LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 8, 2026
Lesson 19: Hungering for the Righteousness of God

MAIN TEXT: Matthew 5:6
"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins His public teaching by describing the character of those who belong to the kingdom of God. These declarations, known as "The Beatitudes," reveal that the blessed life is not defined by power, status, or self-sufficiency but by dependence upon God.

Among these blessings is a striking image: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Hunger and thirst are among the most powerful human instincts. They represent a deep physical need that demands satisfaction. By using this language, Jesus describes righteousness not as a casual preference but as an urgent longing of the soul.

The Greek word translated "**righteousness**" is ***dikaiosyne***, which refers to *right relationship with God expressed through faithful obedience and justice toward others*. In Scripture, righteousness includes both personal holiness and covenant faithfulness in community life. Those who hunger for righteousness desire not only to be reconciled to God, but also to see His will accomplished in the world.

Fasting intensifies this longing. When believers abstain from food, physical hunger becomes a reminder of the deeper spiritual hunger that should characterize life with God. The discipline of fasting trains the heart to seek God as the true source of satisfaction.

Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness "shall be filled." The promise ultimately points to Christ Himself. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus provides the righteousness that sinners cannot produce on their own. At the same time, the Holy Spirit awakens within believers a continual desire to pursue the holiness and justice that reflect God's character.

Thus fasting becomes a practical expression of the longing Jesus describes—a declaration that our deepest need is not merely physical provision but the righteousness of God.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Cornelius Seeking God (Acts 10)
Cornelius, a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea, demonstrates what it means to hunger for righteousness. Though he was not raised within the covenant people of Israel,

the book of Acts describes him as a devout man who feared God, prayed regularly, and gave generously to those in need.

One afternoon, while praying and fasting, Cornelius received a vision in which an angel told him that his prayers and charitable deeds had come before God as a memorial offering. He was instructed to send for the apostle Peter.

At the same time, Peter received a vision preparing him to bring the gospel to Gentiles. When Peter arrived at Cornelius's home, he proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit fell upon everyone who heard the word.

Cornelius's story demonstrates that genuine spiritual hunger leads people toward the revelation of Christ. His prayers and fasting did not save him, but they prepared his heart to receive the gospel when it was proclaimed.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In the early centuries of the Church, **Ignatius of Antioch** demonstrated a profound hunger for righteousness that shaped his entire life. As bishop of Antioch in the early second century, he shepherded believers during a time when Christian faith could lead to imprisonment or death. When he was arrested and taken to Rome to face execution, Ignatius wrote a series of letters encouraging the churches to remain faithful to Christ. Rather than seeking escape from martyrdom, he expressed a deep longing to belong wholly to the Lord, urging believers to pursue holiness and devotion with the same intensity that one pursues food and water.

A similar spiritual hunger marked the life of **George Müller** in the nineteenth century. Müller, a pastor and evangelist in England, became known for his ministry to thousands of orphaned children in Bristol. Müller committed himself to a life of prayer and dependence upon God, refusing to ask others directly for financial support. Instead, he fasted and prayed, trusting that God would provide what was needed for the children in his care. Time after time, food and resources arrived at precisely the moment they were required. Müller's life demonstrated that those who seek the righteousness and provision of God above all else discover that the Lord faithfully sustains them.

In the twentieth century, **Howard Thurman**, pastor, theologian, and spiritual mentor to many leaders of the civil rights movement, spoke often about the deep inner hunger for God that shapes a life of faith. Thurman taught that genuine spiritual longing leads believers to seek justice, reconciliation, and compassion in the world. His prayerful life and pastoral leadership influenced generations of Christians who sought to live out the

righteousness of God in both personal holiness and social transformation.

These lives remind us that the hunger Jesus described in the Beatitudes is not merely a spiritual metaphor. It is a lived reality in which believers seek God above all things and allow that longing to shape their actions, their character, and their witness to the world.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Reflect on what your heart truly longs for most deeply.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to awaken a deeper hunger for righteousness.
3. Practice fasting as a way of directing your desires toward God.
4. Pursue both personal holiness and compassion toward others.
5. Remember that Christ alone ultimately satisfies the soul.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord Jesus Christ, too often my desires have been directed toward temporary things rather than toward Your righteousness. Forgive my misplaced priorities and awaken within me a deeper hunger for Your presence. As I fast and seek You, train my heart to long for what is holy and pleasing to You. Fill me with the righteousness that comes through Your grace and shape my life by the power of Your Spirit. May my deepest satisfaction be found in knowing You. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Psalm 42:1–2
- Isaiah 55:1–3
- John 6:35
- Philippians 3:7–11
- Revelation 22:17

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 9, 2026
Lesson 20: Power Perfected Through Dependence

MAIN TEXT: 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NKJV)
"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
In this passage Paul describes one of the most paradoxical truths of the Christian life: the power of God is often revealed most clearly through human weakness. Earlier in the chapter the apostle recounts extraordinary revelations in which he was caught up to the "third heaven." Such experiences could easily have produced pride, yet Paul explains that God permitted a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble.

