



MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

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Spring 2020 Lenten Studies

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WEEK I, TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020

Giving Up and Gaining for Lent

First things first: Observation of the Lenten Season, and the discipline of giving up something for the Lenten Season is totally voluntary. It is not commanded or even mentioned in scripture. We must be careful not to think more highly than we ought because we observe Lent, and not to look down on others who do not observe it. (See Romans 14:1-6; Galatians 4:9-11; Colossians 2:16-18).

Second: Lent is not biblical, but the practices of fasting and sacrifice are. To follow Jesus is to sacrifice, but not necessarily food. To fast is to give up food, but not necessarily just food. See Isaiah 58. God would prefer that you go on eating cake, potato chips and chocolate and give up mistreating others.

Third: Face it, the act of giving up anything that we like is not attractive. Studies show that while dieting, we can only deprive ourselves for so long before we go back to eating what we gave up, and often more than we did before. As it is in dieting, so it is in spiritual disciplines. Take a positive approach: think less about what you are giving up and more about what you are getting.

In Lent, it is traditional to *fast* or *give up things* that we do a lot of and that give us non-spiritual pleasure. The purpose of “fasting” or “giving up” things is to bring us closer to Christ by relying less on those things and more on the Savior. We acknowledge our sinfulness and our need, not for “things,” but for the Savior. This sacrifice practiced during the Lenten Season:

- Provides discipline, helping us to practice and learn self-control.
- Helps us discover that we don’t need things as much as we thought we did.
- Reminds us of Christ's sufferings, and gives us an opportunity to discover the true pleasures found in following Christ,
- Is an expression of our sorrow for sin.

Sometimes we don't recognize how certain habits have gained power over us and have come to control our lives. Are there things you think you must have or must do, or ways that you must react to things that may be contrary to God's will? During Lent, give these things over to God, and allow Him to be in charge.

We traditionally think of giving up food. That's easy. In Isaiah 58:1-7, God suggests that we fast from sinful behaviors. Think about what you most want to/need to/find difficult to give over to God. Use this Lenten season as an opportunity to simplify your life and focus on the things that bring you closer to God. Use it as a time to clear some "junk" from your schedule and concentrate on activities, such as prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowships that matter most. What would your life be like if you went 40 days without:

- Secular television, radio, Internet chat rooms
- Gossip
- Profane language, attitudes
- Comfort foods (e.g., ice cream, chocolate, pastries, fried and fatty foods)
- Lying
- Fill in the blank

Adding Something for Lent

Lent is not all about giving things up. Read Ephesians 4: 23-32. It's also about **adding** good things to our lives or to others' lives. It's about doing what Jesus commands us.

- [Reconcile](#) yourself to someone you don't like, or even hate. Use this time to reconnect or resolve issues with someone who did something bad to you, or someone you feel has an issue with you. (See also Matthew 5: 23-25)
- Do **acts of kindness** for people, just because they're there; give them little tastes of God's love. You are God's representative.
- If you haven't taken the time lately to be in a refreshing, natural, relaxing spot, do so.
- Study, meditate, and [pray](#) over one or two [Scripture](#) passages for each day. You might also use the So Send I You devotional.
- Try to find a new way every day to contemplate Jesus' life, as well as his death on the cross. Think about all that Jesus sacrificed for us. Read Philippians 2:1-11.

Don't think of this Lenten Season as a time of giving up.

Think of it as a time for growth.