



*the
easter
experience*

what if
what happened then
changes
everything now?



Introduction - Ash Wednesday - February 17, 2021 The Forty Day Adventure of Lent

- What do you know about Lent?
- Have you ever observed any Lenten practices?

The Lent Season is designed around 40 days. It begins on Ash Wednesday [February 17 this year] and goes until Easter Sunday. However, you will notice that that is more than 40 days (Sundays aren't counted, but generally set aside as days of renewal and celebration—sort of “mini-Easters”)

- What are 40 day highlights throughout the Bible? Read the passage and write down the situation
Genesis 7:4 Exodus 34:28 Numbers 14:34 I Kings 19:8
Ezekiel 4:6 Jonah 3:4 Mark 1:13 Acts 1:3
- How might these passages be the inspiration for Lent observances?

Ash Wednesday begins the Lenten season and many people would go to a special church service that was designed to help us focus on the realities of our own mortality, our sinful human nature and our need for Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life. In many churches the ashes are made from burning the palm branches that were used in the Palm Sunday services the prior year. The placing of the ashes on the forehead using the thumb is normally done in the sign of the cross. Putting the ashes on the forehead is a reminder that "we came from the dust, and to the dust we will return." We are God's creation and we will one day die. The sign of the cross reminds us that eternal life is found only through the cross of Jesus. Many Christians leave the ashes on their foreheads all day as a sign of humility before God.

- As you think about Ash Wednesday comment on the statement: "we cannot fully appreciate the cross until we come to terms with why it was needed."
- What Lenten observances have you heard about?

The purpose of Lent is not ritual, good works and earning favor with God. The purpose of Lent is to focus on why the death and resurrection of Jesus is so important. The observation of Lent should be a choice, not an obligation.

We will be using the Lent Calendar to work through the Easter Experience. A series of videos by Kyle Idleman highlighting the crucifixion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

- What are you thinking as you begin the Easter Experience?
- What are you hoping to get out of it?

Session 1 - February 24, 2021

My Life Has A Purpose

what if what happened then changes everything now?

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”

(Colossians 1:27)

If people were asked to give a one or two word description of you, what might it be? Fun loving? Hardworking? Family orientated? Good-looking?

DISCUSSION:

1. What are your thoughts or reactions after watching this episode?
2. This episode challenged us to make our purpose in life to be a servant of others. But why would anyone choose to be a servant?
3. Would you say you are a servant? Why or why not?
4. What is it like for you when you serve others? How does it feel?

What is it like for you when you don't serve?

Which experience is better, and why?

5. Have you found it to be true that when we really know our purpose in life, and that purpose is something beyond ourselves, then we experience the greatest fulfillment?

What life purposes have you found to be the most fulfilling?

What does that fulfillment feel like?

6. Read Mark 10:35-45

What stands out to you from this passage?

FOR REFLECTION:

Read the passage from John 13:1-17 every day this week, first asking Jesus to open your eyes to what He wants you to see. Circle, underline, or write in the margins whatever words, phrases, or thoughts stand out to you.

Session 2 - March 3, 2021

My Life Can Change

Last week we focused on the fact that Jesus lived His earthly life as a servant. We also looked at His teachings that tell us that our purpose in life is to be servants as well. Did that lesson have any impact on how you lived out your week? If so, how?

DISCUSSION:

1. What was your favourite part of this episode?
2. How do you see other people typically dealing with their regrets?
3. Kyle said the difference between remorse and repentance is that mere remorse leads on to turn to self in an attempt to make up for the mistake while repentance leads one to turn to Jesus for mercy. How would you describe the phrase “turning to Jesus” to someone who didn’t know what that meant?
4. Why don’t people take their regrets to Jesus first rather than try to handle those regrets by themselves?
5. When you fail or fall short, where do you tend to turn to first—to yourself to fix it or to Jesus to forgive it?
6. Do you have any regrets affecting your spirit these days? Is there anything you feel badly about? Maybe it’s something having to do with your marriage and how you treat your spouse. Or maybe it’s something having to do with your kids. Maybe it’s something to do with money or work. Have you made some bad decisions you now regret? What are you currently regretting in life?
7. Bring one regret to mind. If you have several chose one. As you think of this regret consider where you are turning with the disappointment. Is it to self, to try to fix it? Are you trying to make up for this failure?
8. Imagine taking this regret to Jesus right now, as Peter did. Can you imagine saying to Him, “Lord, I am so sorry for this action”? Now imagine His reaction to your words. What do you think it would be?
9. Is this reaction like His reaction to Peter’s denial or is it more harsh or unforgiving? If it is more harsh, why would Jesus be harder on you than He was on Peter, who had spent time with Him, seen Jesus’ miracles and heard His teaching, yet denied Him?

FOR REFLECTION:

Read this passage from John 20:30-21:19 every day for a week, first asking Jesus to open your eyes to what He wants you to see. Circle, underline, or write in the margins whatever words, phrases, or thoughts stand out to you.

Session 3 - March 10, 2021

My Pain is Understood

Have you ever gone through something painful or difficult, and felt as though no one understood what you were going through? How would you describe what that was like?

