

The Practice of Self-Emptying



Rediscovering the Fast

[God] humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:3

Fasting may seem a peculiar discipline to commend to contemporary Christians. It is vaguely repellent to our modern sensibilities. If images of ascetic abuse linger in our historical memory, we may have shoved fasting into that mental closet with hair shirts, chastity belts, and self-flagellation whips. Why, we wonder, should we turn back to a pinched, life-denying spirituality that glories in restricting the body? Why not glorify God by enjoying the blessings of creation?

Some of us, no doubt, would be relieved to see the long-revered tradition of fasting fade into oblivion. Yet fasting has been a significant spiritual practice in virtually every religion, and there is good reason to take a fresh look at its purpose and power. The practical rationales for fasting that our culture still accepts, such as health benefits or political clout, do not express the deeper spiritual significance of a fast. I believe we need to recover the spiritual purpose of fasting precisely because of the character of contemporary culture.

In ancient Jewish tradition, fasting had two primary purposes. The first was to express personal or national repentance for sin; fasting was a form of humble supplication before God in the face of imminent destruction or calamity (see Joel 2; Jonah 3; Esth. 4). The second purpose of a fast was to prepare inwardly for receiving the necessary strength and grace to complete a mission of faithful service in God's name. Primary examples are the forty-day wilderness

What are your general reactions to the idea of fasting? Identify your feelings and reservations before you read this chapter. Then comment again when you've finished the chapter.

fasts of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (Exod. 24; 34; 1 Kgs. 19; Matt. 4). The fast prepares each one to become a personal bearer of God's saving acts to the people.

Jesus combined prayer and fasting to overcome his temptations in the desert. The early church followed this practice at critical points in its life to discern how God was leading them and to empower their ministry (Acts 13; 14). Some ancient manuscripts indicate that Jesus' cure of an epileptic boy (Mark 9:14-29) was possible only "by prayer and fasting." These examples suggest that the combination of prayer and fasting invites a greater measure of God's power to be released through us than might be possible through prayer alone.

In Jesus' time, regular fasting was a normal part of Jewish piety (Luke 18:12; Matt. 6:16). Its practice was viewed as normal in the life of Christians until quite recently, and it is still seriously practiced in Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Protestants, however, largely seem to have forgotten that their greatest leaders—figures such as Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and Edwards—were strong advocates of this discipline. Wesley prescribed regular fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. Calvin commended it to (1) subdue the needless desires of "the flesh"; (2) prepare for prayer and meditation; and (3) express humility before God in confession.¹

While Christian history reveals that at times fasting has been taken to unhealthy extremes, very sane perspectives also emerge from within the tradition:

Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen, "How should one fast?" Abba Poemen said to him, "For my part, I think it better that one should eat every day, but only a little, so as not to be satisfied."²

An "ascetical fast" of this kind serves to remind us of our dependence on God. Even with my limited experience of fasting, I am convinced that "rather than weakening us [it] makes us light, concentrated, sober, joyful, pure. One receives food as a real gift of God. One is constantly directed at that inner world which inexplicably becomes a kind of food in its own right."³


Some of our suspicions about fasting may simply be a rationale to cover deeper anxieties. In a land where food is so abundant that we can both glorify and trivialize it, we have developed a horror of being without it. Advertisements bombard us with images of food. The underlying message seems to be, "Eat! Food is good and good for you. You should never be hungry. But if you are, the remedy is no

*Take a few minutes to stop and reflect:
How do you think prayer and fasting
might be connected?*

farther than your friendly pizza delivery service!” Like the noise we have become accustomed to or the frenetic busyness of our schedules, food is taken for granted as a constant in our lives. The very idea of intentionally being without it for even a day may threaten some of the unconscious assumptions on which our lives are built.

This is precisely why fasting remains so relevant for people of faith today. In a more tangible, visceral way than any other spiritual discipline, fasting reveals our excessive attachments and the assumptions that lie behind them. Food is necessary to life, but we have made it more necessary than God. How often have we neglected to remember God’s presence when we would never consider neglecting to eat! Fasting brings us face to face with how we put the material world ahead of its spiritual Source.

