

Seeking the Lord Together

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This month Church of God of Prophecy congregations on every continent will join together to seek God in prayer and fasting. People will seek God by denying themselves of food or other things that are important in their lives. They will come together to pray for their families, their congregation, their communities, and the world. But my question is—"Will the children be included?"

Children were included in significant times of prayer and fasting in the Old Testament. When the Ammonites and Moabites joined forces to make war against Judah, Jehoshaphat called the nation together to seek the Lord with prayer and fasting. 2 Chronicles 20:13 says, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." The Message paraphrase says simply, "Everyone in Judah was there—little children, wives, sons—all present and attentive to God."

During this time of seeking let's invite everyone to participate—even the children. Let's provide age-appropriate opportunities for them to be present and attentive to God.

Fasting

Prepare the children to join in fasting during the season of seeking. Share what fasting is using the Bible story of Jesus fasting. Just as Jesus was led by God's Spirit to fast, God calls us to times of fasting as well. Why?

Fasting helps us to focus on Him. Sometimes we are distracted by all that we have—food and drink, media, sports, and more. When we willingly give up something, it causes us to consider God and what His desires are for us.

Fasting also helps us to focus on particular needs or issues. During this time of seeking we will focus on seeking God for His plans for our congregation, our families, our communities, and the world.

Help the children consider ways they could join the congregation in fasting. While most people give up food, encourage children to think about the following things:

What habit or activity might I give up so that I can better focus on God? Children might consider TV viewing, social media, video games, sporting events, etc.

What is a specific meal, food, or drink that I enjoy that I am willing to give up?

Could I give up my allowance, gifts of money, or money I earn doing chores to provide for someone in need?

Include children in a congregational pledge to fast during this season of seeking. For example, pass out notecards to everyone. Have children as well as adults write or draw their fasting pledge and place it in a designated place.

Praying

During this season of seeking plan interactive prayer times so that everyone—including children—can participate. Some suggestions are:

Prayers for the world. Place pictures on the wall of countries that you will focus on in prayer. Include a list (pictures too) of the specific prayer needs of that country and our church leaders there. Invite your congregation to move around the room praying for each nation.

Prayers for personal needs. Create a wall of mesh wire. Provide strips of colored cloth. Create a chart that shows what prayer need each color represents. For example: white might represent salvation, brown might represent physical needs, yellow might represent health needs, green might represent financial needs, etc. Participants take a strip that represents their personal prayer need and tie it on the wire. They then pray for the prayer needs represented by each of the strips already tied on the wire.

Prayers for Christians who are being persecuted. Set up a cross. Prepare a brief written statement or audio or video recording to challenge people to pray for persecuted Christians around the world. Provide pushpins. Participants push a pin into the cross then pray for those who are suffering around the world because they are Christians.

Prayers for our communities. Have a large sheet of bulletin board paper with the name of your church community written at the top and the words, “I will pray and I will serve.” Ask each participant to draw their hand on a sheet of construction paper, cut it out, and write their name on it. After praying for the needs of the community, they may tape their hand on the paper as a commitment to pray and serve.

When Moses petitioned Pharaoh to take the people of Israel into the wilderness, Pharaoh asked, “Tell me who will be going.” Moses answered without hesitation, “We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the Lord” (Genesis 10:8, 9).

Who will be invited to participate in this season of seeking? I hope you will answer without hesitation, “Our young and our old will seek the Lord together.”

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PRAYER