



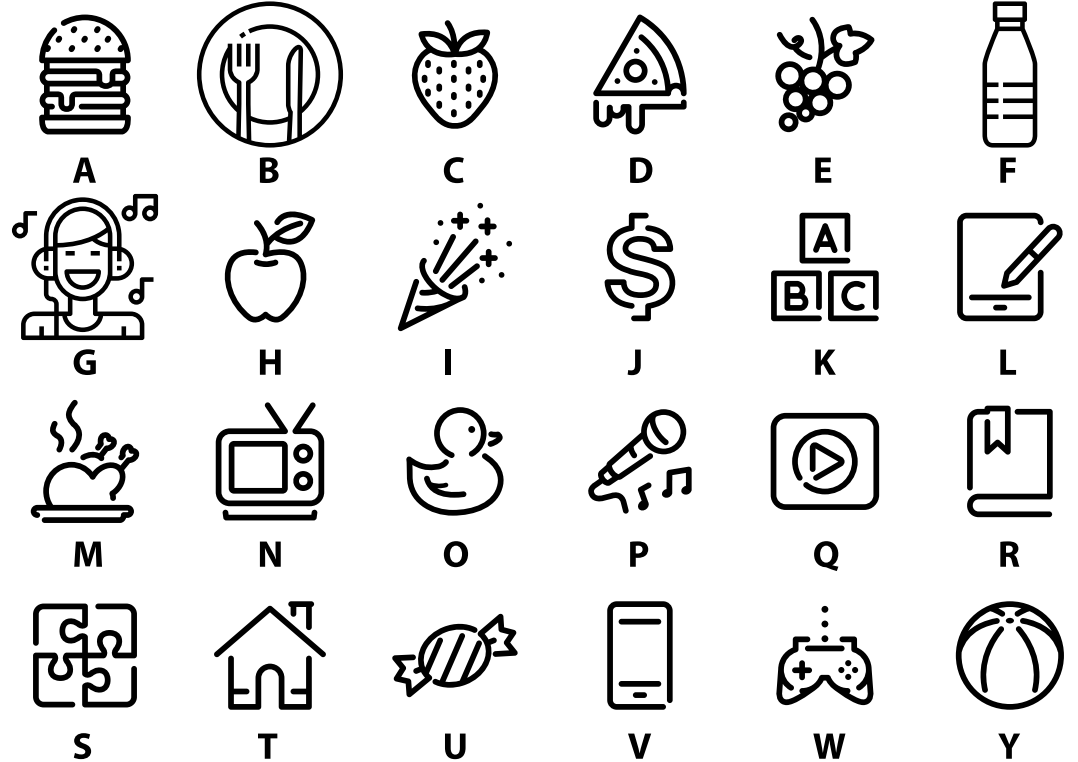
1 Fast

Fasting is typically thought of as not eating food, or certain foods, for a period of time in order to focus on something other than the food. Fasting can also be abstaining from an activity. The purpose of fasting as a spiritual discipline is to use the fast, the time and intention away from something significant, to draw closer to God.

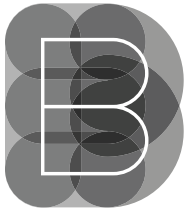
- Fasting is about replacing a physical hunger and thirst with a hunger and thirst for God. Read Bible stories about being hungry or thirsty and see what happens. Read from a Bible or a Bible story book such as the stories suggested from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (Flyaway Books, 2018):
 - Exodus 16–17 or “Just Enough” (p. 96) and “God Is Where the Water Is” (p. 98)
 - 1 Kings 17 or “The Widow of Zarephath” (p. 84)
 - Matthew 25:31–46 or “Seeing Jesus” (p. 326)
 - John 6:1–15 or “A Boy and His Lunch” (p. 264)
- Watch the YouTube video “How Do We Fast?” (bit.ly/FMHowFast, 0:57) to hear about what we can fast from and what we can focus on.
- Fasting can be giving up a certain food for a period of time, but it can also be giving up an attitude. This week, choose to fast from: complaining, demanding, or being selfish. Instead focus on: complimenting, being helpful, or sharing.

Dear God, fasting is not easy. Our stomachs growl or we miss our screen time, or even complaining! Help us remember that fasting is not only about giving up but filling up our time and attention by spending time with you. Amen.

Color all the things that can distract you from time with God. Circle the things you could give up easily. Put an X next to things you cannot live without. Then use the key to solve the question “Why do we fast?”



We fast to draw nearer to God.



BIBLE STORY

Based on the book of Esther

A long time ago, there was a mighty **king** (*bow*) in a faraway land. He lived in a big palace and liked to throw fancy parties. But during one of those parties, the queen made him mad. She refused to let him boss her around. The angry **king** (*bow*) decided she could no longer be queen.

The **king's** (*bow*) officials searched the entire kingdom for a new queen. The **king** (*bow*) chose a young woman named **Esther** (*cheer*). Everyone agreed **Queen Esther** (*cheer*) was beautiful, but no one knew her hidden identity. **Esther** (*cheer*) was Jewish. Her **Uncle Mordecai** (*pray*), who was like a dad to her after her parents died, warned her to hide her family's Jewish heritage. The Jewish people were not from this land. Because of a big battle many years before, they were forced to leave their homeland and now lived in this kingdom.

Unfortunately, there was a powerful aide to the **king** (*bow*) who wanted to destroy all the Jewish people living in the kingdom. His name was **Haman** (*boo*). **Haman** (*boo*) was an important person in the **king's** (*bow*) palace, but **Mordecai** (*pray*) refused to let **Haman** (*boo*) be the boss of him. This made **Haman** (*boo*) very mad. When he found out **Mordecai** (*pray*) was Jewish, **Haman** (*boo*) decided to punish all the Jewish people by convincing the **king** (*bow*) to get rid of them.

When the Jewish people found out that **Haman** (*boo*) wanted to destroy them, they were scared and sad. **Mordecai** (*pray*) begged **Esther** (*cheer*) to ask the **king** (*bow*) for help. **Mordecai** (*pray*) said to **Esther** (*cheer*), "Maybe you became queen just so you could be in this position to save us all!" **Esther** (*cheer*) knew she had to be brave. She also knew she wasn't alone. **Esther** (*cheer*) responded to **Mordecai** (*pray*), saying, "Ask all the Jews to fast with me for three days. After that, I will go to the **king** (*bow*)."

The Jewish community fasted together and prayed to God. **Queen Esther** (*cheer*) prepared a special banquet for the **king** (*bow*) and **Haman** (*boo*). The **king** (*bow*) enjoyed the meal and was in a good mood. He asked **Queen Esther** (*cheer*) if there was anything he could do for her. "Oh yes!" **Esther** (*cheer*) pleaded, "Please help me and my people. We are Jews and **Haman** (*boo*) wants to destroy us!" **Haman** (*boo*) hadn't known **Queen Esther** (*cheer*) was Jewish. He became frightened. The **king** (*bow*) became angry. He turned to **Haman** (*boo*), "I like **Queen Esther** (*cheer*), and you wanted to get rid of her! Well, now I want to get rid of you!" The **king's** (*bow*) guards dragged **Haman** (*boo*) out of the palace, and the **king** (*bow*) invited **Mordecai** (*pray*) to help advise him instead. Together **Queen Esther** (*cheer*) and **Mordecai** (*pray*) were able to save their community.