The exact nature of this thorn is never specified. Throughout church history interpreters have suggested possibilities ranging from physical illness to persecution or spiritual opposition. What matters most, however, is Paul's response. He pleads with the Lord three times for the affliction to be removed. Instead of granting the request, the Lord answers with a deeper promise: "My grace is sufficient for you."

The word translated **"sufficient"** comes from the Greek word ***arkeo***, which carries the idea of *continual adequacy or ongoing provision*. God's grace is not merely a momentary gift but a sustaining presence that meets believers in every circumstance. Rather than removing the weakness, God promises that His grace will be enough.

The Lord then declares that His strength is "made perfect in weakness." The Greek word **"teleioo"** means to *bring something to its intended completion*. Divine power reaches its fullest expression not when human strength is greatest, but when human self-reliance is surrendered. Weakness becomes the place where the sufficiency of Christ is most clearly displayed.

Fasting embodies this same spiritual principle. By willingly embracing physical weakness through abstaining from food, believers are reminded that life itself is sustained by God. Hunger exposes our dependence. As physical strength diminishes, the heart becomes more attentive to the sustaining grace of the Lord.

Paul therefore concludes with a remarkable declaration: he will boast in his weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon him. The language echoes the imagery of God's presence resting upon the tabernacle in the Old Testament. In the life of the believer, humility becomes the dwelling place of divine strength.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Gideon's Weakness and God's Power (Judges 6–7)
The story of Gideon illustrates how God often works through human weakness rather than human strength. When the angel of the Lord first called Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianites, Gideon protested that he was the least significant member of the weakest clan in Manasseh.

Yet God deliberately reduced Gideon's army from thirty-two thousand soldiers to only three hundred men. The purpose was clear: Israel would not be able to claim victory through military strength. The deliverance would demonstrate the power of God alone.

Armed with trumpets, jars, and torches rather than conventional weapons, Gideon's small force surrounded the Midianite camp at night. When the trumpets sounded and the jars were broken, confusion spread through the enemy camp, and the Midianite army fled.

The victory revealed that the battle belonged to the Lord. Gideon's weakness became the stage upon which God's power was displayed.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The life of **Hudson Taylor**, the nineteenth-century missionary to China, illustrates the principle that God's strength is perfected in weakness. Taylor endured repeated illness, financial uncertainty, and cultural barriers during his missionary work. Rather than relying upon institutional support, he trusted God to provide what was needed for the China Inland Mission. Despite overwhelming challenges, thousands of missionaries eventually joined the work, and countless people heard the gospel because Taylor believed that God's power could accomplish what human strength could not.

Another powerful example appears in the life of **Fanny Crosby**, the beloved hymn writer who lost her eyesight as an infant. Though physically blind, Crosby possessed extraordinary spiritual insight and faith. Over the course of her life she wrote more than eight thousand hymns, including "Blessed Assurance" and "To God Be the Glory." Rather than viewing her blindness as a limitation, Crosby believed it allowed her to depend more fully upon God. Her weakness became the channel through which songs of faith strengthened believers around the world.

In the twentieth century, **Joni Eareckson Tada** became a testimony to God's sustaining grace after a diving accident left her paralyzed at the age of seventeen. Through decades of ministry, writing, and advocacy for people with disabilities, she has consistently testified that God's grace meets believers even in the most profound suffering. Her life

reminds the church that divine strength often shines brightest through human frailty.

