

## ... on the **F A S T** track...

Fasting is when you choose to give up something you really want, so you can focus on God and pray at the same time. It is not just for adults. Normally when we pray, it is with our spirit and soul (our soul is our mind, will and emotions). When we fast, we pray with our bodies too! So, when we fast, our whole person prays. What would you do if Jesus asked you to put Him above everything else in your life? We have many things in our lives that take up our time and attention – things like friends, MXIT, eating, sleeping, TV, cellular phone games, the Internet, shopping, school, etc. None of these things are wrong, but they keep our minds and bodies busy with things other than God.

### On what occasions does one want to pray and fast?

A 'fast' is when you willingly decide to give up things that are important to you to show you are serious about God. Sometimes it is when you need to **repent of sin** (1 Sa.7:5-6). Sometimes to **pray for protection** or a **crisis** (Ez.8:21-23, Est.4:15-16), or simply when you want to **hear God's voice** clearly (Dn.10:1-3; Ac.14:23). Jesus fasted for 40 days to be able to resist all the temptations of the devil. When we fast it should be for the right reasons (Mt.6:16-18). Jesus said when we fast we should not fast to be seen by everyone – almost like fasting in secret. But what if your friend invites you over to watch a movie and you have already decided to give up TV for a while as a way of fasting? Then it is fine to let your friend know that you are fasting. The Bible encourages us to be humble and kind when we fast (Is.58:2-11).

### Don't chicken out!

Sometimes when we fast, we are tempted to give up. This even happened to Jesus during his 40-day fast. He was really hungry and Satan came to tempt Him to turn stones into bread (Mt.4:1-4). You can also experience temptation during a fast. If you are tempted to break your fast before you planned, consider praying some Scriptures – and don't chicken out because it's becoming tough on you. Remember **Philippians 4:13**: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

During the month of June, there is a special prayer focus on children at risk. There are millions of children who do not have enough food to eat. By fasting, we feel a little of what they experience every day of their lives. When we pray and care for poor people, it is like we are caring for God Himself (Mt.25:34-40; Ps.72:13). In His eyes, we truly worship and obey Him when we consider people in need (Is.58:6-7,10). One way we can do this is to pray for them from **Lamentations 2:19**: *Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.* Will you not think about praying for children at risk from Monday to Friday? You can decide to fast one day per week by skipping one meal. You can also decide to fast from television for one week. Ask your mother to help you do it the right way.

### Prayer pointers: Monday-Friday

1. **Children without food.** Father, I pray that You will draw hungry children to Jesus. That they will come to know Him as the Bread of Life and that whoever comes to Him will never be hungry or thirsty (Jn.6:36). Please provide food for them every day.
2. **Children in danger.** Father I pray for children who are sick or who are living in a war zone. Please protect them from diseases and harm to their bodies. Give them shelter and safety in times of war and disaster. Reveal Yourself as their Helper so they will not be afraid (Heb.13:6).
3. **Children without parents.** Heavenly Father, please watch over and care for all the children without parents. Give them shelter, food and love. Also help Christians to have a desire to defend weak and

fatherless children and give them courage to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Pr.31:8, Ps.82:3-4).

4. **Children on the streets.** Father I pray for children living on the streets in our cities and towns. They are so dirty, Father, and always begging. Forgive me for not having pity on them. Reveal Yourself to them, let them come to You and let no one hinder them, let them enter into Your kingdom (Lk.18:16).
5. **Children that are abused.** Father of mercy, I pray for children who are beaten, abused or misused by other people. I cannot imagine what it is really like to be treated so badly. Please will You show them that Your love and faithfulness will never leave them, write it on their hearts (Pr.3:3). Let them know for sure they are never alone, no matter how difficult things are.