
James 4:8a NKJV

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

Hey kids! As we get started on this fast, let's first talk about what exactly fasting is. Fasting is simply giving up something so that we can focus on God. We might find that during the week we can get really busy doing a lot of "stuff". That "stuff" not only keeps us really busy but it keep our minds busy too. This "stuff" can be things like watching TV, playing video games, spending time on the computer, or playing with friends. We sometimes get so busy that we don't spend time with God. When you decide to fast you give up some "stuff" and instead use that time to pray, read your Bible, and focus on God.

Today's Activity:

Name some "stuff" that may keep you busy and take away time you spend with God.

Esther 4:16 NKJV

"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise....."

We have talked about how fasting helps us focus on God. Sometimes people fast for other reasons too. There were lots of people in the Bible who fasted. Such as Queen Esther, who fasted and prayed that God would save all the Jewish people that were going to be killed. God answered those prayers and all those people were saved. Have you ever wanted a big thing to happen for you or your family? Or, for example maybe you want to do better in school. By fasting and praying, God may show you ways to help you to do better. Or, maybe you know someone who is sick. Choose to pray and fast for them and ask God to heal them.

Today's Activity:

Think of people you know and want to pray for. Make a list of the people and begin by praying for each one of them.

Matthew 6:16-18 NLT

¹⁶ "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Yesterday we learned what it means to fast. Today, let's think about what we do when we fast. The main reason we fast is to focus on God. So one thing we can do to help us focus on God is pray. Remember God likes it when we spend time with Him, and praying is a great way to spend time with God. Reading your Bible is also a good way to focus on God while you are fasting. By reading our Bible, we learn who God is and how to live our lives the best way. The Bible also helps us to focus on God. Some people like to take time in the morning to pray and read their Bibles. There are other people who like to do it at night. It really does not matter when you do it, the important thing is that you spend time with God. Remember He loves you and wants to spend time with you.

Today's Activity:

Take a few minutes and write down some ways that you will choose to focus on God today.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 NKJV

¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

It is so much fun talking to our friends! We like to tell them what's going on with us and hear about what's going on with them. Our friends love to hear about our family, where we have been, and what we have done. Bu you know, God likes it when we talk to Him too. Prayer is a way that we can communicate with God. According to our scripture today, when we talk to God he listens to us. It is very important that we take the time to talk to God. Just like our friends, God wants to know what is going on with us. He wants to know because He loves us and wants to help us.

Today's Activity:

Take time to talk to God today. Here is a prayer you can pray today "Dear Father, I thank you for loving me. I am so happy that you listen to me when I pray to you."

Write your own short prayer:

James 5:13-15 NLT

¹³ Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. ¹⁴ Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

We've learned that praying is talking to God. Have you ever had something going on in your life and you did not know what to do? Maybe it was a problem with your brother or sister, or you had a sick family member. Or maybe you were scared of a big test you were getting ready to take. This Bible verses teaches us that God answers prayer. If we talk to God in prayer He not only listens but He will answer us too. He says He will heal us and forgive us of our sins . If we are in trouble, it's important to take the time to pray, because He wants to help us.

Today's Activity:

Write some things you can pray about. Take some time today to pray about them today.

Matthew 6:9-13 NKJV

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Did you know that in the Bible, God gives us an example of how we should pray? The disciples asked Jesus how to pray and Jesus gave them a great example. You may have heard it called the Lord's prayer. Jesus did not tell them that they had to pray in these exact words, but wanted them to look at this prayer as a model of how we can talk to God. There are some important parts to this prayer like "forgiveness" and "daily bread", which is another way of asking Jesus to help you with the things you need every day. This prayer can be a great example to us as how to pray.

Today's Activity:

Look back at today's scripture and see what else you see in this prayer that we might remember when we pray to God?

Joshua 6:20 NKJV

²⁰ So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

In this story, God used the voice of seven men with seven small rams horns and made them sound like such a loud trumpet that the walls of a great city, Jericho collapsed! This city was known as one of the strongest and oldest cities. The walls of the city were approximately 25 feet high and 20 feet thick! Sometimes, what we have can seem like a little thing to us, or maybe even unimportant, but if we give it to God and let him use it, He can do big things with it! Do you have the talent to play an instrument? Do you enjoy listening to music? Use that as a way to worship God.

Today's Activity:

Use your instrument, radio or iPod to worship God today. Pick a couple of songs that remind you of how much God loves you.

Acts 16:25-26 NLT

²⁵ Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. ²⁶ Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!

Paul and Silas loved Jesus very much and they loved telling people about Jesus. But there were rulers and people who didn't like Jesus and they were very angry that Paul & Silas were sharing about the message of Jesus. So they had them beaten with wooden rods and thrown into prison with chains on their hands and feet. But that night, even though they were in a lot of pain and chained up, they still used their voices to sing to God and praise Him. Suddenly, there was an earthquake and the prison doors flew open and their chains fell off! Amazed by the miracle, the jailor asked them how he could become a Christian too. Our voices may seem small, but God can use us in a mighty way! When we use our voice to worship Him, we are showing God that we love Him!

