

Bethany Baptist Church Lenten Fast 2019

Coming Back to a Heart of Worship

John 4: 23-24

“Fasting to Focus and Finish”

March 6th – April 21st

Greetings Bethany,

It is with great joy and anticipation that I invite you to join in with our Annual Lenten fast. Lent is my favorite season of the Christian calendar because it forces us to slow down and focus on our Savior and our call to follow Him. This season we are going to use this time to focus on what God has already given us, that we might finish seeing it birthed into the world. God has blessed us as a church and individually with great vision, time to do the work and to see it come to fruition. With all that we've been given, now is the time to rededicate ourselves so that we can share it all with the world. I pray that this year God will do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we could imagine. There is no doubt in my mind that we will be changed on the other side of this fasting experience and that our witness will be as strong as ever. As always, our fast will allow us to use wisdom in developing the discipline that will work the best for our families while also allowing us to be together as a church:

1) Fasting from Distraction

In order to focus on God's Vision for us, we will need to eliminate as many distractions as we can. Each of us must take some time to examine our own lives to determine what distractions exist that we need to fast from during this season. For me, it will be the vast majority of social media use. I'm baffled by how often I find myself mindlessly scrolling through Instagram or Facebook, only to waste precious time that I could be using to be productive. Be prayerful and honest about your distractions and covenant to fast from them during Lent (and maybe even beyond).

2) Fasting from Food

- Option 1: If you are able and experienced in fasting, I invite you to join me in fasting from all food for 12 hours each day. Water is acceptable during the day but no other food or drink for those 12 hours. A modified version of this fast would be to fast for 9 hours during the day, or even to forego lunch every day.
- Option 2: I invite you to participate in the Daniel Fast. In the book of Daniel on two different occasions, Daniel fasted from meat or any “pleasant” food (Daniel 1:8-16 and 10:3). We will follow that model and eat only fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. You should do your best to avoid meat and animal products, dairy products, sweeteners, coffee, tea, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

- Option 3: If you are new to fasting or unable to participate in the other two levels, I invite you to give up one entire category of food that you particularly love. It could be red meat, desserts, dairy, whatever you know will actually be a sacrifice for you.

3) Bringing a First Fruits Offering

In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were required to offer the Lord a First Fruits offering in thanksgiving for all that God had brought them through (Leviticus 23:9-14). This offering represented the very best that they had; it was a choice to give God their absolute best. In the New Testament, the First Fruits offering is used primarily symbolically as a way of speaking to the uniqueness of a gift, most vividly used as a way of describing Jesus as “the First Fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).” In this tradition, I would like us to prepare a First Fruits offering, equal to one week’s pay that shows just how grateful we are for all that God has given us. This is not to replace our normal giving, but to be a special first fruits offering that reflects both our gratitude to God and our financial discipline through the season of Lent. I realize that this is a difficult request, but as with our normal giving, I’m only asking that you do the best that you can and that we make an attempt to grow in our giving together.

4) Our Ministerial Staff has worked diligently to create Daily Devotionals to help guide us through the season.

5) Wednesday Lenten Services:

Each Wednesday at 12 noon and 7:00 p.m. we will have Lenten services where we will worship and learn.

6) Optional Book!

New this year we are adding the option of adding a book to the Lenten experience. This year we have chosen, *“Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience”* by M. Shawn Copeland. Whether or not you choose to read the book, one of our Wednesday sessions will be focused on the research from this book and how it helps us on our Lenten journey.

Church family, I believe that God has some amazing things that He’d like to do for us in this season and that the depth of our devotion will dictate the strength of our influence. Join me in rededicating yourself to God in this season, and I promise that God will do amazing things.

Excited for the journey,

Pastor Adkins-Jones