LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 1, 2026
Lesson 12: "Create in Me a Clean Heart" — Holiness as Inner Renewal

MAIN TEXT: PSALM 51:10–12 (NASB 2020)
"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Psalm 51 emerges from one of the darkest moral collapses recorded in Scripture. David — anointed king, covenant bearer, worship leader — has committed adultery and arranged the death of Uriah. When Nathan confronts him in 2 Samuel 12, David's defenses collapse. Psalm 51 is not lyrical exaggeration; it is repentance under divine exposure. The shepherd-king stands spiritually bankrupt before the Holy One of Israel.

When David cries, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," he uses the Hebrew verb **"bara"** *(create)* the same verb found in Genesis 1:1. In the Old Testament, **"bara"** is used exclusively of God's creative activity. David understands that sin has not merely stained him; it has disordered him at the core. He does not ask for self-improvement. He asks for re-creation. This is theological realism. The problem of sin is not cosmetic. It is structural. Only the God who created light out of darkness can create purity out of corruption.

The word **"heart"** (*leb*) in Hebrew thought represents the inner governing center; *mind, will, and affections*. David is asking God to transform the control room of his being. Holiness begins there. As Gregory of Nyssa observed in his reflections on purity of heart, transformation must occur at the level of desire, not merely conduct. David recognizes that outward reform without inward renewal is unstable.

He continues, "Renew a steadfast spirit within me." The term rooted in **"kun"** conveys *firmness, establishment, something made stable.* David has experienced the volatility of divided affections. He now asks not merely for forgiveness, but for endurance — a spirit that will not fracture under temptation again. Holiness is not emotional oscillation between guilt and relief. It is Spirit-established stability.

His plea, "Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me," reveals covenant awareness. Under the Old Covenant, the Spirit's empowering presence could depart from leaders (1 Samuel 16:14). David has witnessed Saul's decline. He fears not loss of title, but loss of presence. Under the New Covenant, Christ promises

the Spirit will abide "forever" (John 14:16–17), yet Paul warns that the Spirit may be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). Fellowship can be fractured even if union remains secure. David longs for unbroken communion.

Finally, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation." Joy had been displaced by secrecy and guilt. Holiness does not diminish joy; it recovers it. Augustine wrote in *Confessions*, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You." Sin had produced restlessness in David; restoration would produce delight.

John Wesley later described entire sanctification not as grim austerity, but as love perfected, where the heart is freed to love God wholly.

In the Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal heritage, this psalm is foundational. Inward cleansing precedes durable empowerment. Fire without purity collapses into spectacle. Fasting exposes the fractures; prayer invites divine re-creation. The Spirit does not merely comfort the repentant, He transforms them.

Holiness, then, is not behavior management. It is Spirit-wrought renewal at the deepest level of the heart.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Pentecost and Purified Hearts (Acts 15:8–9)
At the Jerusalem Council, Peter interprets the Gentile conversion through the lens of divine action:
"God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit… cleansing their hearts by faith."

The emphasis again falls on the heart. The Spirit's coming was not only charismatic empowerment for proclamation; it was purification of inner life. God "who knows the heart" acted at the deepest level.

Pentecost, therefore, cannot be reduced to external manifestation. It involved inward cleansing. Classical Pentecostal theology, emerging from Wesleyan-Holiness soil, insisted that Spirit baptism empowers obedience and purifies affection.

Dennis Kinlaw often emphasized that holiness is not simply moral restraint but reordered love. The Spirit reorients the will toward God.

Thus Psalm 51 finds fulfillment in the New Covenant: the God who once recreated David's heart now pours out His Spirit to cleanse and indwell permanently. The fire that

empowers is the same fire that purifies.

Holiness is not self-generated discipline. It is divine re-creation sustained by the abiding Spirit.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Augustine of Hippo, after his dramatic conversion, understood that sin's root lay not merely in action but in disordered love. In *Confessions*, he describes how his heart was "curved inward" until divine grace reordered his affections. For Augustine, holiness was not external compliance but interior transformation — a heart healed by grace. Renewal began within.

Reformers, like John Calvin stressed that regeneration is the Spirit's work of renewing the whole person. In his *Institutes* (III.3), he argued that repentance is not momentary remorse but a lifelong "mortification and vivification" — dying to sin and rising in new obedience. Reform was not structural alone; it was inward renewal by the Spirit.

The Puritans pressed this even further. Richard Baxter, in *The Reformed Pastor*, insisted that ministers examine their own hearts before attempting to reform others. He warned that public ministry without private holiness weakens spiritual authority. Likewise, Jonathan Edwards emphasized "religious affections," arguing that true revival manifests in transformed desires, not emotional excess.

Charles H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, testified that before organizational expansion, there must be sanctification. His own experience of sanctification profoundly shaped his leadership, grounding Pentecostal fervor in holiness theology.

Oswald Chambers later wrote that the Spirit's work is not merely to empower service but to produce Christlikeness at the deepest level of character. "The great need," he observed, "is not to do things, but to believe things." Interior alignment precedes outward impact.

Across centuries whether Patristic (Church fathers), Medieval, Reformation, Puritan, Methodist, Holiness, or Pentecostal the pattern is consistent: revival that endures is rooted in inward transformation. Holiness precedes durability.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ask God to reveal inward attitudes, not just outward sins.
2. Confess specific heart motives.

