LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 2

FEBRUARY 23, 2026
Lesson 6: Watchfulness — Fasting as Eschatological Readiness

MAIN TEXT: MATTHEW 25:1–13 (NASB 2020)
"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom…"

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Matthew 25 stands within Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25), where He speaks plainly about His return, the certainty of judgment, the reality of delay, and the necessity of preparedness. The Parable of the Ten Virgins is not about initial belief but enduring readiness. It is a warning to disciples, not outsiders.

All ten virgins were invited. All ten had lamps. All ten expected the Bridegroom. All ten became drowsy. The distinction was not intention rather it was preparation.

The wise brought extra oil; the foolish assumed their present supply would suffice. The oil, within Matthew's structure, represents sustained preparedness, a life of obedient watchfulness maintained through the long delay. What makes the parable striking is the delay itself. "While the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep." The delay is not accidental; it is instructional.

The Christian life unfolds in tension. Christ has ascended. The Spirit has been given. The Church has been commissioned. Yet the Bridegroom has not visibly returned. Time passes. Generations come and go. The danger is not persecution alone; it is complacency.

Fasting addresses delay by disciplining desire during waiting. It declares, "I will not allow my spiritual reserves to diminish while time stretches on." It resists spiritual sedation in an age of distraction. D. A. Carson notes:

"The delay tests the genuineness of faith; perseverance distinguishes the wise from the foolish." (D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, Expositor's Bible Commentary, 1984)

When the midnight cry suddenly comes, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him," readiness cannot be transferred. Oil cannot be borrowed. Watchfulness cannot be outsourced.

Fasting becomes intentional alertness. It trains the soul to live as though the cry could sound at any hour

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BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Daniels Three-Week Fast (Daniel 10:2–12)
Daniel's three-week fast occurred during political instability and prophetic delay. He mourned and abstained while seeking understanding concerning the future of God's people. In response, the angel tells him:

"From the first day that you set your heart on understanding and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard."

Heaven responded immediately, though Daniel did not see it at once. Spiritual conflict delayed visible manifestation, but Daniel remained steadfast. His fasting expressed humility, vigilance, and perseverance while empires shifted and unseen warfare unfolded.

Daniel models watchfulness in delay. He did not allow the passage of time to weaken his devotion. Fasting anchored his alertness.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
The Didache, one of the earliest Christian documents outside the New Testament, closes with urgent exhortation:

"Watch over your life; do not let your lamps be quenched." (Didache 16)

The early Church understood that vigilance was not optional. It was essential.

John Wesley frequently warned against what he called "spiritual slumber." He practiced regular fasting as embodied watchfulness, believing that spiritual disciplines preserved alertness in an age of drifting hearts.

Mary Lena Tate, within the Holiness-Pentecostal heritage, called for seasons of fasting before revival gatherings, teaching that awakening required readiness. Fasting was not fanaticism; it was preparation.

Historically, fasting has never been extremism. It has been vigilance embodied.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION
1. Examine honestly where complacency has developed in your life. Ask the Spirit to reveal areas where spiritual drowsiness has settled in unnoticed.
2. Fast specifically from distractions that numb alertness; excessive entertainment, idle scrolling, constant noise, and replace them with Scripture meditation.

3. Establish a daily rhythm of reading passages that speak of Christ's return and pray explicitly for perseverance until He comes.
4. Let this week's fasting sharpen expectation and cultivate sustained readiness.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord of Glory, I confess that I have allowed time to dull my urgency. I have grown comfortable in delay and careless in watchfulness. Forgive my complacency and my quiet spiritual laziness. Forgive the ways I have assumed tomorrow rather than prepared for today. Holy Spirit, awaken my heart. Keep my lamp burning when others grow drowsy. Guard me from distraction and dullness. Strengthen my perseverance so that waiting does not weaken my devotion. Teach me to live alert, humble, and ready. Let this fast discipline my desires and sharpen my expectation for the midnight cry. In Jesus' name, Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Mark 13:32–37 — Stay awake and watch.
- Luke 21:34–36 — Guard against spiritual dullness.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 — Children of light, not darkness.
- 2 Peter 3:8–14 — Holy conduct in light of His coming.
- Hebrews 12:14 — Pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

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FEBRUARY 24, 2026
Lesson 7: Present Your Bodies — Fasting as Living Sacrifice

MAIN TEXT: ROMANS 12:1 (NASB 2020)
"Present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Romans 12:1 stands at a decisive turning point in Paul's epistle. For eleven chapters Paul has unfolded the grand drama of redemption; human sin, divine righteousness, justification by faith, union with Christ, adoption as sons and daughters, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, and the sovereign mercy of God toward Jew and Gentile alike. Then comes one word: **"Therefore."**

Christian obedience is never detached from mercy. It flows from it. Paul does not begin his exhortation with threat, but with appeal: "I urge you… by the mercies of God." Obedience is not payment for grace. It is response to grace. Yet what he asks is comprehensive.

