

LENT



A SEASON
OF FASTING
AND FOCUS

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AND FOCUS

LENT: A (VERY) BRIEF HISTORY

For many Christians, thinking about Lent conjures two images. First, giving up something they like and living in a state of mild-discontent for a period of time. Second, the Catholic Church.

Neither image paints a complete picture of Lent. Without a complete picture, we risk missing the full beauty and spiritual benefit available to us in the observance of Lent. A few moments to clear up these misconceptions will be helpful as we prepare our hearts for the days ahead.

Historically, the observance of Lent has been the way both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church identify with and focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Traditionally, this period lasts roughly forty days and includes a fasting component. The most popular items to fast in our days include social media, screen time, sugar, caffeine, and television, though that has not always been the case.

Forty days is a timespan used throughout the Bible in order to signify completeness or wholeness (Genesis 6-8, Exodus 24:12-18, 1 Kings 19:1-12). The forty days of Lent and the fasting that accompanies them are tied to the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness before His public ministry, fasting and withstanding the repeated temptations of Satan (Luke 4:1-15). When we enter into a Lenten fast, we are identifying ourselves with the fasting, preparation, and self-denial of Jesus. That is not all though. The historical observance of Lent includes a crucial, second aspect.

While fasting, the removal of something from our lives is intended to help bring focus to our hearts. Identifying with Jesus' self-denial is meant to prepare our hearts to fully celebrate His resurrection triumph. Historically, fasting during Lent is not both the means and the end. Fasting is a means, a tool; focus, celebration, and a deeper appreciation for the full glory of Jesus' triumph over sin, death, and the grave is the end.

FASTING AND FOCUS

Our hope this Lenten season is to make the most of our opportunity to both fast and focus in the coming days. In identification with Jesus' self-denial in the wilderness and on the cross, we will fast. We do not want fasting to be merely a rote, empty, religious experience. Our prayer is that by fasting, we would allow our hearts and minds space to focus on the full depth and beauty of Jesus' work on the cross and His triumph in rising from the grave.

To quote from Alicia Britt Chole's Lent devotional *40 Days of Decrease*:

"God seems more interested in what we are becoming than in what we are giving up. As David sang,

"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. (Psalm 51:16-17)"

Faith, in general is less about the sacrifice of stuff and more about the surrender of our souls. Lent, in kind, is less about well-mannered denials and more about thinning our lives in order to thicken our communion with God. Decrease is holy only when its destination is love."

It is our prayer that this season provides a means for meaningful fasting as a path toward a thickening of your communion with God.

Each week includes a theme on which we are focusing our hearts, something from which we are fasting, and a reading plan from the book of Psalms. As we fast from the things of this world, may we feast on the things of Christ. As we loosen our grip on the things we think we need, would our soul cling tightly to that which we actually need. As our longings increase dependence upon the Lord, would His word lead our soul to worship in response to the reality that He is ever-present to help us. This Lenten season, let us fast and focus as a church family.

A NOTE ABOUT FASTING

Over the next six and a half weeks, we are going to fast from certain items. Remember, fasting is not the end goal. To borrow from Chole again, the goal is “a thickening of [our] communion with God.” The means toward that end, during the season of Lent, is fasting.

Throughout Lent, we will fast from the following seven items:

1. FOOD
2. SLEEP
3. NOISE
4. DISTRACTION
5. UNNECESSARY SPENDING
6. NEWS FEEDS
7. OUR VOICE

At the start of each week, there is a portion of Scripture that directs our hearts to the week’s focus and an explanation of the coming week’s fast. We understand that for some people, modifications may be necessary. You are the best judge as to whether or not it is healthy, wise, and/or feasible for you to take part in any given fast as it is recommended. We encourage you to exercise wisdom in making those decisions and to modify any given week’s fast as needed.

Along the same lines, we want to encourage you not to modify or to skip a fast simply because it sounds difficult. In part, it is the physical, mental, and spiritual challenge within fasting that pushes us toward ever deepening communion with God.

