

What God Taught Me During My 30-Day 'Facebook Fast'

Hi, my name is Jen, and I am a recovering Facebook addict. I confess that I have checked Facebook regularly throughout the day and even into the evening in excessive measures.

I've successfully been off of FB for over a month now after deactivating my account. I admit, the first week coming off of FB, I had withdrawals. Since I'm usually all or nothing, I felt I needed to completely unplug to break this addiction. Deactivating FB made me realize that every time I woke up or was stressed out, or went to the bathroom and got away from the crowds or even when I was with people, there was a compulsion to check FB, even if just out of habit.

Instant gratification, immediate response time, and scrolling through other people's newsfeeds on FB has helped make me even more impulsive than ever. Rather than have deep conversations and connect with people in real time, I would regularly be distracted and want to check my FB. It began to change the way I think. I began to think shorter thoughts.

In the beginning of my FB fast, I had to restructure the way I thought. I was living life and enjoying the moment but then stuck with how to share these experiences with my friends. Where would I post pictures of my epic surfing adventures in Bali or of my new baby nephew I met for the first time in Thailand last month? Once I deactivated FB, I wasn't sure how to share on a more personal level with people. Rather than posting a picture for the masses, I had to redefine how and who I would want to share these experiences with. I texted a few people pictures of my trip since I could no longer post pictures for the masses on FB and assume there was an exchange of life because they saw my post. It helped me to redefine and focus.

One thing I have learned so far on my FB fast is that it is very liberating to not have to check FB every five minutes after I've posted something to see who liked it or commented. It's wonderful being out to dinner with a friend and being able to be fully present in the conversation with the person in front of me rather than checking to see which one of my 4,000+ FB friends responded to one of my posts.

On this fast, I also noticed when I'm out in public that a lot of people are tied to their mobile devices. Countless times I have gone out to dinner with a friend only to notice people around us literally sitting in front of each other at the table and focused on their devices rather than engaging in conversation with the one sitting in front of them.

One of the reasons I got off of FB was so that I could unplug, re-set and begin dreaming about what God has for me in the upcoming season without any distractions. I wanted to go back to my mystic roots and become a minimalist once again in this season. Silence is one of my love languages and I love to sit at the lake for hours and just think. With FB in my life however, I was regularly distracted and torn between the beauty in front of me and the false sense of connection I felt by looking down at my phone. I wanted my thoughts to be pure, refined, and deeper than what FB required from me. I was also getting ready to dive into writing my next book and I wanted it to come from a deep well, not something fragmented, impulsive, shallow or flashy. I was reflecting on what it must have been like for someone like Jane Austin to write a book. Long days with lots of silence, quiet space, and time to think deep thoughts. I felt that there might be a deep place in my heart I could explore more fully. I knew that to get to the depths of that journey inward, I would need to be unhindered by any distractions.

The problem was that my addiction to FB owned me rather than me using it for purposes that would align with my values. So now, into the second month of my FB fast, I am continuing to

enjoy a simpler and more focused life. I'm journaling more, spending more time outside enjoying the summer with friends, climbing mountains and having deeper conversations without being distracted. I'm reading more books, spending more time with family, and letting my heart feel at a deeper level. I'm deep cleaning and purging my house and my life it seems. I'm getting more focused on the Lord and praying more often. I'm learning to grow in vulnerability, be uncomfortable and remain with the people in front of me rather than escape by looking down at my phone all of the time.

I'm also praying about what my relationship with FB will be like in the future. If we ever do get back together, I want to set some good boundaries so that I can limit myself to the constant infiltration of words, videos, pictures of others' lives and begin to live my life more fully in the present. I want my relationship with FB to be life-giving to myself and to all of my "friends." I think social media and FB can be a wonderful tool to release the power of the testimony, change lives, and share my heart with the world. So if or when I do ever return to FB, I want there to be purpose in this relationship. I want to utilize FB so it becomes a blessing rather than let it control and take over my life.

So that's my story in case some of you wondered where I disappeared to. Hope you enjoyed the journey. Life is too short to waste it looking down all the time, unless of course, it's something special like this ...

If you feel the need to cut back on your FB use, one way is to remove the FB app from your phone. Another is to only check FB one day a week or whatever you feel works well with you. If you feel like you might be in a similar position with FB where it has taken more of your time than you realized, I encourage you to take a week off to see how it changes your thinking and to allow deeper heart issues to emerge. A great way to do this is to deactivate your account by going to Settings (Account Settings), Security, Account (Deactivate), Temporary, enter

your password. By deactivating rather than deleting your account, everything (photos, posts, etc.) will be saved until you sign in again to reactivate your account. You can do this for a week at a time and you can also keep your messenger account active even while off of FB. Would love to hear your thoughts, tips, best practices, or awakenings that occurred especially by those who took the week challenge. Please post comments below. {eoa}

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