He does not say, "Present your ideas," or "Present your intentions." He says, **"Present your bodies."** The Greek verb *parastēsai* means to *place at one's disposal, to yield up, to offer deliberately for service*. It echoes temple language. Under the Old Covenant, animals were placed upon the altar; slain, consumed, wholly surrendered to God. But now, under the New Covenant, believers become the sacrifice. Not a dead sacrifice but a living one.

This is paradoxical. A living sacrifice must remain continually surrendered. It must climb back onto the altar every day. Paul calls this offering "holy" and "acceptable." The language recalls Levitical standards of purity. In the Old Testament, a blemished sacrifice was rejected. Now the believer, cleansed by Christ's blood and indwelt by the Spirit, is called to live in consecrated wholeness.

Then Paul describes this as *logikē latreia*, often translated "spiritual service of worship" or "reasonable service." The term *latreia* refers to priestly worship. It is temple language. Paul is saying that daily embodied obedience is priestly liturgy. Fasting becomes a concrete enactment of Romans 12:1.

When we fast, we declare: "My appetites do not rule me. My body belongs to God." We bring hunger itself to the altar. We take what feels most natural, the instinct to satisfy, and we submit it to the Lordship of Christ.

This is not body-denial in a Gnostic sense. Scripture affirms the goodness of the body. Genesis 1:31 declares creation "very good." First Corinthians 6:19–20 reminds us that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Fasting is not punishment of the body. It is consecration of the body.

John Murray writes:
"The presentation of the body is the concrete expression of the consecration of the whole person." (*The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT)

Holiness is not abstract spirituality. It is embodied surrender. In a culture that treats the body as sovereign and appetite as authority, fasting reorders allegiance. It trains the body to obey redeemed will. It reminds us that grace does not merely forgive sin; it claims the whole person.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE
Jesus fasted forty days (Matthew 4:1–11). Temptation targeted appetite, presumption, and power. He answered with Scripture. Where Adam failed in abundance, Christ triumphed in deprivation.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Irenaeus (2nd century) described Christ's obedience as "recapitulation," the Son retracing Adam's steps and succeeding where humanity failed (*Against Heresies*, III.18). The wilderness fast was part of that redemptive obedience.

Early Christians practiced fasting not as ascetic extremism but as embodied surrender. The Didache (late 1st–early 2nd century) instructed believers in regular fasting rhythms as part of covenant faithfulness.

Within the Wesleyan tradition, full consecration of body and will stood at the center of holiness teaching. John Wesley preached that salvation was not merely pardon, but restoration of the whole person. In Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," he emphasized cooperation with grace through disciplined obedience.

Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874) articulated "altar theology," teaching that believers must lay themselves wholly upon God's altar in faith. In *The Way of Holiness* (1843), she wrote: "The altar sanctifies the gift."

Smith Wigglesworth fasted regularly before evangelistic campaigns. Stanley Frodsham records that Wigglesworth believed fasting subdued the flesh and heightened spiritual

sensitivity (*Smith Wigglesworth: Apostle of Faith*, 1947).
The Holiness and Pentecostal movements consistently tied fasting to sanctification and empowerment. They understood that power without consecration was unstable.

Historically, revival has followed surrender.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

- Verbally present your body to God each morning during Lent: "Lord, my body belongs to You."
- Identify one appetite that has quietly gained influence and fast intentionally from it.
- Memorize Scripture that speaks to bodily discipline and consecration.
- Reaffirm full surrender before any ministry activity or leadership responsibility.
- Remember that every act of embodied obedience is worship.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Merciful Father, by Your abundant mercies I come. Yet I confess that my body has often served comfort more than consecration. I have fed appetites that weakened obedience. I have yielded to impulses that dulled devotion. Forgive my divided surrender. Cleanse my desires. Reorder my affections. I cannot master myself apart from Your Spirit. I depend upon You to sanctify both will and flesh. Teach my body to serve righteousness. Strengthen me where hunger rises. Let my fasting be priestly worship.