Jesus tells us that his “bread” is to do the will of the One who sent him (John 4:31–34). He calls himself “the bread of life” (John 6:35). Are we aware of how much sustains our life apart from physical food? Do we have an inner conviction that *Christ* is our life? We will comprehend little of how we are nourished by Christ until we have emptied ourselves of the kinds of sustenance that keep us content to live at life’s surface.



Persons well used to fasting as a systematic practice will have a clear and constant sense of their resources in God.

Dallas Willard

A Look at Lent

One of the best ways to explore the meaning and practice of fasting is to examine how Lent has been understood in the church. Lent is the traditional season of prayer and fasting in preparation for the great “Feast of feasts,” Easter. Right away we can see that the church year has been characterized by *rhythms* of feasting and fasting. What real significance can Easter have if we do not know the experience of Lent? The joy and delight of a feast is proportional to the deprivation of a fast. Have we lost the art of true feasting through rejection of the fast?

Lent is the great fast of the church year. It is a season that reveals and magnifies our understanding of spiritual discipline. When I was growing up, Protestants knew little of liturgical seasons; their impressions of Lent came mainly from Roman Catholic friends. The impressions consisted largely of restriction, regulation, and penitence. As Protestants began to recover church seasons, many took on the tradition of “giving things up” for Lent—dessert, chocolate, popcorn, chewing gum, or other food frivolities. What we have

participated in and witnessed is the trivialization of a very profound discipline.



We trivialize spiritual disciplines when we lose sight of their real purpose. Lent is not a six-week inconvenience in an otherwise abundant year, during which we somehow please God with voluntary if minor suffering. Lent is not a testing ground for the true grit of our willpower. It is certainly not a “spiritual” rationale for losing ten pounds before venturing to the beach in a bathing suit. Do you see how easy it is to twist a practice such as fasting into a means to accomplish our own ends? The question we need to ask with any spiritual discipline is, What does God want to accomplish in me through this practice?

For the early church, Lent was just the opposite of a dreary season of restriction and self-torture. It was understood as an opportunity to return to normal human life—the life of natural communion with God that was lost to us in the Fall. This perspective is clearly expressed in Eastern Orthodox liturgy and theology:

In the Orthodox teaching . . . the world was given to [Adam and Eve] by God as “food”—as means of life. . . . In food itself God . . . was the principle of life. Thus to eat, to be alive, to know God and be in communion with Him were one and the same thing. The unfathomable tragedy of Adam is that . . . he ate “apart” from God in order to be independent of Him . . . because he believed that food had life in itself and that he, by partaking of that food, could be like God, i.e., have life in himself.⁴

In Eden, God gave Adam and Eve every fruit of the garden but one. That one fruit, out of a world of variety, indicated a limit to human freedom. Accepting that limit was the single abstinence required by God. It was a way of recognizing that human beings are dependent on God for life. But Adam and Eve allowed themselves to be seduced by the serpent (a figure of God’s enemy, Satan). The serpent’s question inverts the reality of the situation: “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of *any* tree of the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1, emphasis added). Instead of a prohibition against one fruit, God’s warning is presented as a prohibition against all fruit. The temptation, it seems, is to see a single boundary as so restrictive that it negates the good of all other freedoms. Adam and Eve took the bait. Metaphorically, they “broke the fast,” transgressing the one limit required of them. In refusing to accept the natural bounds

of their creaturehood, they reached for the very place of God. They wanted it all.⁵

The fallen human now lives as if there are no legitimate limits. While we bow temporarily to practical limitations, limits are to be assaulted through the powers of intelligence and technology until they yield to human ingenuity and control. The appetites are given free rein. It is considered a God-given right to use every resource and creature on earth for personal enjoyment or gain. The goal of human life is to acquire more, to experience more, to stimulate every sense to capacity and beyond.

A life that recognizes no limits cannot recognize the sovereignty of God. When created things have become an end in themselves instead of a means of divine grace, they can no longer offer real life. Death and suffering entered into creation because our human forbears could not “keep the fast.”

Did you know that *Lent* is derived from a Saxon word meaning “spring”? In the early church, Lent was viewed as a spiritual spring, a time of light and joy in the renewal of the soul’s life. It represented a return to the “fast” that Adam and Eve broke: a life in which God was once more center and source and the material world was again received as a means of communion with God. This return to authentic human life was made possible by the Incarnation.