As an additional recommendation, you may choose to continue any week’s fast for more than a week while adding subsequent fasts to it. For instance, you may choose to fast from food for one day each week throughout Lent, while also doing the recommended fasts for subsequent weeks. Or, you may choose to stack them all throughout the season. But remember, the point is not the fast; it is the focusing of our hearts on connection with God and reverence for Jesus.

DEPENDENCE

Then Jesus left the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

But Jesus answered him, "It is written: **Man must not live on bread alone.**"

So he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The devil said to him, "I will give you their splendor and all this authority, because it has been given over to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. If you, then, will worship me, all will be yours."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.**"

So he took him to Jerusalem, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written:

He will give his angels orders concerning you, to protect you, and they will support you with their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

And Jesus answered him, "It is said: **Do not test the Lord your God.**" After the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

LUKE 4:1-13

FAST

FOOD

When we think about fasting, we think of food. This is for good reason. Fasting is mentioned throughout the Bible and is always tied to intentionally abstaining from food for a period of time in order to heighten one's awareness of their need for God and focus one's attention toward God.

Fasting from food is a challenge. We need food to survive. Our bodies were designed by God with a wonderfully ingenious ability to take the nutrients from food and transfer them into the energy necessary to live. Skip a single meal and we start to feel the effects. Go an entire day without food and we are likely to feel downright uncomfortable.

And yet, in our passage for the week, Jesus reminds us that we do not live on bread alone. Our existence depends not just on the energy we glean from the food we eat, but on the creating, sustaining, and life-giving grace of God. Were it not for His creating power, we would never have been given life. Were it not for His sustaining hand, all would cease to exist. Were it not for His goodness to us in the work of Jesus, we could have neither new life nor eternal life.

Over the course of this first week of Lent, we want to encourage you to fast from food in one of two ways: 1) fast from one meal each day or 2) fast from food for an entire day. Of course, if you are accustomed to fasting, you could choose to fast for a different period. While fasting, allow the physical sensation of your hunger to help focus your heart on your dependence upon God. Be reminded that in the deepest and truest sense, we depend upon God for our very existence. Allow your hunger for food to drive you to God's Word and be reminded that **"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."** Specifically, on the Word, Jesus. Be reminded that were it not for the self-denying death of Jesus and His victorious resurrection, we would have access to neither life to the full here on earth nor eternal life in the presence of God.

This week as we fast from food, focus your heart on your dependence upon God.

READ

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 24

THURSDAY

PSALM 34

FRIDAY

PSALM 42

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read Psalm 73:26. As a parent, share ways you depend on God.

REFLECT

WEDNESDAY

In your daily life, what are the things you depend on physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually?

THURSDAY

As you fast this week, how is God teaching you or challenging you to depend on Him?

WEEK 2

WORSHIP

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God's wrath is coming upon the disobedient, and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

FAST

SLEEP

Typically, when we think of worship, we think of singing. We picture the church gathered together on Sunday morning; we think of our favorite songs playing on the radio; we think of bands, vocalists, instrumentalists, etc. While music is certainly a component of worship, when the Bible speaks of worship, it involves much more than our vocal chords and mouths. In the Bible, worship is a follower of Jesus' whole-life response to what God has done, is doing, and will do. The book of Romans says it well:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, this is your true worship. – Romans 12:1

"In view of God's mercies," meaning what He has done, is doing, and will do for His glory and on our behalf. "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice," meaning not just your singing voice on a Sunday morning or in your car on the way to work (though those are wonderful), but your entire life.

As followers of Jesus, we are to give all of ourselves to Jesus as a response to Him giving all of Himself for us. Notice in our Colossians passage that Paul encourages us to, "Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you..." That exhortation comes after an encouragement to walk in ways that are "holy and pleasing to God," to borrow from Romans.

This week, we are going to fast thirty minutes of sleep each day – morning or night, pick your time. But our encouragement is to use that time to drink deeply from God's Word, focusing our hearts on His great mercies to us. Psalms is often referred to as the Bible's hymnal. This week, would it help lead us to lives of worship as we focus our hearts on the great mercy of God shown to us in the work of Jesus.

