

PRAY FAST FEAST

SESSION GUIDE

STRIPPED BACK 3: HANGRY AND PRAYING

LIMITLESS



STRIPPED BACK 3:

HANGRY AND PRAYING

This session was written in collaboration with YFC for Mettle. Please use and adapt this FREE session to help your young people think about fasting.

Session Aim:

To explore what fasting is, and how we do it.

To look at biblical examples, to understand why we fast.

To understand that fasting is not specifically about food, but about putting God as our priority.

You can choose some or all of the following activities and adapt them to suit your group. There are options in each of the following sections:

‘Way in’, ‘Think’, ‘Dig Deeper’, ‘Reflect’, ‘Sum it Up’

Session Description:

This session aims to explore the spiritual discipline of fasting. Fasting can seem counter cultural, in a consumerism focussed world. This session we will be exploring why, and how we fast, and how God uses it, to deepen our relationship with Him.

Fasting is such an important spiritual discipline that draws us closer to God. By putting away distractions, and things that get in the way, and spending that time trying to get closer to God instead, we do exactly that! We get closer to God.

Session Prayer:

God, in fasting, we dedicate our lives back to you. Help us to understand what gets in the way of our relationship with you, and help us to have the courage to give things up that hinder us, in order to grow our relationship with you. Amen

WAY IN (1): NO NIBBLES FOR ME

YOU WILL NEED:

Biscuits, plate

LEADER'S NOTE:

Lay out a plate of biscuits in the middle of the room. Explain that the group must not touch them until the end of the session, when if you choose you can share them with your group.

SAY

Has anyone ever tried fasting before? What happened? Why did you do it?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that people have been doing for thousands of years, as a means to get closer to God. Today we are going to be looking at why we fast, and exploring the different ways of how we can fast, as a way of us getting closer to God ourselves.

WAY IN (2): PLANK CHALLENGE

GAME

Get one young person to volunteer themselves, to go head to head with a leader. (Decide on a leader to complete this challenge before the session). Explain to the young person, and to the leader, that they are going to complete a 'plank challenge'. The aim of the game is to plank longer than the other person.

If the other person drops, then the challenge is over. On the count of 3 begin your challenge.

SAY

Fasting is as much of a spiritual challenge as a physical challenge. Whilst food is an important part of fasting, fasting can also include giving up other things that take up our time, such as social media, or TV! We have some much 'stuff' that takes up our time, that often it can be a challenge to give it up to God. Today we are going to be looking at why fasting is so important, and why all of us should be fasting, as a means of getting closer to God.

THINK (1): ATHLETIC PRIORITIES

WATCH

Play the following clip to your young people:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSAkxCoJTD4

Silje Norendal - A day in my life | Youth Olympic Games

SAY

The success of professional athletes relies on where they put their priorities. It would be easy for an athlete to throw all their hard work away, by setting their priorities in the wrong places. Late nights, lazy days, and fast food, would quickly strip them of their reign. Athletes, like Silje Norendal, need to put their priorities in the right place, in order for them to keep being the best they can be. It's similar with us, in our faith. If we don't put our priorities in the right places, then we can quickly drift away from the close relationship that we are offered with God. Fasting is all about putting our priorities back to God. Fasting is about giving up what distracts us, the fast food in our diets, in order to build up our relationship with God.

THINK (2): DEDICATING OUR LIVES

YOU WILL NEED:

5 pots of baby food, spoon, laptop with internet,

ACTIVITY

Choose 3 individuals to take part in this challenge. Divide up the rest of the group to be the supporters for each of the individuals as they try to complete the athletic challenges.

Assign each of the following challenges to one of the young people:

Challenge 1: food

In front of one of the young people, place 5 pots of baby food, with a spoon.

Explain to the young person that their challenge is to eat all of the baby food in 2 minutes.

Challenge 2: fitness

Challenge one of your young people to complete a sit up challenge.

The young person should try to complete as many sit ups as they can in 2 minutes.

Challenge 3: mind

Play the following clip to your chosen young person.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo (selective attention test- Daniel Simons)

The aim is for them to count the number of times the white players pass the basketball. The real challenge is for them to spot the gorilla! (but don't tell them there is a gorilla!)

SAY

Professional athletes dedicate their lives to their chosen sport, all in the hope that they are successful in their training, to win that all important gold medal. We too are to dedicate our lives to God. Hebrews 12:1-2, talks about how we should 'throw off everything that hinders', so that we can 'run with perseverance, the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus'. We are called to dedicate our lives to chasing after God. Deepening our relationship with him, is the gold medal that we are to chase after. And just like athletes, this sometimes requires training. This requires us to 'throw off everything that hinders'. We are to throw off the distractions, so that we can chase after God. This is what fasting is about. Fasting is about throwing off all that hinders, so that we can run the race marked out for us.

