

This Spiritual Discipline Can Reignite Your Hunger for God

We live in a culture that has positioned feelings front and center, to the point where it seems as though they are now dictating our choices. This is not a good thing, and I believe it's affecting how we do relationship with the Lord.

As someone who would call himself a “feeler”—you know, the creative and spontaneous type—my greatest battle has been learning how to let my feelings inform and not lead my decisions.

One particular area where I have felt this most keenly has been in my relationship with the Lord. I would wager that this core part of your life will be the area you feel most contention over. If the enemy can keep you away from God—your life source—then you're a dead man (or woman) walking.

A great litmus test for you to see if you're being led by your emotions is if you know you should be spending more time with the Lord, but your internal response is, “I'm just not feeling it right now,” and therefore don't.

I have to hold my hand up and say that I've been one of those people, and my excuses are a well-worn path. There's always another episode of a favorite show, reading another chapter of a gripping book or falling—willingly—down the YouTube hole.

More often than not those excuses are a façade for a deeper reason for avoiding God. You're afraid of what He might say. You're afraid of what He won't say. You're afraid He won't say anything at all. Or, most frequently, just don't feel like spending time with Him.

Whatever it might be, it all just feels like hard work and a waste of time, and the outcome is the same: You don't spend

time with the Lord.

I'm a runner. I went for my first real run in Michigan, in the dead of winter, because I was going stir-crazy at home. I ran maybe 1.5 miles before stopping through tiredness and because it was freezing.

Nearly 12 years later, I am still a runner, and I absolutely love it. However, if you were to tell me on that cold winter day in Michigan, as I walked back into the house, that running would become a passion of mine, I would have laughed at you.

I'm sure there is something in your life you're passionate about, like reading, playing an instrument, rock climbing, cooking, the list could go on. And if you go back to Day One, the experience was probably not that glorious.

For me the enjoyment of running came once I'd developed my leg muscles and built up stamina. Once I had that, running 4 or 5 miles at a time was pretty easy and it became a joy to do. Yes, of course, there were times when it was hard going but the feeling afterward—known as runner's high—and the sense of accomplishment was well worth the time and effort.

I think you know where I'm headed—but before I get there, I'll say this: God loves spending time with you.

To quote a pastor-friend of mine, "If I could use one word to describe the Bible, it would be '*relationship*.'" God's intent from the very beginning has been for us to be in communion with Him, always.

There are a number of reasons why I've stuck with running, but the main reason is that I just love to run, which makes the days when I'm just not feeling it that much easier to overcome.

Why am I saying this? Because if your heart's not in something, there's no point. And if your heart's not in

spending time with God—for whatever reason that may be—then turning up to church on Sunday, reading your Bible or saying and doing all the right things that a good Christian should do and say means nothing. It's dead—it's just religion.

It all starts from the heart. Jesus was implicit about that point, repeatedly, which was why He dealt so harshly with the Pharisees, whom He compared to white-washed tombs.

I had to face this stark reality in my own life and had to admit to myself, and God, that my heart wasn't in it. Spending time with God was just another box to check and disappointment to fulfill, and another excuse to be resentful at Him for not showing up on the occasions I tried.

It wasn't until I uttered—more like mumbled—a prayer like this: “God, please give me a heart that wants to know you.” I just started saying that all the time, even though I didn't feel like it or know what to expect. Before long, I felt my heart change, and my prayer got even shorter: “God, I want to know you.” After three or four months, He showed up, profoundly, but that's another story for another day.

It's funny how most people can understand that becoming a good runner or musician or whatever takes willingness and commitment, but the same mindset seems to go missing with spending time with God.

Initially, I was going to write this piece and give three “how-to's” for staying spiritually disciplined, but I felt led to go for the jugular, *your heart*! It's the heart that matters most to God, and if our heart isn't aligned with His, then, honestly, the rest is just empty, meaningless work.

He wants you, and even if you don't feel like you want Him, I challenge you to say, “God, please give me a heart that wants to know you.” {eoa}

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