

Dear Friends,

Lent is here. This Wednesday night will be the actual kick off of Lent. In Lent we take the time to daily seek the Lord Jesus Christ, asking Him to prepare our lives to celebrate the greatest work of all time. Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, being raised from the dead on Easter, and ascending into heaven forty days later, is the reason for the season. God is working through the Holy Spirit residing within us to change us, to transform us more and more into the image of Jesus. Lent is the time we focus in on the need to repent, receiving forgiveness, and joining together to carry out specific spiritual disciplines that help us mature in Christ.

The first spiritual discipline's goal is to grow a heart of thankfulness unto the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. *Every day write down something you are thankful to God for and tell another person or put it out where it can be read.* Some may write a thankful sentence and put it on the refrigerator. It is healthy to thank God for those things that are occurring in your life that are difficult.

1 Thessalonians 5:18(NIV) ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

The second spiritual discipline falls in line with our organic outreach theme. One of the best ways to reach out to the non-churched is to pray for them. Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit that gathers people into the church and yes, God can use us and does to bring this about. 2. *Please pray every day for God to fill the pews in His houses of worship.* **Hebrews 10:25 (Message)** "Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching [the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ].

The third spiritual discipline is one that will stretch us to do something we would not normally do. 3. *Take a step of faith outside of your comfort zone as an act of Christian*

obedience. Some call this doing a random act of kindness. Hebrews 13:1-2(NLT) “¹Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. ²Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” **Hebrews 13:16(ESV)** “¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Our nation is divided in unhealthy ways, politics being a major reason. One idea is to reach out in friendship to a person whose politics is opposed to yours and show Christian love. I know we have fractured relationships amongst us. Reach out in a positive way to the estranged person first by prayer and then by a note, call, or a personal visit. Ask the Lord to show you what step of faith to take. You may even find yourself inviting a friend, neighbor, or coworker into your home or house of faith, the church. May God show you what step God wishes you to take.

The fourth spiritual discipline encourages healthy habits. 4. *Give something up during Lent that is not easy to give up and/or add a healthy habit.* Some give up their favorite food for Lent or an unhealthy favorite food. For younger people, giving up video games or limiting their time on social media can be healthy. Adding a healthy habit may be doing physical exercise, attending a Bible study, reading a Christian book and the Holy Bible for a specific time every day.

Please pray this prayer every day during Lent. *“Dear Heavenly Father, may You make the changes in my life that I have been resisting. Help me to face my anxieties head on and overcome them with your help. Please release any hold the enemy has on my life. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*