These stories demonstrate the truth Paul proclaimed: when believers depend upon the grace of Christ rather than their own strength, the power of God becomes visible in remarkable ways.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Reflect on areas of weakness where you feel inadequate or discouraged.
2. Bring those struggles honestly before God in prayer.
3. Practice fasting as a reminder that your strength ultimately comes from the Lord.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to transform weakness into an opportunity for God's power to be displayed.
5. Cultivate humility, remembering that the grace of Christ is sufficient for every circumstance.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord Jesus Christ, I confess that I often resist weakness and try to rely on my own strength. Forgive my pride and teach me to depend fully upon Your grace. As I fast and seek Your presence, remind me that Your power is perfected in weakness. Let my life become a testimony to the sufficiency of Your grace so that others may see Your strength at work through me. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Judges 7:1–22
- Isaiah 40:29–31
- Philippians 4:11–13
- Hebrews 4:14–16
- 1 Peter 5:6–10

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 10, 2026
Lesson 21: Set Apart by the Spirit

MAIN TEXT: Acts 13:2–3
"2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Acts 13 marks a decisive turning point in the life of the early church. Until this moment, the gospel had spread primarily through the regions surrounding Jerusalem and Antioch. Now the Holy Spirit initiates a deliberate missionary movement that will carry the message of Christ throughout the Roman world.

The church in Antioch is described as "ministering to the Lord and fasting." The word translated **"ministering"** comes from the Greek word ***leitourgeo***, which refers to *sacred service offered to God*. This gathering was not primarily a planning meeting or strategy session. The believers were focused on worship, prayer, and consecration before the Lord.

It is within this atmosphere of devotion that the Holy Spirit speaks: "Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul." The verb translated **"separate"** comes from the Greek word ***aphorizo***, meaning to *set apart or appoint for a specific purpose*. The calling of these missionaries was therefore not simply the result of human initiative. It was the direct direction of the Holy Spirit.

The passage also reveals an important rhythm of spiritual discernment. The church fasted before hearing the Spirit's command, and they fasted again before sending Barnabas and Saul into their assignment. Fasting created a posture of attentiveness to God. It quieted competing voices so that the direction of the Spirit could be clearly heard.

This moment reminds the church that the Holy Spirit is not merely the source of personal spiritual experience but the One who directs the mission of God's people. The same Spirit who fills believers with power also sends them into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fasting therefore becomes more than a personal discipline. It becomes a way the church positions itself to hear God's voice and respond in obedient mission.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Jesus Preparing for Ministry (Luke 4:1–14)
Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness. During this time, He faced temptation from Satan and endured physical weakness from prolonged hunger. Yet the wilderness became the place where His mission was clarified and His obedience was strengthened.

When the temptations ended, Luke records that Jesus returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit." The period of fasting and testing prepared Him for the work that lay ahead. The pattern is striking. Before preaching, healing, and teaching throughout Israel, Jesus first withdrew to seek the Father. His mission flowed from communion with God.

In the same way, the church in Antioch fasted and worshiped before sending missionaries. Both moments reveal that God's work is most clearly discerned when His people first seek His presence.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The life of **William Carey**, often called the "Father of modern Protestant missions," demonstrates how God calls ordinary believers to extraordinary service. Carey was a humble English shoemaker who developed a deep burden for the nations after studying Scripture. Despite criticism and limited resources, he eventually traveled to India in 1793 to preach the gospel. Carey endured hardship, illness, and years of slow progress, yet he remained convinced that God had called him to the work. Through his perseverance, Bible translations, schools, and churches were established across India.

Another example appears in the ministry of **Amy Carmichael**, an Irish missionary who served in India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Carmichael dedicated her life to rescuing children from exploitation in temple prostitution. Her ministry began with years of prayer and spiritual preparation. Through courage and compassion, she established a community that protected and raised hundreds of vulnerable children. Carmichael's work reflected a life set apart for the purposes of God.

In more recent history, **Billy Graham** demonstrated how God can use one life surrendered to His calling to reach millions with the gospel. Graham frequently spoke about the importance of prayer and dependence upon the Holy Spirit before every evangelistic crusade. His ministry took the message of Christ to nations across the world and introduced countless people to the hope of the gospel.

These lives remind us that when believers seek God sincerely and surrender to His calling, the Holy Spirit continues to send His people into the world to proclaim Christ.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Set aside time to seek God through prayer and fasting.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify how He desires to use your life.
3. Invite trusted spiritual leaders or friends to pray with you about God's direction.
4. Be willing to obey the calling God places upon your heart.
5. Remember that the Spirit empowers the work He assigns.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Holy Spirit, forgive me for the times I have pursued my own plans without seeking Your guidance. Teach me to listen for Your voice and to follow Your direction with humility and faith. As I fast and pray, set apart my life for the purposes of Christ. Give me courage to go wherever You lead and to serve faithfully in the work You assign. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Matthew 28:18–20
- Acts 1:8
- Isaiah 6:8
- Romans 10:14–15
- 2 Timothy 1:6–8

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 11, 2026
Lesson 22: Courage Born Through Consecration

MAIN TEXT: Esther 4:14–16
"For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.'"