I present myself, mind, appetite, strength, ambition as living sacrifice. Accept my offering. Conform me to Christ. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

1. **1 Corinthians 6:19–20** — Your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.
2. **Galatians 5:16–24** — Walking by the Spirit versus works of the flesh.
3. **Hebrews 13:15–16** — Sacrifices of praise and obedience.
4. **Psalm 141:2** — Prayer as incense before God.
5. **Luke 9:23** — Daily self-denial and following Christ.

LENT LESSONS 2026
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FEBRUARY 25, 2026
Lesson 8: "Speak, Lord" — The Posture of a Listening Heart

MAIN TEXT: 1 SAMUEL 3:1–10 (NASB)
"1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. 2 It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well), 3 and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, 4 that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. 6 The Lord called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him. 8 So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 Then the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
The third chapter of First Samuel opens with a sobering assessment of the spiritual climate of Israel: "Now the word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were infrequent."

This is not merely historical commentary. It is spiritual diagnosis. Israel was in decline. Eli's sons were corrupt. The priesthood had grown careless. Worship continued, but the presence of revelation had diminished. The lamp of God was flickering and Scripture deliberately notes that detail. It was literal, yes, but it was also symbolic. The light had not yet gone out, but it was dim.

Into that atmosphere of spiritual dullness, God does something surprising. He does not begin with a reform movement among leaders. He does not first address the powerful. He calls a child. Lent calls us into this very posture. It asks: in a noisy age, are we prepared to hear? In a distracted generation, are we positioned to listen? Holiness does not begin with activity. It begins with attentiveness.

I. GOD INITIATES REVELATION

The text tells us that "the Lord called Samuel." God initiates. Samuel did not conjure a vision. He did not fast his way into hallucination. Revelation begins with God's desire to speak. This matters deeply. Fasting does not manipulate God into talking. It positions us to hear when He does. Prayer does not coerce revelation. It cultivates receptivity.

Samuel hears his name but mistakes the voice for Eli's. Three times he runs to the priest. His confusion is not rebellion; it is immaturity. Verse 7 tells us plainly, "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him." There is a difference between serving in the temple and discerning the voice of God.

Many believers today serve faithfully, attend consistently, sing passionately yet struggle to recognize when God is speaking. The problem is often not intellectual. As Craig Keener observes, "God's revelation requires receptivity; Spiritual dullness is often moral, not intellectual." The issue is posture. Fasting reduces noise. It quiets competing voices. It trains the heart to distinguish divine initiative from human assumption.

II. DISCERNMENT REQUIRES INSTRUCTION

After the third interruption, Eli perceives what Samuel has not yet understood. Though Eli himself is spiritually compromised in many ways, he still possesses enough discernment to guide the boy. He instructs him: "Go lie down, and if He calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" There is wisdom here. Revelation often requires instruction before interpretation. Samuel needed to be taught how to respond. He had to learn the language of surrender.

The Hebrew word for "listening" (*shōmēaʿ)* does not mean passive hearing. In Hebrew, thought, hearing and obeying are inseparable. The Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 calls Israel not merely to hear God but to respond covenantally. So, when Samuel says, "Speak, for Your servant is listening," he is not asking for information. He is offering obedience.

Holiness bridges the gap between revelation and response. Listening that does not obey becomes self-deception. James would later write, "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

Lent calls us to this posture: not merely curious about what God might say, but committed to do what He reveals.

III. LISTENING PREPARES US FOR HARD TRUTH

When the Lord finally speaks clearly, the message is not pleasant. It is judgment against

Eli's household. The first prophetic word entrusted to Samuel is heavy. It is sobering. It requires courage to deliver.

Holiness does not mean God will only whisper comforting assurances. Sometimes listening means being confronted. Sometimes fasting sharpens our ears not for encouragement but for correction. Samuel does not soften the message. He does not conceal it. Though he fears to tell Eli, he ultimately speaks faithfully. And Scripture says, "Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail."

Listening led to obedience. Obedience led to authority. This is critical for us during Lent. We do not fast merely to feel spiritual. We fast to align with truth — even when that truth exposes, corrects, or redirects us. The Spirit who convicts is the Spirit who empowers.

IV. STILLNESS PRECEDES STEWARDSHIP

There is a quiet detail in verse 3: Samuel was lying down "where the ark of God was." He was near the presence. He was positioned in proximity to covenant symbol.

Stillness preceded stewardship.

Pentecostal-Holiness spirituality must remember this rhythm. We cherish movement, praise, proclamation, and rightly so. But authority in proclamation grows from stillness before the ark. The fire of ministry must be sustained by the oil of listening.

