

“What is Lent? Why Lent?”

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The historical intent of Lent is to place the modern reader into the storyline of the Bible. If we consider the biblical storyline and three corresponding “holy-days,” it is perhaps easier to understand why Lent is notable. First, the season of Advent celebrates the foretold and pre-figured Hero’s arrival. In Advent, God’s Hero arrives. Second, the season of Lent celebrates the foretold and pre-figured Hero’s work. It is not simply the Hero’s arrival that fulfills the promise; it is His work. Lent notes the Hero’s work by marking Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. Finally, the season of Pentecost celebrates the expansive and continuing legacy that His church is left with as a consequence of the Hero’s work. Pentecost marks the certainty of God’s promise and story in the carrying out of His mission in and through the church.

Yet part of the initial question is, “What is Lent?” I would like to begin by noting what Lent is not. **First**, Lent is not a means of meriting divine favor. Whatever Lent is, it is not this. Those who have distorted Lent and mutated it into a means of meriting favor from God have grossly erred. **Second**, Lent is not a time for fleshly introspection. No one need look far if their desire is to find hidden sins. We cannot afford to forget that within the “flesh” there dwells no good thing. **Third**, Lent is not to determine whether one is or is not worthy of the Lord. Those whose identity is *in Adam* will never be worthy in and of themselves. And those whose identity is *in Christ* will never be anything less than worthy in and of Christ. There is no action on the introspective that can cause them to be more or less worthy than they already are in Christ.

Still, “What is Lent?” **First**, Lent is a time to focus more intentionally on the person and work of Jesus Christ. The season of Lent anticipate the Hero’s Work. Lent enables the church to remind Herself of who He is, what He has done, and who She is because of it. Historically the church marks it as a forty day period. Forty is the biblical number for assessing. It is a time to assess where one is in relationship to the Lord and the story of which He is the Hero. For believers, it is a time to celebrate the work and power of the cross and its eternal consequences. All assessing must be in light of the previous three “warnings.” Life has a strong tendency to pull us out of the Bible’s storyline. We become so consumed and distracted by life that we forget and fail to live in God’s story. An intentional approach to Lent can help the believer to remember the story. **Second**, many use Lent as a period of “putting off.” By using it as a time for “laying aside weights” (Heb. 12:1, 2) the Spirit of God can seize this season to break the strongholds of financial greed, food gluttony, and personal glory. We are not here for ourselves but for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Christians should always live in light of their Lord and Savior; but the world, the flesh, and the devil have the power through stealth to distract and deceive the people of God. We are distracted by mere shadows and trinkets and deceived into believing this life is all there is. Lent can be a powerful wake up call to remember the voice from behind the veil, to remember the substance which casts the shadow, and to remember that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come.

More than ever, the people of God must remember. The day and age in which we live stifles the believing and casts the dark shadow of unbelief over our souls. It is the prayer of His

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people to their heavenly Father, to the resurrected and living Christ, and to the guiding and guarding Holy Spirit to awaken them from their spiritual apathy and to will them into a delighting joy in all that He is for them. May God hear His people.

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.