Mutiny Against Excess:

A Lenten Experiment

For the six weeks of Lent, Incarnation will be exploring ways to fast to make room for God. Over the coming weeks, we will explore how a fast—or a mutiny against excess—might change our relationship with food, clothing and possessions, spending, media, and stress.

Sometimes it seems that we have so much stuff that we somehow feel empty. The idea of The 7 Experiment is to empty ourselves of some of our stuff so that we make more room for God to fill us up with God’s goodness, love and challenge. Yes, sometimes God will challenge us right out of our comfort zone in order to accomplish something extraordinary.

This is a time not just to think about excess in various parts of our lives, but to take action against it. Make a commitment to try something each week. Stage your own mutiny against excess and see what God is up to in your life.

For Further Reading:

7: An Experimental Mutiny Against Excess (tan cover) by Jen Hatmaker is the book that started it all. It is the story of her family’s experience as they tried to live more thoughtfully and open to God’s work in their lives. It is a quick read and quite funny at times.

The 7 Experiment: Staging Your Own Mutiny Against Excess by Jen Hatmaker (gray cover) was written as a Bible study to be used in small groups but is an excellent resource for individuals and families who want to engage this process on a deeper level.

A limited number of copies of both books are available for purchase in the Incarnation office.
March 12-18: Introduction & Food

As you begin this Lenten experiment, what do you think God wants to do with your life? What do you think God is calling you to give up? Where do you think God is calling you to serve?

When it comes to food, more is not always more... God calls us to share food with the hungry as though we are sharing our food with Jesus himself. Developing an awareness of the type and amount of food we eat instills in us gratitude for the way God provides for us. Our gratitude is our motivation for sharing food with our neighbors who are hungry.

Read: Matthew 25:35-40

What you can do this week:

- Choose a limited number of foods that you will eat for the entire week. Choose healthy, fresh food.
- Cut your weekly food budget in half and give the savings to a food shelf.
- Eat the same simple breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day for the week. As you eat these meals, remember that 2/3 of the world’s people eat the same diet each day.
- Spend some time with the truly hungry in your community. Volunteer at the Ralph Reeder food shelf, serve a meal at Dorothy Day, pack a bunch of sandwiches and give them to folks on street corners.
- Make sure your family truly thanks God for the gift of enough food at each meal this week.

My/Our family’s commitment this week is to:

One thing I/our family learned this week through our action around food is:

March 19-25: Clothing & Possessions

Whether we admit it or not, we are consumed with our clothing and our possessions. We also tend to make judgments about others based on what they wear and what they own. Jen Hatmaker writes, “James warns us against judgment without mercy, particularly in the context of social distinctions. God makes it clear that outward appearance and inward truth are sometimes two totally different things.” How do you assess people based on what they are wearing (it’s okay to be honest)?

Read: James 2:1-5
What you can do this week:

- Grab a small bag (like a reusable grocery bag). Whatever fits in there, including shoes is what you have to wear for the week. Shut your closet door and live out of the bag.
- Wear the same shirt all week, but rotate the pants (or vice versa).
- Commit to buying no new clothes, shoes, or accessories for the next month and then notice what God does with your heart during that time.
- Purge a significant number of items each day this week. Pool these items with your neighbors and have a massive garage sale, then do something amazing with the proceeds, like donating the money to Feed My Starving Children.
- Choose several organizations in your community to donate your things to.

My/Our family’s commitment this week is to:

One thing I/our family learned this week through our action around clothing and possessions is:

March 26-April 1: Possessions & Spending

Have you ever felt like you possessions own you, instead of the other way round? What caused it and how did it make you feel?

We have so much, while so many others in the world have so little. What do we do with the abundance of riches that God has provided for us? How do we honor God and our neighbors by being aware of how we use what we have been given?

Read: Mark 10:17-31

What you can do this week:

- Give away at least seven items from every room and closet in your house or choose seven categories of items to purge (clothes, toys, furniture, etc.) each day this week.
- Choose a limited number of vendors from which to purchase items this week.
- Choose seven organizations, nonprofits, or missions to spend on this week.
Choose ways to cut your consumption this week. Pack your own lunch, carpool or walk or ride your bike instead of driving, take a walk with a friend rather than going shopping.

Figure out how much you’re spending each month. Are you surprised at the amount in any category? Take steps to make any needed changes.

Commit to not buying your favorite drink (latte or soda) for a week and divert the savings to a nonprofit of your choice.

My/Our family’s commitment this week is to:

One thing I/our family learned this week through our action around possessions and spending is:

April 2–8: Media

How plugged in do you think you are? Would your family and friends agree or disagree with your answer? Why?

“Media can be productive, instructive, harmlessly entertaining, and mobilizing. For most of society, it also provides the content from which we develop our view of the world, our deepest values and concerns. Ironically, those of us who are most affected by popular culture are those who pay the least attention to its influence.” (Jen Hatmaker in The 7 Experiment)

How do we use media, including social media in a way that helps us remember that we are called to conform not to this world, but to the life of Jesus Christ?

Read: Philippians 4:8-9

What you can do this week:

- Dedicate only one hour a day to any media or technology this week.
- Make a media-alternative plan for each day/evening. Plan a family game night, picnic in the back yard or bike to the park, or take a family walk.
- Choose seven people to connect with this week in place of media consumption.
- Declare screen-free zones: dining table, bedrooms, car, family room, etc.

My/Our family’s commitment this week is to:
One thing I/our family learned this week through our action around media is:

April 9-16: Stress

God commands us to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

*How does our culture go against the grain of observing a time for rest? Do you have a day for rest?*

*How is your life right now? Are you running on empty or well rested in God?*

*Are there red flags in your schedule or family’s schedule?*

**Read:** Deuteronomy 5:12-15

**What you can do this week:**
- Identify three stressors in your life and evaluate ways to minimize the negative impacts.
- Evaluate your schedule with your family. Make necessary reforms in areas that are overextended, unnecessary, too taxing, or too much.
- Get up 30 minutes earlier this week and spend time reading your Bible or in prayer.
- Consider tithing your time. What would giving away 10% of your time look like for you and your family?
- Our kids don’t need to do nearly as much as we sign them up for. Make healthy choices for your children, even if that means pulling out of something.

**My/Our family’s commitment this week is to:**

One thing I/our family learned this week through our action around stress is:

Which area of this Lenten experiment (food, clothing, possessions, spending, media, or stress) would you like to take further action around? What is your next step?