



Seeking the Disposable

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To my great surprise, it didn't melt. As I emptied the dishwasher, I discovered a plastic fork in the silverware basket. I had always assumed – or maybe had been told – that they would melt. Plastic forks, spoons, and knives were among the items I always treated as disposable. I understood they couldn't be washed, except by hand and no one has time for that. It turns out they don't melt. I repeated the experiment by putting a handful of plastic spoons in the next load: same result. So, what do I do now with all of these "disposable" items that are perfectly washable and durable?

On the flip side, I've been thinking about what I've clung to that is really quite disposable. Maybe I'm feeling the itch for some spring cleaning. Being at home during the day, I admit somewhat sheepishly that I've noticed cobwebs that appear only in certain light. They were hidden while I was on my daily routine of going to the office. Cobwebs are clearly disposable.

It's not just things. Behaviors, routines, and attitudes might also be disposable, if I give them a chance. During this time, I have the opportunity to test the disposability of what I've always done. Maybe I keep it, maybe I let it go for a few months, and maybe I say a fond farewell altogether.

In ministry, we have the opportunity to do the same. I wonder what we might want to discard these days. What spring cleaning should we do? Undoubtedly, there's that storeroom where props and fabric and decorations get stashed, just in case we want to use them again. After the publication of today's article, it's quite possible the storeroom will also become the dumping ground for re-washed plasticware that is perfectly good. Unfortunately, that room probably has to stay as it is for now, while we keep safe at home.

Instead of literal spring cleaning, what are the behaviors, routines, and attitudes that might need a good dusting, scrubbing, or tossing? This is a perfect time to consider and test the disposability of what we thought was durable or permanent. Perhaps start with what you've stopped doing because of the pandemic. What meetings, chores, or church business have we paused? How does that feel? Maybe it feels discouraging, or, just maybe, it feels like a relief. For the latter, when we come out of this, do we really need to pick these tasks up again, or have they become disposable?

As we look down the calendar and consider what might need to be postponed or modified, that might help us also strip away what is disposable and get to the core of what is essential. Are we secretly glad that an event was taken off the calendar? That might be a sign that we've lost the joy in that ministry and that God is calling us to a new possibility. Perhaps that event is disposable or needs to be scrubbed down. You have an opportunity – albeit one that's been imposed -- to decide that.

Our present reality gives us an unexpected chance to look carefully at what we've stopped or paused, what we've treated as permanent, and what we thought was disposable. Let's not squander this opportunity. Instead, with openness and curiosity, let's experiment.

