

WEEK SEVEN • DAY ONE
UNPLUG AND RECONNECT

COME AWAY
WEEKEND!

KAYLEA HUTSON

un-plug- ging

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40 MAR>APR 2014

march 31–april 6

WEEK SEVEN • DAY ONE

UNPLUG AND RECONNECT

COME AWAY

WEEKEND!

The world is overwhelming and intense—24/7/365. From the news cycle that never stops to social media that never sleeps, our world is filled with noise, images, and distractions. The buzz of tweets, statuses, and photo feeds fills our brains, our hearts, and even our souls. Our lives become saturated with anything and everything but God.

We need a pause button that will let us stop and unplug from the world so that we can hear the “still small voice” of God (1 Kings 19:12, KJV). We need to step away, or retreat, from whatever keeps us from tuning in to God.

I’ve unplugged from the world in a variety of ways. One Lent (the church season between Ash Wednesday and Easter), I did a Facebook fast. I used Facebook for work; but on my days off, I logged off. I have a friend who takes a screen sabbath. On one day a week, he turns off anything that has a screen and finds time to feed his soul with something creative. I admit that unplugging is difficult. Tuning in to anything but God has become easy for us. We have to make a conscious decision to focus less on the world and more on God.

How can you unplug? You can simply turn off your smart phone and computer for a day, choosing instead to pick up the Bible, your journal, or a book of devotions such as **devozine**. Instead of catching up on the latest statuses and tweets, why not read the Psalms or a spiritual autobiography that helps you get to know God from a different perspective? You could also go outside, take a walk, and pay attention to whatever you see, hear, and smell that reminds you of God. If you are artistic, take with you a sketch pad and pencil and find a quiet place to create an image that illustrates the ways God is at work in your life. My favorite option is to grab a camera and to take a photo walk, capturing God’s creation in a variety of images. The goal of unplugging from the world is less about what you do and more about how it helps you to connect with God in a new way. Think of it as a mini-retreat that lets you focus on God. You may find that tuning in to God becomes a habit you can’t live without. <

6 NEXT DAY STRETCH

How will you unplug? What steps will you take to unplug from the world and to plug into God? Will you fast from Facebook? turn off Twitter? pause your Instagram? In the next few days, think about a way that you can shift your focus from all things social media and plug into God’s life-giving presence.

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WEEK SEVEN • DAY TWO

UNPLUG AND RECONNECT

BE STILL

Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer.

Luke 5:16 (CEB)

TRADING IN MY DISTRACTIONS **23**

Tim Livingston [Wilmington, North Carolina]

I want to be the one who answers the call
to modern-day discipline.

In a realm where distraction is the ever-present drug of choice,
escapism is encouraged and promoted
with every technological advance,
every TV sold, every movie rented,
every computer and every phone connected.

In an age where we are drawn to the glow of our devices
like moths to flames,

I want to have the courage to walk away,
disconnect so I can reconnect,
miss a few things so I can gain everything.

I want to know what reality looks like through Jesus' eyes.

I want to love other people through his heart.

I want to be the one who refuses to let time slip away
in half-hour increments and Facebook comments.

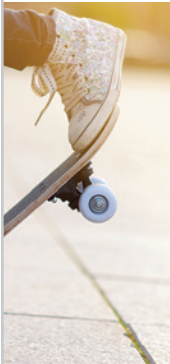
What would happen to me if I embraced this unknown frontier?

In silence would I find him whispering love to my aching heart?

Would I know his gentle presence surrounding my entire being,
quieting me with his peace?

Would I run with joy in my heart?

I wonder what he would give if I trade in my distractions. <



WHAT DO YOU WANT? To be in God's presence begins with intention—a deep, spiritual decision to be connected to God. This decision allows God to envelope us in love and peace. Even as we become involved in other matters during the day, we can remain in God's presence if we maintain our attentiveness and allow God to be the center of our lives. What might we gain by letting go of our distractions?

Alexis Harvey, 19 [Kennesaw, Georgia]

WEEK SEVEN • DAY THREE

UNPLUG AND RECONNECT

THE BUSY TRAP

“Be still, and know that I am God!”

Psalm 46:10 (NRSV)

DISCONNECTED 27

Ashley Oliver, 18 [Charlottesville, Virginia]

I had been feeling disconnected from God, and I couldn't figure out why. Numerous times I had cried out, “Where are you, God? Why don't I feel you close to me?” After much prayer and searching, I realized that I was keeping myself disconnected from God. I allowed myself to get overwhelmed with schoolwork, fear, worry, and anxiety; and I completely forgot that God was right beside me to help me through every stressful time. If we let ourselves get overwhelmed to the point that we lose sight of God, our faith may weaken and we may feel alone and hopeless. But when we keep our eyes on God and remember God's love and care for us, we can get through anything. God is never too busy for us, so let's not get too busy for God. <

BE STILL: When I take the time to be completely silent and to listen to God, I am able to see how God directs and influences my life. By shutting out distractions and simply resting and listening, I have seen my path revealed and I have learned to trust God to guide my life. Prayer is not a monologue; it is a conversation. God may be trying to talk to us, but maybe we are not able to hear. Today, I challenge you to rest in silent prayer and to listen.

Dana Welch, 19 [Marietta, Georgia]



WEEK SEVEN • DAY FOUR

FEEDING BODY & SPIRIT

WELL FED

WEEKEND!

Jesus said to [the disciples], "I am fed by doing the will of the one who sent me and by completing his work."

John 4:34 (CEB)



what feeds you?

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focusing on my passions

When I consider what feeds me, my nieces and nephews immediately come to mind. I love them and want to be my best for them. I imagine other people feel this way about their siblings, their children, or the kids they babysit. Children inspire us to be spontaneous and happy.

