

Heavy

By [Diane Roth](#)

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For the last six weeks I wore an orthotic boot on my left foot. I fractured a small bone in my ankle while walking my dog one sunny morning in January. I wasn't doing anything exciting or high-risk. I just stumbled and rolled the foot enough to get a fracture instead of a sprain.

I have never broken a foot, ankle, or leg before, so I was unaccustomed to the extra weight of the boot. I have no idea how much the boot really weighed, but it sometimes seemed like a ton, especially on stairs and at the end of the day. In the scheme of things, it was really a small inconvenience.

But it was heavy.

So lately I have been thinking about carrying around that weight, and how I would have gotten rid of it, but I knew that it was helping me heal. I have been wondering about what I carry around that is heavy, and how much of it is necessary, how much of it is helping me heal, and how much of it might be holding me back.

It's hard to know.

When I moved to Texas last summer I did not bring everything with me. The idea was to live lightly for a season; when my husband comes, the rest of our household will come with us. So we debated what was most important and what would be unnecessary weight. Some of that debate was verbal, and some, I suspect, was in the silence of our hearts. What should I bring? What would I leave behind?

It was hard to know.

For awhile now, I have longed to downsize, and have imagined that much of what I have accumulated in the many years of living in one place wear also holding me back. It was the weight of actual, physical stuff that was the problem. All of it has meaning, and all of it is terribly difficult to lose, and yet, it is heavy, too. What do I do with the dishes that came all the way back from Japan? The books I have read

and those left unread, the knick knacks that were gifts, the affirming cards? I finally made some hard decisions. I thought I needed to lose some weight.

But I have discovered that there is more than one kind of weight in life. It is not just the weight of possessions. It is also the weight of memories, regrets, and hurts held on to. It is the weight of relationships, responsibilities, successes, and failures.

A few days ago, the doctor told me I could take the boot off, take that extra weight off of my foot, and start to walk again. I discovered that it is not as easy as it looks as I take my tentative first steps. My balance is different now, and I have to strengthen my muscles to make up for weak ligaments. She told me if it starts to hurt again, I can always put the boot back on.

It would be easy to make a lesson from this: use Lent to remove the weights from your life. Lent is a time for giving it up, giving it away, taking off all that weighs you down. But I am not sure it is quite that easy. Some weights are for our healing, after all. We need to wear them for a time at least, for healing to happen. The trick is in the timing.

Instead I might say this for Lent: that Lent is a time for feeling the weight of your life. It is a time both for picking up a burden and for putting it down, for carrying extra weight or for taking it off. What is most important? What is unnecessary weight?

It is hard to know.

But it is Lent, and maybe that is the first thing to admit: it is hard to know.

Take up your cross; lay down your heavy load. Let God heal you.

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