



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**

Lent
(Preparation)

Part I

Daily Scripture Readings for
February 24 - March 15

WEEK 1: RESISTING TEMPTATION

Monday, February 24 - Joel 2:12-17

Today, we begin to prepare for Easter. Ash Wednesday is this week, the beginning of the season of Lent for most Christians around the world. Lent is a time of reflection and preparation for Easter. A time to remember who Jesus is and what he has done for us. It is six and a half weeks long, which ends up being forty days if you subtract the Sundays when, according to the Christian calendar, Lent is not in observance (Confusing? Yeah, a little). Many denominations which observe Lent encourage their church members to sacrifice in some form or fashion as a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice. Many people fast during Lent to suffer along with Christ as he suffered during his temptations in the desert.

It is never too late to return to Jesus. Lent can be an opportunity for all of you to devote yourself to God in a way you never have before. The next seven weeks are a great opportunity to reflect and remember what God has done for you. Our passage today calls for this type of devotion to God. The people of Israel had not been in a right relationship with God. Joel is calling them to return with fasting, mourning, and weeping.

As the Bible is the Living Word of God, just as important to those of us reading it today as it was to the original audience, Joel is also calling us to this type of repentance. You have not run too far away from God. As we begin on this journey to the cross for this Lenten Season, I want you to pray this prayer:

God, I am returning to you with all of my heart. Whatever I have been holding back from you, make me aware of it, and I will lay it down at your feet. I know you are a gracious God, always abounding in steadfast love. Receive my prayer and offering to you, O Lord. I give you my all.

As you pray that prayer, let me tell you that I am praying for you as well. I pray that this season before Easter is one of unmistakable blessings from God and is a time of great growth in your relationship with God.

Tuesday, February 25 - Genesis 3:1-7

If we are going to talk about Resisting Temptation this week, we must start at the first sin in the world. Here's something we need to understand about sin. It looks good. If it wasn't appealing, we wouldn't do it. We have a similar conversation about food at my house fairly regularly. Why can't the healthy food taste as good as the unhealthy food? If cake tasted like salad and salad tasted like cake, living a healthy lifestyle would be so much easier. The woman saw that the fruit looked good to her eyes, so she and her husband ate of the tree at the snake's urging.

In order to give in to temptation, like Adam and Eve did, you must be in a position to give in to temptation. Notice that Adam and Eve had tried to create new laws to resist temptation. Eve says they could not touch the fruit. God never tells Adam anything about that in Genesis. This added regulation was an attempt to resist temptation. You can't eat something you don't touch. Maybe their plan to avoid the fruit did not go far enough. It seems that when the serpent speaks to Eve, they are close enough to the tree to see that it looked good. Maybe Adam and Eve should have avoided the area altogether (NOTE: I'm not saying this is a good idea in all temptation because there are times when Christians need to go and be a light into the world. At the same time, if you're a recovering alcoholic, avoiding liquor stores and bars is probably wise). If Adam and Eve cannot see the fruit, they cannot be tempted to eat it, or, at the very least, there is another barrier to help them resist temptation. Ultimately, there are ways you can help yourself resist temptation, but you will still falter. Barriers like Adam and Eve had will eventually fail you. Adam, the first man's way to resist

temptation will not succeed. However, the one who is called the Son of Man, the “second Adam,” did successfully resist temptation and we will discuss his success on Thursday.

Wednesday, February 26 - 1 Peter 2:13-17

Honor the emperor. Fear God. It is that difference where we draw the line between what is appropriate and inappropriate as it relates to earthly leaders and our Heavenly Father. Give those in authority honor and respect. You fear and worship God. You put all of your hope in God. Earth and its kingdoms are only temporary. God and His Kingdom are forever. Do you put your faith in temporary things or in things that are everlasting?

Thursday, February 27 - Matthew 4:1-11

We are going to dive deep into this passage on Sunday morning, but I want to point out one thing today. Notice what Jesus does to refute every temptation by Satan. He uses Scripture. It is not his words, but the words of the Old Testament. Adam and Eve failed at withstanding the temptation from Satan because they used their own devices and strategies. Jesus, even though he was fully God, did not craft his own responses, but spoke from the Bible. What a powerful example for all of us!

