

PrayKids!

ADVENTURES WITH JESUS IN PRAYER

The Word on...

Fasting

Fasting is when you choose to give up something you really want so you can focus on God and prayer for a time. Normally, you pray with your spirit and soul (your soul is your mind, will, and emotions). But **fasting** gets your body involved, too. It's sort of like body prayer. When you **fast**, you are praying with your whole self.

Want to add nuclear power to your prayers? When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, it was because they wanted something they shouldn't have had so badly that they finally gave in. But if you "just say no" to something you really want for the purpose of prayer, it shows God—and the enemy—that you are really serious about it. It's like releasing an atomic prayer-bomb! ★

ON THE FAST TRACK

BY KIM BUTTS

What would you do if Jesus asked you to put Him above everything else? Would you be willing to give up some things for a while that are very important to you just to focus on Him? Guess what? Jesus DID ask us to put Him first!

We have so many things going on in our lives that take up our time and attention—things like friends, sports events, eating, sleeping, TV, video games, shopping at the mall. None of these things are wrong, but they do keep us busy and thinking about things other than God. Even Jesus felt the pressure of everyday things taking up His time.

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When that happened, He would get alone with God to fast and pray.

A "fast" is when you willingly give up something that is important to you so that you can get serious about God. There are lots of times when people might want to **fast**. Sometimes it's when they want to **humble themselves** in prayer for someone else (2 Samuel 12:16, Daniel 9:3). Or when they are **repenting of sin** (1 Samuel 7:5-6). Or when they are **praying for protection or a crisis** (Ezra 8:21-23, Esther 4:15-16). Or when they are **trying to hear God's voice** clearly (Daniel 10:1-2, Acts 14:23).

Fasting is also a way to "supercharge" your prayers for spiritual warfare. Jesus **fasted** for 40 days before He met Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-2). He knew He needed to be extra strong spiritually to stand up to all of Satan's tricks. Another time, when Jesus' disciples were trying to get rid of an evil spirit, the enemy was actually winning! The disciples asked Jesus what went wrong and He told them

that sometimes the war with the kingdom of darkness is so tough that prayer and **fasting** are the only way to win

(Mark 9:29, KJV).

It's important to Jesus that we **fast**



FASTING IS A WAY TO "SUPERCHARGE" YOUR PRAYERS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE.



for the right reasons (Matthew 6:16-18). He taught that we shouldn't brag about **fasting** or go around with a sad face, making a big deal about the things we are giving up. Instead, He said to act like nothing out of the ordinary is happening. Jesus said we should **fast** secretly. But what if your friend invites you over to watch your favorite TV show together, and you have already decided that God wants you to give up TV for a while as a **fast**? It's okay then to let your friend know that you are **fasting**. Jesus

just doesn't want us to go around telling everybody to make them think we are a better Christian than someone else.

The Bible tells us to be humble and especially kind

when we **fast** (Isaiah 58:2-11).

So what do you think? Are you ready to take the challenge? If God asks you to **fast** and pray about something, will you do it? If you do, get ready for God to do some really cool things in your life! ✨

A Note from PrayKids!: If you feel God is leading you to fast from food, you should discuss this with your parents.

—Kim Butts is on the editorial advisory team for *PrayKids!*. She and her husband Dave head up Harvest Prayer Ministries.

Dear Readers,

The idea of **fasting** may be new to you. Don't be scared of it; just listen to God. If you read the *PrayKids!* issue on "Hearing God" you will remember that God talks to kids! He will help you to understand **fasting** and He will help you know when and how it is right for you.

I know it's hard to tell yourself you can't have something. But when God asks you to give up something and you obey Him, amazing things happen.

Keep Praying!
Nancy Sutton
editor of
PrayKids!



PrayKids!

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Mission Statement

The mission of *PrayKids!* is to teach, encourage, and equip children (ages 8-12) as they develop a deepening relationship with Christ through prayer, so that they might become more effective prayer warriors.



What We Learned through Fasting

Fasting isn't just for adults. When the Church of the Open Door (in Minnesota) decided to participate in a 30 Hour Famine, a fasting program sponsored by World Vision (www.30hourfamine.org), the kids didn't want to be left out of the **fast**. So they got permission from their parents to participate and then asked people to pledge to give money to help the hungry children. Instead of 30 hours, the **fast** for the kids lasted from 6 p.m. until 8 a.m. the next morning.

