

Theme: Lent is patterned after Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. It is a time when we fast, pray, confess sin, and set aside distractions so we can fully seek God to be empowered by His Spirit.

## I. My First Ash Wednesday

- A. I grew up mainly in Georgia - BaptistLand
- B. First Ash Wednesday at Navy - guys with dirty forehead
- C. I had no clue what this was about - and no interest
- D. We are observing Lent for first time this year
- E. What is it? Why do this?

## II. The Central Idea of Less Is More

- A. Less Is More - making room for the most important  
Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. Luke 4:1–2
  - 1. Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit
  - 2. The Spirit leads Jesus into a lonely place
  - 3. This time of retreat is full of spiritual warfare
  - 4. Jesus does a 40 day fast from food to feast on God
  - 5. Even the Son of God practices less is more!

## B. Jesus regularly practiced less is more

- 1. Jesus - the freedom of simplicity to seek God  
Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:15–16
- 2. Jesus - the feast of fasting  
Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. Luke 4:1–2
- 3. Jesus - a life of practicing Sabbath  
He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. Luke 4:16
- 4. Jesus is the model of less is more
  - a. Jesus knew nothing was more important than hearing God
  - b. Jesus knew the power of fasting from food to feast on God
  - c. Jesus knew the importance of Sabbath rest to be refreshed and worship God
- 5. If the Son of God lived a life of “less is more” - restricting even good things to focus on the best - how much more should we!

### III. Lent 2015 - A Season of Less Is More

#### A. Is Lent Biblical?

1. Lent is not commanded in Scripture, nor practiced by the apostles - so it is not obligatory for Christians
2. However, Lent developed early in Church history and can be a beneficial practice - if done properly
3. So what is Lent - and how do we practice it properly?

#### B. Understanding Lent

1. Lent - from Anglo saxon word for "spring" and related to English word for "lengthen"
2. Lent - 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter
3. In Scripture God often worked in periods of 40 to teach His people so that they might turn from sin, war against the enemy, grow in faith, hear His Word, and turn to Him and find true life.
  - a. Noah - 40 days of rain (Genesis 7:2)
  - b. Moses - 40 year exile until burning bush (Acts 7:30)
  - c. Moses - 40 days on mountain to receive God's commands (Exodus 24:18)
  - d. Moses - 40 days interceding so Israel would not be destroyed (Deuteronomy 9:18)
  - e. Spies - 40 days exploring the promised land (Numbers 13:25)
  - f. Israel - 40 years in the wilderness (Numbers 14:34)
  - g. Goliath - 40 days of taunting Israel (1 Samuel 7:16)

- h. David - reigned over Israel for 40 years
- i. Solomon - reigned over Israel 40 years
- j. Ninevites - fasted and repented of sin for 40 days (Jonah 3:4-5)
- k. Jesus - fasted 40 days in preparation for ministry (Luke 4:1-2)
- l. Jesus - appeared for 40 days after resurrection to prepare disciples for coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:3)

4. So Lent became a customary time of 40 days of prayer, fasting, confession, repentance, and seeking God
5. So why does Lent actually cover 46 days?
  - a. Ash Wednesday to Easter is actually 46 days
  - b. Because Sundays are always feast days to celebrate the resurrection - no fasting
  - c. On Sunday we always celebrate more - not less!
  - d. The six Sunday's are foretastes of Easter - the Day of Resurrection!

#### C. The purpose of Lent

1. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, confession, repentance, and seeking God
2. In imitation of Jesus in the wilderness, Lent is a time of LESS so we can give ourselves to God MORE
3. Lent is a time of LESS to usher in Easter and 50 days to Pentecost - a time of MORE
4. Easter is greatest day of celebration and feasting
5. The whole 50 days from Easter to Pentecost - no

fasting, or even kneeling - just celebration

6. Lent is a time to prepare us for the celebration, that we might be filled with the power of the Spirit to celebrate resurrection life

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. Luke 4:14

- a. Jesus was full of the Spirit at the beginning
- b. He returns from a time of LESS with MORE of the Spirit's power

#### IV. Applying the Word - Lent 2015

##### A. Do we see that seasons of LESS lead to MORE?

1. This is a principle deeply rooted in God's Word
2. This is not about earning God's favor - that is freely given to us in Christ
3. Christianity is not ascetic - we do not punish our evil flesh - this is unscriptural
4. But Christianity does recognize that doing LESS - even of good things - can lead to MORE enjoyment of God and His blessings
5. BRCC is encouraging a season of Less Is More for the whole congregation

##### B. Less Is More during Lent 2015

1. We encourage everyone to fast one day a week during Lent
  - a. We encourage Ash Wednesday and Good Friday for those weeks

- b. For other weeks pick any day other than Sunday
- c. If you can't fast, maybe just give up some particular food - a Daniel fast
- d. Spend extra time in prayer and the Word that day

##### 2. We will be giving out a devotional schedule for readings

- a. The readings will follow after the Sunday teaching
- b. The biggest part will be reading through the Gospels
- c. This will be more reading than many are used to - and that is part of the point!
- d. Lent is a time of being stretched spiritually
- e. This may well require setting aside other things to have more time for reading the Word and prayer

##### 3. We encourage each person to seek God about anything else they need to give up to allow more time to focus on God

- a. Might be TV, Facebook, hobby, evening news
- b. Not "bad" things - just clearing out time to seek God more

##### 4. Should be a time of prayer, confession, repentance

##### 5. Should be a time of seeing Jesus

##### C. Communion - Our Communal Feast of Preparation

1. This is our Table of feasting
2. Each Sunday we gather to celebrate and feast - for He is Risen!

3. We begin each week with a feast - to empower us for the week of fasting - looking forward to the next feast
4. This is like the Gospel - we receive from God first - and only then do we work
5. Come to our Table of feasting to seek our King

### Less Is More - Lent 2015

Luke 4:1-2, 14

February 8, 2015

Communion

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Lent; christian life; confession; fasting; legalism; sanctification

The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

Luke 4:1–2, 14