We don't read our Bible just to learn information. We don't study Scripture just because we are supposed to. Studying the Bible is not done just for the sake of studying the Bible. We study in order to know the Word of God when we need it. Are you learning the Bible in order to be ready to use it? I had a pastor challenge me, along with thousands of other teenagers, at Youth Camp one year. He asked a simple question: do you have one Bible verse memorized for every year you have been a Christian? Just one. It is embarrassingly sad how many of us cannot live up to that low expectation. Satan knows his Scripture and you better know it also in order to

withstand temptation. There will be trials and temptations to overcome in your life. You cannot overcome them on your own. You must follow the example of Jesus and use God's Word to fight evil.

Friday, February 28 - Romans 5:12-19

Go ahead and read this passage again. You might as well read it a third time and very slowly because, I won't lie, it is hard to follow what Paul is saying. One commentator suggested that this is the "most theologically intense passage in all of Romans." There is an overarching theme in Romans 5-8 of two ways we can live our lives. We can follow the path of Adam, which leads to sin and destruction, or we can follow the path of Christ, which leads to obedience and life. The path of Christ is the path we all desire. It is only available to us because of the free gift of salvation that God has given to us through Christ's sacrifice. Adam's path leads to destruction and Christ's path leads to righteousness. We are redeemed and transformed by the Spirit working inside of us when we take the path of Christ. This is the choice we face when dealing with eternity.

However, there is a part of understanding the two ways that is not only eternal but daily. There are two paths before us when we are confronted with temptation. The path Adam took when presented with the appealing fruit, or the path Jesus took when he was tempted in the desert. Which are you going to choose?

Saturday, February 29 - Psalm 31; Luke 23:46

Jesus uttered seven sayings while on the cross, including the beginning of Psalm 31:5 as quoted in Luke 23:46. How committed are you to God? Psalm 31 is a psalm of commitment; a psalm asking for deliverance from God. Psalm 31 is broken into two sections each asking for deliverance, but then concluding with a declaration of trust to God. While Jesus was on the cross and while David in this psalm is surrounded by

enemies, they continued to trust in God. What about you? When do you trust in God? Sometimes or always?

Sunday, March 1 - Psalm 35:1-3

We have a God who fights our battles. Come worship that God this morning!

WEEK 2 - THE FAMILY OF GOD

Monday, March 2 - Genesis 12:1-4a

Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord...

This week as we continue to prepare for Easter, we focus on the Family of God. The song we sang was children, "Father Abraham," has some amazing truths regarding our testimonies as Christians. The blessing of God's children, which originated with the blessing of the people of Israel, truly began with a promise to Abraham. When we become Christians, we become part of Abraham's family. We are grafted into this family tree. We become part of Jesus' family.

What should we do because God has allowed us into his family? Let's just praise the Lord. Praise God today for the privilege of being in God's Family.

Tuesday, March 3 - Romans 4:13-25

It is our faith in God not adherence to the Law which allows us to be part of the Family of God. Romans 4 reminds us that God made a promise to Abraham and Abraham had faith in God before the law of circumcision and certainly before the Law as we see in Exodus through Deuteronomy. It is God's grace and faith that puts on the path to transformation and being in God's Family.

Let us not grow weary of trusting in the promises of God. Abraham is a great example for this as seen in Romans 4:19. He did not consider the natural impossibilities of the promises of God, but he hoped in the supernatural possibilities of God. Likewise, we must believe in God's supernatural ways.

Where have you given up hope because you don't see a natural way of success? Pray a prayer of confession to God today. Recommit yourself to a trust in God. Don't look at all of the natural ways God's promises can't happen. Instead, focus on God's strength and God's power.

Wednesday, March 4 - Matthew 22:36-40

Tonight, we will finish our study on Religious Liberty. As you read these famous verses in Matthew, ask yourself this question: What does Jesus' answer mean for us as it relates to freedom in society?

