



The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer through prayer, penance, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement and self-denial. The period of 40 days represents the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted of satan, while emptying himself to prepare for His earthly ministry. As we move through these 40 days, we consider what we might set aside in keeping with the example of Jesus. As we make these discoveries, let us not just give them up for Lent, but give them up for Christ.

Week 5. **Giving Up My Will**

God turns brokenness into usefulness.

It is a sign of His love and activity in our lives. God never accepts us on the basis of what we've done; rather He receives us because of what Christ has done on the Cross. Eph.2:8-10. We are called to stop depending on what we think we can accomplish and start relying upon Him – not just for our salvation, but for every aspect of our lives.

Prov.3:5-6

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

He calls us to repent of our sinful habits, self-reliance, and prideful desires until we can truly say, “All that I am and all that I have is God's”.

Reflection:

What is God stripping away from your life?
What do you trust in more than the Lord?

All you need to do is ask, and God will break your dependence upon anything other than Himself. Warning: Keep your seat belts buckled until you land – a smooth flight is ‘relative’. God is committed to conforming us to the likeness of His son (Rom.8:29) so that He can work through us and bring others to His care through the testimony of our lives.

2 Cor. 1:3-5

“Praise be to the God and Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”

Reflection upon the following:

“God uses brokenness so we can develop a more complete understanding of ourselves.”
“God uses brokenness so that our compassion & understanding for others’ suffering grows.”

In Jer.15:19, we read, *“If you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become my Spokesman.”* By trusting in God and learning from our trials, He will reveal himself to us and work through us in wonderful ways. The Lord has one goal in mind for our brokenness and that is spiritual victory. We can be confident that Jesus Christ can take our weakness and turn it into strength, hope and honor.

2. Am I Ready to Take Up My Cross?

Matt.16:24-25

"Then Jesus said to the disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who keeps his life for himself shall lose it; and anyone who loses his life for me shall find it again'".

Reflection: Discuss among yourselves what these two verses mean to you.

Jesus gave this teaching to get the crowds to think through their enthusiasm for him. He encouraged the superficial either to go deeper or to turn back. Lent is a time to meditate on Christ's walk to Calvary and ponder, are we willing to let God change us? This requires more introspection than circumspection. "Most people do not see things as they are, they see things as they are".

For the Christian, we can think of introspection as "seeking the Lord". **Jer.29:12** – *"You will call upon me and come to pray to me, and I will listen to you"*.

Eph.4:22-23

"You must put aside your old self which has been corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution".

The Christian life is a process. Although we have a new nature, our thoughts and attitudes can be displeasing to God. If however we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. Although change may be slow, it comes about if you trust God to change you.

Reflection: As you look over the last year, do you see a process of change for the better in your thoughts, attitudes, and actions?

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Eph. 2:10. Rather than waiting on God to tell us what to do, *God is waiting for us to open ourselves to Him.* How do we do this? We can ask the Holy Spirit to *help us be willing to let God change us.* **Psalm 51 (10-12)** can guide us: *"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."*

As Billy Graham expressed it, "Our sense of joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment in life increases, no matter what the circumstances, if we are in the center of God's will". C.S. Lewis put it another way, "To walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere".

As we continue our walk to Calvary, we are reminded that we too are being asked to take up our cross, so that by the blood of Christ, our heavenly father can change us in a way that pleases him greatly, and that we can bring glory to him through our lives.

Reflections 'for the road':

Gal 2:20 *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me", and*

Phil.2:10-11 *"So that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow – of those who are in heaven and who are on earth – and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*