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
The book of Esther unfolds during the period of the Persian Empire, when the Jewish people lived scattered throughout foreign lands. In the city of Susa, a political decree orchestrated by Haman threatened the complete destruction of the Jewish population. What began as court intrigue quickly became a crisis that placed an entire people in danger.

Mordecai sends word to Queen Esther that she may have been placed in her royal position for a divine purpose: "for such a time as this." Yet approaching the king without being summoned was punishable by death. Esther faced a decision that would determine not only her own fate but also the survival of her people.

Before acting, Esther calls for a corporate fast among the Jewish community in Susa. For three days they would abstain from food and drink while seeking God. Though the book of Esther never directly mentions the name of God, the call to fasting reveals the people's reliance upon divine intervention.

Fasting in this moment accomplishes several things. It humbles the community, unites them in prayer, and prepares Esther spiritually for the courage required to confront the king. The discipline of fasting becomes the pathway through which fear gives way to faith.

Esther's words, "If I perish, I perish," reveal the depth of her surrender. She entrusts her life to God and acts in obedience despite the risk. Her courage demonstrates that consecration before God often precedes decisive action for His purposes.

Throughout Scripture, fasting frequently prepares believers for moments when faith must be expressed through courageous obedience.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Daniel's Faithfulness in Babylon (Daniel 6)
Daniel lived during another period when God's people were under foreign rule. Serving in the court of King Darius, Daniel distinguished himself through integrity and wisdom. His faithfulness, however, provoked jealousy among political rivals.

These officials persuaded the king to issue a decree forbidding prayer to anyone except the king for thirty days. The penalty for violating the decree was death in the lions' den. When Daniel learned of the decree, he did not change his spiritual habits. Scripture records that he continued to pray three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem. Daniel's courage did not appear suddenly; it had been formed through years of disciplined devotion to God.

When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, God miraculously preserved him. The king later declared that the God of Daniel is the living God whose kingdom will never be destroyed.

Daniel's life demonstrates that steadfast faith in moments of crisis is often the result of long seasons of quiet faithfulness before God.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The courage born from consecration can also be seen in the life of **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, the German pastor who resisted the Nazi regime during the Second World War. Bonhoeffer believed that Christian faith demanded both spiritual devotion and moral courage. His disciplined life of prayer sustained him as he opposed injustice and defended the dignity of those being persecuted. Though he was eventually imprisoned and executed, Bonhoeffer's witness continues to inspire believers to stand faithfully for truth.

Another example appears in the life of **Corrie ten Boom**, a Dutch Christian who, along with her family, helped hide Jewish refugees during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Corrie's faith had been formed through years of Scripture reading and prayer in her home. When the danger came, her family risked their lives to protect others. After being arrested and sent to a concentration camp, Corrie later testified that God's grace sustained her even in the darkest circumstances.

The life of **Martin Luther King Jr**. also demonstrates courage shaped by spiritual conviction. As a pastor and leader in the American civil rights movement, King repeatedly emphasized that the struggle for justice must be grounded in prayer, faith, and

love. Despite threats, imprisonment, and violence, he continued to pursue reconciliation and equality because he believed that obedience to God required standing against injustice.

These lives remind us that courage in moments of crisis rarely appears suddenly. It grows out of hearts that have been shaped through prayer, faith, and devotion to God.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Identify areas where fear has discouraged you from acting in obedience to God.
2. Seek the Lord through prayer and fasting when facing difficult decisions.
3. Invite trusted believers to pray with you during seasons of uncertainty.
4. Remember that God often places His people in strategic moments for His purposes.
5. Choose faithful obedience even when the outcome is uncertain.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Sovereign Lord, I confess that fear often restrains my obedience. Forgive my hesitation and strengthen my faith. As I fast and seek Your presence, fill my heart with courage to follow You wherever You lead. Help me to trust that You are working even when circumstances seem uncertain. May my life reflect the faithfulness and courage that come from dependence upon You. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Daniel 3:16–18
- Acts 4:18–31
- Hebrews 11:32–38
- Matthew 10:28–31
- 2 Timothy 1:7

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 12, 2026
Lesson 23: Rend Your Hearts — The Fast of True Repentance

MAIN TEXT: Joel 2:12–13
"12 'Now, therefore,' says the LORD,
'Turn to Me with all your heart,
With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.'
13 So rend your heart, and not your garments;
Return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness;
And He relents from doing harm."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
The prophet Joel addressed a devastating crisis that had struck the land of Judah. A massive locust invasion had destroyed crops, disrupted the economy, and brought widespread suffering. Yet Joel did not interpret the disaster merely as a natural event. He recognized it as a spiritual wake-up call for the people of God.