This week as we fast from sleep, might that added time awake help focus our lives on worshipping God.

READ

MONDAY

PSALM 119 VERSES
1-32

TUESDAY

PSALM 119 VERSES
33-72

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 119 VERSES
73-104

THURSDAY

PSALM 119 VERSES
105-144

FRIDAY

PSALM 119 VERSES
145-176

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read Revelation 4:11. Discuss why God deserves our worship. Sing songs to Him.

REFLECT

MONDAY

We give our worship to what is most important to us. When you think about your life, what is most important to you? Make a list.

WEDNESDAY

How does the use of your time, money, and resources reveal what you worship?

FRIDAY

How can you rearrange the use of your time, money, and resources so that all your worship is directed toward God? What challenges might stand in the way?

ADDITIONAL REFLECTION

WEEK 3

PRESENCE

"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they are yours. Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine, and I am glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I was protecting them by your name that you have given me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled. Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy completed in them. I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. I sanctify myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

"I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me."

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world's foundation. Righteous Father, the world has not known you. However, I have known you, and they have known that you sent me. I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them."

JOHN 17:9-26

FAST

NOISE

Take stock of the sounds around you right now. There is always some sort of noise bouncing around in the background. It could be the sound of a dishwasher, voices talking, traffic passing, cell phone notifications, the sounds of an office environment, or the low hum that constantly drones on in our technology-saturated world.

Add to this the reality that many of us intentionally fill our days with noise. Whether it is because we cannot stand the deafening sound of silence, because music helps us focus, or because we just have to be able to cram in a little more content via podcast, almost all of our time is either intentionally or unintentionally filled with noise. All that noise can make it very hard to settle our hearts and minds long enough to really stop and interact with God.

The gospels are full of instances where Jesus retreats from the noise and commotion of the crowds that surrounded His ministry in order to make space for the silence and solitude necessary to commune with His Father. This was a regular rhythm in Jesus' life, so much so that as His final moments on Earth were rushing toward Him, He created time to find a quiet spot in a garden to pour out His heart to His Father in Heaven.

Notice that in His prayer, Jesus spends time praying for us. Specifically, He spends time praying the glorious truth that He is in us and we are in Him. No matter what is going on in your life, no matter the circumstance or situation, if you have been saved by God's grace, then the very presence of Jesus is there with you. You can stop, savor, cherish, and enjoy that presence at any moment.

This week, let us fast from intentional noise and replace that with a focus on prayer. Cut out the podcasts, the music, the Spotify, the radio, etc. while you are working, driving, exercising, and/or cooking. Let the silence give you space to enjoy the presence of Jesus.

This week as we fast from noise, would the quiet provide space to focus on the presence of Jesus.

READ

MONDAY

PSALM 8

TUESDAY

PSALM 22

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 27

THURSDAY

PSALM 84

FRIDAY

PSALM 145

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read Psalm 73:28. Share times that God has helped your family. Pray and thank Him.

REFLECT

MONDAY

What are some things that fill your space with noise?

WEDNESDAY

Which moments are you finding hardest to enjoy the silence and presence of Jesus?

FRIDAY

What can you do to build in time to retreat from the noise and find the presence of Jesus on a regular basis?

ADDITIONAL REFLECTION

INTIMACY

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

This is what I command you: Love one another.

JOHN 15:1-17

FAST

DISTRACTION

Friendship – or relationship in any form – is built on a foundation of intimacy. Intimacy, in any relationship, requires cultivating closeness and familiarity between yourself and another person. The greater the intimacy, the closer the relationship.

Last week we focused on the truth that Jesus is present with us in all things and at all times. The full depth of Jesus' presence with us is about more than proximity. Jesus' presence with us is built on intimacy. In John 15, Jesus describes His relationship to His people like that of a branch to a vine. There is connection, familiarity. In fact, the two are so closely related that the one exists because of the other. The branch has life because of its relationship to the vine. So it is with us and Jesus. We have life (in the truest, fullest, and eternal sense) because of our connection with Jesus, the Vine.

