

My name is Sarah Boonstra. I'm a wife and a mom of three. I consider myself a professional volunteer, investing time in the rising generations. The most important thing to know about me is that years ago God walloped me over the head with the message to read my Bible every day and that has forever changed my relationship to Him. That practice has also impacted on every other relationship in my life. I live in Colorado but am connected to the River CRC through my brother Scott, who has been kind enough to believe that I have good things to share.

Fasting

Wednesday, February 18

Prayer to begin:

Lord, we invite you into this space. As we begin Lent, we do not want to miss the gifts that you have for us. Please speak to us as we turn our hearts towards you.

Read Exodus 34:6-7, Matthew 4:1-11

Moses set aside intentional time to be with God. He headed up the mountain and the first thing that God did was to tell Moses what He, God, is like: God is gracious and compassionate; He is slow to anger; He abounds in faithful love. And He is just.

As we read through the story of Jesus in the desert, Jesus clearly knows the character of God. Not just *knows the information* but is intimately familiar. He can counter Satan's accusations with verses from scripture. His knowledge of the scriptures is important. But the fact that the text tells us in verse 2 that Jesus was hungry gives us a clue that Jesus doesn't just have a head knowledge of the reference texts, but that he also knows in his heart that they are true and can be trusted.

It is important to know what we believe, yes. But we need to know it in our head AND in our hearts. As we give up food or vices in Lent, we are giving ourselves the opportunity to put our beliefs into practice. To remove the distractions that fill us, so that we can fill our lives with a personal, present God. Each time we feel a hunger pain, click on that app or instinctively seek out whatever it is that has previously "filled" us, and we have a chance to acknowledge the truth that God is all that we need. We can practice putting our trust in Him.

God wants us to know His compassion. But if our instinct is to reach for a vice when we are hurting, we miss seeing the ways that He is caring for us in our hurt.

God wants us to know His grace. Yet when we make a mistake, if we numb up our conscience with food or social media, we miss seeing Him turn His face toward us in love and unmerited forgiveness.

God wants us to experience His faithful love and His truth. But if we spend our days distracted by our next meal, thinking only about the tasks to accomplish, we miss the common expressions of His love all around us each day.

God also wants us to know his justness. But if we rely on ourselves and our vices when we see injustice, we miss seeing the ways He is working things out.

What character trait of God do you most struggle with? This Lent, as you set aside food or a vice, could you take the moments where your mind longs to be filled and invite God to help you know the truth about Himself? Ask Him to give you the knowledge in your head and in your heart.