

## Spiritual Disciplines for Lent 2021

1. Please participate in the devotions that are sent into your home Monday through Friday. The staff puts a lot of time and energy into what comes your way, and it is all created with you in mind. For those who do not receive the devotions at home, we will put them into print and place them in the narthex.
2. Please maintain your daily reading of the One Year Bible Plan. For those not participating please be in the Bible seven days a week, whichever part of the Bible you choose to read.
3. Please tell another person, friend, family member, coworker every week during Lent of a God story in your life. Some call this giving a personal testimony. This is an experience in your life that can only be explained as a work of God. It has been said that there are no such things as coincidences. There are God incidences. The Apostle Paul writes, "I believe; therefore I speak." Verbalizing your God story draws attention to God and helps to build up another's faith in God. One example would be to draw attention to God by telling a person something you are truly thankful to God for, a verbal thanks offering unto God.
4. Forgive a long-held grudge. Let it go.
5. Pray this daily prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, please reveal Your glory to our nation. Lord, we pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would soften hearts which are completely hardened toward You, so that Your perfect love would be received. Warm all of our hearts dear Lord. We pray for the non-churched, that You place inside of them the desire to worship You with Your people. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Mark 9:2-9(ESV)** <sup>2</sup>And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one<sup>£</sup> on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi,<sup>£</sup> it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup>And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son;<sup>£</sup> listen to him." <sup>8</sup>And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. <sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-6(ESV)** <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants<sup>£</sup> for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Jesus is the light of the world. The very first time we see Jesus we will see Him in all of his glory. The brightness of His glory will absolutely astonish us. When God created the universe He said, “Let there be light and there was light.” If God did not create light, the universe would be in complete darkness. The universe was dark until God turned the lights on and then you could see the creative work of God bringing everything into being that is. “The heavens declare his glory.”

When Jesus lowered himself, when Jesus humbled himself, when Jesus emptied Himself and was born of the Virgin Mary, He left behind His former radiant glory. When Mary was pregnant she looked like a normal pregnant woman, getting larger and larger until she gave birth. Yes, she had that glowing pregnant look which is normal. She did not have this blinding brightness coming out of her mid-section. Jesus left that bright glory, gave it up for a time. In Mark 9 Jesus, Peter, James, and John are given a mountain top experience. High up on the mountain Jesus was transfigured right before their very eyes. The glory that he left behind was now his again. This is the greatest miracle recorded in the Gospels prior to the resurrection. Jesus is the pure revelation of God’s glory. John says in chapter one of his Gospel that they saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Peter, James, and John were never the same after witnessing the glory of Christ. **2 Peter 1:16-18(NIV)** <sup>16</sup>We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” <sup>18</sup>We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

More than likely the moment Jesus was transfigured into his former glory, the three disciples were sleeping. The Bible says in Luke 9:32, “Peter and the others had fallen asleep.” His face shown like the sun (Matthew 17:2). Even the clothes of Jesus became exceedingly white, too white to even describe. Two of the greatest men in the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah appear and speak to Jesus. It is quite possible that Moses and Elijah are given their glorified bodies early or temporarily and that is why they appear as they do. They speak to Jesus about his going to the cross and more. The transfiguration was given to prepare the disciples for his death.

The disciples woke up and saw Moses and Elijah speaking to Jesus. Peter blurts out what first comes to mind and then something else happens to their utter amazement. The glory cloud came down and encompassed Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Inside the glory cloud is the throne room of God. God the Father speaks directly to God the Son. The disciples hear the voice of the Father. “This is my beloved Son, Listen to Him!” All at once they looked around and saw no one with them except Jesus alone. (9:7-8). The experience ended as quickly as it began with the disciples sleeping through part of it. When the Father spoke, another Gospel tells us that the disciples fell face down to the ground (Matthew 17:6). I have heard stories of Christians experiencing firsthand the Presence of God in a mighty and powerful way and all they could do is fall face down before God, prostrating themselves before God. God’s Presence is quite humbling for God’s holiness is all consuming and we are still sinners in the Presence of the Holy.

I believe God the Father gave Jesus a taste of His former glory that He would soon return too after dying the most horrible of deaths on the cross. In Hebrews we read, “Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising its shame” (Heb 12:2). Jesus was in the glory cloud where the fullness of joy is so very present. Jesus knew where He came from and He knew where He was going. The Father made it perfectly clear.

Jesus is the light of the world. This means Jesus is completely holy, pure, bright, without blemish, without fault, always truthful, incapable of lying, full of glory, and more. The Bible says Jesus lives in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16). What astounds me and something that so bothers me is how human beings can be so blind to the light of Jesus. Friends, I was raised in a home that was in complete darkness until my parents became Christians through the Bethel Bible Series. I saw firsthand what their lives were like before Christ became the light of their lives. It was night and day. My parents of course still had their faults, but I saw what they were like before Christ and then after Christ and Jesus made all the difference in the world. The Gospel brings with it the light of Christ. The Gospel is the power of God that saves us and that sustains us. The Gospel is so bright. And yet to the people who are perishing, to those who do not know Jesus, they are completely blind to Christ and one day will perish without Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4(NLT)** <sup>3</sup>If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

I have a relative that refuses to believe in Christ. He is proud of his atheism. Every time I leave him I always say, "God bless you." Friends, you and I can give the right message, speak everything correctly, do it all in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the message is rejected outright. Our work of evangelism will often be met with great resistance. The god of this world, Satan, does not want any soul won to Christ and will do all he can to keep people completely blind to the light of Christ. Please hear this. You and I cannot save a soul. Yes, we are told by God, commanded by God to speak the Gospel verbally, to live out the Gospel message, but only God Himself can save a soul. We cannot argue people into the kingdom. We cannot come up with clever gimmicks to win people to Christ. We do not change our worship to entertain nonbelievers. We cannot persuade anyone to believe in Christ. Jesus says, "No one can come

to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). It is God Himself who grants a person the ability to repent. Yes we plant the seeds of the Gospel the best we can but only God can lift the blinders and let people see the Light of Christ. God can use us, but you and I cannot save a soul. That is God’s business.

Now that I am into my 60’s my top priority is evangelism. I want St. Mark’s ministry to center on evangelism. God has shown His light into our hearts. We see and know the light of the world Jesus. We do not want to hide the light under a bushel, no! God has given to us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. Through the words of the Gospels, we have seen the transfigured Christ. We want everyone to see the transfigured Christ and be saved.

I am not asking you to do more work. I am asking God to open up the eyes, hearts, and lives of those around us, those who surround this church and those whose lives you come into contact with every week. Satan has a veil over the eyes of the unbelievers. It is time to ask God to remove those veils so the light of Christ can be seen and accepted. It is time to ask God to open up their hearts to be receptive to the Gospel in order to be saved and never perish. It is time to ask God to work in the lives of those we are in contact with to quit resisting the Holy Spirit. “Lord please open up their hearts to receive Christ and come and worship with the people of God.”

Those that do not know God do not know that they are blind, that somehow the work of unholy angels is keeping them blind. Only God can pull off the blinders and God, please do just that. I feel within me something has come to life and it is this. My heart aches for those who do not know Jesus. It is up to us to ask the Evangelist, God Himself, to give people a hunger to know Christ, to be in relationship with Christ, and to want to worship with the people of Christ. We do not need a new program. We want to pray for God to unleash His saving power to transform the lives of those who live around this church and around our lives to see the light of Christ and be saved, transformed forever and ever. Amen and Amen.