



## OBSERVING LENT

Just as Advent prepares our hearts for Christmas, Lent prepares our hearts for Easter. Lent invites us into God's presence to remember our need for a Savior, and to prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter. By setting aside 40 days to draw close to God and to fully understand our desperate need of the cross, Lent becomes a time of renewed joy in the Lord. The traditional three pillars of Lent are fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

**1. FASTING** - *Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning.* Joel 2:12

Lent is about fasting, and not just from food; we willingly and joyfully let go of things in this world that have too much of a hold on us. Before you decide what to fast, pray and ask God to reveal the idols in your life, i.e. anything distracting you from a deeper relationship with God. Then listen for Holy Spirit's prompting on what needs to be confessed, repented and fasted from during this season.

**2. PRAYER** - *Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Lent is about giving ourselves in a more focused way to prayer, and crying out for the help that we desperately need from the only One who is able to give it. As our idols are torn down, we repent of our sin and receive God's grace and forgiveness. In our humbled position, we admit our weaknesses and rely on God's strength. The void caused by our fast is then filled with reading God's Word and seeking God in prayer. With distractions removed, we allow God to meet our needs and bring us abundant life.

**3. ALMSGIVING** - *And the King will say, "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!"* Matthew 25:40

Lent is a time of service. As we prepare for Easter, we should remember why the Son of God became man in the first place. According to Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." When we give of ourselves, including our time, talent and treasure, we reflect Christ within us. Serving others becomes the outward sign of the internal work being done by the Holy Spirit.

How will I use this Lenten season to become a person of deeper faith? Be specific.