Thursday, March 5 - John 3:1-17

We know this story, so I do not need to use these paragraphs to explain it to you. In fact, one of our discipleship sessions was on this encounter of Jesus and Nicodemus. Let us use this passage as a time to reflect on our own relationships with Jesus. When have you misunderstood what Jesus was saying to you? When have you been Nicodemus and tried to fit the Word of God into what you already think? Nicodemus was confused about being "born again." "You can't go back in time and be physically born again," Nicodemus thought. Where do you get confused about God's instruction in your life? Be honest with yourself and with God. Pray for God to give you clarity in your life. Pray that he makes all things plain to you. Pray to God right now and then spend time listening for God's voice to guide you.

Friday, March 6 - Matthew 17:1-9

A few weeks ago, I got to take Hannah out on a “Daddy-Daughter Date.” We went out to breakfast, did some shopping, played mini-golf, and finished our day with ice cream. Those types of moments will be events I will remember forever, and I hope Hannah does too. Some of the best times we have in my family is when we get to spend time with only a few of us. Don’t get me wrong. I love family gatherings, and I enjoy the four of us spending time together, but it is a special moment when it’s just two of us, whether that be me with LeeAnn, or one kid, or one of my parents.

As we discuss the Family of God this week, I wonder if this idea was why Jesus took the three “inner-circle” disciples to show them the Transfiguration. It was a moment Jesus could have with them and be a time Peter, James, and John would never forget. It was such an awesome moment for those three, and it is great for us to be able read about this event in the gospels. In the daily events of Jesus’ ministry, however, the Transfiguration does not seem to have a major impact. What I mean is that it does not have an impact on the work Jesus and the disciples are doing or Jesus’ teachings come the next day. What it does do is create a moment in time that the disciples can point to as life-changing. A moment they will never forget.

What moment in your spiritual life do you have where God has revealed himself in a special way? What story in your life is so special because it was just you and God? Thank God for those special moments. And take time this week to share about that moment with someone who needs to hear about what Jesus can do in their life.

Saturday, March 7 - Psalm 32; Romans 4:7-8

As the first few verses of Psalm 32 say blessed are those who have sin forgiven. Blessed are those who realize the need for forgiveness. Forgiveness is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Christ has forgiven our sin, but we have to realize we need forgiveness. Christ’s sacrifice offers us no help if we do not admit we are guilty of

sin. When we come to that moment of realization, it is only then, we can have the joy of forgiveness. Come tomorrow night as we discuss the joy of forgiveness.

Sunday, March 8 - Psalm 36:5-9

Come worship the God who can be your refuge in times of trouble!

WEEK 3 - LIVING WATER

Monday, March 9 - Exodus 17:1-7

Is the Lord among us or not? Let me recap for you Exodus 14-16. God parts the Red Sea for Israel to cross. God allowed for bitter water to be made good to drink. God provided manna from heaven to sustain Israel. Those are three incredible miracles. Then comes our passage today, and Israel is thirsty again. What do they do? Do they remember how God has provided for them three times over the last few weeks and trust in God? Of course not! They complain. They wonder if God even cares about them. They think they would have been better off as slaves in Egypt. We give Israel grief for the lack of trust they have in God, but we are no better. We see God provide for us every step of our life and then when we struggle again, we forget the blessings God has already bestowed on us.

Are you testing God's ability to take care of you? Moses seems to think the people of Israel are doing this. While God does provide in this episode, it is clear through the naming of this site that God is not happy. Moses names the place "Quarrel" and "Testing." What we are to learn from this story is not God's miraculous saving of Israel again, but Israel's lack of faith in God.

We are going to look at passages this week that discuss God as Living Water. God as the one who sustains us throughout all of life. We must trust in his life giving gifts. Have you been trusting in God to sustain you? Have you been trusting in him

giving you water when you need it or do you demand a spiritual quench of thirst on your terms? Pray for God to lead you to trust in him and his provisions.