Later, He puts that agricultural image into human terms. Those who are His, Jesus calls friends. Oh, the wonder and joy of the reality that we have been called the friends of Jesus! There is intimacy, closeness, familiarity, connection with Him. We are given that gift in an instant when we receive salvation by God's grace through faith. Then we spend a lifetime growing in our intimacy with Jesus. That growth requires intentionality. It requires time. It requires effort.

This week, we are fasting from distraction so that we might focus on our intimacy with Jesus. Distraction is a broad category, but we tend to know those things that we use in order to distract ourselves and disconnect from life. Netflix, video games, television, the internet, phone or tablet screen time. None of them are bad in and of themselves, but we often use them as a means of disconnection. This week, let us set them aside and in their absence, be reminded of the blessing of our connection with Jesus.

This week as we fast from the distractions of our age, may we focus on the gift of intimacy with Jesus.

READ

MONDAY

PSALM 17

TUESDAY

PSALM 63

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 86

THURSDAY

PSALM 103

FRIDAY

PSALM 139

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read John 15:5. Share about your friendship with God and how you stay connected with Him.

REFLECT

MONDAY

What are your normal outlets for distraction or disconnection from God and others?

WEDNESDAY

Without your typical patterns of distraction or disconnection, how are you connecting with God this week?

FRIDAY

As you reflect on the intimacy of your relationship with God, are there any distractions you feel compelled to eliminate moving forward?

ADDITIONAL REFLECTION

CONTENTMENT

Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light within you is darkness, how deep is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

MATTHEW 6:19-24

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-12

FAST

UNNECESSARY SPENDING

Contentment is a challenge for the human heart. It is hard to be content with the season of life we are in when others are in seasons we would prefer. It is hard to be content with what we have achieved in life when we see others who have achieved more. It is hard to be content with the relationships we have when we know that ours could be better or that we could have more of them. It is hard to be content with the money or possessions we have when we see others who have what we wish we did. Like an appetite that cannot be satisfied, the human heart is prone to continually cry, "More!"

Hebrews 13:5 gives us two reminders for finding contentment in Jesus: Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, **I will never leave you or abandon you.**

1 "...he himself has said..." Know the promises of God. Remind yourself of them. When it comes to being content with what we have, the words of Matthew 6:19-24 and 1 Timothy 6:6-12 offer us promises we can cling to, promises we can repeat to ourselves as our heart screams for more. God's promises are a balm to the soul that aches for that which it does not have.

2 You have Jesus, and thus you have everything. To quote John Piper, "We will only be truly content with what we have when we know that we have Him." He will never leave or abandon you. That is the greatest of promises. When we settle that reality deep into our heart, our longings for more become reminders of the treasure that it is to have Jesus.

For the upcoming week we are fasting from unnecessary spending. Don't go out to eat. Don't buy that shirt, those shoes, that coffee on the way into work, those earrings. Stay off Amazon. Don't go wander around Target. Allow the longing for stuff to remind you that you have Jesus, and that in having Him, you have everything.

This week as we fast from unnecessary spending, focus on the contentment we have in Jesus.

READ

MONDAY

PSALM 4

TUESDAY

PSALM 23

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 49

THURSDAY

PSALM 62

FRIDAY

PSALM 136

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read Luke 12:15. What does it mean to, "Be on guard against greed?" For an activity, watch Veggie Tales Madame Blueberry on Youtube.

REFLECT

MONDAY

How would you define contentment? What does contentment look and feel like in your life?

WEDNESDAY

In what areas of your life is God challenging you to find contentment in Him?

JOY

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 PETER 1:3-9

FAST

NEWS FEEDS

Life in a broken and sin-filled world is hard. It is heavy. In some seasons, the results and consequences of our own brokenness and sin are difficult enough to manage on their own. Add to that the fact that the sin of others often has an impact on our lives and the reality that there is a never-ending stream of news stories and world events that seem to constantly keep before our eyes, hearts, and minds the devastating effects of sin on the entirety of the world. The weight of it all can be overwhelming.

