

Fasting with Your Kids

One of the greatest joys in life is seeing your children following in our footsteps. This includes their spiritual lives. As you are fasting, challenge your kids to join with you. As a parent you get the opportunity to help kids understand, through experience and short and intentional opportunities to practice what Jesus and many Bible heroes practiced.

5 Ideas for Fasting with your Kids

Fasting from bread

Each time we want bread, we pray for those around the world who don't yet know Jesus as the "Bread of life" and are hungry for Him. We pray that their hunger will be satisfied. We've also connected this fast with the Old Testament Passover story and prayed for God to remove all traces of sin from our lives as we abstain from anything made with yeast.

Fasting from juice

Juice is a hot commodity in our house, so drinking water instead gives us many reminders to pray. We talk about the grape juice we use for communion and how it represents the blood Jesus shed. When we want juice, we pray for those who don't yet know that their sins have been paid for and can be washed away. We pray that someone will tell them soon. A juice fast can also be tied to Jesus as "the Vine" and we can pray that we will abide more and more in Him. (John 15)

Fasting from sweets

Whenever our sweet tooth strikes, we stop and pray for those who have never had the chance to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8) and we thank Him for how sweet He makes our lives.

Fasting from TV

We've found this fast and the next one work as well or better than food fasts when it comes to freeing up more time in a day to pray!

Fasting from computers/iPods/tablets

This is a tough one, especially for Mom and Dad! But we feel it's a good idea to be unplugged as a family every now and again so that we can plug in to our real Source!

Being intentional about helping kids understand why they're fasting:

- 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 of every good and perfect gift. Help your kids find this reality.
- Fasting helps us focus. The point of a fast is to focus on a particular issue, need, concern, or desire. Determine the point and be very intentional to share and help kids understand.
- Fasting is a discipline not a punishment. Don't use the biblical discipline of fasting to ease your guilt or need to punish poor behavior.
- Model biblical fasting. Kids learn more from what they see than what they simply hear. When teaching the discipline of fasting, know that you can't lead kids to do something that you're not willing to do yourself.
- Don't sell kids short. While the practice and understanding of biblical fasting will be best suited for older kids, teaching and allowing kids to participate in age-appropriate ways will lay foundations for deeper and more meaningful experiences in the future.

This inwardly expressed discipline (not publicly shared but a private matter between the individual and God) in its traditional sense should be approached with a lot of thought and care. For us to ignore this discipline would be a blatant disregard of Old and New Testament practice as well as Christ's expectation shared in the Gospels.

Obviously, there are physical issues and limitations to consider and, quite frankly, fasting may not be for everyone — especially kids. You may want to check with a doctor before beginning a fast from food. But ultimately, we cannot think of a reason why we would ignore teaching about fasting