The kids met that evening at the church and were part of a program filled with activities, teaching times, and group discussions. They began by focusing on the problem of hunger in our country and around the world. The kids also discussed how God has called them to help others and that kids can do things that help. Time was spent praying for the hungry people and the organizations that feed the hungry people.

In the morning, when parents came to pick up the kids, they all enjoyed a real "break-fast." They celebrated the end of the **fast** and shared what they had learned.

Here are some of the kid's comments on the **fast**:

"[God] helped me notice how spoiled I am and I still want more. Some kids don't have anything. I always thought I needed more but now I'm thankful for what I have." —Bjorn Westlund, age 11

"I had read about starving kids. Kids starve every day, so (I've learned to) be thankful for food. I have more faith." —Kurt Hansen, age 11

"I learned that . . . many people die of starvation each day. That was really sad. I thought more about people who starve." —Gina Berlien, age 11

"I think God spoke to me by taking time to not eat and help people in other countries that are dying. My life changed because I think about more people and not just me all the time." —John Bros, age 12

"God showed me how a lot of times we take stuff for granted, that we can just go to the store and get some food." —Carrie Johansen, age 12

Don't Wimp Out

Sometimes when we **fast**, we are tempted to give up. It happens to everyone. It even happened to Jesus. He went on a 40-day **fast** without food or water. Just when He was REALLY hungry, Satan came along and tried to tempt Him to turn stones into bread. Jesus could have done it, but instead He quoted Scripture to give Him strength to overcome the temptation (Matthew 4:1-4).

You can do that too. If you are tempted to quit your **fast** before you planned, try praying these verses from Scripture:

"Jesus, Your Word says that You will give me strength to do ANYTHING. Please help me stay on this **fast**. Help me finish what I started" (Philippians 4:13; John 4:34).

Try turning these verses into prayer as well: Proverbs 16:3, Psalm 37:5-6, 2 Chronicles 26:5. ★

3



B A S E D O N
Esther 3-8



Esther

and
the

Factor

Fasting

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Hathach's sandal slipped on the smooth mosaic tile of the Women's Court; but in his haste, he hardly noticed. Esther rose from her marble bench. "Tell me! What did my cousin Mordecai say?"

"That wicked Haman has arranged to destroy all the Jews, Queen Esther," her servant panted. "Mordecai says you must talk to the king."

"Hathach!" Esther cried. "You know that anyone who approaches the king's inner courtyard without an invitation is killed unless the king holds out the golden scepter."

"If Haman gets his way," Hathach replied, "you will die anyway." Hathach paused, then whispered, "Mordecai also sends this message: 'Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal position for such a time as this.'"

Esther clenched her fists till her knuckles turned white. She felt trapped. She knew her people faced certain death without her help. But what could she do?

Esther looked straight at Hathach: "Tell Mordecai to ask our people (the Jews) to **fast** and pray for me. Do not eat or drink anything for three days. My maids and

I will also **fast**. Nothing, not even food preparation, shall distract us from seeking God's guidance. Then I will go to the king."

For three days, while palace activity hummed around them, Esther and her maids, Mordecai, and all the Jews **fasted** while Esther prayed for God to show her what to do. On the morning of the third day, Esther dressed in her finest clothes. Taking a deep breath, she walked slowly into the king's inner courtyard.

The king sat on his royal throne under a purple canopy, his feet resting on a golden footstool. Esther bowed low before him to show him honor. Her heart pounded and her knees shook as she approached the throne with her head down. Finally, she peeked at the king through her veil. He was holding out the golden scepter toward her!

"Esther! What do you want? I will give you whatever you want," the king said with a smile. He was pleased to see her. God had heard her cry for help!

During Esther's time of **fasting** and prayer, God had helped her realize that she should not make her request immediately. So she invited the king and Haman

BY KAREN WINGATE

request immediately. So she invited the king and Haman

to one banquet and then another to show the seriousness of her request.

At the second banquet, the king again asked, "What do you want, Esther?" She replied, "Oh please, protect my people, the Jews. Haman, your counselor, plans to kill all the Jews in the land of Persia."