Today's Activity:

Get with your parents today and think of other ways you can use your voice to worship God.

2 Samuel 6:14-15 NKJV

¹⁴ Then David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; and David *was* wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

¹⁶ Now as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

Can you remember a time when you got so excited about something really awesome? Did you start dancing or jumping around, maybe even doing cartwheels? That's what King David did in this story! He was so happy because God had chosen him as king, and he was able to safely bring back the Ark of God to where it belonged, in his city. The Bible says he celebrated and danced with all his might.

Even when his wife Michal was angry with him for acting so crazy, he told her he was willing to look silly and even be embarrassed for God. King David didn't let what other people thought stop him from praise God and dancing before him. He was willing to do whatever he had to do to show God how thankful he was. We too can get excited about who God is and what He has blessed us with, and if dancing is the way we want to show our love and appreciation to God, then we should do it!

Today's Activity:

Write down things that you can be excited about - excited enough to dance before the Lord!

I John 4:7-10 NLT

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

When someone gives us a really special gift, we feel excited and even loved by the person who gave it to us. When God sent his Son, Jesus into the world it was because he loved us. And Jesus showed us how much he loved us by dying on the cross to save us from our sin. (Read John 3:16)

Love is a feeling that God had given each one of us. It is a special gift that allows us to show others how we feel about them. Love is a gift that God has given us and that we can share with others.

Today's Activity:

Make or buy a special gift for a friend, and remind them how much you love and appreciate their friendship.

John 13:35 NLT

³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

I John 3:18

¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

One of the best ways we can show the love of Jesus to other people is by showing our love to one another. Love is not shown only in what we say, but also in what we do. It is very important to Jesus that we tell other people that we love them, and it's also important that we do things that show other people how much we love them. When we treat other people well and with kindness, it brings us happiness too!

Today's Activity:

Show your family and friends love today by treating them with kindness. Also, do something special for your family like help with extra chores around the house.

Luke 6:27-28 NLT

²⁷ "But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.

Have you ever had someone make you feel unwanted or maybe even say hurtful things about you behind your back? When people treat you badly it can be really hard to show them love. Sometimes you may want to say mean things back, or treat them unkindly too. It may seem like that person deserves to be treated badly, but that only makes matters worse and we end up feeling bad too. It's not always easy to love other people, but when we get hurt or people say mean things to us, Jesus can help us love others enough to forgive them.

Today's Activity:

Today, ask your parents to pray with you and ask Jesus to help you respond differently the next time someone hurts your feelings.

John 14:5-6 NKJV

⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am **the way**, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Have you ever looked at a roadmap? It shows all the different roads in an area or city. If we want to go somewhere, we can look at the map and find which road will take us where we want to go. Without it, we can get lost, but by following our map, we can stay on the right path. The Bible is a lot like a roadmap for our lives. Through the stories in the Bible, we can see examples of how God helped people find their way through difficult situations. By reading about these, we can learn how to go down the right path in our lives too.

Today's Activity:

Do you have a favorite Bible story? Read it tonight and write a little bit about what this story means to you.

John 14:5-6 NKJV

⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

When Jesus was arrested, the Roman governor, Pilate, asked Him if He was a King. John 18:37 tells us that Jesus answered him, saying " You are right in saying I am a King. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

So, what is this truth that Jesus is talking about? It's the truth about **who** God is, **what** He is like, **how much** He loves us and that He wants to **have** a relationship with us. We learn all these truths by reading God's Word. Here are a few other things the Bible tells us about God: He is Love, Eternal, the Beginning and the End, and our Creator.

Today's Activity:

Talk to your parents tonight about all the cool things that God IS! Ask God to show you even more cool things about Himself.

John 14:5-6 NKJV

⁵ Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

God's Word is full of life. How can words printed on a page be alive and full of life? As we begin to read and learn God's Word every day, we begin to learn different things from the same story, and then we find ways to apply the lessons we learn to things we might be going through at the same time. Here's an example: In Luke 19, we read about Zacchaeus, a tax collector in Jericho. He was a short fellow who had to climb a tree to see Jesus pass by. But Jesus called him by name and took him to his house for dinner. Maybe you're feeling like no one ever notices you, but by reading this story, you can learn that when you look for Jesus, He sees you. You could read this same story another time and realize that Jesus likes to spend time with you, all you have to do is invite Him in. The words haven't changed, the meaning hasn't changed, but how it relates to your life has changed. God's Word is just one of the ways God speaks to us every day. He opens our hearts to see what He wants to tell us in his WORD about how he LOVES us and is CARING for us.

Today's Activity:

Read the story of Zacchaeus tonight with your parents, and see if there is anything else that God might want you to learn in this story.

John 13:35 NLT

⁴ So He got up from the table, took off His robe, wrapped a towel around His waist, ⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then He began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel He had around Him.