Ignatius of Antioch, on his way to martyrdom, urged believers toward attentive obedience to Christ even under threat. John Wesley rose before dawn consistently because he believed obedience required disciplined listening before public labor. Holiness has always required stillness before action.

LENT APPLICATION: THE POSTURE OF A LISTENING HEART

During these forty days, the first discipline must not be speaking, it must be listening. Before we present requests, we must present availability. Before we declare plans, we must declare surrender. Each day of this fast should begin not with noise, but with stillness. Not with demand, but with readiness.

"Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening."

That is the posture that prepares us to seek the Lord, to become like the Lord, and ultimately to stand before the Lord unashamed. If the word was rare in Samuel's day, it was because hearts were dull. But when one listening heart positioned itself in humility,

God spoke again. Perhaps Lent is God's invitation to rekindle clarity in a noisy generation.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd century), on his way to martyrdom, wrote letters urging believers to attentive obedience. In his Letter to the Ephesians, he emphasized submission to Christ's will even under threat of death.

John Wesley often began his day before dawn in prayer and Scripture meditation. He believed obedience required disciplined listening. In his Journal (April 4, 1739), he wrote of waiting upon the Lord before preaching in Bristol, seeking divine direction.

Holiness has always required stillness before action.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Begin each fasting day with silence before speaking.
2. Pray: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening."
3. Record impressions in a journal.
4. Act immediately on clear biblical instruction.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord God, forgive me for speaking more than listening. I have rushed ahead of Your voice. I have assumed rather than sought. Quiet my heart. Remove distraction. Discipline my ears to hear You through Scripture and Spirit. I cannot discern rightly without Your illumination. I depend upon You to teach me, correct me, and guide me. Make me a servant *before* You make me speaker. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Deuteronomy 6:4–9 — Hearing as covenant obedience.
- Psalm 46:10 — Be still and know.
- John 10:27 — My sheep hear My voice.
- James 1:22–25 — Doers, not hearers only.
- Hebrews 3:7–15 — Do not harden your hearts.

LENT LESSONS 2026
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FEBRUARY 26, 2026
Lesson 9: "Be Holy" — The Character of God as Our Pattern and Power

MAIN TEXT: 1 PETER 1:13–16
"13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Peter writes to believers scattered throughout Asia Minor which is marginalized, pressured, and socially misunderstood. They are "aliens" (1 Peter 1:1), living between Christ's resurrection and His return.

Holiness, in this context, is not monastic withdrawal. It is covenant-identity in exile. Peter begins with a call to mental discipline: "Prepare your minds for action." Literally in Greek, it reads: "gird up the loins of your mind." In the ancient world, men gathered their long garments into a belt before running or working. Peter applies that image to thought-life. Holiness begins in the mind.

Then he says: "Keep sober in spirit." The word "nēphontes" implies *alertness, free from intoxication, not merely by wine, but by passions, cultural pressures, and misplaced hope.* Then comes the anchor: "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Peter then identifies the relational foundation: "As obedient children…". Holiness is not servile fear. It is filial obedience. The contrast follows: "Do not be conformed to the former lusts." The Greek term *syschēmatizomenoi* (*be conformed*) refers to being shaped by an external pattern. Before Christ, believers were shaped by ignorance, not merely lack of information, but lack of covenant knowledge of God.

Holiness is de-patterning from old desires and re-patterning according to God's nature. Then Peter quotes Leviticus: "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

In Leviticus 19, Israel was called to reflect the distinct character of Yahweh in concrete ethical life; justice, sexual purity, honesty, mercy toward the poor. Peter now applies that covenant summons to the Church. Holiness is not optional piety. It is participation in God's character.

John Frame writes:
"Holiness is the attribute that marks God as distinct from all creation; to be holy is to be set apart unto Him in covenant likeness." (John Frame, The Doctrine of God, 2002)

Peter does not lower the Old Testament standard. He intensifies it by rooting it in Christ's coming revelation.

Thus, fasting serves holiness by:
- Training the mind (discipline)
- Guarding sobriety (alertness)
- Redirecting hope (eschatology)
- Weakening former lusts (de-patterning)

Holiness bridges what God says and what we do.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE
Joseph is young, isolated, and enslaved in a foreign land. Potiphar's wife repeatedly tempts him. He answers: "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Notice Joseph's reference point; not reputation, not consequence, not public shame but God's holiness. Joseph lived centuries before Peter wrote his letter, yet he embodied its command. He refused conformity to his environment.

