

# Mount Pisgah AME Church

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**Bible Study, Wednesday, February 19, 2020**

## **Preparing for Lent: Spiritual Disciplines**

Based on Rev. Dr. Jessica Kendall Ingram's Teaching on The Spiritual Disciplines,  
Founder's Day Friday on February 7, 2020

### **What is Lent?**

Lent is the 40 day period prior to Easter, and it represents the 40 Days that Jesus was in the wilderness when he endured temptation by Satan. For us, the 40 days does not include Sundays, because Sundays are by definition celebrations of the Resurrection (Mark 16:2, Acts 20:7). Sunday is not the "sabbath" per se, but rather the day when Jesus was resurrected. All Sundays are, in a sense, "mini-Easters" and excluded from the 40.

The days in the wilderness were Jesus' time of preparation for ministry. Thus, the 40 days of Lent are seen as time of preparation for the believer.

Lent is about DRAWING NEAR TO GOD. We draw near to God so that we can discern (and walk in) God's will for our lives.

- God often speaks in whispers. (1 Kings 19:11-13)
- You can only hear the "whispers" if we *draw near*. (James 4:7-10)
- You have to *want* God and what God offers.
  - You've grown frustrated with the doing things YOUR way. (2 Corinthians 7:10, Matthew 5:4)
  - You've realized that God's way is greater. (Jeremiah 29:11)
- If you want to FIND God, you have to seek God "with all of your heart." (Jeremiah 29:12,13)
  - What does it mean for YOU to do something "with all of your heart?"

### **The importance of SACRIFICE in drawing near to God**

Drawing near to God requires *sacrifice*.

- Whenever God's people wanted to draw near to God, they always sacrificed (symbolized by "bringing a sacrifice").
- Sacrifice means intentionally turning away from those things that provide short term personal benefits *in favor of* things that lead to longer term growth and spiritual maturity.
- Although the SACRIFICE is a means to an end (i.e., the goal of the sacrifice is not the sacrifice itself, but rather the fruit that it bears in our lives), the *process* of sacrifice does build within us spiritual disciplines that are beneficial in all seasons.

### **A Longing for God (Psalm 42:1)**

- A longing for God is the desire to develop a deeper relationship with God.
- The longing results in our engaging in "spiritual disciplines," or personal and intentional spiritual "habits" that place God at the center of our attention and drive out distractions.
  - Our work in the church does not *necessarily* draw us closer to God.
  - Our gifts can sometimes be a hindrance to developing a closer relationship with God.
- God assures us that if we are intentional about *seeking* a closer walk with God, God will give us one. (Matthew 5:6, Luke 11:9-13)

## **Spiritual Disciplines**

The use of Spiritual Disciplines (i.e., spiritual formation) presents opportunities for us to enter into the center of our heart and become familiar with the complexities of our own inner life. When we begin to earnestly seek God, to create a sacred space in our life for God, to take the time to be with God, then we come face to face with our own inner motives and contradictions – the core of our being where our physical, mental and emotional lives come together as one in relation to God.

Spiritual disciplines can make us uncomfortable, as we come face to face with our own issues. (Isaiah 6:1-5), but they will bless us in the end (James 1:22-25)

## **The Process of Restoration**

- A. Prayer:** Calls us to incorporate adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication into our time with God.
- B. Meditation:** Calls us to quiet the “noise” of the world and tune in on God. Heightens our spiritual sensitivity.
- C. Study:** Focuses our entire being on God’s Word and positions us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
- D. Self-Examination:** Intentionally allowing God to speak to us about our inner thoughts, motives
- E. Repentance:** Turning away from that which separates us from God
- F. Sacrifice and Self-Denial (or flesh denial) – Fasting :** Enables us to silence our appetites long enough to develop more of an appetite for spiritual intimacy with God.

**Let’s draw closer to God and see what God reveals to us.**