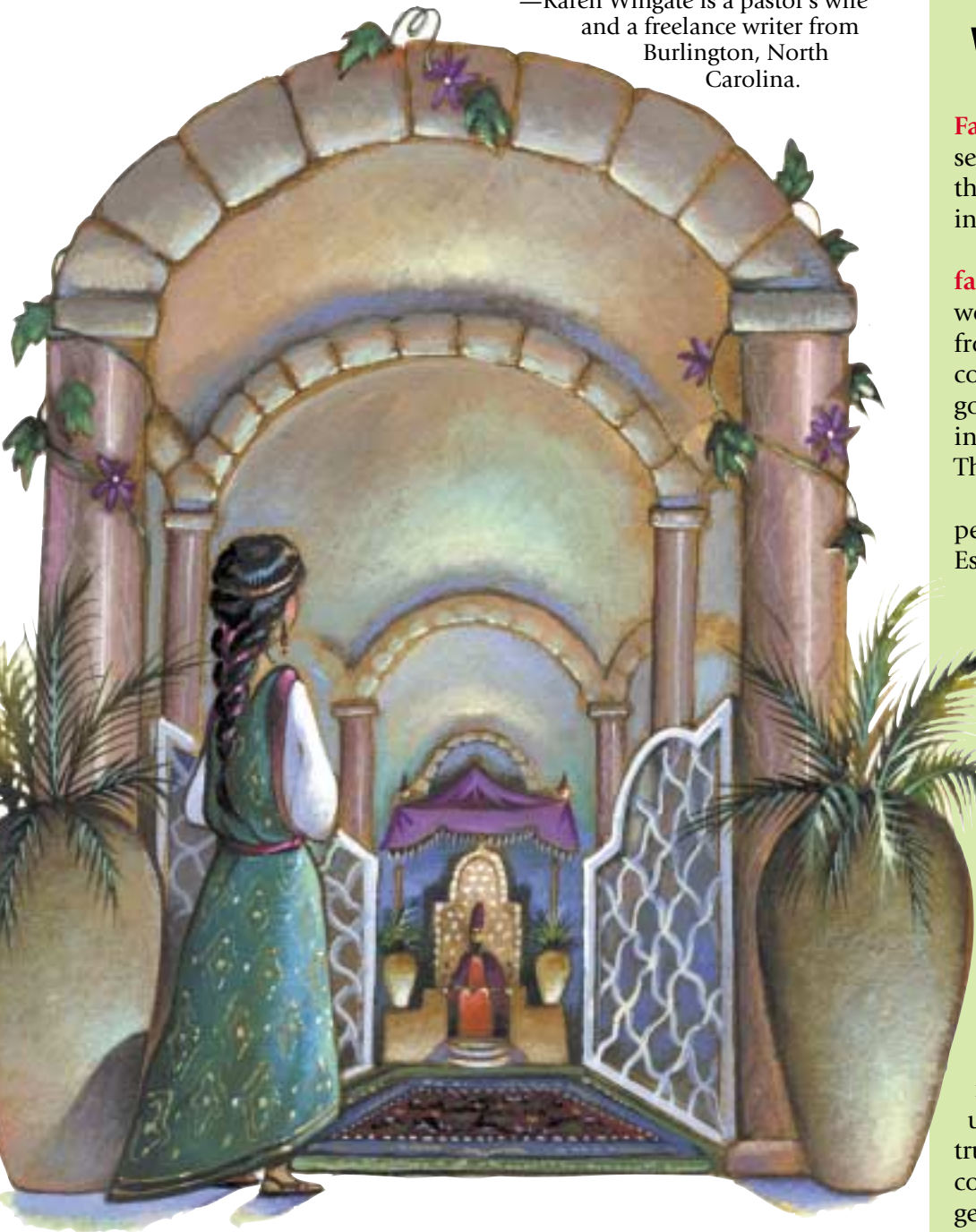
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The King, furious that he had been tricked by Haman, gave orders for Haman to be killed. He also ordered that the Jews be allowed to protect themselves from their enemies.

When Esther returned from the banquet, Hathach cried out, "You did it, Esther! You saved your people!"

"No, Hathach," Esther replied. "We all **fasted** and asked God for help. God is the One who did the saving." ★

—Karen Wingate is a pastor's wife and a freelance writer from Burlington, North Carolina.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY STACEY SCHUETT



What Happens When We **Fast**?

Fasting is a way to show God how serious we are. But it does more than that. It makes things happen in the spiritual world!

Esther asked that all the Jews **fast** with her before she went to the king. We know from the story that the king could have killed her for going to him without an invitation, but he didn't. That was an answer to prayer.

But another unusual thing happened as well. The night before Esther's banquet, the king couldn't sleep. So he stayed up very late reading a book that recorded everything that had happened during his reign. In the book, he read how Mordecai had once uncovered a plot against the king and had saved his life (Esther 2:19-23). Remembering that a Jew had saved his life probably made the king much more likely to grant Esther's request to save the Jews.

