

WHAT IS FASTING?

MATTHEW 6:16-18 (JAN. 11)

Fasting is a spiritual practice where we choose to go without something -most often food -for a period of time so we can focus more fully on God. When we fast, we are saying with our actions that we need God more than comfort, routine, or even daily bread. Fasting helps slow us down, quiet distractions, and remind us to depend on the Lord. Fasting is giving up something and filling up with God.

Read Matthew 6:16-18. In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His followers how to fast. He does not say if we fast, but when we fast, showing that fasting is a normal part of a believer's life. Jesus explains that fasting is not about showing others how spiritual we are. We are not meant to complain, look unhappy, or seek attention. Instead, fasting is done quietly and joyfully before God, trusting Him.

Jesus reminds us that the purpose of fasting is our relationship with God. It is personal, sincere, and rooted in love for Him. When we fast with the right heart, God meets us, strengthens us, and draws us closer to Himself.

FAMILY DISCUSSION:

Discussion: Early Childhood

- What is food? Who gives us our food? When we fast, we take a break from something. What are other things that we can take a break from?
- What is one thing you like that you could take a short break from?
- What are things we do to show God we love Him and to learn more about Him?
- What can we do with God to fill up the space from what we are taking a break from?
- Does God see us even when no one else is watching?

(Encourage simple answers and remind children that God loves when we talk to Him.)

Discussion: Elementary

- In your own words, what is fasting?
- Why do you think Jesus said we should not show off when we fast?
- How can fasting help us focus more on God? What is one thing that might distract you from God that you could fast from for a short time?
- How can we use the time we save during a fast to pray or help others?

INTERACTIVE PRAYER TIME:

Opening Prayer: Thank God for being near and for inviting us to draw closer to Him.

Surrender Prayer: Each person names one thing that can sometimes distract them from God.

Giving Up Prayer: Each person names one thing they can give up for God.

Filling Up Prayer: Each person names one thing that they can do to fill up with God.

Listening Moment: Sit quietly for 30-60 seconds, asking God to help you with what you are giving up and are filling up with to draw closer to Him.

Closing Prayer: Ask God to teach your family how to fast with joyful and humble hearts.