In the midst of this devastation, the Lord issues an invitation: "Turn to Me with all your heart." The call to return includes fasting, weeping, and mourning. These outward actions were common expressions of repentance in the ancient world. Yet the Lord immediately clarifies that the true issue lies deeper than external behavior.

"Rend your heart, and not your garments."

In ancient Israel people often tore their clothing as a visible sign of grief or repentance. The Hebrew word translated **"rend"** is ***qara***, which means to *tear open*. God is declaring that genuine repentance must reach the heart rather than remaining a public display.

The problem facing Judah was not merely that they had sinned. It was that their repentance had become superficial. They could perform religious gestures without experiencing inward transformation.

Joel therefore calls the people to a repentance that reaches the core of their being. Fasting becomes a means of humbling the heart before God. It removes distractions and exposes the soul to the searching presence of the Lord.

Yet the call to repentance is grounded in hope. Joel reminds the people that God is

"gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." The purpose of repentance is not humiliation but restoration. When people turn sincerely to God, they encounter His mercy.

This passage ultimately points toward the gospel. Through Jesus Christ, God offers forgiveness and restoration to those who return to Him with sincere hearts.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: David's Repentance (Psalm 51)
One of the clearest examples of heartfelt repentance appears in the life of King David. After committing adultery with Bathsheba and arranging the death of her husband Uriah, David attempted to conceal his sin. Eventually the prophet Nathan confronted him with a parable that exposed his guilt.

When David realized the depth of his wrongdoing, he did not attempt to justify himself. Instead he turned to God with a prayer of repentance that is preserved in Psalm 51.
In this psalm David acknowledges that his sin was ultimately against God. He pleads for mercy and asks the Lord to cleanse him from his guilt. Most importantly, David recognizes that outward sacrifices cannot restore a broken relationship with God.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise."

David's repentance was not merely emotional regret. It was a sincere turning of the heart toward God. Through God's mercy he experienced forgiveness and restoration.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
A powerful example of repentance appears in the life of **Augustine of Hippo**, one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the early church. As a young man Augustine pursued pleasure, ambition, and intellectual prestige, yet he remained restless and dissatisfied. After years of spiritual searching, he encountered the message of Christ and experienced profound conviction. In his famous work *Confessions*, Augustine describes how his heart was transformed when he surrendered his life to God. His repentance marked the beginning of a life devoted to teaching, pastoral leadership, and theological reflection.

Another story of repentance can be seen in the life of **John Newton**, the eighteenth-century English sailor who once worked in the slave trade. Newton lived a reckless life at sea until a violent storm convinced him that he needed the mercy of God. Over time, his

faith deepened and he eventually became a pastor and outspoken opponent of slavery. Newton later wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace," reflecting on the transformation that occurred when God's mercy reached his heart.

In the twentieth century, **Charles Colson**, a political advisor involved in the Watergate scandal, experienced a dramatic spiritual awakening while facing criminal charges. After reading Scripture and encountering the message of the gospel, Colson repented and surrendered his life to Christ. Following his imprisonment, he devoted the rest of his life to prison ministry and founded Prison Fellowship, an organization that has helped countless individuals encounter the hope of the gospel.

These stories remind us that repentance is not merely a religious formality. It is the doorway through which God transforms lives and restores broken people.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of hidden sin or compromise.
2. Approach God with humility through prayer and fasting.
3. Confess specific sins honestly before the Lord.
4. Seek reconciliation with those who may have been harmed.
5. Receive the forgiveness and restoration that God freely offers through Christ.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Merciful Father, I confess that my heart is often divided and distracted. Forgive the sins that I have hidden and the compromises I have tolerated. As I fast and seek You, tear away every layer of pride and self-deception within me. Create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore me through the grace of Jesus Christ so that my life may reflect Your mercy and truth. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Psalm 51
- Isaiah 55:6–7
- Luke 15:11–24
- Acts 3:19
- 1 John 1:8–9

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 13, 2026
Lesson 24: Seeking God in the Wilderness

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 63:1–2 (NKJV)
"1 O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Psalm 63 was written during a period when David found himself in the wilderness of Judah. The wilderness was a harsh and barren environment, marked by dryness, danger, and isolation. Yet it was precisely in this difficult setting that David expressed one of the most intimate declarations of devotion found in the Psalms: "O God, You are my God."

