

NOTES

WHY OBSERVE LENT?

1. As a millennial myself, I can attest to my own attraction to ancient church traditions that are often absent from contemporary evangelical church services, as well as the troubling feeling that such a desire somehow betrays the sacrifice of Reformation-era brothers and sisters who have gone before me. The conversation surrounding a proper appropriation of Lenten practices is deeper and richer than would fit in this brief introduction. So let me refer you to the excellent book *The Good of Giving Up: Discovering the Freedom of Lent* (Chicago: Moody, 2017) by Aaron Damiani for an accessible exploration of the history of Lent and an evangelical case for its practice in our church communities today. See “A (Mercifully Short) History of Lent,” 35–36.
2. A fantastic resource on this topic is John Piper’s book *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).
3. One of the most common hang-ups for beginners of Lent is not knowing when it starts and how long it lasts. To clarify, the season of Lent spans the forty-six days preceding Easter Sunday; since Sundays are considered mini-celebrations of Jesus’ resurrection, they are excluded from the traditional requirements of fasting, which is why Lent is commonly referred to as forty days long. To determine the start of Lent each year, use a calendar or type “when does Lent begin in [current year]” in your preferred search engine.
4. At the time I began drafting this book, I sensed the Lord lay someone on my heart so that I may live out this uncovering of Jesus’ love in my own life before I wrote about it. I knew I wanted to love them better, but I didn’t know where to start. My friend Wendy suggested I plan acts of love based on Gary Chapman’s work in the weeks leading up to Easter. She emphasized that just because a loving act is preplanned does not make it any less sincere, and that in time my feelings may



follow my actions. She was right. I was pleasantly surprised to notice a thawing of both our hearts as Jesus' love compelled me to practical love. We may become closer in the years to come; conversely, it's possible that we will never be best buddies.

In any case, I've personally experienced the power of God's love to change us as we respond to His love, and I believe you will experience restoration and redemption in your relationships as well. For more information, see: Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages* (Chicago: Northfield, 2015).

WEEK 1

1. My understanding of Jesus' temptation expanded as I listened to this excellent sermon from the co-creator of The Bible Project: Tim Mackie, n.d., "Testing Jesus in the Wilderness, Gospel of Matthew Part 3," podcast audio, *Exploring My Strange Bible*, May 14, 2018, <https://exploring-my-strange-bible.simplecast.com/episodes/921dab20-921dab20>.
2. "In first-century Palestine, disciples typically took the initiative in attaching themselves to a particular rabbi, not vice versa. As a well-known dictum declared, 'Provide yourself with a teacher.' Jesus broke with this custom and called his own disciples" (R. M. Bowman Jr., "Is Jesus the Only Way?," *CSB Study Bible*, E. A. Blum and T. Wax, eds. [Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017], 1698).
3. To better understand how the rabbis of Jesus' day would have viewed His disciples, see the temple rulers' opinion of Peter and John in Acts 4:13.
4. According to one scholar, "Running out of wine represented a social disaster much greater in the first century than it would today. Disgrace, humiliation, insult—all these and more would be brought upon the family with such carelessness as to allow this to happen. Wedding celebrations in that day sometimes lasted nearly a week, so the wine supply was a major consideration." For more, see: Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000).

WEEK 2

1. I don't usually wade into textual criticism, but this one's worth pondering, because it reveals something of Jesus' character in Mark 1:41. While most English translations (including the KJV, ESV, HCSB, and NLT) refer to Jesus' compassion or pity (original Greek word *splogchnizomai*; Strong's G4697), the NIV pulls from a few

other ancient manuscripts that render the verse as “Jesus was indignant.” The variation comes from weighing external and internal evidence in deciding which manuscripts to translate. Elsewhere in the gospel narratives, we see examples of both Jesus’ compassion and His indignation, and both responses are plausible. Most commentators on the gospel of Mark opine that the original Greek text refers to Jesus’ anger, explaining that it’s His divine response to seeing His perfect creation twisted and disfigured by the effects of sin. This response makes sense within the context of Jesus’ righteous anger at sin’s effect on His world (see Week Five, Day Three for a discussion on Jesus’ anger), yet it doesn’t invalidate His response of compassion toward this man who had been thus disfigured. Both responses are appropriate; both express His love. To read more about the Bible translators’ decision-making process on Mark 1:41, read: Louis, “Was Jesus Angry or Compassionate According to Mark 1:41? The NIV vs. NLT,” *The Baker Deep End Blog*, Baker Book House, bbhchurchconnection.wordpress.com/2012/09/10/was-jesus-angry-or-compassionate-according-to-mark-141-the-niv-vs-nlt.

2. “splaɡchnizomai,” Blue Letter Bible, Strong’s G4697, www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G4697&t=KJV.