The early church found the reversal of Adam’s sin in Christ. After his Baptism, Jesus began the work of redemption by keeping a forty-day fast in the wilderness. When he became hungry, he refused the lie that life depends on bread alone and reaffirmed that human beings depend in all things on God for life. He said no to the limitless, self-referential power Satan tempted him with. Every temptation—to self-sufficiency, to self-display, to power at the price of integrity—would have placed Jesus at center stage instead of God. Throughout his life Jesus consistently pointed to *God’s* authority, power, and will in him. Jesus “kept the fast,” abstaining not only from food but also from the illegitimate exercise of power. He accepted his limits, living within the normal constraints of human life and accepting a human death. Jesus lived out God’s deepest intention for human beings in the created order. Through him, we too begin to live as a “new creation.” The possibility of genuine communion with God in and through creation is restored.

Perhaps we can see, then, that the discipline of fasting—as with keeping Sabbath—has to do with the critical dynamic of *accepting those limits that are life-restoring*. Our culture would seduce us into

Fasting is not a renunciation of life; it is a means by which new life is released within us.

James Earl Massey

believing that we can have it all, do it all, and (even more preposterous!) that we deserve it all. Yet in refusing to accept limits on our consumption or activity, we perpetuate a death-dealing dynamic in the world. That is why the discipline of fasting is so profoundly important today.

Food Fasting

Abstaining from food is the original meaning and most basic expression of a fast. It is the core reality from which analogous forms of abstinence derive. If we are to recapture the practice of such fasting as a spiritual discipline, we need to know how to go about it. Ignorance of basic rules can be dangerous, but if we follow a few simple guidelines there is little danger and much to be gained.

Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann reminds us that first we must prepare spiritually before fasting.⁶ Depending on the shifting sands of personal willpower results only in frustration and harm. A fast for spiritual purposes must be centered on God and can be so only if we ask God's help. We need to recover both a reverence for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and a genuine respect for food as God's gift. Such inner preparation will give us a vision of the spiritual dimension of fasting and arm us with the weapons we will need when temptations and difficulties arise.

Richard Foster distinguishes between a normal fast, a partial fast, and an absolute fast. The normal fast "involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water." A partial fast involves "a restriction of the diet but not total abstention." And an absolute fast means "abstaining from both food and water."⁷ The first rule of fasting is not to practice it if sick, traveling, or under unusual stress. If you suffer from any debilitating physical condition or illness, consider a fast only under the strict supervision of a physician. Because a fast depletes your normal energy reserves, it is important to reduce your normal activity while fasting.

Beyond these considerations, if you are a beginner or have not fasted in a long time, start with a partial fast of not more than twenty-four hours, not more than once a week. Restricting your intake to fresh fruit juices is a good way to engage in a partial fast. For many, it is helpful to begin after the evening meal, fasting until the next day's evening meal, so that only two meals are missed. Some prefer to fast from lunch to lunch, on the same principle.

Give your body several weeks to adjust to regular fasting before you introduce any further stages. After four or five weeks, you will be ready to try a normal fast for the same twenty-four-hour period. Drink only water, but *plenty* of it.

After several months of adjusting to a normal fast, you could choose to move on to a thirty-six-hour fast: all three meals in a given day. It is a common mistake to try to “tank up” on extra calories before a fast, and an equally common error to eat a big meal after one. A fast should be broken gently with a light, non-fatty meal, generally of fruits and vegetables. Longer fasts need to be broken even more gradually. Foster offers specific guidelines on the dynamics of a longer fast but urges that beyond the thirty-six-hour variety, it is best to discern through prayer whether you are called to a fast of several days or more.

There is no reason to push yourself to heroic effort where fasting is concerned. If you feel tempted to do so, take a hard look at your motives. Has fasting become a source of pride in personal achievement? Are you competing with yourself to win a record? Are you trying to score points with God? “More” is not necessarily “better” in this matter. Perhaps you are called just to be faithful to the humble practice of a partial fast once a week. Do not underestimate what God can accomplish in you through the consistent offering of such a discipline.

