

# FEASTING ON GOD

“In fasting, we are learning how to be sustained by divine pleasures rather than human pleasures. Fasting is feasting — feasting on God alone.”

— Richard Foster

**O**n a sun-scorched day, when you are craving ice-cold water, warm milk would be a poor substitute. And when you need — really need — a soak in a tub of hot water, then wading through a mud puddle is not going to satisfy you at all. When we identify a specific physical craving, there is no satisfying substitute. So it is with our “soul hunger.” **Soul hunger has only one remedy. Fasting reminds us of what that remedy is.**

**Fasting is intentionally turning our affection away from pleasures and solutions that are temporary to focus on the One who satisfies without end.**

When we are fasting, we are learning by experience what really feeds our souls — and it’s not “bread alone.” We set aside whatever deters us from drinking deeply and feasting ravenously on the spiritual provision that God brings to the banquet table.

As we feast on God, we let go of the distracting trivia of this physical world so that we hold on to the eternally sufficient. When those substitute satisfiers and faux fulfillers are moved out of the way, we love him better — without anything competing with him. **Fasting leads us to a place where we recognize, once again, that the cravings of the inner person can only be satisfied by his presence.**

Why don’t we regularly turn away from other cravings? Because we don’t desire God. Probably because we have an incomplete, inaccurate view of him. If only we would really see him, have an unobstructed view of him, then, in the words of Skye Jethani’s *With*, **“God would cease to be how we acquire our treasure, and he would become our treasure.”**

“Feasting on God” is explained and practiced throughout Scripture. Moses fasted when Israel sinned. David fasted when people died. Daniel and Esther — and Jesus — fasted when they faced extreme challenges. Isaiah 58:3-8 explains the kind of fast that delights God. Joel 2:12 instructs and invites us: “Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning.”

We nurture our children well as we teach them that there are many false cures for our soul’s aches, because we live on this side of eternity. **We give them a lifelong gift as we model fasting for them, when we set aside things we love too much in order to hold closely the One we can never love enough.**

Sometimes the craving for a specific taste or a specific experience can eclipse every other reality. When that happens in our spiritual journey — **when another love is overshadowing and interrupting “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength ...”** — then it is probably time for a fast.



# FEASTING ON GOD

## INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

### Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. Here’s something that will help you when the things you love get out of order.”

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

(Start by experiencing fasting for yourself.)

Sometimes we let go of things we love so that we can learn to enjoy God’s love more. **This week we are going to let go of \_\_\_\_\_.** [Let the child help you choose some form of media.] **We are going to put something better in place of that.**

We are going to use that time to be closer to each other and to God. First, we will pray together to ask God to make our love for him stronger and our family love stronger, too. We will ask God to enter our lives in place of what we are letting go.

Then we are going to \_\_\_\_\_. [Insert your choice: read, play a game, go for a walk.] And we will all thank God for that special, extra time together.

#### ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Let’s read Joel 2:12 together. Let’s use this box as a Love Box. Find 5 things that you often say that you love and put them in the box. I’m going to find 5 things and put them in my Love Box, too.

Now, we know that the Bible (Mark 12:30) tells us to love God most of all — with every part of ourselves. Sometimes it’s hard to know what we really love best, because we pay attention to lots of things we love: food, games, or other good things. It’s hard to know if we love God most.

**Sometimes it helps us to remember to love God most if we set aside other things we love for a while. So, let’s each choose something out of this Love Box to let go of** (choose a length of time) so that we can remember to pay attention to God and love him most.

#### PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Read Joel 2:12. It is really important to know what truly has our hearts — what we love most of all. Sometimes it’s hard to tell what we love best. It’s important to know this because what we love best is what controls us. Sometimes it’s hard to identify what is controlling us, but God can help us.

Just to see what God will show us about what we genuinely love most, let’s ask him to help us write two lists in our journals. One list will be for the things we love that are “needs” and the other list will be of the things we love that are just “wants.”

**Now we will each ask God to show us which of our “wants” we should set aside so that we can pay attention to him and hear from him. We will ask God to enter our lives in place of what we are letting go.** (Allow time and then return to the conversation to hear from one another.)

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Entre Niños online magazine: <https://entreninos.com/collections/revistas>

*Habits of a Child’s Heart*, by Valerie Hess and Marti Watson Garlett

*With*, by Skye Jathani

*Spiritual Disciplines for Children*, by Vernie Schorr Love

(Chapter 4 explains the concept of fasting from negative character traits to take on traits of a “with-God” life.)