

## The Spiritual Challenge of Health

What does our spiritual life have to do the rest of life? Sinfulness, confession, and forgiveness do impact our physical and mental health.

*Psalm 32:3-5 "While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of the summer. Then, I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" and you forgave the guilt of my sin."*

We have begun the season of Lent. The traditional view of Lent is on confession, sacrifice, and repentance; a turning from sin and a resolve to reform one's life. This sounds like a change process to me! A perfect opportunity to turn from unhealthy habits towards healthier ones.

Many of us give up chocolate, caffeine, or something we enjoy for Lent. This is a form of fasting. Fasting and abstinence brings us face to face with how we put the material world ahead of its Spiritual Source. Instead of going through the motions of giving something up for Lent, I challenge you to ask yourself the following questions:

**What do I do to excess that comes between me and God? How can a particular activity bring me closer to God? What does God want me to accomplish through this activity or practice?**

You may be surprised at the answers. Instead of just giving something up for Lent, you may need to replace an unhealthy habit with healthier one: spending time with family and friends instead of surfing the internet, reaching for fruit instead of chocolate, going for a walk instead of watching TV, being intentional about your devotional or study time.

Rather than viewing Lent as time of self-sacrifice and self-control; look at Lent as a time to intentionally connect with God. This will allow God to redirect your lifestyle and to open yourself to the process of healing your body, mind, and spirit.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me,...Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. (Psalm 51)*

I invite you to intentionally replace an unhealthy habit with a healthier one as your Lenten discipline. My hope is that the healthy habit sticks with you long after Lent is done.

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