Other Forms of Fasting

In a culture obsessed with consumption, I believe fasting needs to be considered in terms of its inner dynamic: *abstinence*. The concept of abstinence applies to more than alcohol and sex. It needs to be considered in relation to the whole of our affluent and addictive lifestyle. Our society voraciously consumes just about anything and everything: food, drink, sex, drugs, guns, cars, clothing, energy, gadgets, TV, radio, social media, online activity, gossip, fads, ideologies, programs, even work and leisure. Our intimate relationships have often suffered from this gluttonous consumer mentality: enjoy while useful and stimulating, discard when broken or no longer satisfying. The world of God’s gifts has indeed become a world of mere objects to satisfy temporary and restless appetites, leaving in their wake enormous waste.

The point of abstinence is not the denial of all enjoyment in life; as professor and author Dallas Willard rightly points out,



St. Augustine once said that God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them. If our hands are full, they are full of the things to which we are addicted. And not only our hands, but also our hearts, minds, and attention are clogged with addiction. Our addictions fill up the spaces within us, spaces where grace might flow. . . . [T]he spiritual significance of addiction is not just that we lose freedom through attachment to things, . . . [but] that we try to fulfill our longing for God through objects of attachment.

Gerald May

“We dishonor God as much by fearing and avoiding pleasure as we do by dependence upon it or living for it.”⁸ The purpose of abstinence is to learn *rightly* to enjoy God’s gifts. We need disciplines of abstinence because we have come to relate to food, drink, sex, money, recognition, and many other things in life not as lovely gifts to be enjoyed in moderation and gratitude but as objects of consumption to fill emotional voids. When what we consume is consuming us and what we possess is possessing us, the only way back to health and balance is to refrain from using those things that have control over us. “To give up anything that comes between ourselves and God”⁹ is the core dynamic of self-denial.

What forms might this kind of “fasting” take in our lives? One possibility is to abstain from constant media stimulation. Choosing natural sounds or silence over incessant television and radio would be a pertinent form of fasting for many. For others, it might mean choosing to check personal email or social media sites only at chosen intervals, to resist the peer-pressured expectation of constant updating. What about abstaining from eating overpackaged and overprocessed foods or from throwing away all packaging in our disposable culture? The recycling movement is making only a dent in our mountains of landfill. If your mailbox is like mine, it frequently groans under the weight of mail-order catalogs, even in a world of online shopping. Millions of people wade daily through a glut of slick advertising, whether it comes to their doorstep or beckons from electronic screens. Many of us need to rest our credit cards and reclaim precious time by fasting from needless shopping sprees.

We might consider abstaining not only from lack of all physical exercise but also from fitness mania; not only from compulsive eating but also from compulsive dieting.¹⁰ We have a tendency to fall off the path of moderation into extremes. We like to impress ourselves and others with “the big splash.” It is a more difficult discipline to slowly change your eating habits and lose two pounds a week than to lose fifteen pounds quickly and swing back to former eating patterns. Part of fasting in this case is to relinquish the temporary excitement that comes with spectacular achievement. A counterweight to the desire for congratulation is abstaining from personal recognition. We can scarcely make a big splash if we practice anonymity in our charity or engage in our vocation without seeking to be honored.

The Practice of Self-Emptying

What would it mean to fast from judging others or even from judging ourselves too harshly? Most of us are quick to prejudge people we barely know on the basis of external appearance, mannerisms, or a few statements taken out of context. Worse yet, we judge people on hearsay. Spiritually speaking, this is a dangerous habit. Often we are ashamed of our prejudgments (prejudices) when we actually get to know the person in question. To abstain from judging others in the secret places of our heart is a challenging discipline to learn and sustain.

Perhaps one of the most difficult forms of abstaining today is from overpacked schedules, for both ourselves and our children. When we become exhausted, depressed, and short-tempered, when we have little energy left for our friends or families, much less for ourselves, do we give more glory to God? Here, again, we clearly see our desperate need for reclaiming sabbath time. Indeed, honoring the boundaries of sabbath time may strengthen our spiritual muscles for other expressions of abstinence.

With so many ways to practice fasting through abstinence, we will need to make choices appropriate to our character and life circumstances. Behind every fitting choice of abstinence lies the question, What do I do to excess? What I do to excess reveals my inordinate desires, my compulsions, the attachments that have control over me. They are precisely the areas of my life that need the freeing lordship of Christ rather than my own abysmally ineffective efforts at control. Fasting is not primarily a discipline through which I gain greater control over my life but one through which God gains access to redirect and heal me in body, mind, and spirit.