3. Pray daily Psalm 51:10.
4. Fast from influences that feed inner impurity.
5. Seek Spirit-filled renewal, not mere willpower reform.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Merciful Father, my problem is deeper than behavior. My heart has been divided. Pride, envy, lust, and self-will have lingered beneath the surface. Create in me a clean heart. I cannot purify myself. I depend entirely upon the sanctifying work of Your Spirit. Restore joy. Restore purity. Restore steadfastness. Let this fast strip away pretense and expose hidden compromise. Make me inwardly holy that my outward life may reflect You. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Ezekiel 36:25–27 — A new heart and new spirit.
- Hebrews 10:22 — Hearts sprinkled clean.
- Matthew 5:8 — Pure in heart.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 — Entire sanctification prayer.
- Acts 2 — Spirit outpouring and transformation.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 2, 2026
Lesson 13: The Altar of Consecration — Entire Surrender

MAIN TEXT: ROMANS 6:12–14 (NASB2020)
"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Romans 6 comes after Paul has unfolded the glory of justification by faith. Having declared that believers are saved by grace and not by works, he anticipates a dangerous misunderstanding: if grace abounds where sin increases, should we continue in sin? Paul's response is forceful. Union with Christ changes everything.

He argues that those baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. We were buried with Him and raised to walk in newness of life. Holiness, therefore, does not begin with behavior modification; it begins with identity transformation. We are not striving to become something we are not. We are learning to live in what we already are in Christ.

Then Paul commands: "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body." The verb **"basileuetō"** carries the imagery of kingship. Sin desires to sit on the throne. It seeks authority, influence, dominion. Paul does not deny that sin remains a presence in the believer's experience. He denies that it retains the right to rule. The reign has changed because the King has changed.

The Christian life is not about the absence of battle; it is about the transfer of authority.

Immediately Paul follows with another command: "Present yourselves to God." The verb **"paristēmi'** carries sacrificial language. It evokes the image of an offering placed upon the altar. This is not passive resignation. It is decisive surrender. It is the conscious yielding of the will — the placing of the self at God's disposal.

Notice the order: dethrone sin, then enthrone God.

Wesleyan-Holiness theology has historically emphasized this decisive act of consecration. It is not sinless perfection in performance, but a settled surrender of the will. Francis Asbury often warned that the greatest enemy of holiness was not ignorance

but self-will. As long as self occupies the throne, sin finds foothold. The altar must be repaired before fire falls.

Pentecostal-Holiness theology deepens this by insisting that surrender alone is insufficient without empowerment. Consecration prepares the altar; the Spirit sends the fire. The Spirit enables what consecration commits. Holiness is not repression of desire; it is liberation from sin's dominion and redirection of desire toward God.

Fasting fits naturally here. It disciplines the body and weakens habitual impulses so that the Spirit's rule becomes clearer than fleshly impulse. When the appetite is restrained, the heart is reminded: I no longer belong to sin's reign. I belong to Christ.

Entire surrender is not dramatic language; it is daily enthronement. Each day we decide who will reign. And Paul makes it plain: because we are alive from the dead, we now present ourselves as instruments of righteousness. Thus, the altar of consecration is not about loss. It is about rightful rule.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

John Wesley spoke of what later came to be called "the second blessing" not as spiritual elitism, but as deeper surrender and fuller love. In his sermon *The Circumcision of the Heart*, he described holiness as the heart cleansed from pride, self-will, and anger, and filled entirely with the love of God and neighbor. For Wesley, entire sanctification was not a mystical escape from humanity; it was the restoration of rightly ordered love. He insisted that believers must yield every affection, every ambition, and every hidden motive to Christ's lordship. Consecration was not theatrical rather, it was thorough.

Early Pentecostal believers inherited this altar theology. At Azusa Street (1906–1909), William Seymour did not rush people into displays of power. Eyewitness accounts consistently describe prolonged seasons of repentance, confession, and humble prayer. Seymour often refused to lay hands on seekers until he discerned humility and surrender. He believed that Spirit baptism must rest upon cleansed vessels. Power without purity would not sustain revival. The altar had to be repaired before the fire could fall.

Mary Lena Lewis Tate embodied this same conviction within the House of God movement. She did not merely preach consecration; she structured ministry around it. Before major gatherings, she would call seasons of prayer, fasting, and heart-searching. Testimonies from early members describe extended altar services where believers confessed sin, reconciled with one another, and surrendered personal ambitions before seeking public ministry roles. Tate insisted that spiritual authority did not come from

position, personality, or even charisma — it flowed from yielded lives.

When she established congregations across state lines, often facing racial hostility and limited resources, her resilience was not rooted in institutional power but in disciplined consecration. She fasted regularly and required leaders to do the same, not as ritual austerity, but as alignment with God's will. Her ministry authority endured because it was anchored in altar life. She believed that the Spirit's fire would not rest long where self-remained enthroned.

Across Methodist revivalism, early Pentecostalism, and Holiness movements alike, the pattern is consistent: surrender precedes sustained empowerment. Holiness fire falls where altar surrender exists. Not momentary emotion, but deliberate yielding. Not public display, but private enthronement of Christ.

The Church's history confirms Paul's teaching in Romans 6: the throne must change occupants. Where self descends from the throne and Christ reigns fully, the Spirit empowers obedience, endurance, and lasting fruit.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Verbally surrender every area of life to God.
2. Identify one persistent area where sin has reigned.
3. Fast in that area specifically.
4. Pray for Spirit empowerment to break dominion.
5. Reaffirm union with Christ daily.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord God, I confess that I have allowed sin to reign in subtle ways in thought, reaction, pride, and appetite. I present myself fully to You. Every ambition. Every desire. Every hidden place. I cannot dethrone sin in my own strength. I depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to rule in me. Repair my altar. Send holy fire. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Romans 8:1–13 — Life in the Spirit.
- Galatians 5:16–25 — Flesh vs. Spirit.
- 1 Kings 18 — Fire after altar repair.
- 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 — Living for Christ.
- Hebrews 13:15 — Sacrifice of praise.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 3, 2026
Lesson 14: Clothed with Power — The Spirit's Fire for Holy Obedience

MAIN TEXT: LUKE 24:49 (NASB2020)
"And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Luke 24 closes with resurrection glory. The tomb is empty. The Scriptures are opened. The disciples understand that the Christ must suffer and rise again. Yet Jesus commands them to wait. The mission is clear. The message is certain. The resurrection is accomplished. But, power is required. Jesus said, "Stay… until you are clothed with power."