Another thing that feeds me is my passion for writing. When I'm coming up with a new story idea, I sense a different kind of energy than at any other time. I'm excited and can't wait to see where the story goes.

I believe God empowers us and wants us to be passionate about using our gifts. I also believe that God blesses our lives with children who inspire us with their joyful spirit.

Bethany Acker, 23 [Plover, Wisconsin]

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february 11-17

WEEK SEVEN • DAY FOUR

FEEDING BODY & SPIRIT

WELL FED

WEEKEND!



slowing down and going deep

We live in a culture that is all about speed—how fast we can get something done, how far we can go in the shortest amount of time. Sometimes we even try to speed up our faith. We look for quick, easy ways to spend time with God so that we can check that off the to-do list.

Instead of walking with Christ through the entire day, we settle for the five minutes it takes to read a passage of scripture. Rather than taking time to seek real nourishment, sometimes we view prayer as we do fast food—as a quick, easy way to fill up just enough to keep us going. Instead of “eating on the run,” let’s slow down and take time to create and enjoy a healthy meal. Our faith can only grow stronger when we find our nourishment in a deep relationship with God. <

Tynea Lewis [New Holland, Pennsylvania]

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NEXT DAY STRETCH

taking care of body and soul

As a runner I spend a lot of time training. As I run, I am training not only my body but also my mind. I need to be mentally tough to run long distances and to stay focused on my goal.

In 1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV), Paul reminds us that “physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” Our bodies are gifts that need nourishment and exercise, but our faith is also a gift that needs care and attention.

START TODAY: Consider how you nourish and care for yourself so that one day you too can say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, NIV).

- + What do you read, listen to, or practice to strengthen your faith?
- + How do the people you surround yourself with encourage you to grow in positive ways?
- + What can you do today to feed your body and soul?

Paul Cillo, 24 [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania]

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JANUARY>FEBRUARY 2019 **53**

WEEK SEVEN • DAY FIVE

FEEDING BODY & SPIRIT

[FEBRUARY 11-17]

+well fed

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them.
“Those who come to me will never be hungry;
those who believe in me will never be thirsty.”
John 6:35 (GNT)

FEED YOUR SPIRIT 11

Anna Swain, 18 [Roswell, New Mexico]

If our bodies go without food, we begin to get hungry. Our stomachs start to rumble; we might develop a headache. The feeling of hunger grows until we are unable to think about anything else. The only way to eliminate hunger is to eat something—to feed our bodies.

Our spirits can experience hunger as well. As our spiritual hunger grows, we can become irritated or restless. In time we might begin to feel lost or empty. Unfortunately, we don't always recognize these warning signs as readily as we do physical hunger pains. To be well-fed, we need to pay attention to the ways we can nourish ourselves—body and soul. <



PAY ATTENTION:

Begin to notice the ways you feel and act when your soul needs nourishment.

When you experience spiritual hunger, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to fill your spirit with wisdom, peace, and love.

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JANUARY>FEBRUARY 2019 **47**

WEEK SEVEN • DAY SIX

FEEDING BODY & SPIRIT

WE ARE THE BODY

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 (NIV)


SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

Salina McGinniss [Moscow, Pennsylvania]

The kitchen is an absolute mess, but my heart is full of joy. Dust and flour dance together in the sunlight streaming through the window. The hearty smells of pasta and oregano waft through the air. I cradle a cool glass of iced tea in my hands.

It's Sunday afternoon, and I am with friends. We are enjoying lunch and the chance to be together. We talk about the sermon we just heard and the music we sang as a congregation. We discuss what it means to be a child of God, how we are living out our faith, and what God has been doing in our lives. We share joys, burdens, tears, prayers, and praises; we give thanks for the small community we have built.

I hear wind chimes outside the open kitchen door, and a breeze blows into the warm kitchen. Forks clink against plates as we eat dessert. Everyone is full of good food and God's grace. As my friends laugh together, I pray silently, thanking God for the simple gifts of friends, food, and sunny Sunday afternoons. <



JOURNAL: When have you gathered with friends or family to enjoy one another's company and to talk about what God is doing in your lives? What about this time together are you especially grateful for? How might you encourage the group to make this a regular gathering?

june 18–24

MAY>JUNE 2018 **53**

WEEK SEVEN • DAY SEVEN

FEEDING BODY & SPIRIT

HEALTHY TOGETHER

Walk with the wise and become wise.

Proverbs 13:20a (NIV)

HEALTHY HABITS 4

Milea Schnall, 21 [Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania]

In high school, my best friend and I shared a habit: healthy eating. As members of the cross country and track teams, we were expected to be in shape year-round. However, we went above and beyond what was required. We ate healthy foods, researched and tried new recipes, and talked about new food discoveries. As a result, our running improved and our friendship grew. Our mutual commitment to healthy eating bound us together and enabled us to strengthen each other.

In much the same way, our relationships with other Christians give us encouragement and motivation to live for God. Proverbs 13:20 tells us that we become wise by walking with other people who are wise. We become stronger in our faith when we hang out with other devoted Christians.

Sticking to a healthy diet is easier with a friend. Christian living is no different. Keeping our eyes on God is easier with a friend or a group of friends. We can feed on each other's spiritual energy, challenge each other, talk about ideas, tell stories of faith, and get excited about what we believe. Spending time with other Christians is a great way to recharge our faith and to continue a healthy relationship with God. <

PRAYER: Dear God, help us to develop deeper relationships with Christian friends, so that we can motivate one another to live in devotion to you. Amen.