To serve is to do something for someone so that they won't have to do it. In Jesus' day, an inexperienced servant was given the task of washing guests' feet, because it was considered a very dirty job that no one else wanted to do....kind of like having to clean the toilets every day. Even though Jesus was the Son of God, He didn't think He was too good to wash His disciples feet. In fact, He considered it the most important job He could do at that moment. Jesus had been doing a lot of other things to serve people, like healing the sick, raising the dead, and teaching people about how much God loved them. Even though He was acting as a servant, His disciples didn't understand that. Jesus wanted His disciples not only to see what He was doing to save and help others, but He wanted them to know how much He loved them by taking care of them too. By doing this, Jesus was setting an example for them that they must love each other and take care of each other.

Today's Activity:

Talk with your parents about the greatest thing Jesus did to serve us. Do you know what that was?

Matthew 25:35-36, 40 NLT

³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'.... ⁴⁰ "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

In this scripture, Jesus points out how important it is to Him that we serve one another. When we show love and kindness to others, we're also showing Jesus that we love Him. That's why He says that service you do for others is service to Him. The examples of caring given in this list cover all the basic needs of every person. We all need food, water, friendship, clothes, care when we're sick, and somebody to talk to when we're in trouble.

Today's Activity:

Go through the list with your parents and talk about how you can help someone with that need. Try to be specific. First, here's an example:

Someone who is hungry: We can keep canned goods in the car and give them to the homeless people we sometimes see.

Someone who is thirsty: _____

Someone who is a stranger: _____

Someone who needs clothes: _____

Someone who is sick: _____

Someone who is in trouble: _____

Ask God to help you be aware of the needs around you, and the ability to help.

Daniel 12:3 NLT

³ Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.

Daniel tells us that the greatest service we can do for God is to "lead many to righteousness", which means telling people about Jesus. There are a lot of people in the Bible who told people about Jesus. Peter and Paul are just two. Look in the New Testament and see how many you can find:

There are also many people in the Old Testament who taught about Jesus even before He was born. They didn't know what his name would be, but they knew God was going to send someone very special to save His people and bring them back to having a friendship with God. That's how they "lead many to righteousness". There were people like Abraham and Moses, for example. How many more can you find:

Are there any people you know who "lead many to righteousness"...people like your pastor, for instance:

Today's Activity:

As you pray today, give God thanks for the people you know that share the message of Jesus with others. Ask God to bless them.

John 3:16 NLT

¹⁶ "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

When the Bible says that God loved "the world" He not only meant the earth itself, but most importantly, every person in it. That means every person that has been born, or ever will be born - ever! He loves people that make good choices, and people that make bad choices. He loves people in churches and people in jail, rich people, poor people, and He even loves people who don't believe in Him. He loves me, and He loves you. In fact, He loves us all so much that He gave us the most precious part of Himself...His Son, Jesus to save us from our sins so that we could spend forever with Him. Even though Jesus was the greatest gift God could give us, He didn't stop there...He continues to give to us every day!

Today's Activity:

Take some time to think about things that you are grateful for and write them down. Then, spend some time in prayer just thanking Jesus for them.

Examples: Food; clothing, shelter, friends, teachers,

Luke 21:1-4 NLT

1 While Jesus was in the Temple, He watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. 2 Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. 4 For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has."

What a great story about giving, let's see how this applies to you and me. By sharing this story, Jesus is not implying that He wants all of us to empty our bank accounts, our cabinets, pantries and refrigerators and give away everything we have. What Jesus wants us to see is that this lady gave because she loved God. In another story, Jesus talked about people who make a big show of what they give so that they would look important. But this lady quietly gave everything she had, and Jesus noticed her because she was given from her heart. Giving money to God is important, because when we give to God, He uses it to spread the message of Jesus to other people. But we can also give other gifts to God too. For example:

Our Time: Spending our time with someone because we love them is like giving a gift to them. Do you like to spend time with Mom and Dad just because you love them? You could also give of your time to God.

Our Obedience: As a kid, you can obey God by being kind and loving to others, and obeying and respecting your parents.

Our Self: Some of the most famous people in the Bible only had themselves to give to God, like Paul, who spent his **WHOLE** life traveling and teaching about Jesus.

Today's Activity:

Think about other ways you can give to God. Write them down, and give them from your heart:

Malachi 3:10-11 NLT

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! ¹¹ Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

Have you ever wanted something really bad and your parents told you that you could get it if you saved for it. So you save and save for it and then the day comes that you can finally get it! You are so excited when you finally are able to have it in your hands. The thing you get to have is a result of you saving on a regular basis. You now have something to show for it. It is the same with giving to God. In the Bible, it says we are going to have amazing blessings if we give to Him. He says He will pour out a blessing so huge that we can not even receive it! The best thing about this is that as we give to God, people all over the world will be able to hear about God's love for them and His gift of Jesus!

Today's Activity:

Think about ways you and your family can give to make heaven even more full of people! Talk to God and ask Him how He wants you to help.