The Greek term **"endysēsthe"** means to *be clothed, enveloped, covered.* This is not internal improvement alone. It is divine enablement. Jesus does not assume that proximity to Him is sufficient. They must receive the promise of the Father, who is the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 clarifies the purpose: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses…" Witness here is not only verbal proclamation. It is embodied testimony. The Spirit empowers obedience that reflects Christ's life.

In Wesleyan-Pentecostal theology, Spirit baptism is not conversion alone. It is an experiential enduement for bold, holy living.

J. Rodman Williams writes:
"The gift of the Spirit is empowerment for living and doing the will of God." (J. Rodman Williams, Renewal Theology, Vol. 2)

Fasting creates hunger. Prayer invites filling. The Spirit empowers obedience.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Peter Before and After Pentecost (Luke 22; Acts 2–4)
Before Pentecost, Peter denies Christ three times. Fear governs him. After Pentecost, Peter stands before thousands and declares Christ boldly. Later, in Acts 4, he stands before the same Sanhedrin that condemned Jesus — and does not waver.

The difference is not education. It is empowerment. The Spirit did not merely give Peter

words. He gave Peter courage. Obedience requires power.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Church has repeatedly testified that divine power must produce holy obedience, not spiritual spectacle.

At Azusa Street (1906), William Seymour insisted that Spirit baptism was not a badge of superiority but a call to humility. Eyewitness accounts record that seekers were often directed first to repentance, reconciliation, and moral examination before emphasis was placed on spiritual manifestations. Seymour taught that power divorced from purity would grieve the Spirit. The goal was not ecstatic display, but Christlike living under the Spirit's rule.

Charles Harrison Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, articulated Spirit baptism as empowerment for sanctified living. After his own Pentecostal experience in 1907, Mason did not reduce the baptism of the Holy Spirit to tongues alone. He preached that the evidence of Spirit fullness must include moral transformation, courage in suffering, and disciplined obedience. During periods of intense racial hostility and institutional opposition, Mason called ministers not to retreat but to stand firm in holy boldness. For him, power was proven in perseverance.

But this principle long predates Pentecostalism.

Richard Baxter, the Puritan pastor of Kidderminster, spoke of the necessity of "vital godliness," a life animated by the Spirit rather than mere external conformity. In *The Reformed Pastor*, Baxter warned ministers that giftedness without spiritual vitality would corrupt both preacher and people. Though writing in a different theological context, his concern was similar: divine work requires divine life within.

Charles H. Spurgeon likewise preached that the Spirit's power must produce holy character. In sermons on the Holy Spirit, Spurgeon declared that no man is truly Spirit-filled whose life does not increasingly reflect Christ's humility and obedience. He cautioned against confusing emotional fervor with spiritual power. True fire, he insisted, refines as well as ignites.

Thomas Oden, reflecting on classical Christian consensus, emphasized that the Spirit's work has always been understood within the Church as sanctifying and empowering for faithful witness. The Spirit does not merely inspire proclamation; He conforms believers to Christ so that their lives become credible testimony.

Across Puritan, Methodist, and Pentecostal streams, the thread remains consistent: divine empowerment is given for obedient endurance. Power is not spectacle. It is steadfastness under pressure. It is courage before opposition. It is holiness embodied in public life. Spirit baptism, rightly understood, clothes believers not merely with fervor, but with fortitude.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ask God for fresh filling of the Spirit.
2. Fast specifically for bold obedience.
3. Identify one area where fear hinders faithfulness.
4. Pray in the Spirit for courage.
5. Step into obedience immediately when prompted.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Father of Promise, I confess that I have attempted obedience in my own strength. I have relied on resolve rather than power. Clothe me with power from on high. Fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit. Burn away fear. Burn away compromise. Burn away hesitation. I depend upon Your Spirit not only to speak, but to live boldly and purely. Empower me for obedience. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Acts 1:4–8 — Promise of power.
- Acts 2:1–18 — Pentecost outpouring.
- Acts 4:29–31 — Boldness through filling.
- Ephesians 5:18 — Be filled with the Spirit.
- 2 Timothy 1:7 — Spirit of power, love, and discipline.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 4, 2026
Lesson 15: Walking in the Spirit — Victory Over the Flesh

MAIN TEXT: GALATIANS 5:16–25 (NASB2020)
"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
In Galatians 5, Paul draws a stark contrast between two governing principles of life: flesh (*sarx*) and Spirit (*pneuma*). The flesh is not merely the physical body, nor is it simply sensual indulgence. It is fallen human nature oriented away from God — self-directed, self-protective, self-exalting. The flesh resists surrender and seeks autonomy.

Against this, Paul commands: "Walk by the Spirit." The Greek verb **"peripateite"** implies *continual action; an ongoing way of life,* not a momentary experience. To walk is to order one's steps, to live in habitual dependence. Holiness, therefore, is not a single dramatic moment alone; it is a sustained direction.

Paul does not merely command rather he promises: "You will not carry out the desire of the flesh." The Greek construction carries strong negation. He does not say you will struggle slightly less. He says walking in the Spirit prevents the fulfillment of fleshly desire. The emphasis is not on suppressing impulses through sheer willpower, but on cultivating a stronger governing presence.

The flesh and the Spirit are in opposition, Paul says. There is tension. There is conflict. But the Spirit is not passive in this battle. The Spirit leads. The Spirit empowers. The Spirit reorders desire itself.

This is critical for Pentecostal-Holiness theology. Spirit baptism is not merely empowerment for outward ministry; it is empowerment for inward victory. The Spirit does not only give gifts, for He also produces fruit. Paul deliberately speaks of "the fruit of the Spirit" in the singular. It is one unified character formed by divine life within: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. This is not manufactured virtue. It is cultivated by abiding.

Frank D. Macchia rightly observes that the Spirit is given for "the transformation of life into Christ's likeness." Manifestations without moral transformation contradict the text. Fire that does not produce fruit is incomplete.