David describes his longing for God using the language of thirst and hunger. His soul thirsts for God in the same way that the body longs for water in a desert. This imagery reflects a deep spiritual reality. Just as the human body cannot survive without water, the human soul cannot flourish apart from communion with God.

The psalm also reveals that David's devotion is intentional. The phrase "early will I seek You" comes from the Hebrew word ***shachar***, which conveys the idea of *seeking diligently at dawn*. David does not wait passively for spiritual renewal. He pursues God with deliberate urgency.

Fasting reinforces this same pursuit. When believers voluntarily abstain from food, physical hunger becomes a reminder that the deepest need of the soul is the presence of God. The discipline of fasting trains the heart to seek the Lord above every other source of satisfaction.

David recalls how he had previously beheld the power and glory of God in the sanctuary. Those memories strengthen his faith in the wilderness. Even when circumstances are barren, the believer continues to seek God with confidence that His presence will sustain and satisfy the soul.

The psalm therefore teaches that seasons of dryness can become opportunities for deeper communion with God. The wilderness becomes a place where spiritual hunger awakens and devotion grows stronger.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Elijah Encountering God in the Wilderness (1 Kings 19)
The prophet Elijah experienced a similar wilderness season following his dramatic confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Although God had demonstrated His power through fire from heaven, Elijah soon found himself discouraged and fearful after receiving threats from Queen Jezebel.

Exhausted and overwhelmed, Elijah fled into the wilderness and prayed that his life might end. Yet God did not abandon His servant in that moment of weakness. Instead, the Lord provided food and water to restore Elijah's strength and instructed him to travel to Mount Horeb.

There Elijah encountered God in an unexpected way. The Lord was not revealed through the violent wind, the earthquake, or the fire. Instead, Elijah heard the gentle voice of God speaking in a still, small whisper.

In that quiet moment, Elijah's perspective was renewed. God reminded him that he was not alone and that His purposes for Israel were still unfolding.

Elijah's wilderness experience demonstrates that times of exhaustion or discouragement can become moments when God speaks most clearly to the hearts of His people.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The experience of seeking God in difficult seasons is evident in the life of **George Müller**, the nineteenth-century Christian known for establishing orphanages in Bristol, England. Müller committed himself to a life of prayer and complete dependence upon God. During seasons when resources were scarce, he often fasted and prayed, trusting the Lord to provide food and provision for the children in his care. Time after time, help arrived at precisely the moment it was needed. Müller's life illustrated what it means to seek God as the true source of sustenance.

Another example appears in the life of **Howard Thurman**, the twentieth-century theologian and spiritual mentor to many leaders of the civil rights movement. Thurman taught that deep spiritual disciplines such as prayer, silence, and fasting allow believers to encounter God in the midst of life's pressures. Through his writings and pastoral leadership, he encouraged Christians to cultivate an inner life with God that would

sustain them during times of struggle and injustice.

The missionary **David Livingstone** also experienced seasons of physical and spiritual wilderness during his travels throughout Africa in the nineteenth century. Livingstone endured illness, loneliness, and immense hardship as he carried the message of Christ to regions that had never heard the gospel. His journals reveal that prayer and devotion to God sustained him during long periods of isolation. Livingstone's perseverance demonstrated that the presence of God can strengthen believers even in the most demanding circumstances.

