

TALKING TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT FASTING

In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus gives some instruction on fasting. Verse 16 begins with WHEN not IF. That shows us that it's something we are to do. So how do we do it? And how do we safely and in a clear way, bring our families along to practice this spiritual discipline with us?

Scripture refers to fasting as abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Normally fasting includes abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not water. *For the purposes of teaching your family about fasting, consider a partial fast or a restriction of one's diet. Daniel talks a little about this in Chapter 10.

Here are some practical ways to fast with kids:

Make different choices.

For a period of time, make different choices that are a better use of time and a better choice for your health. Instead of watching TV at night, read a book aloud as a family or have a family devotion. Instead of cookies, choose carrots or apples. Instead of soft drinks, choose water.

Abstain from sweets.

Lead kids to not eat candy, cake, or desserts for a designated time.

A digital fast.

As a family, decide to fast from technology. We realize this would be a commitment for everyone, especially the parents!

Grow from short to more intensive fasts.

Don't start with a 40 day, "no (fill in the blank)" fast that will be difficult to achieve. Start small and build on success.

Be intentional about helping kids understand why you'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. When you think about what you have given up, spend some time praying and talking to God.

Fasting reminds us that God is our provider of every good and perfect gift.

Help kids find this reality through intentional conversations.

Fasting is a discipline not a punishment.

Don't use the discipline of fasting to ease your guilt or 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 to fast will lay foundations for deeper and more meaningful experiences in the future.

We invite you to seek the Lord on how to specifically walk your family through this season of fasting, and follow His guidance in how to present it. We hope these ideas help you lead your family to understand and practice the discipline of fasting that Jesus practiced.

*Check with your child's doctor before having them begin a fast from food.

Resources:

<https://kidsministry.lifeway.com/2014/01/02/fasting-teaching-kids-spiritual-disciplines/>