John Wesley held together two realities: gradual growth and decisive surrender.

Sanctification involves both daily walking and deliberate yielding. The Spirit works not apart from our cooperation, but through it. We crucify the flesh with its passions and desires, yet it is the Spirit who empowers that crucifixion.

Fasting becomes a practical partner in this process. It weakens the volume of fleshly impulses and exposes their persistence. But fasting alone does not sanctify. Spirit filling strengthens holy affections so that obedience becomes not merely restraint, but desire redirected.

Victory in Galatians 5 is not self-generated discipline. It is Spirit-empowered cooperation. We walk and the Spirit enables the walk. We yield and the Spirit produces the fruit. Holiness, then, is not grim suppression. It is a life governed by a stronger Presence.

Holiness, then, is not achieved by suppressing desire through sheer discipline; it is achieved by cultivating stronger Spirit-formed desire.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Stephen (Acts 6–7)
Stephen is described repeatedly as "full of the Spirit."

When falsely accused and facing death, he reflects Christ:
- He speaks truth boldly.
- He sees heavenly glory.
- He forgives his executioners.

That is Spirit-empowered holiness. Stephen's obedience did not remove suffering. It sustained faithfulness within it.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Throughout the history of the Church, Spirit-empowered victory over the flesh has never been described as perfection in flawlessness, but as freedom from domination.

In the early Methodist revival, John Wesley distinguished between involuntary weakness and willful sin. He taught that sanctification meant deliverance from reigning sin: pride, anger, envy, self-will through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Wesley did not deny struggle; he denied slavery. He insisted that the Spirit's work could so transform the heart that love would become the governing principle rather than self-interest.

Adam Clarke, Wesleyan commentator and theologian, wrote in his exposition of

Galatians that walking in the Spirit implies constant dependence upon divine grace for both strength and direction. Clarke emphasized that the Spirit does not merely restrain outward misconduct but purifies inward motive. For him, sanctification was not behavior modification, but heart renewal empowered by grace.

Richard Baxter, though from a Puritan stream, echoed similar concerns. In *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, he warned that uncrucified affections would sabotage perseverance. He urged believers to cultivate Spirit-governed desire rather than merely restraining sinful impulses. Baxter understood that inward appetite must be reordered if outward obedience is to endure.

Charles H. Spurgeon likewise preached that the Spirit produces real transformation, not merely religious enthusiasm. In his sermons on sanctification, Spurgeon warned against confusing emotional fervor with moral renewal. He insisted that the Spirit's presence must produce Christlike humility, patience, and self-control. A man may shout (loudly) in worship, Spurgeon noted, yet still be ruled by pride and that would betray a lack of Spirit-formed fruit.

Within the early Pentecostal movement, testimonies frequently centered not merely on speaking in tongues, but on deliverance from drunkenness, violence, bitterness, and sexual immorality. Charles H. Mason testified that the evidence of Spirit baptism must include a sanctified life. William Seymour cautioned that manifestations without humility revealed spiritual immaturity.

The consistent witness across traditions is clear: Spirit baptism must produce fruit, not merely manifestations. The Spirit does not merely electrify; He sanctifies. He does not only empower proclamation; He transforms disposition.

Where the Spirit truly governs, the flesh no longer reigns.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE
"Holy Spirit, I confess that I have walked according to fleshly impulse; impatience, pride, anger, lust, self-will. I cannot conquer the flesh through discipline alone. I depend upon Your indwelling power. Lead me. Restrain me. Produce fruit in me. Let fasting weaken fleshly appetites while Your presence strengthens holy desires. Empower me to walk in victory. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY
- Romans 8:1–14 — Life in the Spirit.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

- 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 — Discipline of the body.
- Acts 6–7 — Stephen's Spirit-filled courage.
- Colossians 3:1–17 — Put off and put on.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8 — Sanctification and purity.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 5, 2026
Lesson 16: When Heaven Responds — Fasting That Moves History

MAIN TEXT: 2 CHRONICLES 7:14 (NASB2020)
"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Second Chronicles 7:14 is often quoted, but its setting is essential. Solomon has just completed the Temple. Fire has fallen from heaven. The glory of the Lord has filled the house so powerfully that the priests could not stand to minister. The people have witnessed undeniable manifestation.

Yet God speaks beyond the moment of glory. In verses 13–14, He anticipates drought, pestilence, and judgment. He says, "When I shut up the heavens… when I command the locust… when I send pestilence among My people… and My people who are called by My name…"

The implication is sobering: spiritual decline can follow spiritual glory. Revival is not sustained by memory. It is sustained by humility.

God gives a fourfold response:
1. Humble themselves.
2. Pray.
3. Seek My face.
4. Turn from their wicked ways.

The Hebrew verb for **"humble"** (*kana*) implies *bending the knee, bringing oneself low, submitting pride.* Humility is not emotional softness; it is the dethroning of self-reliance.

"Pray" here is not perfunctory recitation. It is covenant appeal.

"Seek My face" goes deeper — it is relational pursuit. To seek God's face is not merely to seek relief from crisis but to long for restored presence.

Finally, **"turn"** (*shuv*) means to *reverse direction*. It is not regret alone; it is repentance embodied in change. Only then comes the promise: "Then I will hear from heaven… forgive… and heal." Heaven's response follows earthly repentance.

Pentecostal-Holiness theology has always insisted that revival requires consecration. Fire without repentance becomes spectacle. Glory without humility becomes presumption. J. Rodman Williams writes:
"Divine visitation is not arbitrary; it is often preceded by intense prayer and surrender." (*Renewal Theology*, Vol. 2)

Fasting participates in this pattern. It humbles the body, disciplines pride, and reminds the soul of its dependence. Prayer lifts the heart. The Spirit empowers the turning. Revival is not engineered; it is invited through humility.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Jehoshaphat's National Fast (2 Chronicles 20)
When Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir advance against Judah, the threat is overwhelming. The text says plainly, "Jehoshaphat was afraid." Scripture does not sanitize the moment. The king felt the weight of impending disaster. The enemy coalition was numerically superior. The situation was politically unstable. The future was uncertain.

