



## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

Letting Go

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March 5, 2025

The observation of Lent is a spiritual exercise intended to bring us closer to God in anticipation of the high holy day of Easter. As a tradition, it has been around more than twice as long as Sunday School and altar calls. Growing up in the Baptist church, I never participated in Lent, nor did I understand it. It was easy for me to just throw it out as an unnecessary tradition. But in more recent years, once I understood Lent and I began practicing it yearly, I have found it enriches my soul and better prepares me for Easter. If, like me, Lent is something that you know little about but you'd like to know more, join us this Wednesday night at 7PM when I will explain the Lenten tradition in a message I'm calling "Letting Go." Join us online or in person.

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### **1. LENT IS FOR LETTING GO**

*Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. Hebrews 12.1*

Sometimes, we have to say "no" to GOOD things in order to have time and energy for the BEST things.

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24*

Search me – Test me – See me – Lead me

## **2. WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 40 DAYS?**

"The Bible is clear that God considers 40 days a spiritually significant time period. Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for His purposes, He took 40 days..." - Rick Warren

*The number 40 occurs 159 times in the Bible*

"Forty is associated with almost each new development in the history of God's mighty acts, especially of salvation..."  
– The New Bible Dictionary

## **3. WHAT WILL WE FACE IN OUR 40 DAYS?**

*For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 1 John 2:16*



*The world is driven by those two things: passion for pleasure and pride in possessions.*

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. Luke 4.1-2*

❑ The first temptation – the lust of the flesh

*The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" Luke 4.3-4*

❑ The second temptation – the lust of the eyes

*The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" Luke 4.5-8*

❑ The third temptation – the pride of life

*The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your*

*foot against a stone.” Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Luke 4.9-12*

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband... Genesis 3.6*

good for food = lust of the flesh

pleasing to the eye = the lust of the eyes

desirable for gaining wisdom = the pride of life

#### **4. HOW AND WHY DO WE FAST AND PRAY?**

1 Samuel 7.5-6, Ezra 8.21-23, Nehemiah 9.1-3, Joel 2.15-16, Jonah 3.5-10, Acts 27.33-37

*Fasting reveals the things that control us.*

“Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear - if they are within us, they will surface during fasting.” – Richard Foster

#### **5. WHY MARK THE FOREHEAD WITH ASHES?**

*He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. Job 30.19*



*I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance. Job 42.6*

*He has sent me...[to] provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Isaiah 61.3*