He remembered covenant identity even in exile. Joseph's holiness cost him prison but preserved his integrity. Holiness often precedes vindication.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Athanasius argued that the Incarnation restored humanity to holiness by union with Christ (On the Incarnation, ch. 54). Holiness was not moralism but participation in divine life.

John Wesley preached entire sanctification not as sinless perfection in performance, but as perfect love, the heart fully yielded to God. In A Plain Account of Christian Perfection (1766), he wrote: "Holiness is the image of God impressed upon the soul."

Phoebe Palmer's "altar theology" emphasized immediate consecration, placing oneself fully upon God's altar in faith, trusting the Spirit to sanctify.

The Holiness and Pentecostal movements never treated holiness as cultural separation

alone. They treated it as heart transformation resulting in ethical distinctiveness. Thus, holiness is both God's command and God's work.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Identify patterns from your "former lusts" still influencing conduct.
2. Gird up your mind — remove mental intake that fuels compromise.
3. Re-anchor hope in Christ's return daily.
4. Fast specifically from habits that reinforce old conformity.
5. Pray Scripture over areas of weakness.

PRAYER

"Holy Father, You are pure and radiant, set apart in glory. Yet I confess that I have conformed to patterns that dishonor You. I have allowed former desires to shape present conduct. Forgive my compromise. Cleanse my imagination. Renew my mind. I cannot be holy apart from Your Spirit. I depend upon Your sanctifying grace to reorder my affections and strengthen obedience. Fix my hope on Christ's appearing. Make me distinct in love, truth, purity, and courage. Let my fasting weaken old patterns and strengthen new obedience. Form Your image in me. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

1. Leviticus 19 — Holiness expressed in daily conduct.
2. Romans 12:1–2 — Transformation through renewed mind.
3. Ephesians 4:17–24 — Put off the old self, put on the new.
4. 2 Corinthians 7:1 — Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
5. Hebrews 12:10–14 — Discipline leading to holiness.

LENT LESSONS 2026
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FEBRUARY 27, 2026
Lesson 10: "If You Love Me" — Obedience as the Proof of Devotion

MAIN TEXT: JOHN 14:15–21
"15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
John 14 unfolds in the upper room on the night before the crucifixion. The air is heavy. Judas has departed. Jesus has spoken of betrayal, denial, and departure. The disciples are troubled. Their categories are collapsing. The One they left everything to follow is speaking about leaving them.

It is into that emotional instability that Jesus speaks these words: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

This is not spoken coldly. It is spoken tenderly. The context is not discipline but devotion. The Greek structure of verse 15 is revealing. It is not a harsh ultimatum but a diagnostic statement. The construction assumes reality rather than threatening consequence. Jesus is not saying, "Prove your love by obeying." He is saying, "Where love exists, obedience follows."

The verb ***agapaō*** does not describe mere affection. It refers to covenantal loyalty, steadfast attachment, devoted allegiance. This is not sentimental love. It is pledged love And obedience here is not legalistic compliance. It is relational fidelity.

In the Old Testament, love for God was inseparable from keeping His commands.

Deuteronomy 6:5–6 joins loving God with keeping His words upon the heart. Jesus is not introducing something new; He is fulfilling covenant expectation in Himself. But notice the grace in the promise that follows. "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another

Helper…" The word "another" (*allon*) means *another of the same kind*. Jesus is saying that the Spirit will continue His presence among them. The term ***Paraklētos*** refers to one who comes alongside, advocate, comforter, helper, counselor.

Jesus commands obedience then He promises empowerment. Holiness, therefore, is not self-generated effort. It is Trinitarian grace.

- The Son commands.
- The Spirit empowers.
- The Father indwells.

Obedience is not achieved by willpower alone. It is enabled by indwelling presence. Jesus intensifies this in verse 17: "He abides with you and will be in you."

The shift from "with" to "in" anticipates Pentecost. The Spirit will not merely accompany; He will indwell. The obedience Jesus calls for will be sustained by divine presence within.

Then comes one of the most comforting statements in Scripture: "I will not leave you as orphans."

Obedience is not demanded from abandonment. It is invited within belonging.

Verse 21 deepens the promise: "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me… and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

The word translated "disclose" (*emphanisō*) means to *make manifest, to reveal personally*. Obedience does not earn love, it positions the believer for deeper revelation. Love leads to obedience. Obedience leads to intimacy. Intimacy leads to greater revelation.

D. A. Carson rightly observes: "Obedience is not an added condition to love; it is its necessary expression." (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 1991)

In Pentecostal-Holiness understanding, this passage is vital. We do not obey to be loved. We obey because we are loved and because the Spirit has been given to empower that obedience. The Spirit of truth enables believers to walk in truth.

