

# The Benefit of a TV/Social Media Fast

Most of us don't spend much time online with social media or watching TV—at least that's what we tell ourselves. We sincerely think we're not like other people in our viewing habits, but we're likely guilty of the "halo effect"—perceiving ourselves better than we are.



- The average American watches 2.81 hours of TV every day. That comes to almost twenty hours a week.
- The average American spends about the same amount of time—three hours—on social media every day. That's also twenty hours a week.

I am not opposed to TV viewing or social media—I regularly do both—but I realize there's a lot of other things I could be doing with those twenty hours that are more productive. Let me propose you consider the same: put yourself on a media diet or—even better—a media fast.

When the Bible refers to a fast, it is always in the context of eating. The Greek word literally means *not to eat*. I know of some who think it's wrong to engage in any fast that is not a fast from food, but I disagree. For years, people have "fasted" from other things during the season of Lent. The principles behind a fast from food can apply to abstaining from other things—like TV and social media.

I can list multiple benefits of fasting from social media. Here's just a few:

- Your mood will improve.
- You can reconnect with people and the outside world.
- You'll stop comparing yourself to others.
- You will likely sleep better.

That's all fine and dandy, but let's engage in a fast for a wholly different reason: to focus on Christ.

Connecting (or reconnecting) to God is what drove people in the Bible to fast. Yes, there are health and emotional benefits to getting off TV and social media for a season, but to a greater extent, there are spiritual reasons and benefits. Instead of focusing on a screen, close your eyes and focus on God.

**Pray and worship.** Fill your heart and mind with unhurried gratitude and praise.

**Pray and confess sin.** Spend time in concentrated prayer getting your heart and life right with God. That begins with confession: seeing your sin as God sees it and turning completely from it.

**Pray and seek direction.** Seek God's will on a matter. Too often we can't hear the voice of God or sense His gentle nudging because our minds are focused elsewhere. Shut out the voices of the world so you can hear His.

**Pray for others,** Pray intercessory prayers on behalf of others. Pray for them with an intensity as if their need is your own.



**Study God's Word.** Don't just read the Word, study it. Spend time getting into and understanding what God says through His Word. Prayer comes into play again. As you read and study, ask the Holy Spirit

to guide your understanding. We cannot understand the things of God apart from the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:12-14).

**Meditate on God's Word.** Meditation is not the passive, empty-your-mind approach endorsed by eastern religion. Meditation is pondering and thinking through what God's Word says. Instead of emptying your mind, you're filling your mind.

- "His delight is in the Lord's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers" (Ps. 1:2-3)
- "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8-9).

Spending time with God in prayer and in His Word will benefit you far more than scrolling through your Twitter feed or endless memes. That TV show will still be there. Instead, fast. Take a break from the things of the world so you get your heart and mind aligned with the things of God.

You'll be glad you did.