DIG DEEPER (1): WHY FAST?

YOU WILL NEED: Bibles, paper, pens,

ACTIVITY

Split your young people into small groups, and assign each group some of the following Bible passages.

**EZRA 10:6, NEHEMIAH 1:1-4, ESTHER 3:8-11 + 4:15-17,
DANIEL 10:1-3, JONAH 3:1-10, LUKE 2:36-37, ACTS 13:1-3**

Get the groups to read their Bible passage.

Give each group a piece of paper, and on their pieces of paper, get them to write down the reasons why they think each of the people from the passages are fasting. Feedback at the end.

DIG DEEPER (2): WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

YOU WILL NEED:

Paper, pen, Bible, pens of a different colour

ACTIVITY

Hand out a piece of paper to each young person, along with a pen.

Get them to draw out what they imagine fasting to look like.

They can write descriptive words around the outside too.

Once they have done this, hand them a different coloured pen, and read out the following Bible passage.

Matthew 6:16-18

As you read out the passage, get your young people to draw out what they hear from the passage.

SAY

The Bible doesn't say 'IF you fast', it says 'WHEN you fast'. And this is Jesus himself talking. This means that we are called to fast, as a means of connecting with God. But when we imagine fasting, we might imagine people making a massive deal of what they have given up at lent time, but in reality, fasting is not about us at all. Fasting is not about what WE have given up, but WHO we have given stuff up for. Fasting is about God, not us.

DIG DEEPER (3): FAST FIX HUNGER

YOU WILL NEED:

2 plates, various veg, fast food, Bibles

PREPARATION:

Prepare a plate of vegetables, such as celery, cucumber etc. Alongside this, prepare another plate filled with fast food, from McDonald's for example.

GAME

Pick two volunteers from your group to complete this challenge.

Toss a coin to decide who gets to eat from which plate. (heads gets the veg!)

Get the young people to stand behind the plate they have won, with their hands behind their backs.

Explain that the aim of the game is to be the first person to have finished their plate of food without using their hands.

READ

Daniel 1:1-20

DISCUSS

Why do you think Daniel and his mates refused the 'fine food'?

Where did Daniel's priorities lie?

SAY

Fasting is less about what you give up, and more about where you put your priorities. Rather than settling for second best, and accepting the 'fine food', Daniel and his mates refused, and decided that in dedication to God they would eat only veg. Daniel decided to put God first, over what was probably quite tempting food! Imagine the best ever food put in front of you, and you passing it off for a bit of broccoli! It was probably quite a hard decision for Daniel and his mates. But they knew that in order for them to stay true to God in this new land, they had to give up things, for the sake of keeping close to God. And because of this 'fasting', Daniel and his mates were blessed by God to extraordinary measures. They were given knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. They got fitter and faster than the rest of the group. Daniel could even understand visions and dreams! And that all came through deciding to put God first, and giving up the things that would have got in the way.

REFLECT (2): DAILY LIFE

YOU WILL NEED:

Laptop with internet, speakers, projector, paper, pen.

LEADER'S NOTE:

Ensure each of your young people keep their piece of paper, for use later on in the session.

WATCH

Play the following clip to your young people:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOksW_NabEk

The Time You Have (In JellyBeans)

ACTIVITY

Hand out a piece of paper to each young person, along with a pen.

Get them to think about an average day of their lives, and to imagine how much time they spend doing things.

Get them to split their page into 24 different boxes. (this works out as 6 rows, and 4 columns).

In each of their boxes, get them to map out their average day. They can do this by drawing, or by writing in the boxes.

DISCUSS

What do you spend the most time doing in an average day?

What do you spend the least time doing?

What do you wish you did more of in a day?

What do you wish you did less of in a day?

If you had an extra 15 minutes a day, what would you spend your time doing?

If you had an extra 15 minutes to simply hang out with God, what would you spend your time doing?

ACTIVITY

Once they have finished all their boxes, get them to reflect on each of the days, and to think about how they can involve God more in each of the various activities that they have drawn. Get them to write down their thoughts into each of the boxes.

REFLECT (1): PRIORITIES

YOU WILL NEED:

A Bible, a laptop, a phone, a photo album, a teddy, food, bottle of water, mirror, spoon, rope, makeup, xbox controller

ACTIVITY

Place in front of the young people, various items that might be seen as valued or important to individuals. For example: a Bible, a laptop, a phone, a photo album, a teddy, food, bottle of water, mirror, spoon, rope, makeup, xbox controller.