But Jehoshaphat's fear did not drive him to frantic strategy; it drove him to fasting. "He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." This was not a private spiritual exercise. It was a corporate act of humility. The entire nation was summoned to seek the LORD. Cities gathered. Families assembled. Leadership did not posture; it bowed.

Standing in the assembly at the house of the LORD, Jehoshaphat prayed a covenantal prayer. He rehearsed God's past faithfulness. He acknowledged God's sovereignty over the nations. He confessed present weakness. And then he uttered one of the most honest prayers in Scripture:
"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You."

This is fasting in its purest form: confessed inadequacy paired with fixed attention upon God. Notice the sequence: humility precedes revelation. As the people stand before the LORD, the Spirit comes upon Jahaziel. Divine guidance is not manufactured; it descends. The prophetic word is clear:
"The battle is not yours but God's."

But the Spirit's word does not remove obedience. It directs it. They are instructed where to stand, how to position themselves, and what posture to maintain. What must they do before victory manifests? They worship. Before the enemy is defeated, before swords clash, before circumstances visibly change, the people bow with faces to the ground and praise the LORD. Faith expresses itself in worship before evidence appears.

The next morning, singers go before the army declaring, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." Praise precedes breakthrough. As they worship, the LORD sets ambushes against their enemies.

The pattern is unmistakable:
Fear → Fasting → Prayer → Spirit Revelation → Obedient Positioning → Worship → Divine Intervention.

Fasting did not manipulate heaven. It aligned Judah with covenant dependence. Obedience met revelation. Worship sealed trust. Obedience + fasting + Spirit revelation did not merely result in survival. It resulted in victory so complete that Judah gathered spoil for three days.

When God's people humble themselves, seek Him, and position themselves in surrendered faith, heaven responds — not always by removing conflict immediately, but by asserting divine sovereignty within it.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The pattern of humility preceding divine intervention is woven throughout Christian history.

Evan Roberts, a central figure in the Welsh Revival (1904–1905), repeatedly emphasized confession and surrender before expecting national awakening. The revival did not begin with mass meetings but with small gatherings marked by repentance, reconciliation, and yielded lives. Roberts taught that the Spirit would not move where pride remained unbroken. Before coal mines were emptied of profanity and taverns closed, hearts were bent low in prayer.

William and Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army, fasted and prayed in the midst of urban poverty before launching evangelistic campaigns in London's East End. Their work among the poor was not fueled by social strategy alone, but by deep conviction that spiritual renewal and moral reform required humble dependence upon God. The Army's early discipline included seasons of consecration before public mission.

Francis Asbury, itinerant Methodist bishop in early America, practiced rigorous personal discipline, including fasting, as he traversed thousands of miles on horseback. Facing frontier hostility, exhaustion, and institutional fragility, Asbury relied not on

organizational strength but on sustained prayer and humility. His leadership style reflected a deep belief that spiritual vitality must precede ecclesial expansion.

The Puritans likewise tied national blessing to repentance and corporate fasting. Public fast days were proclaimed during times of crisis, not as political theater, but as theological confession that the nation stood under divine authority. Reformers such as Martin Luther insisted that true reform began not merely with structural correction but with repentance before God.

Oswald Chambers later warned that spiritual power divorced from surrender becomes presumption. In *My Utmost for His Highest*, he repeatedly pressed believers toward inward yielding before outward activity, reminding them that God's work flows from lives fully submitted.

James Earl Massey, reflecting on revival preaching within the Black church tradition, noted that authentic awakening is born not of manipulation but of brokenness before God. True revival preaching, he argued, summons hearers to repentance and moral transformation, not merely emotional response.

Across revival movements, reform efforts, and missionary expansions, the pattern is unmistakable: humility precedes healing, surrender precedes breakthrough, and fasting prepares hearts for heaven's response.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION
1. Identify areas of personal and corporate pride.
2. Fast with repentance, not demand.
3. Gather with others for prayer.
4. Confess national and communal sins.
5. Expect Spirit-directed response.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE
"Sovereign Lord, We have trusted programs more than prayer, strength more than surrender. Humble us. Bend our pride. Expose hidden sin. We do not know what to do but our eyes are on You. We depend entirely upon Your Spirit to heal, restore, and revive. Let this fast be more than ritual, but let it be turning. Hear from heaven, O God. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY
- 2 Chronicles 20 — Jehoshaphat's fast and victory.
- Jonah 3 — Corporate repentance.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

- Nehemiah 1 — Fasting for national restoration.
- Acts 2 — Spirit outpouring after united prayer.
- Psalm 85 — Revival prayer.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 6, 2026
Lesson 17: Deliverance Through Fasting — Authority in the Spirit

MAIN TEXT MARK 9:28–29 (NASB2020)
"28 When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."
(Note: Some manuscripts include "and fasting." While textual variants exist, the Church historically connected this passage with fasting and prayer.)

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
In Mark 9, the disciples descend from the Mount of Transfiguration into immediate confrontation with demonic resistance. The glory of the mountain quickly gives way to the brokenness of the world below. A crowd surrounds the remaining disciples, and among them is a desperate father whose son has long been tormented by a destructive spirit. The boy experiences violent seizures, and the father testifies that the spirit repeatedly attempts to destroy him by throwing him into fire and water (Mark 9:22). This is not merely illness but malignant spiritual oppression.

Some manuscripts add "and fasting," and the Church historically paired them because the principle is clear; certain confrontations expose shallow communion. Intensified opposition reveals insufficient dependence

The father explains that he had brought his son to the disciples, **"and they could not cure him"** (Mark 9:18). The moment is striking because earlier in Mark 6:7 Jesus had already granted the disciples authority over unclean spirits and had sent them out to exercise that authority. They had previously cast out demons successfully. Authority had been granted, and experience had confirmed it. Yet here they encounter a form of resistance that exposes their limitations.