It was no accident that the king "happened" to read that story, in that book, on that night. When we **fast**, God causes unusual things to happen. The truth comes out. Peace and hope come into a situation. It's worth getting serious about! ★





Let's Pray for Hungry Children

You know what it feels like when you're hungry. Your stomach grumbles and aches. Sometimes you get weak or dizzy. You may have trouble concentrating. If you are *very* hungry, you might even get the shakes or feel like you can't do anything but lie down.

Millions of children in the world feel like that every day because they don't have enough food, or don't have the right kind of food. Their bodies often don't grow like they should, and they get sick easily. Many die young. The ones who live can't learn in school because they are so weak or their brains have been hurt by hunger.

God has special concern for poor and hungry



people. They are so close to His heart that when we care for them it's like we are caring for Him (Matthew 25:34-40). God has pity on weak and needy people (Psalm 72:13), and He gives food to the hungry (Psalm 146:7). If we ignore the needs of the poor on purpose, we insult God (Proverbs 14:31). In His eyes, we truly worship and walk with Him when we help people in need (Isaiah 58:6-7,10).

One important way we can help hungry children is to pray. In fact, God tells us to! Lamentations 2:19 says, "Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street." ★

—By Sarah Congdon, World Concern (www.worldconcern.org). Photos courtesy of World Concern.

SIX

COVER THE GLOBE

Your prayers can make a difference for hungry people all over the world.

Here are some things you can ask God to do:

1. "Father, draw the hungry children to Jesus who is the Bread of Life. He promised that whoever comes to Him will never go hungry and whoever believes in Him will never be thirsty" (John 6:35).
2. "Jesus, protect the hungry children from diseases in their bodies and protect their minds from harm. Help them stay healthy and strong. Shelter them during times of war, famine, and disaster. Keep them safe and give them hope" (Psalm 39:7).
3. "Lord God, give Christians the desire to defend weak and fatherless people and the courage to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8, Psalm 82:3-4).
4. "Heavenly Father, bless wealthy people with a heart to do good. Make them generous and willing to share so hungry children and their families can get the help they need" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
5. "Show me, Lord, what I can do to help hungry children in a practical way. Make me a blessing to them" (Proverbs 22:9).



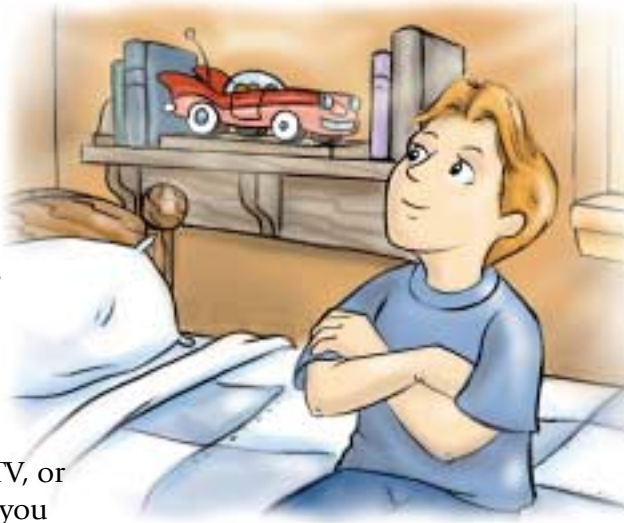
Fast Forward

If you feel that God might be telling you to **fast**, ask Him:

1. **Why** am I **fasting**? To increase the power of my prayers? To get closer to God?
2. **How long** should I **fast**? One day? Several days?
3. **What** should I **fast** from?

Here are some ideas:

- Give up candy, desserts, TV, or video games. Spend the time you would eat, watch, or play in prayer.
- Pick something you really want (a bag of gummy bears or a new toy, for example) and set it up in your room in clear view. Decide how long the Lord wants you to **fast**, and agree not to touch



that item for that length of time. Every time you see it, remember to pray! When your **fast** is over, enjoy!

- As a family, do a “people group” **fast**. Instead of eating a regular meal, eat only what people in another culture might eat (like rice, beans, bread, or fruit). Then pray for those people.
- Instead of asking to go to McDonalds, fix yourself a PBJ sandwich. Ask your parents to donate the money from eating out to a missions organization that feeds hungry children. ★

ILLUSTRATION BY ED OLSON

A Glowing Reminder

Fasting is all about prayer. If you **fast** from food, your rumbling stomach is a good reminder to pray. When you **fast** from other things, however, you may forget to pray. Here’s a way to remember—even in the dark! Each time you see it, remember why you are **fasting** and pray, pray, pray!