Explain that they should imagine that they are going travelling, and that they are only allowed to take one item from the pile put in front of them. They should go pick up that item. If more than one person picks the item, then they should go sit with the people who have also picked it. Once they have all decided, give your group time to explain why they picked their items.

DISCUSS

What is the one thing you can't live without?

What would it take for you to give up that thing?

Is your priority your relationship with God, or does it lie somewhere else?

SAY

'There's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that your priority at that moment is to be alone with him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have cancelled the meal, party, concert or whatever else you had planned to do, in order to fulfil that priority'. (James Packer)

REFLECT (3): HUNGER FOR THE RIGHT THINGS

YOU WILL NEED:

Cans of cola

LEADER'S NOTE:

Facts about cola taken from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/food/article-3178341/What-Coca-Cola-REALLY-does-body-just-hour.html>

GAME

Ask for a couple of volunteers to drink a can of cola each.

Hand each of them a can of cola, and explain to them that they are about to complete a challenge. They have to drink their can of cola in the fastest time. The first person to finish wins. However, before they start the race, explain that each of them should take off their sock, and place it over the top of the can of cola.

Explain that they should complete the race, drinking the can of cola through their sock.

As a step further, if you wish you could get them to pass their sock to the person on their left, and they should drink their cola through the other person's sock.

SAY

Cola has a massive impact on our body, that many of us don't even realise. (or we do, but we choose to ignore it!). Some of the facts are as follows:

Within 10 minutes of drinking cola, 10 teaspoons of sugar hits your system, which is 100% of your recommended daily intake! The reason why you don't immediately vomit from the overwhelming sweetness, is because the phosphoric acid cuts through the sweet!

At 40 minutes, your caffeine absorption is complete. Your pupils dilate, your blood pressure rises, as a response your livers dumps more sugar into your bloodstream. The adenosine receptors in your brain are now blocked preventing drowsiness.

Over 60 minutes after drinking the cola, the caffeine's diuretic properties come into play. It makes you have to wee! And eventually the sugar rave that has been going on inside of you begins to die down, making you sluggish and irritable.

And those are only some of the things that happen when you drink cola.

ASK

If you had known this before you started drinking the cola, would you have drunk it?
Are there things in your life that you know have negative consequences on your faith?
In order to grow your faith, are there things that would be helpful to give up?

SAY

We often fill our lives with things that don't necessarily have great consequences for us, and our faith. It's a bit like an athlete filling up on fast food, before a race, and expecting it to go well. We all have 'fast food' in our lives that initially seem to take away the hunger that we have for a relationship with God, but eventually it catches up with us, and we are left hungry. We could easily spend our time on instagram, instead of praying. But the real question is, which will most grow your relationship with God? Is your love for 'fast food' getting in the way of your relationship with God?

SUM IT UP (1): FOCUS ON HIM

YOU WILL NEED:

Paper from 'daily life' activity, highlighters, pens

LEADER'S NOTE:

Get your young people to get out the page they created from the 'daily life' module.

ACTIVITY

Give each young person a highlighter, and a pen.

Get them all to find a space across the room, so that they can spend some time in reflection.

Ask them to pick out one part of their daily lives that they have written or drawn, that they know is getting in the way of their relationship with God. Get them to highlight the thing, and write down in it's place what they want to take up, in order to get closer to God.

It might be that they even want to give up an extra 15 minutes of sleep, for them to get up earlier, to spend some time reading their Bible instead.

SUM IT UP (2)

YOU WILL NEED:

Smarties, 2 bowls, 2 pairs of chopsticks, paper, pens

PREPARATION:

Pour a couple of packets of smarties into 2 bowls, so that they are split up evenly.

ACTIVITY

Get your young people to think of all the distractions that might get in the way of their relationship with God. Get them to write each of the suggested things onto pieces of paper, and then screw up the pieces of paper, to create paper snowballs. Once they have done this, split them up into two teams, and half the paper snowballs between each team. If there aren't many snowballs, then add a few more, that haven't been written on.

Then, pick 1 young person from each team, to sit at a table. In front of each of them, place a bowl of smarties and a pair of chopsticks. Explain that they each have 1 minute to eat as many smarties as they can in that minute. Assign a counter from each team to count the smarties of the opposite team.

As the minute starts explain to the rest of the group that they should aim to distract the other team's smartie eater, by throwing the paper snowballs at them.

SAY

The enemy loves nothing better than sending distractions our way, to lead us away from getting closer to God. By fasting, it means that we throw off those distractions, with the aim of putting God first instead. This might mean that we are called to fast food, but it also might mean that we are called to fast those other distractions. It means that we might be being called to put down our phones, sign out of our instagram, and pick up the Bible instead. It might mean that we need to give things up, in order to take up a Godly life.