

By the time you read this we will be off and running in the season of Lent. For some, Lent is a season to engage in a new spiritual discipline. Often that spiritual discipline is giving something up (i.e. chocolate, snacking). I have even heard of people giving up coffee for Lent (Why in the world would anyone do that). And while all of that is perfectly fine, except the giving up coffee thing 😊, the question that arises for me is this – “Why? For example, giving up snacking for Lent could very well produce some healthy turn-around from which you would greatly benefit. Maybe the decrease in high calorie snacks leads to some weight loss and thus getting into some clothes you have not worn for a while. Maybe it allows you to reduce or get rid of a particular medication. Whatever the case, the so-called “spiritual discipline” is not really a “spiritual” discipline then but rather a physical discipline wearing a spiritual mask.

Now do not get me wrong here. I am not criticizing anyone for giving something up for Lent, just the motivation for doing so. For you see, the giving something up for Lent is not meant to be a selfish thing to benefit you in the here and now, but rather draw you closer to the Lord. It is a time to refocus your attention to listen to the Lord and depend upon him for your provision. There are many things that get in the way of our relationship with Jesus. There are times of spiritual dryness. There is a drifting away from the One. The giving up of something can serve as a reminder to re-evaluate that relationship and to focus on God. For example, as you long for the nighttime snack that you gave up, those cravings could be a reminder to pray or read your Bible, etc.

But allow me to challenge you with something else. Instead of giving something up, take something on. *What do you mean by that, Pastor?* Well, instead of giving up chocolate, add the discipline of daily Bible reading (i.e. You could join the Bible reading Facebook group). Add the discipline of praying first thing in the morning and maybe even start a prayer journal. Commit to turning off the TV at night and meditate on scripture. And those are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Instead of using Lent for veiled selfish reasons, use it to strengthen/deepen your relationship with the Father through Jesus. If giving something up helps strengthen that relationship with God, then do that. Whatever the case, glorify God and get to know Him all over again.

Have blessed Lenten season 😊

Pastor Eric