How does the gospel encourage us to find joy despite the heaviness of the sin that seems to surround us? It points us to Jesus. It reminds us that He has overcome the eternal consequences of our sin, is overcoming the reality of sin in the world, and will fully and finally overcome the very presence of sin when He returns again. The gospel roots joy not in the reality of our circumstances but in the sin-defeating triumph of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. There, says the gospel, is your unending, ever-present, never-decreasing source of joy.

To those who know Jesus, the good news of the gospel is good news even when the world is full of bad news. There is joy and rejoicing in the work of Jesus, even when the evidence of sin seems overwhelming. There is hope for both the day ahead and for eternity even when brokenness seems to abound. And so, as Paul encourages, we can rejoice always. As Peter says, we can rejoice even though we may face suffering, challenges, and trials of various kinds and for varying seasons.

As we focus our hearts on the joy we have in the finished work of Jesus, let us fast from the places where we typically encounter the news of sin and its consequences: social media news feeds, local and cable news outlets, newspapers, etc. In their absence, allow your heart and mind to be filled with the joy that only the gospel can provide.

This week as we fast from our news feeds, focus on the joy found in Jesus.

READ

MONDAY

PSALM 16

TUESDAY

PSALM 30

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 51

THURSDAY

PSALM 90

FRIDAY

PSALM 92

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read John 15:11 Fill in the blank. I have joy because
Jesus is _____.

REFLECT

MONDAY

What voices have the most influence in your life? How do they positively or negatively impact your joy?

WEDNESDAY

How can you shift your gaze toward the true and everlasting joy found in Jesus?

ADORATION

Then I saw one like a slaughtered lamb standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth. He went and took the scroll out of the right hand of the one seated on the throne.

When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and golden bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth.

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and also of the living creatures and of the elders. Their number was countless thousands, plus thousands of thousands. They said with a loud voice,
Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say,
Blessing and honor and glory and power be to the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

REVELATION 5:6-14

FAST

VOICE

When a prominent, important, or well-known figure passes away, it is customary for us to honor them with a moment of silence. When we attend a funeral or visitation, we use hushed voices or stand in total silence out of respect. In these ways, our silence communicates our desire to honor the deceased.

During this final week of Lent, we are going to focus our hearts and minds on the unimaginable grief of Jesus' death on Good Friday and the unmitigated joy of His resurrection on Easter Sunday. As we stand before the cross and look to Jesus hanging in our place, bearing the weight of our sin, absorbing the punishment we deserve, honor is not sufficient to convey the emotion we feel. As we look into an empty tomb and try to comprehend the wonder of our resurrected Savior, honor is not sufficient to convey the emotion we feel. Jesus is worth more than our honor. He deserves our adoration.

All of heaven for all of eternity has been and will continue to sing in adoration of the Lamb who was slain at Easter. When Jesus returns, we are told that all of humanity from all generations will bow their knees in adoration just at the mention of His name (Phil. 2). Easter is a time for adoration. On Sunday, we will gather together to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. We will sing. We will rejoice. We will join with the multitudes in heaven to declare that the Lamb is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, and blessing.

Until then, let us honor and adore the work of Jesus on the cross by standing in awe before Him. For an hour a day, we will fast from our voice. No talking, no texting, no social media posting, no emailing. This will likely require some careful thought and planning, but the aim is that our silence would declare the honor and adoration that rightfully belong to Jesus. As we prepare to join the celebration of heaven, let us stand in silent awe before the beauty of Jesus' work in our place.

This week as we fast from our voices, may we focus our hearts on adoring Jesus – crucified, resurrected, triumphant, and glorious.

READ

MONDAY

PSALM 29

TUESDAY

PSALM 33

WEDNESDAY

PSALM 47

THURSDAY

PSALM 67

FRIDAY

PSALM 98

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTER

Read John 10:3. Describe Jesus as our Shepherd. What might He say to you?

REFLECT

MONDAY

Is silence difficult or uncomfortable for you?
Why or why not?

WEDNESDAY

What are some characteristics of Jesus that make Him
worthy of adoration?

FRIDAY

What does it look like to instill habits of adoration for God into your daily life?

ADDITIONAL REFLECTION





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