



fasting & sabbath

In an ever-changing world and society, raising children can feel overwhelming, but thankfully, we serve an unchanging and immovable God that has already taught us how to be close to Him! We have put together a set of activities that you can use throughout your normal routines with your children to teach them about how we can be close with God in a busy world. We are challenging you to commit to one activity/week and see how it transforms your family's faith into something that is truly ***immovable!***



When spending time with your children and God...

- ...always make it a positive experience
- ...associate “God Moments” with “good times”
- ...the heart is more important than the discipline itself
- ...be sensitive to how your child responds
- ...try not to let this time be associated with boredom or forcing
- ...listen to the Holy Spirit’s guidance inside of you
- ...giving them choices gives them a feeling of “ownership” (prompt decks, decorating book covers, illustrating, etc)
- ...if it is enjoyable, it can become a habit that they can start at a young age and continue throughout their lives

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Keys to Practicing Fasting:

- Be a good role model.
- Remember that fasting is not always abstaining from all food. It can be choices...choosing healthy snacks instead of unhealthy or staying away from sugar, etc.
- Fast from technology. Start small, such as no technology in the car for a couple of weeks, and work up to no electronics at home after a certain time of the day each day.
- Grow from short to long. Begin small and build on success.
- Fasting must center on God. Make sure that this time is used to remind us that God is our perfect provider.
- It is an inwardly expressed discipline to be shared between the individual and God. It should be thought of as a discipline, not a punishment.



Bible Verses to Study about Service

- Matthew 6:16-18
- Luke 4:1-2
- Acts of the Apostles 13:16-18

fasting & sabbath

1. Give up, Fill up

This is a wonderful activity to help kids learn that fasting is a way for us to give up something so that God can fill us up. Each child will need two cups, one labeled “GIVE UP” and one labeled “FILL UP”. Cut apart a set of cards that are appropriate for the child and fill in some of the blank ones. You can write “Listen to a worship song”, “Draw or write a prayer to God”, “Draw something you are thankful for”, “Memorize 1 Corinthians 10:31”, or “Read the Sermon on the Mount” or something similar on them. Place the Give Up strips in the Give up cup and do the same with the Fill up strips and cup. You do not need to use all of the strip, just pick the ones that work for your family. Explain that each day (or whenever works for your family and for however long), you will choose a strip from each cup, explaining how fasting is not only about giving things up; it’s about filling that space with something you do to fill up with God to grow closer to Him



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Keys to Practicing Fasting:

- Role model a healthy rhythm of work and rest so kids don't grow-up embracing the life-sucking idol of overscheduled, frazzled, stressed-out busyness.
- Set aside a day to pray and play! Keep it simple...God, family, rest, play, etc. This day is an act of worship. It is a day to find our rest in God's loving embrace.
- Prepare ahead of time, by getting as much work done in the days before.



Bible Verses to Study about Service

- Exodus 20:8-11
- Exodus 16:19-23
- Exodus 16:29



fasting & sabbath

1. Extreme Excercise Race

To have your children completely understand why God instructs us to have a day of rest, this activity and discussion can help. Give your children a series of commands for them to do until they are exhausted, such as:

Do 20 jumping jacks

Do 10 sit-ups

Hop on one foot 10 times

Hop on the other foot 15 times

Do a crab walk for 20 seconds

Do 10 burpees

Point out to your children that as they get more tired, they cannot perform the tasks as well. Their form gets sloppy because they are tired. Have your children continue until they are very tired.

Talk to your children about how we cannot perform in our best ways when we are tired, which includes our bodies and our brains.

Ask:

Do you remember why God gives us rules?

What happens when we work too much?

How is our life different when we take time to rest?

