapter of the Bible together or pray that God would work in your hearts.
- While you set aside to fast, discuss what questions your child or student may have about God or how to hear His voice. If age appropriate, encourage them to write down questions they have for God or what they feel God is saying to them.
- Pray together: “Lord when I desire (the thing I am fasting from) help me to desire you more!”

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT HELPING YOUR CHILD OR STUDENT UNDERSTAND WHY YOU’RE FASTING. REMEMBER:

- Fasting must center on God. If you fast for any reason other than to center on Him, His will, and His desire, it will be in vain.
- Fasting reminds us that God is our provider. James 1:17 reminds us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Remind your children that we fast because we know that God provides everything we need.
- Fasting helps us focus. The point of a fast is to focus on a particular issue, need, concern or desire and spend time praying about that during your time of fasting.
- Fasting is not a punishment. Never use the biblical discipline of fasting to ease your guilt or to punish poor behavior. It’s not something to do because we’re in trouble or think God is mad at us.
- Model biblical fasting. Kids learn more from what they see modeled than what they hear. When teaching the discipline of fasting know that you can only lead your child to fast if you’re willing to do it yourself.
- Believe in your child’s full potential! While the practice and understanding of biblical fasting will be best suited for students, teaching and allowing kids to participate in age-appropriate ways will lay the foundation for deeper and more meaningful experiences in the future.