Jesus rebukes the unbelief surrounding the situation and then commands the spirit to leave the boy. The demon convulses the child violently before departing, demonstrating the intensity of the spiritual conflict. Deliverance occurs not through prolonged ritual but through the authoritative command of Christ.

Later, in private (Mark 9:28), after Jesus casts out the spirit, the disciples privately ask, "Why could we not drive it out?" The question is not defensive; it is searching. Jesus' reply is simple yet penetrating: "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer." Some manuscripts add "and fasting," and the Church historically paired them because the

principle is clear; certain confrontations expose shallow communion. Intensified opposition reveals insufficient dependence.

Notice what Jesus does not say. He does not suggest a revised technique, louder command, or improved formula. He directs them toward deeper prayer. Authority in the Kingdom is relational, not mechanical. It flows from abiding in God, not from prior success.

The issue was not a lack of delegated authority but a deficiency in sustained reliance upon God. Jesus does not introduce a new formula for exorcism. Instead, He points His disciples back to the foundation of spiritual authority — abiding communion with the Father.

Authority in the Kingdom is therefore not mechanical but relational. It does not operate automatically through position, prior experience, or outward gifting. It flows from lives continually aligned with God through prayer.

Pentecostal–Holiness theology has long affirmed the reality of spiritual warfare while also insisting that **consecration and authority are inseparable**. Frank Macchia observes:
"Spirit empowerment does not replace dependence; it intensifies it."
— *Frank D. Macchia, Baptized in the Spirit* (2006)

The greater the authority entrusted to a believer, the deeper the dependence must become. Fasting sharpens that dependence by deliberately weakening the dominance of physical appetite and reorienting the believer toward God. It heightens spiritual attentiveness and exposes subtle forms of self-reliance.

Deliverance ministry is therefore not spectacle, emotional intensity, or spiritual bravado. It is **obedience exercised under the authority of the Spirit through lives that remain surrendered to God**. When communion deepens, authority stabilizes.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Esther's Three-Day Fast (Esther 4)
Facing the possible annihilation of the Jewish people under Haman's decree, Esther recognizes that the crisis cannot be resolved through political influence alone. Before she approaches the Persian king, she calls for corporate fasting:

"Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women also will fast in the same way. And so I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."
— Esther 4:16

The fast precedes the act of courage. Esther does not rush into action relying upon royal position or personal persuasion. Instead, she calls the entire community into a period of consecration before God. Deliverance would come through divine intervention, but that intervention would be sought through fasting and prayer.

The effectiveness of the fast in Esther chapter 4 reveals two movements: a call and a response. The Lord placed the burden of fasting upon Esther's heart, and she communicated that burden to the people of God. The community joined together in unified dependence upon God before decisive action was taken.

Believers must learn both dimensions of fasting. At times the Spirit prompts individuals to fast privately as an act of personal consecration. At other times the people of God are summoned to fast together for matters that affect the whole community.

When a corporate call to fasting is given, the question is not whether it aligns with our personal plans or schedules. A corporate fast represents alignment with the purposes of God for His people.

The Book of Esther demonstrates that deliverance often emerges from moments when God's people humble themselves together in dependence upon Him before acting with courage and obedience.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Early Pentecostal missionaries testified that extended fasting often preceded deliverance encounters on foreign fields. They understood that spiritual confrontation in unfamiliar territories required sustained prayer, not impulsive zeal.

Smith Wigglesworth, though bold in faith, disciplined himself in seasons of prayer and abstinence before confronting demonic oppression. He believed that holiness strengthened authority and that private consecration preceded public breakthrough.

Within Holiness revivals, fasting commonly preceded evangelistic campaigns. Leaders and congregations would humble themselves before entering cities or conducting tent meetings. Their testimony was consistent: fasting quieted presumption, deepened

reliance, and prepared vessels for the Spirit's power. The fruit was not theatrics but transformed lives whereas addicts were delivered, the sick healed, sinners converted.

Deliverance in Christian history has never been sustained by charisma alone. It has been rooted in surrendered lives shaped by prayer.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Identify spiritual strongholds requiring focused prayer.
2. Fast before engaging difficult spiritual situations.
3. Pray for deeper intimacy with Christ.
4. Seek Spirit empowerment rather than emotional intensity.
5. Maintain humility after breakthrough.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord Jesus Christ, forgive me for seeking to exercise spiritual authority without maintaining deep spiritual dependence upon You. Guard my heart from relying upon past experience, outward gifting, or human strength instead of abiding communion with You. Draw me again into the discipline of prayer. Purify my heart through fasting. Expose every trace of self-reliance within me and teach me to trust fully in the power of Your Spirit. Strengthen my life in holiness so that I may stand firm against the works of darkness and serve faithfully in Your Kingdom. Remind me always that authority belongs to You alone, and that every victory over evil comes through Your name and Your power. I surrender myself again to Your rule and rely entirely upon Your grace. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Ephesians 6:10–18 — Armor of God.
- Acts 16:16–18 — Deliverance through authority.
- Daniel 10 — Spiritual resistance and perseverance.
- Luke 4:1–13 — Jesus confronts the enemy after fasting.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 — Weapons of warfare.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 7, 2026
Lesson 18: Light in the Fast — Clarity, Direction, and the Voice of God

MAIN TEXT: EZRA 8:21–23 (NASB2020)
"Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him." 23 So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Ezra stands at a decisive and vulnerable moment in the history of God's people. The Babylonian exile has begun to reverse. A remnant is returning to Jerusalem. The temple has been rebuilt, yet the spiritual condition of the people remains fragile. Restoration has begun, but the work of renewal is unfinished.

The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem spans nearly nine hundred miles across territory filled with bandits, political uncertainty, and harsh terrain. Ezra is not traveling alone. Families, children, priests, temple servants, and significant wealth intended for the service of the temple accompany him. The risk is enormous.