● *fasting & sabbath*

2. *REST*

The idea of pausing for an entire day of rest is not the most natural thing in our society, so we need to practice it. Start small, with an afternoon and work up to an entire day focused on God, family and rest. We live in a world where we are hard-wired to produce and perfect, but there is nothing to “show” for a day of rest, a day spent communing with God. Sabbath rest can look different for different families. For some it is a hike in the woods, for others it can be sitting around the kitchen table playing board games. What God asks of us on the Sabbath isn’t perfection, but progress...intentional slow times where you remember who God is and enjoy the world He made and the family He gave you. The acronym REST can help practice Sabbath time.

R: Reflect

E: Experience God’s Goodness

S: Spend Time Together

T: Talk To God



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Reflect

Use your Sabbath hours to reflect on the week behind you and the week ahead. Share the best and hardest parts. Reflect on what you learned in church and school, or a book you are reading, or something you are studying in the Bible. Invite the whole family to reflect on who God is and what He has done. You can read Scripture or devotions together or keep a Sabbath journal and write prayer requests and what everyone is thankful for.

Experience God's Goodness

Experience the goodness of God and His creation together! Use your Sabbath to spend time outside, enjoying creation through a hike, a walk, a bike ride, or driving a scenic route. If you are stuck inside, you can listen to music, read poetry or stories together.

Spend Time Together

The Sabbath is, at its core, about spending time communing with God. But by engaging this spiritual practice together, as a family, you invite your kids to start their own journey of spending time with God. When you spend time together, focus on the people in the room. Put your phones away, and engage in a fully present way. Even a few hours of dedicated engaged rest will be transformative for your family.

Talk To God

When you Sabbath, invite God into it. Spend time praying, reading God's word and journaling. Maybe each member of the family has their own

fasting & sabbath

3. *Why Sabbath?*

God instituted the Sabbath during the creation story in Genesis; having completed the creation of the world and everything in it, God rested. Reading Scripture about how and why God created the Sabbath will help children to understand why we set aside time to rest and honor God. Using age-appropriate Bibles for your children, read the following verses.

Genesis 2:2-3

By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Explain to your children that when God gave Moses the law in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, He called out the Sabbath as a crucial part of the life of God's people.

Exodus 16:23

He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of Sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'"



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Tell your children that when giving the 10
Commandments, this is what God said:

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy. Six
days you shall labor
and do all your work, but the seventh day is a
sabbath to the Lord
your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither
you, nor your son
or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor
your animals,
nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six
days the Lord made
the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in
them, but he
rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord
blessed the Sabbath
day and made it holy.

Explain to your children that we practice the Sabbath
because God tells us to. He wired our bodies for rest and
He desires to spend time with us. The goal of the
Sabbath is to experience both of those things: rest and
communion with God.

fasting & sabbath

4. *Sabbath Day Idea Box*

As parents, some days we feel more creative than others. On those less creative days that might happen to fall on the Sabbath, it is nice to have an Idea Box to pull activities from, so you don't rely on electronics as entertainment. Decorate a shoe box and, as a family, brainstorm as many different activities and ideas to write on cards or strips of paper and put into the box.

On those Sabbath days when you cannot think of anything to do to spend time together, pull out a card.

Some ideas could include:

- Look at family photos together
- Puzzle
- Board Game
- Take a hike
- Each person shares a memory (favorite childhood, favorite vacation, favorite pet, favorite Christmas, favorite birthday)
- Activity book
- Scenic drive
- Read a chapter book together
- Color a coloring book
- Paint/Play-Do/Clay
- Write a letter to a soldier
- Make a fort in the living room and read inside



fasting & sabbath

- Bake something together and bring to a neighbor
- Nature Race...give everyone a bag and list of things to collect (5 flowers, 2 rocks, 3 leaves, etc.)
- Create a Bible scene together using Legos, Play-Do, painting, drawing, drama, charades, etc. Can be done in teams or individually
- At-home science experiment...many use household items and are a great way to glorify God and His fascinating world
- Scavenger Hunt inside the house...use riddles to give a clue to the next place where the next riddle is located. At the end, have a small prize.