



# THE PRACTICE OF FASTING FOR KIDS!

Here are some practical ways to fast with kids:

## Fasting: Teaching Kids Spiritual Disciplines

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Make different choices. For a period of time, choose healthy foods for snacking. Instead of fast food, choose nutritious meals.

- **Abstain from sweets.** Lead kids to not eat sugar-based foods (candy, cake, pastries) for a designated time.
- **A digital fast.** As a family, decide to fast from technology. This could be as simple as not using the DVD player in the minivan to complete abstinence for a week or month.
- **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.
- **Fasting reminds us that God is our provider of every good and perfect gift.** Help 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.
- **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, I cannot think of a reason why we would ignore teaching about fasting and at some level help kids understand, through experience, short and intentional opportunities to practice what Jesus (and many Bible heroes) practiced.