



The Feast: Fasting and Feasting Session Outline

The session outline provided serves as a guide for a Christian/Muslim interfaith youth event that explores what fasting means in each faith.

The purpose of the session is to try to understand the importance of fasting in each faith, and to break the Muslim fast during a day in Ramadan together as a group. It was originally used with a group who already knew each other a little, and had experienced an interfaith youth event before.

This event is very short and only takes 2 hours, but could be adapted to be longer with breaks and other activities. The event is written to occur during the Ramadan period.

NB. the reason that it is short is that it was first used when Ramadan was in the summer months, and fell on a long day – we didn't want to keep young people with us past 10pm.

Session Outline

Time	Activity	Description	Materials
5 min	Arrive and register	Get people to make name labels. Introduce day, house-keeping	Labels, pens
10 min	Ice-breaker: Pairs	Find your partner!	Card
5 min	Guidelines for Dialogue	Go through the guidelines to create a safe space for discussions.	Guidelines
20 min	Carousel discussions	In small groups talking about questions scattered around the room.	Big paper with questions written on them.
15 min	What does scripture say?	In small groups looking at Scriptures about fasting.	Scriptures printed
10 min	Wudu/absolution	Demonstrating purifying oneself in our faiths.	Water, towels, Liturgy
2 min	Ending the fast	Ending the fast together.	Dates
10 min	Magrib prayer	Muslim prayer time, allowing Christians to watch.	
10 min	Christian worship	Christian worship time, allowing Muslims to watch.	A song, prayers, the Lord's supper?
30 min +	Dinner	Time to hang out, eat and continue conversations informally.	Food!

Leader's notes

Arrive

It's really important to make people feel at ease as they come in, especially as some might be particularly nervous. Making name labels takes the pressure off learning names, which is hard in a new group, especially if names from different cultures are unfamiliar to the young people.

It might be an idea to play some music as people come in, and make sure leaders are welcoming and chatting to the young people informally. Gather everyone together and use this time to do the house-keeping (toilets, emergencies etc).

Find your partner!

Print out the list of celebrity pairs (see appendices). Distribute them among the young people ensuring, as far as is possible, you give Muslim and Christian young people opposite parts of the pairs so they meet a new person.

Once all the pairs have been given out instruct the group to find their partner. I.e. Mickey Mouse would try to find Minnie Mouse.

Once they've found their partner they need to find out three interesting facts about them. Get the whole group back together and ask each young person to introduce their partner, sharing their name and the facts they learned.

Guidelines for Dialogue

These are essential in setting the right tone before entering into faith discussions. They are available ['here'](#), simply click on the link to download. There are many ways you can go through them with your group, here at two ideas.

Method one

Take turns reading a guideline out loud each, going round in a circle. Elaborate on what some of them mean, and ask why they young people think they're important. At the end make sure everyone agrees to stick to them.

Method two

Give everyone a few minutes to read the guidelines by themselves quietly. Then get them into pairs and ask them to tell each other what their favourite guideline is and why. Ask a few of them to share with the whole group. Make sure everyone agrees to stick to them.

Carousel discussions

Join each set of pairs with another pair, or two others, to make groups of four or six. Lay pre-written questions on large sheets of paper (a3 is fine) and scatter them around the room. Send each group to a question, and give them a few minutes to discuss what's written. After five minutes say 'change' and ask each group to move clock-wise. Repeat this

process until each group has had a chance to talk about all the questions. If you like they can write down some of their answers around the question. (NB this can sometimes distract other groups when they get to the question!).

Ideas for questions;

- What do your scriptures say about fasting?
- Do you fast? If so from what, how and when?
- What do you think would be the hardest thing to give up, besides food?
- How important is fasting in your faith tradition?
- If you fast, what's the best thing about it? If not what do you think you would find hard?

What does Scripture say?

In the same small groups give each group some Scriptures to look at that talk about fasting, and some questions to talk about as a group.

Suggested passages;

Bible: Isaiah 58, Matthew 6:16-17 Acts 13:2-4

Qur'an: Chapter 2:183-185, Hadiths (see appendices)

Suggested questions;

1. What is the role of fasting in Islam/Christianity?
2. How are followers told to fast?
3. Are there any reasons given to why people should fast?
4. Is there anything you notice?
5. Do you have any questions about the scriptures/hadiths?

Wudu/Absolution

The act of absolution (forgiveness) is different in all faiths, and widely differs in different Christian denominations.

Split the group into male and female and ask a Muslim in each group to demonstrate how they perform wudu, their act of purification. Encourage people to ask questions.

You can then get the whole group back together and demonstrate a Christian act of absolution. For Anglicans there is some liturgy you could ask them to read, which they'll do as part of a Sunday service. If the Christians you're with don't have a set way of doing absolution you could ask one of them to briefly explain the reason (i.e. Jesus has already absolved them through his death and resurrection).

This does require forward planning so make sure you speak to people about being involved in this before, otherwise it could make people feel a little embarrassed if they have nothing to show.

Ending the Fast

This should happen at sunset. Leave a Muslim leader or young person in charge of saying when it's time to end the fast. This is usually done by eating dates, a tradition that dates back to the time of the prophet. Again, this is another point for discussion.

Magrib prayer

This is a chance for Christians to see how Muslims worship. If any of the Muslims feel uncomfortable with others watching them pray then allow them to pray in another room. Make sure the Christians stand behind those who are praying. It would be good if there was a space to ask questions afterwards.

Christian worship

This is a chance for Muslims to see how Christians worship. This could vary, depending on the tradition of the Christians present. It could include singing a hymn or song, and a time of open or structured prayer. Again allow a space for questions.

Food

This is a very important part of the event! You could either buy some food, or ask everyone to bring a dish to share. During Ramadan Muslims are usually well in the habit of bringing food to people's homes, so they might like to bring something. Send clear instructions about what to bring so it's suitable for everyone; i.e. halal meat and vegetarian options.

This time is also great for informal discussion.

Appendix 1: Pairs

Mickey Mouse	Minnie Mouse
Ben	Jerry
Ant	Dec
David	Victoria
Wallace	Gromit
Batman	Robin
Beauty	Beast
Robin Hood	Little John
Hansel	Gretal
Barbie	Ken
Lilo	Stitch
Romeo	Juliet

Appendix 2: Hadiths

Hadith Collected by Imam Bukhari & Imam Muslim

Islam has been built on five [pillars]: testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, performing the prayers, paying the Zakah, making the pilgrimage to the House, and fasting in Ramadan.

Hadith Collected by Imam Bukhari & Imam Muslim

Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven.

Hadith Collected by Imam Bukhari

Every action a son of Adam does shall be multiplied—a good action by ten times its value, up to 700 times. Allah says: With the exception of fasting, which belongs to Me, and I reward it accordingly. For, one abandons his desire and food for My sake.

There are two occasions of joy for a fasting person: one when he breaks his fast, and the other when he meets his Lord, and the (bad) breath (of a fasting person) is better in the sight of Allah than the fragrance of musk.