These lives remind us that seeking God during difficult seasons often leads to deeper faith and renewed spiritual strength.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Recognize seasons of dryness as opportunities to seek God more deeply.
2. Set aside intentional time for prayer, Scripture, and reflection.
3. Use fasting to remind your heart that God is the true source of life.
4. Recall previous moments when God revealed His faithfulness.
5. Trust that God's presence can sustain you even in the wilderness.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"O God, You are my God. Forgive me for the times I have sought satisfaction in temporary things instead of seeking Your presence. As I fast and pray, awaken within me a deeper thirst for You. Strengthen my faith during seasons of dryness and remind me that Your presence is the true source of life and joy. Draw me closer to You and teach my heart to seek You above all else. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Psalm 42:1–2
- Isaiah 55:1–3
- Matthew 4:1–4
- John 7:37–38
- Revelation 22:17

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

MARCH 14, 2026
Lesson 25: Faithful in Temptation

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 39:9 (NKJV)
"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Genesis 39 tells the story of Joseph during his years of slavery in Egypt. Though he had been betrayed by his brothers and sold into a foreign land, Joseph remained faithful in his service to Potiphar, an Egyptian official. Scripture repeatedly notes that "the Lord was with Joseph," and as a result Joseph prospered even in difficult circumstances.

Potiphar eventually entrusted Joseph with the management of his entire household. Yet Joseph's integrity soon faced a severe test. Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him and repeatedly urged him to lie with her.

Joseph's response reveals the depth of his spiritual character. He first acknowledges the trust that Potiphar has placed in him. Then he identifies the act clearly as "great wickedness." Most importantly, Joseph recognizes that the ultimate offense would not merely be against Potiphar but against God.

This statement reveals Joseph's awareness that every moral decision is made before the presence of God. Even in Egypt, far from his family and the covenant community of Israel, Joseph lived with a consciousness that God was watching over his life.

Joseph ultimately refused the temptation and fled from the situation, leaving his garment behind. His obedience resulted in false accusations and imprisonment, yet the narrative makes clear that God continued to be with him.

Fasting strengthens this same kind of spiritual vigilance. The discipline teaches believers to deny immediate desires in order to pursue what is righteous. When the body learns restraint, the heart becomes more attentive to the will of God.

Joseph's example reminds believers that righteousness is often tested in private moments when no one else appears to be watching. Faithfulness in those moments reflects a life that truly seeks to honor God.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 4

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Jesus Resisting Temptation in the Wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11)
Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness. During this time He faced three direct temptations from Satan.

The first temptation challenged Jesus to turn stones into bread in order to satisfy His hunger. The second urged Him to throw Himself from the temple in order to force God to demonstrate protection. The third offered Him authority over the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship.

In each case Jesus responded by quoting Scripture. His answers revealed a deep commitment to obey the will of the Father rather than pursue personal advantage. Jesus' resistance to temptation did not come through human strength alone. It followed a season of fasting and communion with God. By remaining faithful in the wilderness, Jesus demonstrated the perfect obedience that would ultimately lead Him to the cross and the resurrection.

This account shows that spiritual preparation strengthens believers to stand firm when temptation arises.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The struggle to remain faithful in the face of temptation appears throughout the history of the church. One example is the life of **John Wesley**, the eighteenth-century leader of the Methodist revival. Wesley believed that disciplined spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and accountability helped believers pursue holiness. He encouraged early Methodists to gather regularly in small groups where they would confess struggles and encourage one another to live faithfully before God.

Another example can be found in the life of **Billy Graham**, whose evangelistic ministry reached millions of people across the world. Early in his ministry Graham and several close colleagues made a commitment often referred to as the "Modesto Manifesto." They pledged to avoid situations that could compromise their integrity, including financial impropriety or inappropriate relationships. These safeguards helped preserve the credibility of Graham's ministry for decades.

The theologian **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** also emphasized the importance of spiritual discipline in resisting temptation. In his writings he warned that isolation from Christian community often makes believers vulnerable to moral failure. Bonhoeffer taught that

confession, prayer, and mutual accountability strengthen believers in their pursuit of holiness.

These lives remind us that resisting temptation is rarely accidental. It grows out of deliberate devotion to God and consistent spiritual discipline.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Recognize areas where temptation most frequently arises in your life.
2. Strengthen your spiritual life through prayer, Scripture, and fasting.
3. Avoid environments or situations that encourage compromise.
4. Seek accountability and encouragement from trusted believers.
5. Remember that honoring God is more important than temporary pleasure."

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Holy and righteous God, I confess that I am often tempted to pursue what is easy rather than what is right. Forgive my moments of weakness and strengthen my heart to walk in obedience. As I fast and seek Your presence, train my desires to reflect Your holiness. When temptation arises, remind me that my life is lived before You. Give me courage to choose righteousness so that my life may honor Christ. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Psalm 119:9–11
- Matthew 26:41
- 1 Corinthians 10:12–13
- James 1:12–15
- Hebrews 4:14–16