Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

Teacher Background

**Fact Card: Fasting**

Fasting is the practice of abstaining from food, either completely or partially, for a specified period. It is an ancient practice found in most religions of the world. Most religions designate certain days or seasons as times of fasting, such as Lent, Yom Kippur and Ramadan. Certain events in the lives of individual persons have been considered appropriate times for fasting, such as the day or night before a major personal commitment. Today, fasting is also linked to the call to love one's neighbour and as a symbol of identifying with the poor and hungry of the world. Aside from abstaining from food, the concept of fasting may also be extended to the idea of always using resources in a responsible and sustainable manner, so that there is always sufficient for everyone.

**Fact Card: Almsgiving**

Almsgiving is tied closely with fasting. When fasting, the money saved is donated to the needy through the missions, the Church or a worthy charity. In a family with small children, it helps to make this a visual practice by, for example, having a jar or box in the centre of the table as a reminder and measure of progress. It is also considered “almsgiving” to give one's time and goods to those who are in need, i.e., mowing lawns for the elderly, giving clothes to charity, visiting people who are house-bound, running errands for people who aren’t mobile and other similar practices.

**Fact Card: Prayer**

Prayer is raising one’s heart and mind to God. It is a response to God's invitation to seek him. Three common forms of prayer are vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer. Vocal prayer is prayer of mind, heart and lips. It is prayer spoken audibly. Meditation is a mental (unspoken) prayer in which a person, after quiet reflection, arrives at or strengthens a resolution to live a better Christian life. Meditation can lead a person to know Jesus better and follow him more closely. Contemplative (mental) prayer is unspoken prayer in which a person is united to God and ponders God's truths.