

So I made a decision early this week about what I was going to give up for Lent. As many of you know, Lent (which we started on Wednesday night, and goes till Easter Sunday) is a time when people will traditionally give up something that is near and dear to them, and devote themselves to prayer when the cravings and temptations to cheat on your promise come about.

It is all an effort to draw us closer to God, and help us realize that the habits and addiction and sin in our life cannot be eliminated without the work of God in helping us. So my decision was this: I am giving up soda and coffee and tea, with the intent of eliminating or greatly reducing the amount of caffeine that I am taking in.

I chose to give up caffeine because I believe that it might be a keystone habit for me. You see much of what I drink that has caffeine in it, also has a bunch of sugar, and so eliminating caffeine might also help to break my sugar habit. But also, caffeine at night (I like to drink a Coke Zero after I get the kids to sleep) causes me to stay awake longer, and much of what I do after that is mindless and pointless.

I need some "cave time," to be sure, but I don't need *that* much cave time. Staying awake later means I'm sleeping less, but of the guarantees in my life right now, one of them is that one of the two younger children will be awake between 6:15 and 6:30 in the morning. So lack of sleep makes me less productive at work and at home. And finally, caffeine may play a part in making me so high strung, something that I try to hide, but makes its way out in my dealings with people on occasion (just ask the kids).

So you see, caffeine is a keystone habit to me, and giving it up, has the chance of helping me to break other habits as well. I say all of this to say that not only this Lenten season, but always, our church, and many others like it, need to engage in developing the most important keystone habit of all throughout history: **loving each other.**

Reminding ourselves that we are to love each other, and making a habit of that practice, has great potential for positive change: what gets said and what does not; how decisions are made in the church; how truth is both spoken and how it is heard; how visitors and returning members view the church; and so much more.

I hope that you will commit to this practice, not only in the church, but in your life, and perhaps you can think about keystone habits, and how they can change everything.

I hope that worship is great for you today, and that you can enter into God's presence.