Fasting during Lent sharpens this reality. It exposes areas where affection has not yet produced obedience. It confronts us with the question: Do we admire Christ, or do we

align with Him? Jesus does not measure love by volume of worship, but by conformity of life.

"If you love Me…"

The test of devotion is obedience.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Restored (John 21:15–19)
Few biblical figures illustrate this truth more clearly than Peter. On the night Jesus spoke the words of John 14, Peter confidently declared that he would lay down his life for the Lord. Yet within hours, he denied Him three times. His affection was real, but his obedience faltered under pressure.

After the resurrection, Jesus meets Peter by the Sea of Galilee. Three times He asks him, "Do you love Me?" The question is not to humiliate him but to restore him. Each time Peter answers, Jesus responds not with sentiment but with assignment: "Tend My lambs." "Shepherd My sheep." "Follow Me."

Jesus ties love directly to obedience and responsibility. He does not say, "If you love Me, feel deeply about Me." He says, "If you love Me, feed My sheep."

Peter's restored love expresses itself in surrendered obedience. Church history tells us that Peter would ultimately lay down his life in martyrdom. The one who once denied out of fear later obeyed unto death.

Love matured into obedience. Obedience confirmed love.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Throughout church history, genuine devotion has always manifested itself in obedience. Ignatius of Antioch, writing on his way to martyrdom in the early second century, urged believers to remain faithful to Christ's commands even under threat of death. His love for Christ was not emotional fervor alone; it was visible submission, even unto suffering.

John Wesley emphasized repeatedly that holiness was not mystical experience detached from conduct. He insisted that the evidence of love for Christ was visible obedience in daily life; honesty in business, purity in relationships, mercy toward the poor, discipline in devotion. For Wesley, love that did not translate into obedience was incomplete.

In the early Pentecostal movement, believers testified not only of spiritual experiences

but of transformed lives; addictions broken, relationships restored, speech purified. They understood that the Spirit who filled them was the Spirit of truth, empowering them to obey the commands of Christ.

The Church has always known this: love for Christ is not measured by intensity of worship alone, but by conformity to His will.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Identify one clear command of Christ you have delayed.
2. Pray for courage to obey immediately.
3. Fast from excuses.
4. Ask the Spirit to strengthen resolve.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Lord Jesus, You have loved me first, and You have not left me as an orphan. Forgive me where my words of devotion have exceeded my obedience. Forgive me where I have sung of love but resisted Your commands. Search my heart and reveal where affection has not yet produced faithfulness. Holy Spirit, You are the Helper promised by the Son. I cannot obey Christ in my own strength. Empower me to walk in truth. Strengthen my will where it is weak. Correct my course where I have drifted. Let my love for Jesus be visible in my life, not merely audible in my worship. Father, draw me deeper into communion as I obey. As I keep His commands, disclose Yourself to me. Make this Lent a season where love matures into obedience and obedience deepens intimacy. In the name of Jesus, Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- James 1:22–25 — Doers of the word.
- Luke 6:46–49 — Why call Me Lord and not do?
- 1 John 2:3–6 — Assurance through obedience.
- Deuteronomy 10:12–13 — Love and keep His commandments.
- Hebrews 5:8 — Christ learned obedience.

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FEBRUARY 28, 2026
Lesson 11: The Fear of the Lord — The Beginning of Holiness

MAIN TEXT: PROVERBS 9:10
"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Proverbs 9 stands at the climax of Solomon's opening appeals to wisdom. Chapters 1–9 present two competing invitations: Lady Wisdom calling to life, and Lady Folly calling to destruction. Before wisdom is defined as skill, intelligence, or moral insight, it is rooted in relationship. Proverbs 9:10 declares the foundation: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

The Hebrew word for fear, **yir'ah**, carries a depth that modern language often flattens. It includes awe, reverence, trembling awareness, moral seriousness, and covenant submission. It is not mere terror, nor is it casual respect. It is the recognition that God is utterly holy, utterly sovereign, and utterly distinct from His creation, and that we stand accountable before Him.

"Beginning" (*re'shith*) does not simply mean first chronologically. It means the chief principle, the controlling foundation. Without fear of the Lord, wisdom collapses into preference. Without reverence, discernment becomes self-referenced. True wisdom does not start with self-expression; it begins with God's holiness.

Throughout Proverbs, fear of the Lord produces tangible fruit. Proverbs 8:13 declares, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." It reshapes moral appetite. Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence." Reverence does not produce paralysis; it produces stability. Proverbs 10:27 says, "The fear of the Lord prolongs life." It is protective.

