



Lord, you delight to set your truth deep in my spirit. Come into my secret heart and teach me wisdom. Purify my conscience! Make this leper clean again!

Wash me in your love until I am pure in heart. Satisfy me in your sweetness, and my song of joy will return. The places within me you have crushed will rejoice in your healing touch.

Psalms 51:6-8

Time flies, and it's already February, which means we begin our Lenten journey to Calvary and celebrate Easter!

Historically, Lent was the time set apart for the new converts ready for baptism. The candidates would prepare themselves by spending time in fasting, refraining from food from sunrise to sunset before baptism. Over time, Lent became a time for general penance and abstinence. Reflection and contemplating on gracious acts of God and spiritual renewal become the emphasis of the season. As the psalmist noted, this is the time to humble ourselves, seek the face of God and invite him to our innermost secrets. We ask God to show us his love, purify our consciences, and heal us, that we rejoice in the covenant promise again.

During Lent, we are invited to walk the path of Jesus to Calvary and are encouraged to observe the season with fasting and self-emptying in our spiritual practices (Mark 1:13). We ask the Lord to occupy our hearts, our minds, and our whole being, nurturing our faith as we embark on a new journey, while we limit ourselves from things that distract us from our spiritual disciplines.

Even if many believers pay less attention to Lent these days, we are convinced that the Christian church can restore the importance of Lent in our 21st century world. The first step is to acknowledge the purpose of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross. Christians need to take seriously the act of faith and the importance of the Cross as part of the divine correlation for redemption. Second, believers ought to ask who we are. As we are called and chosen for God, we are encouraged to lead this life and commit ourselves and exercise our faith.

Paul urged the Ephesians to put off their old selves and put on their new humanity “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” Ephesians 4:22-24.

Therefore, starting on Ash Wednesday we observe Lent, imitating Jesus, because his temptation mirrors our path as everyone carries their own crosses in this life (Mark 8:34).



In observing, we also encounter God in our prayers. We are called to empty ourselves, sacrifice our needs, and pursue God's presence in repentance. **We practice self-discipline as we direct our attention away from ourselves, social media, TVs, smartphone buzzes, and our needs and toward God.**

This season, I encourage you to begin with the simple step taking a few minutes every day for God and make an intentional focus to God each day. Set a time throughout the day, whether in the morning, at noon or evening, and read a scripture passage or pray. Remember how the Lord your God has walked with you all these years and how he strengthened you and showed you his gracious love through your hard times (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

And as the Psalms states, may God *Come into your secret hearts, purify your conscience, strengthen you; may he heal you, and teach you wisdom this season.*

Amen

Pastor Owar Ojulu

