

40 Days of Discipleship: the *Discipleship Challenge*

Would you like to become closer to God? Would you like to better understand your purpose in life and how you can make a difference? Would you like your faith to grow and become a bigger part of your life? If so, the 40 days of Lent this year are for you!

Growing up the first thing I learned about Lent was it was time when you had to give something up. Whether it was chocolate, pop, TV, or something else, the emphasis was always on taking some away. When such sacrifices are done with the right spirit it can be liberating and edifying, but more often than not these Lenten sacrifices ring hollow, and not just because we aren't very successful at keeping them. I would like to suggest that this year be a year where we focus intentionally on growing in our faith. This year I hope you will join in **40 Days of Discipleship**.

Over the 40 days of Lent, I ask you to prayerfully consider taking time to grow your relationship with Christ and take the *Discipleship Challenge*. I believe that we can grow in our relationship to God by pursuing a path of discipleship; when we work at our faith and our spiritual life we will become closer to Jesus and be blessed. To be a disciple means to be a follower of Jesus, it means connecting to God in serious, disciplined, and intentional ways. When we make the time for God in our life and work at our spiritual lives, God will work and transform us in amazing ways.

Here is how the *Discipleship Challenge* will work. During the 6 weeks of Lent, intentional time will be given to each Mark of Discipleship. The Marks of Discipleship are areas of our spiritual lives that if we work on will help us grow closer to God. The Marks of Discipleship are: prayer, bible study, service, generous financial giving, spiritual friendships, and worship. Each week you will focus on a different mark and take time for God in that area.

Week 1 (February 21-27) Prayer: Take time each day, at the same time, for at least 10-20 minutes of personal prayer time. Multiple times a day is preferred.

Week 2 (February 28-March 6) Bible Study: Take time each day for 30-45 minutes of focused time for devotional bible study. You can read any scriptures you wish. The goal of devotional reading is not acquiring knowledge but growing in God's Word.

Week 3 (March 7-13) Service: Take time and energy do something each day to serve the needs of someone else. Be creative and try to serve someone else you normally would not connect with.

Week 4 (March 14-20) Generous Financial Giving: Each day find some way to give money to someone in need. Whether this giving is to an individual or through an organization doesn't matter. Give generously and give until you feel it. Consider giving away whatever money you might normally spend on entertainment, dining out, shopping, or any other extraneous spending. (I know this one is tough—they are supposed to be!)

Week 5 (March 21-27) Spiritual Friendships: Take time each day to check in spiritually with a friend. This is not a conversation about how busy you are. This is a conversation about your prayer life, what God is up to, or scripture. Your spiritual friend can be a spouse, small group member, or friend. If you currently do not have someone in your life who is a spiritual friend, consider asking someone.

Week 6 (March 28-April 3) Worship: Take time each day to worship the Lord. This can include but is not limited to organized worship services (this is Holy Week and we have worship Sunday, Monday, Thursday, Friday). You can worship on your own or with family or friends at your home. Read scripture, pray, listen or play inspiring music and you have worship!

After 40 days of intentional work on your faith, I guarantee you will grow closer to the Lord. I pray you will take the Discipleship Challenge and see how God will work in your life!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Ben