Fear of the Lord reorients the heart before it reforms behavior. This is why fasting deepens reverence. Fasting humbles the body and quiets presumption. It confronts the illusion of self-sufficiency. Hunger reminds us that we are not autonomous. We are creatures sustained by grace. When appetite is restrained, pride is exposed. When noise is reduced, the weight of God's holiness becomes clearer.

R. C. Sproul wrote: "When God appears, fear is the response of those who truly understand who He is." (*The Holiness of God*, 1985)

Scripture confirms this pattern repeatedly. When Abraham encountered God, he bowed. When Moses encountered God in the burning bush, he removed his sandals. When Job encountered God in the whirlwind, he repented in dust and ashes. When John saw the risen Christ in Revelation 1, he fell at His feet as a dead man.

Reverence is not incompatible with love. In fact, reverence protects love from triviality. Pentecostal-Holiness spirituality must guard against over-familiarity with divine language. The Spirit brings intimacy, but never irreverence. The indwelling Spirit does not diminish awe; He deepens it. The closer Isaiah came to the throne in Isaiah 6, the more he cried, "Woe is me."

Holiness begins when God is no longer common in our estimation. Fasting, therefore, becomes a corrective to casual Christianity. It restores sacred weight. It trains the heart to bow before it speaks. It declares, "You are God. I am not."

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE – Isaiah's Vision (Isaiah 6:1–8)
Isaiah sees the Lord "high and lifted up." Seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy." The thresholds shake. Smoke fills the temple. Isaiah does not react with curiosity; he reacts with confession: "Woe is me, for I am ruined!"

Reverence produces repentance. Repentance precedes cleansing. Cleansing precedes commission. After his lips are purified, Isaiah hears the Lord ask, "Whom shall I send?" Only then does he respond, "Here am I. Send me."

Fear precedes service.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Gregory of Nyssa described the spiritual life as an ascent into divine glory but always marked by increasing humility. In *The Life of Moses*, he portrays Moses drawing nearer to God yet recognizing deeper mystery and majesty.

Within the Wesleyan tradition, holy love never displaced holy fear. John Wesley warned against "lightness" in worship and insisted that reverence and joy coexist. In Sermon 34, "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," Wesley affirmed that reverence for God preserves moral clarity.

Early Pentecostal revivals were marked by profound awe. Eyewitness accounts from Azusa Street describe moments of silence so weighty that no one dared speak casually. Confession flowed not from manipulation but from awareness of divine holiness.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 2

Holiness movements across centuries have understood that when reverence fades, compromise grows.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Meditate deliberately on passages that reveal God's holiness (Isaiah 6; Revelation 4–5).
2. Confess casual or flippant attitudes toward sacred things.
3. Fast from speech or entertainment that trivializes God's name.
4. Reintroduce solemn, unhurried prayer into your daily rhythm.
5. Ask the Spirit to restore weight and wonder in worship.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Holy and Majestic Lord, You are high and lifted up, radiant in holiness and clothed in glory. Yet I confess that I have treated sacred realities casually. I have grown familiar without reverence. I have spoken lightly where I should have bowed deeply. Forgive my irreverence. Remove presumption from my heart. Restore holy fear within me, not terror that drives me away, but awe that draws me near in humility. I cannot manufacture reverence by discipline alone. I depend upon Your Spirit to reveal Your majesty to my soul. Let fasting quiet pride and awaken wonder. Let my worship carry weight. Let my obedience flow from awe. Teach me to fear You rightly and therefore to live wisely. Amen."

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL STUDY

- Psalm 111:10 — Fear of the Lord as wisdom.
- Hebrews 12:28–29 — Reverent worship.
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 — Fear God and keep His commandments.
- Acts 5:1–11 — Awe in the early church.
- Exodus 3 — Moses before the burning bush.

LENT LESSONS 2026
WEEK 2

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, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit."

EXPOUNDING THE TEXT
Psalm 51 is not abstract theology. It is exposed failure. It is David after Nathan's confrontation. It is the king stripped of denial. The superscription anchors the psalm in 2 Samuel 11–12; adultery, deception, murder, and prophetic rebuke. This is not vague confession; it is covenant breach.

David does not begin by minimizing sin. Earlier in the psalm he declares, "Against You, You only, I have sinned." His awareness is vertical before it is horizontal. Sin is not merely damage to reputation; it is offense against holiness.

By verse 10, the prayer deepens: "Create in me a clean heart, God."