Tuesday, March 10 - Isaiah 43:18-21

“I am about to do a new thing” God declares in our passage today. Yesterday, we read about God providing for Israel in the wilderness. Today’s passage asserts that God is going to take care of Israel in a similar way during the time of Isaiah, which is the period of exile for Israel. The Israelites have been taken away from their homes to Babylon. God makes it clear that he will defeat Babylon and once again provide “water in the wilderness” for his chosen people.

Remembering the former things that God has done is important. However, we must always be looking forward to the new things that God will do. We must use the ways God has acted in our lives as an example for how God will act on our behalf in the future. When we are facing challenges in our lives, let us remember that we serve a God who provides us “rivers in the desert.”

In addition to God providing what we need while in the desert, the language that Isaiah uses in verse 21 reminds us of God as our creator. We are people who God formed for himself. Not only that, but we have been formed for a reason: to declare the praise of God. Let us not lose sight of this purpose. God has provided for us in the past, and he will provide for us in the future. He gives us sustenance in the deserts of life. And he does all of this for a reason: so we can return our thanks with praise to him.

Have you been following through on your end of your relationship with God? Have you been thanking him and praising him for the provisions he has given you? Stop right now and write down five things you have taken for granted recently, but need to thank God for. It might be health, family, food, to name a few. Then let’s do something with that list tomorrow at Prayer Meeting. Let’s use that list to praise God for the water he has given us in the wilderness of life.

Wednesday, March 11 - 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Tonight, we will begin a study of the life of King David. It will be a great dive into the life of the man who is said to be “a man after God’s own heart.” What does that mean? Let’s start to unpack that phrase tonight.

Thursday, March 12 - John 7:37-38

As Jesus says these words, it is the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This is important because on the last day, the priests would gather water from the pool of Siloam and pour water on the altar as part of the celebration. The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated at the end of the harvest and also commemorated the time God provided for Israel in the wilderness. The pouring of the water on the altar was a reminder of the water God provided in the desert.

Jesus uses this moment, while a great crowd is gathered in Jerusalem, to proclaim himself the new Living Water. Similar to what he says to the Samaritan Woman in John 4, he alludes to an understanding that if you come to him, you will never be spiritually thirsty again. Are you thirsty? Are you searching for a quench of water in this desert of life? Go to Jesus. This is not just a question for those who are not Christ-followers. This is a question for all of us. Have you forgotten about the one who can fulfill all of your needs? Jesus is on our side. He proclaims that *anyone* who is thirsty can go to him. That is all of us. Go to him and he will supply your needs.

Friday, March 13 - Romans 5:1-2

In order to stay hydrated, it is recommended that you drink half of your body weight in water every day. For some people, that may seem like a herculean task and for others it is second nature. Over the past two years, I have become more aware of the need to drink water daily, and I know I am healthier because I am staying hydrated.

Here's the problem: when I drink enough water for the day, I have to do it again the next day. And the next...and so on and so forth...

With God, that is not the case. Without the imagery of Living Water, our passage today states this case. God has justified us through our faith in Jesus Christ. In this access to Jesus, we have eternal peace. We drink from the water once and we never go thirsty again. The peace we receive through Christ is different than any peace from earthly powers. The peace that comes through human endeavor is only temporary. It is much like drinking water every day. That peace must be renewed and recommitted to daily in order for peace to continue. The peace we receive through the sacrifice of Christ is forever. Christ has done all of the work and established true peace. Thank God today for this peace. Thank him for the sacrifice of Jesus.

Saturday, March 14 - Psalm 34

What does it mean to bless the Lord at all times as verse 1 states? David was in trouble when he penned these words. It's not easy to bless the Lord in times of difficulty. It's not easy to magnify his name. But it is best. Psalm 34 is traditionally associated with The Lord's Supper in the New Testament. The Lord's Supper reminds us of what God has provided for us and this provision is what is proclaimed in Psalm 34. Let us respond to God with gratitude today because of what God has given us. There is suffering in life, but let us boast in God gracious never-stopping, never-ending love.

Sunday, March 15 - Psalm 37:39-40

Salvation is from the Lord! Let's come together and worship the God who saves us!