WEEK 3

1. The Old Testament prophets frequently referred to Israel’s royal and priestly administrators as the nation’s shepherds, accusing them of abusing their power and failing to provide and protect the people. In Mark 6:14–29, the passage immediately preceding today’s text, King Herod throws a drunken, lustful, and murderous banquet; the contrast between that meal and Jesus’ benevolent banquet in Mark 6:30–44 would not have been lost on original readers.
2. A bit of historical background may prove helpful here: “Apparitions were usually frightening (though Josephus employs the term here translated “ghost” for angels). Jewish tradition warned of dangerous night spirits. On a popular level, many Gentiles and probably a number of Jews believed in ghosts, although such a belief technically contradicts mainstream Jewish views of the afterlife (heaven or hell and future resurrection). Gentiles often believed that the ghosts of those drowned at sea hovered over the sites of their deaths” (*NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, footnote on Matthew 14:26, eds. David W. Baker, et al. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016]).



3. *The Moody Bible Commentary* is helpful here: “When Jesus said **it is I**, the Gk. words are *ego eimi*, a phrase used in Isaiah 40–50 (LXX) by God when He alone claims to have the power to rescue His people. . . . Is 41:10 says, ‘Do not fear [“fear” here is *phobou*; in Mt 14:27, *phobeisthe*—same word, different person and mood], for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am [*ego eimi*] your God. . . . Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Michael G. Vanlaningham, “Matthew,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds. [Chicago: Moody, 2014], 1479).
4. I’ve found myself wondering what exactly Peter was doubting in that moment. We can’t know for sure, but I wonder if Peter doubted whether Jesus would save him from the crashing waves. Had he doubted one time too many? Yes, Jesus was God. Yes, Jesus had power over nature. Yes, Jesus could save him. But would He? We can easily put ourselves in Peter’s shaky sandals: Am I worthy of Jesus’ love? Am I worthy of being saved, after I got myself into this mess? Will Jesus give me a second chance? Or a third? Or a fourth? Whether these thoughts crossed Peter’s mind we’ll never know. But the answer to all those questions is a resounding “Yes!” Jesus’ ongoing love and compassion for Peter is proof of that (see Luke 22:32; John 21:15–19).

WEEK 4

1. “It was long since the law of death had been demanded; and even had this not been the case, the Roman law would have interfered” (J. S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: St. John*, Vol. 2 [London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.], 5–6). Both the *The Biblical Illustrator: St. John* and *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* support that the Jewish leaders did not have the legal right to execute anyone without the governor’s permission (see John 18:31), but it seems Roman rulers may have occasionally allowed stoning as long as it didn’t result in a public disturbance (as in Stephen’s case) (John D. Guthrie, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, eds. [Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 1061).

WEEK 5

1. This theological phrase, originally *incurvatus in se* in Latin, is thought to have originated with the early church theologian Augustine of Hippo, though it appears in Paul’s writings in Romans 7:15–19 and was also expounded upon by Martin

NOTES

Luther in his *Lectures on Romans* as well as Karl Barth and Søren Kierkegaard. This phrase provides a basic paradigm that helps us understand sin and its effects not just personally but also relationally, describing a life lived inward for oneself rather than outward for God and others. Though such a discussion is outside the scope of this book, the Lenten season offers us a beautiful opportunity to meditate on the effects of such sin in our lives. I'm convinced we need to develop a better vocabulary to discuss sin so that we may continue to mortify it, both personally and relationally. A hefty but helpful starter may be Matt Jenson's book *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther, and Barth on 'Homo Incurvatus in Se'* (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

2. As a “chief” tax collector, Zacchaeus would have set collection policies and hired other tax collectors to work for him. He would have been held accountable by his people for the misdeeds of all those under his supervision. For more information, see Craig S. Keener’s “The Gospel of Luke” in the *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eds. David W. Baker et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 1787.
3. In this Middle Eastern culture, offering hospitality to a renowned teacher was a great honor, but respected teachers didn’t request hospitality. So Jesus tramples over all sorts of unwritten rules as He extends friendship to this scorned man.
4. John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary series (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 353.

WEEK 6

1. The perfume in question cost a year’s wages, which would amount to a lifetime’s savings. In today’s economy at the current minimum wage, that would bring the cost to approximately \$25,000. This exact figure comes from John Piper’s sermon “Leave Her Alone, Judas—This Is for My Burial,” on November 5, 2011 at Bethlehem Baptist Church, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/leave-her-alone-judas-this-is-for-my-burial>. Another scholarly resource that supports this figure is Donald Guthrie’s “John” in the *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed., 1051. Leicester, England (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
2. See Exodus 21:32 for the redemption cost of a slave. Zechariah 11:12 uses the same phrase for the “wages” paid to the rejected shepherd (the Messiah), and Matthew refers to this prophecy in 27:9–10. The exact value of thirty pieces of silver is disputable, with some scholars stating that it could be up to four months’ wages



and others as little as a single month. Regardless of the exact amount, Judas scoffs at Mary's extravagant offering for Jesus while betraying Him for a fraction of that cost. For more details, see Louis A. Barbieri, Jr.'s "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, 2:82 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985).

3. Craig S. Keener, "The Gospel of John," *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eds. David W. Baker et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 1841.

WEEK 7

1. Craig S. Keener, *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eds. David W. Baker et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 1852.