

RASPBERRIES & MACADAMIA NUTS

by Rachel Stamey

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As I write, I am on day 24 of a strict but short-term diet for medical reasons. I've done this diet before, but oh man, something about this time is so much harder. I haven't been able to even drive by a Shari's without fantasizing about pie. I enjoy pie as much as the next person... but I'm not really a food fantasizer. What is it about being "not allowed" to do such-and-such that makes that thing so much more attractive? Something that wouldn't usually rate a second glance (my kids' stale gummy candy, for one) suddenly makes me drool when I see it lying on the counter.

As I pondered this, I realized that the other times I did this diet, I cleaned out my fridge and pantry of off-plan foods and went out of my way to buy appropriate snacks and no-prep food. So, that's what I did yesterday—a little late, maybe, but still effective. I stocked up on fresh raspberries, macadamia nuts, dried fruit concoctions, fancy waters, and jerky without additives. I filled my kitchen with delicious, interesting, and on-plan flavors and textures. I forgot all about pie (well, almost).

I surrounded myself with "yes" and put away the "no." Of course, that wouldn't stop me from hitting Shari's if I really wanted to—or eating that gross gummy candy, for that matter. But now I enjoy my food and don't feel the hole I thought pie could fill.

I've found that we can do the same thing when it comes to prayer, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines. When we focus on "no," "can't," and "shouldn't," we are just asking ourselves to do the spiritual equivalent of fantasizing about lemon meringue or marionberry-cream cheese or Dutch apple... mmm... whoops! See, I'm doing it right now. When we only look at the boundaries and what's outside of them, we lose sight of the beauty and sweetness within them.

Let's focus on the spiritual equivalent of raspberries and macadamia nuts, the "yeses"—that is, the sweetness of the presence of God, the joy that erupts when you help a stranger, the deep peace that comes when you know your choices are aligned with God's will, the fullness of awe in the midst of worship. The list goes on. When we fully enjoy things like this, they can fill the hole left by pie—the short-term-happy-but-long-term-consequences stuff that we don't do anymore.

"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you," Philippians 4:8-9 (NLT).

And I'll add that the God of peace will help us in the journey... Ask Him!

May you find your raspberries,

Rachel Stamey

