



{INVITATIONS}

DENY.

The Lenten Journey Begins

Psalm 32; Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11; Romans 5:12-19

GETTING STARTED

Have you ever fasted? Share your experience of what you did, what it was like, and how you were impacted. If you have never fasted, listen for commonality in other people's experiences.

READ AND REFLECT

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Context: What is happening before and after this passage?

Fasting in the Bible is always linked to refraining from food (and sometimes water) in response to sin or grief. Given the ministry road Jesus is beginning to travel, do you think his fast had to do with sin or grief? Anything else?

Tempted can also be translated tested or to be tempered (as in preparation for battle). How was this desert experience important for Jesus? Do we need "deserts of testing/tempering"? Why or why not?

What tests did Jesus face? How did he respond? Can you resonate with these same tests in your life? How so?

ENGAGE AND DISCUSS

How have you experienced the Lenten season in years past? Does Lent carry any personal significance for you in your faith journey?

Dan Meyer says, "You see, if a genuinely intelligent Evil exists (as the Bible says it does), then it probably isn't going to expend much energy on someone as long as he or she is living their faith in an uncommitted or semi-committed way. The cosmetic Christian isn't not a threat to the cause of Darkness. Why waste spiritual bullets on somebody whose Christianity is mainly something they put on for Sundays or for the kids or when its convenient."

What do you think about this quote? How is it telling for you (us) today?

Read Mark 8:34-35. What is Jesus saying to us? How can "deny" ever be attractive enough or valuable enough for us to actually do something about it?

NEXT STEPS

- Read Psalm 32 each day this week.
- How does this Psalm speak to your heart and soul?
- *Do not merely listen to the word, do what it says* (James 1:22). As you are led, confess you sin to God this week.
- Consider journaling your Lenten journey these next six weeks. After Easter, go back and read what you wrote. What is God doing in your life?
- Share any insights you may have on your journey with your group or a trusted friend. This may be as much for you and it will be for them.