Ezra therefore gathers the people at the river Ahava and proclaims a fast.

The purpose of the fast is not ritual observance but spiritual orientation. Ezra identifies the intention plainly: "that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey."

Humility precedes guidance. Scripture consistently teaches that divine direction is granted not to the proud but to the humble. James later affirms the same principle:

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

Ezra's situation carries an additional layer of moral weight. He explains in verse 22 that he felt ashamed to request a military escort from the Persian king because he had already testified publicly that the hand of God protects those who seek Him. Ezra had proclaimed the truth of God's providence before the king. To now rely upon imperial protection would appear to contradict the confession he had already made.

His public testimony therefore binds his private conduct. Integrity requires dependence upon God.

Instead of requesting soldiers, Ezra calls the people to fasting and prayer.

Notice the order Ezra establishes:
1. Humility before God
2. Seeking God's direction
3. Entrusting the journey to Him

The Hebrew verb translated **"seek"** is *baqash,* which implies *intentional and diligent pursuit*. This is not passive religiosity. Ezra is not hoping vaguely for divine favor. He is actively pursuing God's direction regarding a specific and dangerous undertaking.

The text records the outcome with striking simplicity:

"So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty." (Ezra 8:23)

The narrative does not describe thunder from heaven or dramatic visions. Instead, it records the quiet confidence of answered prayer. The people sought God, and God heard them.

This is a crucial theological distinction. Fasting does not produce God's faithfulness. God is already faithful. Rather, fasting aligns the people of God with His will, quieting human anxiety and focusing the heart upon divine guidance.

Throughout Scripture, fasting often accompanies moments requiring clarity and decisive obedience. The discipline removes distraction and heightens attentiveness to God's voice.

FASTING AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT
Within Pentecostal–Holiness theology, the ministry of the Holy Spirit includes not only empowerment for witness but also illumination for discernment.

Jesus promised His disciples:
"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

The Spirit's guidance does not operate independently of Scripture. Instead, the Spirit illuminates the Word and directs believers within the boundaries of covenant obedience. As Craig Keener observes in his work on the Spirit's ministry, the Spirit's guidance in the New Testament consistently occurs within a framework of prayer, obedience, and submission to God's revealed will.

Fasting therefore serves a practical spiritual purpose. It reduces the noise of bodily appetite, worldly distraction, and internal anxiety. Prayer then fills the space created by that restraint. In that quietness, the believer becomes more attentive to the voice of God through Scripture and the prompting of the Spirit.

Guidance is therefore neither mystical speculation nor emotional impulse. It is the Spirit's illumination operating within a life that has been humbled before God.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Paul's Fast in Acts 27
Acts 27 presents another moment where fasting intersects with divine clarity.

The apostle Paul is being transported by ship as a prisoner to Rome. The vessel encounters a violent storm that lasts many days. Luke records the severity of the crisis:

"Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned." (Acts 27:20)

During this prolonged ordeal the passengers had gone without food for many days. Their fasting is partly circumstantial, produced by fear, exhaustion, and the chaos of the storm. Yet within that moment of deprivation, God speaks.

Paul rises and declares:

"For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'" (Acts 27:23–24)

The storm does not immediately cease. The ship will still be lost. Yet clarity arrives in the midst of chaos. Paul receives divine assurance regarding the outcome of the journey and encourages the frightened sailors.

This narrative illustrates an important spiritual principle. Fasting does not remove every storm from life. Instead, it positions the believer to hear the voice of God while the storm

is still raging.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Throughout Christian history, believers have turned to fasting when facing moments requiring discernment.

John Wesley regularly practiced fasting, particularly when confronting difficult decisions in ministry. Before expanding the Methodist movement through outdoor preaching, a radical departure from established Anglican practice, Wesley sought God through prayer and fasting. His eventual decision to preach in open fields became one of the catalytic moments of the eighteenth-century evangelical revival.

Early Pentecostal missionaries also viewed fasting as a means of seeking divine direction before entering foreign fields. The pioneers of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement believed that spiritual guidance required consecration as well as courage. Prayer and fasting preceded many of the missionary journeys that carried the message of Spirit-filled Christianity around the world.

Mary Lena Tate, founder of the House of God (Pillar and Ground of the Truth), likewise emphasized disciplined prayer and fasting in the leadership of the church. Decisions regarding doctrine, moral discipline, and missionary expansion were often preceded by seasons of fasting. Her example reflects a consistent conviction within the Holiness tradition: spiritual authority must remain rooted in spiritual consecration.

Holiness and guidance cannot be separated. Where the heart is purified and humbled before God, clarity often follows.

Fasting, therefore, becomes a lamp along the path of obedience. In humbling the body and focusing the heart upon God, believers position themselves to hear the Spirit's voice with greater clarity.

The lesson of Ezra remains enduring: when the people of God humble themselves, seek Him diligently, and entrust their journey to His care, the Lord hears their prayer and directs their steps.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Identify a major decision needing clarity.
2. Fast specifically for discernment.
3. Pray Scripture aloud during the fast.

4. Wait before acting impulsively.
5. Test impressions against the Word and counsel.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Faithful God, Too often I have acted without seeking You. I have trusted instinct over illumination. Humble me. Quiet my heart. I depend upon Your Spirit to guide my steps, correct my assumptions, and steady my path. Let this fast sharpen discernment. Let my ears be attentive. Lead me in truth. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Proverbs 3:5–6 — Trusting the Lord for direction.
- Psalm 25 — Teach me Your paths.
- Acts 16:6–10 — Spirit-directed mission redirection.
- James 1:5 — Ask God for wisdom.
- Isaiah 30:21 — "This is the way, walk in it."

