



Giving Up

Week 1: Giving Up Control

Teaching Guide

Key Texts:

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Luke 4:1-12

Message:

Intro

Tonight we are starting a brand new series called “Giving Up.” This time of year, the forty days before Easter, is a period that the church calls Lent. Just a few years after Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, some Christians wanted a way to prepare their hearts for the celebration of Easter, so they started this practice of self-denial, focused prayer, and scripture study that became known as Lent. This idea grew and grew to the point that in 325AD a council of church leaders from all over the world got together in a town called Nicaea, and decided that Lent was something that the everyone in the church should participate in.

Today most people observe Lent by giving something up that they really like. They give up things like coffee or sugar, but what is the point of that? In his book *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “The New Testament has a lot to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself.” What if this year, instead of giving up things that we really like, and will probably pick right back up, we gave up things that keep us from being like Christ, and we gave them up permanently? Would you pray with me?

The Real

A few days ago I got a Facebook message from a guy I went to high school with. He and I were never super close, but we are Facebook friends, so I vaguely knew what he was doing with his life. He wrote me to ask for a

character reference. I fill out a lot of references for people, I guess people think having a pastor vouch for them is a good thing, but this was a different type of character reference. It was not for a job, or to move into a new apartment; his lawyer was asking him to get a character reference so that he could prove to a judge that the “recent mistake” he made was just a one-time thing, and not indicative of who he really was.

As soon as he mentioned the word judge I was googling, and pulling up police reports, and it only took me about five minutes to piece together the whole story. He was managing a Pep Boy’s auto parts store, and had embezzled \$29,000 from the store over the past year and a half. I told him that a year and a half did not really seem like a one-time thing to me, and he started to explain how it all happened. He was having some trouble at home and knew that the extra money would fix the problems. Then someone who really looked up to him confessed to him that he had a major drug problem and couldn’t afford treatment and he thought he could fix that problem. He said that the whole time he was taking the money, he knew that it was wrong, but he thought that ends justified the means, and he felt like as long as he was the one in control, things would be ok. Here’s the thing though: he was never in control. The police and his company had been on to him since the beginning. The whole time that he thought he was this mastermind, who was able to make other people’s lives better, they were letting him do it, so that they could build a better case against him. He was never in control.

The Rub:

Have you ever thought you were in complete control of a situation, and then suddenly realize you are NOT? Maybe it was a situation with grades, and you thought you had it figured out so that you could get everything in on time, but your plan didn’t work, and you were stuck. Maybe it was money. You thought you could make this big purchase now, and pay your phone bill and insurance with the next paycheck, but then your hours got cut. Have you ever felt like you had it orchestrated everything perfectly, only to realize that you were never really in control at all? Of course you have. We all have! We want to be in control. We want to have the answers. We want to be the ones that can fix things. We want to be God! Wait, what? I know what you’re thinking, “Wait, I never said anything about wanting to be God. I just want to be in control of my life.”

The Read:

To want to be in complete control is to want to be God. I know it doesn't seem like that is what we are saying, that is the beauty of the temptation to want to be in control. And it is literally the oldest temptation in the book. Look at what happened way back in the Garden of Eden.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV).

God said to Adam "Welcome to earth. You can literally do anything you want in here, except for eat from this tree." Seems like a pretty good deal to me, but just one chapter later, a few versus really, Adam and Eve are suddenly wanting to do the one thing they know that they shouldn't; they want to be the ones in control. You know the story; Satan shows up and says "God isn't being fair to you. Why would you let him treat you like that, you should really take control of this situation, because his way just isn't working.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 3:1-7 (NIV).

Satan's temptations always start out the same way, "You should be in charge. You should be able to do it your way." Look at how he tempted Jesus:

This preview includes a select number of pages from this resource.

If you like what you see, download the entire resource today!

downloadyouthministry.com