Supplies:

- Fun foam
- Glow-in-the-dark paint
- Glow-in-the-dark beads
- Ribbon (20 inches)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Optional: clothespin or magnet

Directions:

Cut a large heart shape (or another shape) from the fun foam. Paint the word P-R-A-Y on the heart with glow-in-the-dark paint. String some beads on a ribbon and knot the ends. Make a loop with the ribbon (so it can hang) and glue it to the back of the heart. You may want to glue a magnet or a clothespin to the back so your reminder can go on the fridge or be clipped on your Bible or pillowcase—anywhere you need to be reminded to pray while you **fast**! ★



The Facts on Fasting: A Family Bible Study

By Cynthia Hyle Bezek

The Bible teaches that **fasting** is a voluntary but expected part of a believer's prayer life. There are different kinds of **fasts**, different reasons to **fast**, and different benefits from **fasting**. You and your family can learn about **fasting** by doing one part of this Bible study together each day of the week.

Sunday: Jonah 3:1-10

- It is not just grown-ups who **fast**. Who **fasted** in these verses?
- Why did they **fast**?
- What else did they do?
- They _____ God (v. 5)
- They _____ urgently on _____ (v. 8)
- They gave up their _____ (v. 8)
- How did God respond?

Monday: Ezra 8:21-23

- Ezra was in charge of leading 49,897 people and 8,136 horses, mules, camels, and donkeys back to Jerusalem after a long exile in Babylon. Would you like that job? Ezra knew he needed help!
- What did Ezra ask the people to do with him?
- Why did he ask God for help but not the king?
- What attitude were the people to have during the **fast**?
- How did God respond?
- What does Ezra teach you about what you can do when facing a big, hard job?

Tuesday: 1 Kings 21:20-29

- What did Elijah say about King Ahab? (v. 20)
- What did Ahab do in response to Elijah's warning? (v. 27)
- How did God respond?
- Although God does not require **fasting** for the forgiveness of our sins, why might it sometimes be appropriate to **fast** after we have committed serious sin?

Wednesday: Daniel 10:1-3

- One time the prophet Daniel received a difficult-to-understand vision from the Lord. He **fasted** and prayed, asking God to help him understand.
- Fasting** does not always mean going completely without food. What did Daniel give up in these verses?
- How long did he **fast**?
- What is going on in your life right now that is difficult for

you to understand?

—How will you ask God to help you know His thoughts about it?

Thursday: Nehemiah 1:1-11

- Nehemiah **fasted** and prayed when he realized he would have to talk to a powerful person who might not like what he had to say.
- What was Nehemiah feeling when he **fasted** and prayed? (v. 4)
- What were the three main parts to Nehemiah's prayer?
Verses 5-7: _____
Verses 8-9: _____
Verses 10-11: _____
- Is there something scary that you have to do? What is it?
- What sins might you repent of, what Bible promises might you claim, and what requests of God might you make if you were to **fast** and pray before doing the scary thing?

Friday: Isaiah 58:1-7

- Why were the people upset? (v. 3a)
- What did they hope to gain by **fasting**?
- What was their attitude while they were **fasting**? (vv. 3b-5)
- What attitude and actions does God want to see from people while they are **fasting**? (vv. 6-7)

Saturday: 2 Chronicles 20:1-4, 14-17, 22-30

- Why did King Jehoshaphat proclaim a **fast** for all of Judah?
- What did God do in response to the people's **fasting** and praying?
- Can you think of anything facing our nation, now or in the past, which might be a reason for **fasting** and prayer?
- How would you feel about participating in a **fast**? ★

—Cynthia Hyle Bezek is the managing editor of *Pray!*. She and her husband, David, and son, Ian, recently moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado.

FREE Leader's Guide for Teachers/Parents: We want you to be able to use *PrayKids!* with a group of kids. On our website you'll find **group discussion questions and activities for each article**. Download and copy the information from www.praykids.com.

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Item #33



Encourage Your Kids

If your child has a story of an answered prayer, how his/her life was impacted by prayer, or how his/her class prayed and something special happened, please send it to:

PrayKids!
P. O. Box 35004
Colorado Springs, CO
80935-3504
E-mail:
praykids@navpress.com

While we cannot publish everything that is sent in, we will put some additional stories up on our website:
www.praykids.com