Do you tend to say yes to too many things? Take some time to examine your motives for doing so. Is there something you are trying to prove? Someone you are trying to save or to impress? Is it God's will or yours you are following?

Review the various forms of fasting suggested in this section. Each one is a way of allowing the Spirit to bring your life under control. Select one in which you need to establish boundaries. Try it for a day. Then commit to a full week. Assess your experience in writing, or talk it through with a faithful friend.

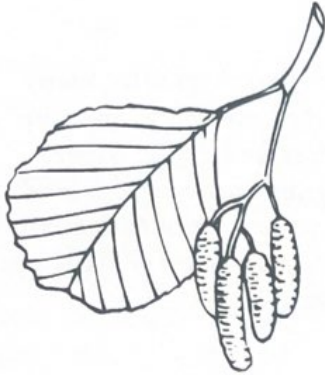
Invitations to Explore

Keeping a Journal during a Fast

If the purpose of your fast is spiritual, your inner attitudes will be of greater significance than your physical reactions. Keeping a journal can help you focus on the spiritual dimensions of a fast. Answering some questions may help your journal-keeping process: How do I respond to hunger pangs? What feelings attend the experience of physical emptiness—panic, irritation, boredom, helplessness? How do I express these? Do I sense any inward cleansing, release, or

freedom? Do I feel a need to draw the attention of others to what I am doing? Do I find myself attentive to God's presence in new ways? connected to others in new ways? What is God revealing to me through my responses?

The following excerpts are taken from the journal of a person who, as a spiritual discipline, committed himself to fast once a week for two years. It reveals the kind of growth that can occur through an extended practice of fasting for the sake of God. It is also a good example of the way a journal can be used to help record the movements of the mind and heart.



I felt it a great accomplishment to go a whole day without food. Congratulated myself on the fact that I found it so easy. Also, enjoyed the fact that I lost weight . . .

Began to see that the above was hardly the goal of fasting. Was helped in this by beginning to feel hunger . . .

Began to relate the food fast to other areas of my life where I was more compulsive. . . . to move out of the grip of necessity . . . I did not have to have a seat on the bus to be contented, or to be cool in the summer and warm when it was cold.

Continued to feel less at the mercy of my own desires—more detached. . . . Reflected more on Christ's suffering and the suffering of those who are hungry and have hungry babies . . .

Six months after beginning the fast discipline, I began to see why a two-year period had been suggested. The experience changes along the way. Hunger on fast days became acute, and the temptation to eat stronger. For the first time I was using the day to find God's will for my life. Began to think about what it meant to surrender one's life.

I now know that prayer and fasting must be intricately bound together. There is no other way, and yet that way is not yet combined in me.¹¹

Recovering the Fast of Repentance

I have said little thus far concerning the role of fasting as an expression of repentance. Since fasting and repentance are so clearly joined in the Bible, recovering this dimension of a fast seems appropriate and important. John Calvin followed the

biblical tradition of interpreting major disasters as divine messages. He urged that when war, famine, plague, or other natural calamities threaten a nation, "the whole people ought to accuse themselves and confess their guilt." He felt that regional threats obligated local pastors "to urge the church to fasting, in order that by supplication the Lord's wrath may be averted."¹² While Calvin's language may seem quaint, the impulse behind it may strike us as rather pertinent.

If ever there was a time when repentance was called for on a national and international scale, it is now. Personal and social sin abounds everywhere we look. World powers stand by while despots wreak havoc on their own populations. Ancient hatreds continue to fuel wars all over the globe. Racial and ethnic tensions threaten the cohesion of our communities. Levels of violence and addiction exceed all bounds. Family structures crumble, and children become both victims and perpetrators of abuse in their homes and schools. Our way of life places intolerable burdens on the resources of the earth, fouling the very elements we depend on for life.

Even a fraction of this woeful catalog should be enough to put us on our knees! Would not a time of corporate mourning and repentance be in order? Surely our religious leaders could gather and appoint a time of fasting and prayer for all believers. Yet if our leaders will not be so bold, we can take up the invitation to make sincere repentance a key in our personal fasting, and we can intercede on behalf of those who apparently see no need for a change of heart.

