

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

Tuesday, February 17

Prayer to begin:

Lord, we invite you into this space, turning our attention towards you. As we begin this journey, we do not want to miss the gifts that you have for us. Please speak to us today.

*Read Exodus 34:1-5 and Matthew 4:1-2*

Both Jesus and Moses begin their fasts by setting aside intentional time to be with God. Moses does it by climbing up Mount Sinai early one morning, apparently, leaving behind any food provisions. Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness for a 40 day fast.

Lent begins tomorrow. Do you have a plan to set aside time to spend with God and a plan for what you will be leaving behind? It does not need to be as drastic a shift as climbing a mountain, but Lent does invite us to shift our routine and our patterns to be with God. We are invited to carve out time to turn our attention towards Him in a way that is different from the rest of the year.

Moses spent 40 days in the presence of God and came back radiant. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert without food or water and, even though we know he was hungry, he was able to withstand the temptation of Satan. Scripture shows us that something changes in us when we spend intentional time in God's presence. Especially if we plan to focus and then refocus ourselves on Him by taking away our distractions.

I was raised in a churchgoing family and have believed in God for as long as I can remember. But it was only at age 30 that I began to set aside time in my day to be with God. God has changed me through that intentional time. It turned out that when I made time to be with God, to be loved by Him and to listen to Him, He was able to speak to me more efficiently. During my intentional time with God, He has convicted me of poor behavior, He has reminded me of His protection, and He has invited me to know Him more. It has been life changing.

Yet lately I've noticed that my focus drifts quickly (I blame the phone!) I believe this is where the Lenten invitation to give up food and water is a gift. Even on a 36 hour fast, when my stomach growls it's an opportunity to choose God over food. It's a chance to refocus on my intent instead of my default settings of coasting. It's why I'm so grateful that Lent comes around each year. It's a season of opportunity. Opportunity to remind ourselves repeatedly to keep our eyes on Jesus and his work in our lives.

Today, take a few minutes to think about ways to set aside intentional time with God, and consider distractions you can take out of your life to ensure you keep your eyes on God. Invite God into the process because everything works better when we do it God's way.

