



It's day 12 of our News Cleanse.

Last week, Jason challenged us to set boundaries around the *quantity* of news we're consuming ([catch up here](#)). Today, we'll talk quality.

PONDER | PRAY | PRACTICE

What is your news doing to you?

Sometimes, the Bible is deeply nuanced... other times, God puts the options before us in black and white:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

[Romans 12:1-2 \(ESV\)](#)

Paul says that there are two paths of formation: being formed by the world into something that mirrors the world's pattern or being formed by the Spirit into something new that knows and pleases God. There is no neutral option.

So, which way is your news forming you? Are your news habits making you fearful or faithful? Combative or curious? Contemptuous or compassionate? Paralyzed or purposeful?

If your news is forming you in the wrong direction, the problem may not be quantity alone. It may be an issue of quality.

If you spend just five minutes every day listening to the news, but you choose a toxic source... the fruit will not be the Spirit's. That means we need to set boundaries around *how much* news we're consuming and also *what kind*.

Here are some characteristics of toxic, worldly news that will grow the wrong kind of fruit in you:

- **Partisan perspective:** partisan news spotlights the worst in its opponents, casting the perspectives and positions of people we disagree with as either stupid or evil. The result is division, pride, anger, and contempt.
- **Sensational language:** emotionally manipulative news – which gets better engagement than balanced reporting – riles us up about issues that may or may not affect us, then leaves us without any opportunity to respond. This cycle gives us the sense that the world is out of control and there's nothing we can do about it. The result is anxiety and despair.
- **Attention bait:** to make money, news outlets need to keep your eyeballs... whether or not there is news worthy of your attention. Spoiler: most of it is not. The result of constant attention to news that doesn't matter is that we start caring about eternally insignificant things.

News that makes us anxious, arrogant, angry, or apathetic is conforming us to the pattern of the world... but renewal is waiting for us on the other side of presenting ourselves to God for His transforming work. The Spirit's fruit will grow in an area protected by a good fence and rich with good soil. As a news consumer, that means low quantity and high quality.



Yours in Christ,
Steph Juliot
Writer | The Pour Over

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What worldly patterns do you detect in your habits of news consumption?

What toxic sources have become part of your news diet? What effect are they having on you?

How have you seen the Spirit working to transform your news habits? What next step can you take?

Let's present ourselves to the Lord, asking Him to do His transforming, renewing work in us:

Merciful God,

We confess that we are so easily pressed into a worldly mold,
responding to the headlines with anger and anxiety, arrogance and apathy.
Forgive us for the ways we've taken on the world's scent of decay:
caught up in fruitless debates,
puffed up with knowledge, speaking harshly,
envying the prosperity of the wicked.
We have been faithless and fearful,
desensitized and detached—
grieving the state of the world as if we have no eternal hope.

But Your transformation of Your children
into Christ's glorious image is the hope of the world.
We present ourselves to You, trusting You to do Your good work in us.

Renew our minds so that we can walk in good paths,
pleasing You as we engage with the news of this world.
Equip us to be effective ambassadors for Christ,
bringing His aroma to our temporary places of exile.
Make us wise servants of our cities,
seeking the good of our neighbors in the outposts where You've placed us.

Thank you for the permanent, unchanging good news
in the face of hard headlines for those who are in Christ:
Your presence within us and around us, shedding light in darkness,
Your power to overcome evil in our hearts and in our world,
and Your promise of full, eternal life in Jesus,
in whom we pray.
Amen.

PONDER | PRAY | PRACTICE

Your homework this week is to **audit the sources** from which you get your news. On a scale of one to ten (1 is abysmal, 10 is terrific), rank them in these areas:

- **Partisanship:** To what extent do they vilify the other side?
- **Manipulation:** Is sensationalized language a major component of their vocabulary?
- **Story selection:** Is the feed filled with fluff?

Add up each source's scores. If any sources score below 20 overall, cut them out of your news diet this week, and pay attention to how the fast affects you.

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