Have you ever gone through something hard, but had someone alongside you who had gone through something similar him- or herself? What was that like?

DISCUSSION:

1. This episode focuses heavily on the sufferings of Jesus—the emotional and relational sufferings to be sure—but especially the physical agony, and that suffering is very graphic. How do you feel about so much focus on the physical trials of Jesus?
2. The episode referred to a letter in the New Testament called Hebrews. Read Hebrews 1:1-4. Listen for what this writer says about Jesus. What do you notice about Jesus in these verses?
3. Read Hebrews 2:10-11 What does it say that suffering did for Jesus?

How could Jesus be made perfect through suffering?

Wasn't He perfect already? What was He lacking before He took on flesh and endured suffering?

4. What is the consequence of Jesus' sufferings in regard to His relationship with us, as described in verse 11?
5. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. Again, look for what comes out of Jesus' sufferings.
6. Can you think of any kind of suffering to which Jesus could not relate?
7. Do you think Jesus really knows how you feel? Does He truly relate to whatever hardships you are going through?
8. How does all we've discussed and viewed in the last few minutes impact you? What difference does it make to you?

FOR REFLECTION:

Read the following passage from Hebrews every day this week, first asking Jesus to open your eyes to what He wants you to see. Circle, underline, or write in the margins whatever words, phrases, or thoughts stand out to you.

Hebrews 1:1-4

Hebrews 2:10-11

Hebrews 2:14-18

Hebrews 4:14-16

Knowing He knows; Knowing He cares; that changes everything

Session 4 - March 17, 2021

My Life Has A Plan

When you were little, what did you dream of being or doing when you grew up?

DISCUSSION:

1. How has your life been different from what you expected?
2. What do people usually expect in life? What don't they expect? What leads people to expect life to be fairly smooth and easy?
3. Do you see any difference in what believers in Jesus expect in life and what nonbelievers expect?
4. The most common reason people turn their backs on God is because He doesn't do something they expect He should, such as heal their best friend or stop the bus accident that killed their daughter. What can we expect from God?
5. If God will let His own Son not only die but also suffer horrifically, what does that imply about our lives?
6. Read each of the scriptures below. Have you ever seen these verses on a plaque or greeting card, or have you ever personally tried to memorize them?
 - a. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8)
 - b. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)
 - c. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10)
7. Why don't we put verses like these bottom three on plaques? Would it be good for us to do so?
 - a. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12-13)
 - b. "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Romans 8:17)
 - c. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Philippians 1:29)

FOR REFLECTION:

Read these three New Testament passages every day this week. Circle, underline, or write in the margins whatever words, phrases, or thoughts stand out to you. 1 Peter 4:12-13 Romans 8:17 Philippians 1:29

Life brings pain - but God can be trusted; that changes everything

Session 5 - March 24, 2021 the Promise of Eternal Life

"There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle."
John 18:18

DISCUSSION:

1. Read the different gospel accounts of the crucifixion:
 - a. Matthew 27:32-56
 - b. Mark 15:21-41
 - c. Luke 23:26-49
 - d. John 19:16-37
2. As you are reading find the seven things that Jesus said while on the cross [they have come to be known as "The Seven Last Words."]
3. As you are reading notice the comments about the two other men that were crucified with Jesus.
4. Who were these other two men? What was their crime?
5. How do they react toward Jesus? Why are they insulting towards him specifically?
6. What shift happened to the one man crucified beside Jesus as reported by Luke?
7. How was his attitude one of repentance?
8. What did Jesus promise him?
9. He did nothing to deserve it; how is this a great example of mercy and grace?
10. Why would we use this story when we are teaching about the purpose of baptism or The Lord's Supper?

FOR REFLECTION:

In a sense the whole populations of the world have been crucified beside Jesus. We will all respond to Jesus like one or the other of the men. Romans 6:23 Ephesians 2:8-10

"The worst day of his life became the best day of his life."

Session 6 - March 31, 2021
Hope That Never Dies / My Hope Is Secure

What do you think is the saddest word in the dictionary? What is the happiest?

DISCUSSION:

1. What scene in today's episode did you like the best?

What was it about the scene that struck you?

If you really believed what that scene communicated, how would it or should it impact your life?

2. Have you ever personally experienced the word *hopeless*?

How would you describe it?

How was your hope restored?

3. Why does God allow us times of seeming hopelessness?

4. Kyle names three assurances that come from Jesus rising from the dead.

- a. We can be confident that Jesus will do what He says He will do.
- b. We can be confident in our relationship with God.
- c. We can be confident Jesus will come back for us.

Which one of these assurances means the most to you?

What is the most telling evidence for you that Jesus actually did rise from the dead?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, often called the Resurrection Chapter.

Look over those words. Paul certainly believed those truths. He not only suffered for them but was executed for them. How would you like those words, those truths, to impact your everyday life?

FOR REFLECTION:

Read this passage from 1 Corinthians 15 every day this week, first asking Jesus to open your eyes to what He wants you to see. Circle, underline, or write in the margins whatever words, phrases, or thoughts stand out to you. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

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