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

MARCH 8, 2026
Lesson 19: Breaking the Yoke — Fasting That Releases Freedom

MAIN TEXT: ISAIAH 58:6 (NASB2020)
"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Isaiah 58 is not gentle instruction; it is prophetic confrontation. The people are fasting. They are humbling themselves outwardly. Yet God exposes the contradiction: they fast while exploiting laborers, quarreling, and perpetuating injustice. Religious abstinence without relational righteousness is hypocrisy.

So, God redefines the fast He chooses.

"To loosen the bonds of wickedness…" The Hebrew word "**patach"** means to *open what has been tightly bound*. It suggests deliberate action; untying, releasing, undoing what sin has fastened. The **"yoke"** (*motah*) evokes the image of an ox under heavy wooden restraint that is burdened, directed, constrained. It symbolizes systems and patterns that enslave.

True fasting, then, is not self-centered asceticism. It is participation in God's liberating work. It aligns the fasting believer with the heart of God, who hears the cry of the oppressed and breaks chains.

Isaiah makes it clear that fasting cannot remain private while injustice remains public. Holiness in the Pentecostal-Holiness tradition has never been merely inward purification detached from outward righteousness. Entire sanctification produces ethical fruit. When the heart is cleansed, the hands must follow.

Isaiah 58 links fasting explicitly to justice, generosity, compassion, and covenant faithfulness. Sharing bread with the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked. These are not optional social concerns; they are covenant responses.

Then comes the promise in verse 8:
"Then your light will break out like the dawn…"

Notice the sequence. Liberation precedes illumination. Alignment precedes breakthrough. When fasting aligns us with God's justice, light follows. Healing follows. Guidance

follows.

The Spirit empowers believers not only to resist personal sin, but to confront oppression courageously. Fasting sharpens moral clarity. It weakens self-preoccupation and strengthens compassion. It turns inward discipline into outward obedience.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Nehemiah's Fast (Nehemiah 1)
When Nehemiah hears that Jerusalem's walls are broken and its gates burned, he does not respond first with strategy. He responds with sorrow. He weeps, fasts, and prays for days before the God of heaven.

His prayer includes confession, not only of the people's sin, but of his own and his father's house. He identifies with the failure. Fasting births burden. It breaks indifference. But Nehemiah does not remain in grief. After fasting and praying, he acts. He requests permission from the king. He risks favor. He organizes labor. He rebuilds walls under threat and opposition.

Fasting moved him from sorrow to obedience. Fasting that does not move toward action remains incomplete. True fasting releases freedom — first in the heart, then in the world.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Throughout the history of the Church, decisive guidance has often been preceded by deliberate fasting.

John Wesley frequently fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, but beyond routine discipline, he intensified prayer and fasting before significant ministry transitions. When faced with the controversial decision to preach in open fields, breaking Anglican convention, Wesley did not act impulsively. His journals reflect seasons of prayerful wrestling before stepping into what would become a defining feature of Methodist revival. For Wesley, innovation was never separated from consecration. Holiness and discernment walked together.

George Müller, known for establishing orphan houses in Bristol without public fundraising, practiced disciplined prayer and fasting when facing financial uncertainty and major decisions. Müller refused to manipulate outcomes through pressure or publicity. Instead, he waited before God until he believed he had clear inward assurance consistent with Scripture. His journals reveal that guidance was not mystical impulse but prayer-tested conviction. He once wrote that he sought to bring his heart into a state

where it had “no will of its own” before making major decisions. Consecration preceded clarity.

Charles Harrison Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, modeled similar dependence. During times of doctrinal tension and organizational uncertainty, Mason called leaders to seasons of prayer and fasting before issuing directives. He believed that authority must be grounded in communion. Mason did not separate Spirit baptism from moral seriousness. He insisted that those who carried spiritual leadership must cultivate humility and prayerfulness lest power outrun purity.

Mary Lena Tate embodied this same altar-guided leadership within the House of God movement. Major decisions, including expansion into new regions and leadership appointments were preceded by prolonged prayer and fasting. Those who served under her testified that she would delay action rather than move without inward clarity. She believed that Spirit illumination preserved both doctrinal integrity and moral stability. For Tate, holiness was not merely personal piety; it was the safeguard of sound leadership.

Thomas Oden, reflecting on classical Christian consensus in *The Living God*, emphasized that discernment has always required submission to Scripture, prayer, and the wisdom of the historic Church. He argued that authentic spiritual guidance is never detached from the “consensual memory” of the Church. In other words, discernment must be anchored in what the Spirit has consistently affirmed throughout history. Illumination does not contradict revelation.

Across Methodist revivalism, Holiness movements, and early Pentecostal awakenings, the pattern remains steady: fasting disciplines impulse, prayer refines motive, and the Spirit clarifies direction. Holiness and guidance are inseparable. Authority grows where surrender deepens.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Identify a significant decision requiring clarity — not merely logistical, but spiritual.
2. Fast specifically for discernment, naming the matter before God rather than fasting vaguely.
3. Pray Scripture aloud during the fast, allowing the Word to shape your thinking and quiet competing voices.
4. Resist urgency. Wait before acting impulsively; clarity often emerges in stillness rather than haste.
5. Test impressions carefully against Scripture, godly counsel, and the fruit of the Spirit. True guidance withstands examination.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 3

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Faithful and Unchanging God, too often I have acted without seeking You. I have trusted instinct over illumination and urgency over obedience. Forgive my haste and self-reliance. Quiet my heart. Subdue my will. Bring my desires into alignment with Yours. I depend entirely upon Your Holy Spirit to guide my steps, correct my assumptions, and steady my path. Guard me from deception, pride, and impatience. Let this fast discipline my impulses and sharpen discernment. Teach me to wait without anxiety and to move only when You lead. Make my decisions reflect Your wisdom and not my impulse. Lead me in truth, and establish my steps in righteousness. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Micah 6:8 — Do justice, love mercy.
- Luke 4:18–19 — Freedom for the oppressed.
- James 2:14–17 — Faith expressed in works.
- Amos 5:21–24 — Justice rolling like waters.
- Matthew 25:31–46 — Serving Christ in the least.
-