



Welcome to Week 1 of our News Cleanse!

Hopefully, you've made time to fast from the news for a day (or four) since Wednesday. If not, now is the time to recommit to implementing new rhythms ahead of Easter.

To (re)read the introduction to the News Cleanse or to print a PDF of this devotional, [click here](#).

PONDER | PRAY | PRACTICE

How much news should we consume?

For two years, I consumed the news like I was breathing it—constantly, without thinking. I'd scroll headlines at stoplights, check news sites every time I opened or closed my laptop (maybe squeeze in a quick article if something seemed "big"), and listen to news-related podcasts while doing chores.

Over that time, I watched my views shift and align with whichever news outlet I was pumping into my head. I started with months of only liberal news (mostly CNN), during which I grew increasingly angry at the people CNN was angry at. I began to care more and more about the issues CNN cared about and worry about the things CNN worried about. I began to think that people who viewed things differently (than me/CNN) were either ignorant, evil, or both.

Then, (*whiplash*) I switched to only conservative sources.

After months of this mostly-Fox-News diet, my views/cares/worries mysteriously began to align with Fox News. (For what it's worth, this is exactly what I thought would happen... to someone else. But I thought I would be able to simply observe the differences between the two sides without being drawn in.)

I concluded my experiment with what I thought was the right approach all along: consume liberal, conservative, and centrist media together. After months of this third way, I was... still angry, still anxious, and still thought people who viewed things differently were ignorant, evil, or both. The *direction* of my anger, anxiety, and judgment changed, but the emotions were still there.

My problem wasn't just my sources of news; **it was the amount I was consuming.**

Regardless of whether it was liberal, conservative, or a balance of both, I was giving a huge portion of my day to the news. I allowed it to interrupt me with "breaking news" updates, entertain me during lulls in activity, and dominate my conversations.

Meanwhile, Jesus was getting an hour on Sundays and an inconsistent 10 minutes per day of quiet time. With those numbers, is it any wonder I was becoming more like the angry and hopeless news and less like Christ?

Galatians 5:22-23 says: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*" This isn't a list of things I should do; it is the *fruit* produced when the Holy Spirit is present. All of the attributes at once—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—naturally grow out of people close to God and full of His Spirit. And when I'm consuming large amounts of news, the *opposite* grows out of me.

I've found the sweet spot to be 5 to 15 minutes per day of news, with at least one day per week of no news at all. Staying informed takes less time than you think.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Have you noticed your news consumption affecting your emotions or views?
How so?

What would it look like to give Jesus as much time as you give the news each day?

Holy Father,

I confess that I have given my eyes and ears
to a near-constant stream of earthly news
while neglecting to meditate on the Good News,
and my heart has followed the headlines into anger, anxiety, and despair.
I have been worldly and distracted and self-dependent and rebellious.
I have been cold and hardhearted toward You and my neighbors.

Spirit of the Living God,

Warm me and soften me and draw me near.
Grow love where there is contempt in me;
grow joy when I am dull and despairing;
grow peace in my restless discontent and chaos;
grow patience in places of hurry and agitation;
grow kindness that overcomes my harsh severity;
grow goodness where I have selfish ambition;
grow gentleness that quiets my quick, sharp tongue;
grow faithfulness where I am wayward and fickle;
and grow self-control that's stronger than my fleshly cravings.

Peacemaking Savior,

do Your renewing, healing, quieting work
in places of darkness and fruitlessness and noise in my life.
Stir up my zeal for Your Kingdom and
my desire for Your presence
so that I care about what You care about
and love what You love.
May I be increasingly in tune with the mission of Heaven
and unplugged from that which draws me away from You,
for my good and Your glory.
Amen.

For the duration of Lent, **cut back on current events**. Consume your news for the day in a single, intentional, 5-10 minute session... then be done. Turn off breaking news updates. Get off Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Turn off YouTube or the cable news in the background. Find a different podcast while you're driving.

And for at least one day every week (I suggest Sunday), turn off the news completely.

New habits are stickier when shared. Invite a friend (or several) to join the News Cleanse!