Springtime for the Soul

Perhaps we can now see how abstaining from food is connected to other forms of abstinence. Regular fasting at its most basic level may well be the most effective way to deal with all the appetites and compulsions that rule us. Why else would fasting be so heartily recommended by so many saints over so many years? Combined with prayer, it is a potent means of making ourselves available to the cleansing, restoring, empowering grace of God.

Abstinence, of course, is not the sum total of the Christian life. It simply creates enough space in us so that the Spirit can creatively use our talents and energies in the service of God's reign: "A proper abstinence actually breaks the hold of improper engagements so that the soul can be properly engaged by God."¹³ Disciplines of *engagement* balance our practice of abstinence.

Fasting teaches temperance or self-control and therefore teaches moderation and restraint with regard to all our fundamental drives.

Dallas Willard

Most of the practices considered in this book are disciplines that call us to actively invite God's presence and engage God's purpose in deeper ways: worship, spiritual reading, prayer, self-examination, guidance, and hospitality. Yet coloring and enlivening their practice are aspects of abstinence: silence, solitude, secrecy, and sacrifice. The abstinence of fasting is integrally connected to the engagements of prayer and active service. Indeed, fasting from physical food can scarcely be experienced as spiritual until it is joined to the sense of feasting on God's gracious love and responding by loving others. Fasting prepares us for authentic service. Author Macrina Wiederkehr expresses this connection beautifully:

Fasting is cleansing. It cleans out our bodies. It lays bare our souls. It leads us into the arms of that One for whom we hunger. In the Divine Arms we become less demanding and more like the One who holds us. Then we experience new hungers. We hunger and thirst for justice, for goodness and holiness. We hunger for what is right. We hunger to be saints.

Most of us are not nearly hungry enough for the things that really matter. That's why it is so good for us to feel a gnawing in our guts. Then we remember why we are fasting. We remember all the peoples of the world who have no choice but to go to bed hungry. We remember how we waste and squander the goods of this world. We remember what poor stewards of the earth we have been. We remember that each of us is called to be bread for the world. Our lives are meant to nourish. Fasting can lead us to the core of our being and make us more nourishing for others.¹⁴



All forms of spiritual discipline help us to make more space for God in our lives. Fasting and prayer, the traditional disciplines of Lent, seem to be two of the most effective tools in clearing away our self-preoccupation so we can be more responsive to God's life in and through and around us. Perhaps we can think of it this way: fasting is a form of interior "spring cleaning." It involves real labor, but how satisfying and freeing it is to get rid of all that unnecessary stuff!

There is, finally, a light and joyful quality to the practice of fasting. Release, clarity, and freedom shine through the sometimes painful and often tedious process of stripping away what is false in us. Spiritually, the result is restoration to what the Orthodox call "the natural life," which is nothing other than the Christ life: "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). May

we come to discover more fully in our own experience this spring-time of the soul.

Notes to the Text

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), bk. 4, ch. 12, para. 15, p. 1242.
2. Benedicta Ward, ed., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 144.
3. Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 98.
4. *Ibid.*, 94–95.
5. In this interpretation, I am indebted to insights from Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973) and to one of his foremost Protestant interpreters, Dr. V. Bruce Rigdon.
6. Schmemmann, *Great Lent*, 97.
7. See Richard J. Foster's chapter on fasting in *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 49.
8. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 180.
9. W. R. Inge, *Goodness and Truth* (London: Mowbray, 1958), 76–77.
10. Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia are true physiological addictions and cannot simply be turned off at will. They require either professional help or a communal therapeutic structure such as a twelve-step program. The language of fasting can be used both to cover and to reinforce eating compulsions.
11. From Elizabeth O'Connor, *Search for Silence* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971), 103–4. Used by permission of author.
12. Calvin, *Institutes* bk. 4, ch. 12, para. 15–17, pp. 1242–43.
13. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 176.
14. Macrina Wiederkehr, *A Tree Full of Angels: Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 37.

Notes to the Sidebars

Dallas Willard, philosopher, professor, and author in Christian formation, 1935–2013. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 167.