The Hebrew verb **bara** (*create*) is the same word used in Genesis 1:1; "In the beginning God created." It is used in Scripture exclusively of divine action. David is not asking for improvement. He is asking for re-creation. He understands that moral adjustment is insufficient. Behavioral reform is too shallow. The problem is interior. Holiness requires new creation.

The word translated "clean" (*tahor*) is often used in ceremonial contexts, purity suitable for God's presence. David is not asking merely for relief from guilt; he is asking for fitness for fellowship.

Then he prays:
"Renew a steadfast spirit within me." The word for "renew" (*chadesh*) implies restoration to former strength. "Steadfast" (*kun*) carries the sense of being established, firm, stable. David knows his failure did not begin with Bathsheba; it began with drift. Stability eroded before scandal erupted. Holiness is not emotional intensity; it is durable loyalty.

Then comes one of the most sobering petitions in the Old Testament: "Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." Under the Old Covenant, the Spirit empowered leaders for specific tasks and could depart, as in Saul's

case (1 Samuel 16:14). David knows that sin jeopardizes fellowship. He fears not merely consequence but distance from God.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus promises that the Spirit will dwell with believers forever (John 14:16–17). Yet Ephesians 4:30 warns that the Spirit can be grieved. David's cry becomes our caution: sin dulls communion.

Finally, David prays: "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation."

Notice he does not ask for salvation itself but for joy. Sin steals delight. Guilt suffocates gladness. Holiness is not dour morality. It is restored joy rooted in a forgiven and transformed life.

John Wesley, in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766), wrote: "It is the loving God with all our heart."

Wesley understood holiness as perfected love, not mere restraint, but affection rightly ordered.

The Holiness movement emphasized that sin is not only an action problem; it is a heart problem. External conformity without inward cleansing produces hypocrisy. Pentecostal theology, rooted in Wesleyan soil, declared that the Spirit not only empowers witness but purifies the heart.

Fasting exposes inward disorder. When appetite is restrained, hidden cravings surface. Pride, envy, impatience, or self-will all arise when comfort is removed. Fasting does not create corruption; it reveals it. And prayer invites divine recreation.

Holiness is not self-engineered discipline. It is Spirit-wrought transformation.

David's prayer teaches us that repentance is not complete until desire is transformed.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Hearts Cleansed by Faith (Acts 15:8–9)
At the Jerusalem Council, Peter recounts what happened when the gospel came to the Gentiles: "God… gave them the Holy Spirit… cleansing their hearts by faith."

The Spirit was not merely external power. He purified the interior life. Pentecost was not simply empowerment for proclamation; it was cleansing for communion.

Classical Pentecostal theology affirmed that Spirit baptism empowers obedience and intensifies sanctification. The Spirit strengthens resolve, illumines conscience, and deepens sensitivity to sin.

Holiness is both positional and progressive, declared righteous in Christ, and continually renewed by the Spirit.

EXAMPLES FROM THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874), central to the Holiness revival, urged believers to place themselves entirely upon the altar in faith. In *The Way of Holiness* (1843), she wrote: "The altar sanctifies the gift."

She emphasized that full consecration invited full sanctification.

Mary Lena Tate called for seasons of heart-searching prayer before revival gatherings within the House of God tradition. She warned that outward manifestations without inward purity were unstable.

William Seymour at Azusa Street repeatedly emphasized humility and heart cleansing before spiritual power. Eyewitnesses reported extended seasons of confession preceding Spirit outpouring.

Historically, durable revival has always been preceded by inward renewal.

LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ask God to expose not only actions but motives.
2. Confess specific heart attitudes — pride, envy, resentment, impurity, self-reliance.
3. Pray Psalm 51:10 daily during Lent.
4. Fast from influences that inflame inward impurity.
5. Seek Spirit-filled renewal, not mere willpower reform.
6. Ask the Spirit to restore joy, not merely remove guilt.

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE AND DEPENDENCE

"Merciful and Holy Father, My problem is deeper than behavior. My heart has been divided. I have harbored pride, nourished self-will, and justified hidden motives. I have sought relief from consequence more than renewal of spirit. Create in me a clean heart. I cannot recreate myself. I cannot purify my own desires. I depend entirely upon the sanctifying work of Your Holy Spirit. Renew steadfastness where drift has begun. Restore joy where sin has dimmed delight. Guard me from grieving Your Spirit. Let this fast strip

away pretense and expose hidden compromise. Make me inwardly holy so that my outward obedience reflects Your glory. Through Christ my Lord, 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.