

Up-and-Coming Country Star's Take on Fasting Could Revolutionize Your Life

Health is important to my generation. Millennials can be kale-loving, dairy-avoiding, exercise-practicing proponents of wellness, all in the name of healthy living. We've embraced practices like fasting, often for its physical benefits alone, though it has have faith-based significance for Christians like me. To focus my mind on faith over food, I've tried the Daniel Fast, which dramatically cuts back on all kinds of foods for 21 days to give a person the chance to really focus. But in today's culture, fasting can be so much more than simply not eating.

Fasting in the Bible involved putting aside the needs of the physical body to focus on the spiritual. Jesus, in talking about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18, says, "*When* you fast" ... not *if* you fast ... keep it private and between you and God. The assumption was that you would deprive yourself of something you need short term, to think on larger issues, pray, meditate and get outside of your box.

That's why I'm a proponent of fasting from social media, which can create an intense roadblock between us and living our lives and spending time with God. Through our devices, many of us spend lifetimes looking at tiny screens and measuring ourselves against what we see, rather than engaging in real personal connection and just plain, old-fashioned fun.

For an entertainer like me, it would be impossible to throw away all social media connections, as that is a tool for communicating the craft I practice and the songs I release into the world. Most of us need the technology and tools on our phone for our work and daily lives. In fact, Pew reports

that 95 percent of Americans have a cell phone, taking our connections on the go.

But as universal as phones can be, I am incorporating fasting from my phone and social media, encouraging people to unplug and live their life, rather than just watch it on tiny screens. Like with food, just because we need some of it, doesn't mean we have to binge 24/7.

For me, that involves picking a time about once a week in which I shut it all down to focus on things that make life meaningful, like writing music, spending time with my family, trying a new hobby, enjoying hiking in my home state of Kansas or laughing with friends. And I also use that time to reconnect with things larger than myself, by deliberately being still to know that He is God.

And you won't believe the time you will find in your day.

According to Entrepreneur, the average person will spend more than five years of their life on social media, "that breaks down to nearly two hours (116 minutes) a day spent on YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter—not to mention some of the less popular platforms such as LinkedIn, Reddit, Tumblr, Pinterest and , an app popular with teens." Compare that with the average one year and three months people will spend with friends. Tragic.

And forget "average," teenagers spend about nine hours a day on social media—more than on sleeping or in school.

Studies are showing that the kind of intense consumption of social media for teens, combined with all the ugliness that can occur like shaming and bullying, are actually leading to a higher suicide rate for teens. When I travel around the country talking in schools about strategies to really thrive and shine, dealing with the gluttony of social media is a health risk that is front and center for teens struggling with mental, physical and spiritual health.

I saw a recent survey by health food, snack company GoGo squeeZ that said 76 percent of parents said that their kids engaged in too much screen time, and that unstructured free time for kids average less than 30 minutes a day.

That's probably true for a lot of us ... too much time engaged electronically, not personally, and too little time reflecting on what makes life worth living.

People need a fast from phones. And imagine what you could do with two extra hours in a day, or even 30 minutes.

Try an experiment. Shut off your phone for just 15 minutes today and embrace a Philippians 4:8 (NIV) moment: "(B)rothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Take the UNPLUG challenge with me. The worst thing that can happen is you get a break from the technology that is supposed to work for you, not run your life. {eoa}

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Share your #UNPLUG story with Kaylee on social media. What did you do with your time off? What were you inspired to do?