



Prayer and fasting might seem weird, scary, or even unnecessary at times. Or maybe fasting you feel like you don't know where to start. But the Bible tells us that prayer and fasting can be a way for us to show our love for God and to connect with Him. So let's set aside special time over the next 21 days to let Him change our hearts and help us to know Him more.

If fasting is something you don't know much about, but you are interested in trying it out with your family, this is your step-by-step guide to doing a simple 21 day fast together. We'll walk you through explaining fasting to your kids, some examples of types of fasts you can explore, and things to think about before getting started.

Step 1: Explaining Fasting to Kids

Kids often want to get a feel for the big picture, but they also want to ask the what, why, and how questions. Here are some simple pointers for both those things below:

Big Picture

An easy way to explain the benefits of prayer and fasting to kids is to compare it to cleaning out old toys that no longer work or aren't fun anymore. When you clean out old toys, you aren't just getting rid of things to get rid of things, you're making space for something new.

When we fast, it's like we are cleaning out our bodies, minds, or our time, to make space for new gifts from God.

Frequently Asked Questions

We wanted to include some basic answers to questions your kids might ask. Feel free to improvise, but we wanted to get you started, just in case it might help.

What is fasting?

Biblical fasting is giving up something in the physical in order to try to know God more and get closer to Him spiritually. Prayer and fasting go really well together because fasting is a way of disconnecting—unplugging—from the world, and prayer is connecting—plugging into—God.

Why should we fast?

Fasting is also like a big reset button or a good deep cleaning that helps to clear away extra junk or layers of yuck that build up over time. It helps us get back to the basics of our relationship with Jesus.

How do I fast?

Great question! There are lots of different ways to fast. You can give up snack time, your favorite foods, or give up specific activities like screen time, reading your favorite chapter book, or even a bad habit like biting your nails.

Step 2: Pick Something to Fast

There are tons of different types of fasts. We're diving in to two main types here:

Food Fast

While we do not recommend that children skip meals or drastically reduce their food intake, a modification of their diet might be an easy place to start. Think about fasting from dessert or candy, chips or fried foods, or maybe even bacon.

Entertainment Time Fast

We all have tons of options for entertainment in our lives and screens are only one. Why not think about reducing some of the time and energy trying to entertain ourselves and fast watching TV; playing video games; or reading chapter books, or even sleeping in?

Step 3: Think It Through Before You Start

Finding something that's a good fit for your family.

Bring your whole family in to the discussion. Rather than passing down a “decree from on high,” let your kids ask questions, voice concerns, and have a say in the decisions that are made. Don’t be afraid to push them and ask them to stretch but let them engage in the process of defining the fast.

Think about how long the fast will be.

Currently, we are about to launch a 21-day fast. But depending on what type of fast you decide to do, it might apply all-day-every-day, for several days in a row. Or you might pick something that is specific to a certain time of day over the course of the 21-day fast. If you need screens for work and school during the day, but you want to do a screen time fast, figure out what time the fast will start each afternoon or evening.

Don’t just take away. Add something in.

If you’re doing a food fast, schedule some specific time after dinner, or around other mealtimes, to read the Bible, pray, or journal, together as a family.

Or, if you’re doing a screen time fast, take some of the time that you would have spent on those devices and read a chapter of the Bible together or pray that God would work in your hearts.

Over the course of the fast, depending on how old your children are, talk about what questions they have about God or how to hear His voice. You can even encourage them to write down questions they have for God or the things that God is saying to them in the time you set aside for the fast.

Step 4: Start the fast

Remind the family.

It’s important to talk it over and remind the family what was decided and that it starts today. You can even kick it off with a party of sorts, if you’d like.

Encourage the family.

I don't know about you, But I love encouragement. Especially when I'm doing something that's new or hard. Encouragement can be huge in fasting well. It's ok to go back and revisit why your family has decided to fast and what the benefits are.

It should be uncomfortable.

A fast should really cost you something. You, and your kids, should *feel* the absence of whatever you are giving up. If you never watch TV, don't fast TV. If you never eat sugar, don't fast sweets. If you don't really notice that you've given something up, you might as well not be fasting at all.

Don't give up.

Nobody is perfect. If you're doing the 21-day fast, but you blow it on Day Two, don't quit. Pray as a family that God will forgive your mistakes and that He will help you to keep going and then jump right back in on Day Three. All is not lost if the fast isn't perfect. There is real value in your kids' seeing mistakes happen but also seeing how you turn back towards Jesus and keep pressing towards Him.

Step 5: Take time to reflect and celebrate.

When your fast comes to an end, take some time to talk about it. What worked? What didn't work? Was it too easy? Too hard? What would we want to do differently next time? As you wrap up the fast, if you don't talk about anything else, make SURE you talk about what God taught or said to each of you during the fast. Take that moment to really celebrate how God took the time you gave Him and made something important and beautiful out of it.