



INSPIRE

MARCH 2023



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**“Live as children of light ... and find out what pleases the Lord”
(Ephesians 5:8b, 10, NIV)**

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It's Complicated ...

Dear friends,

With Ash Wednesday having fallen on 23rd February this year, this month sits wholly within the season of Lent. As this is traditionally a season for self-examination and for thinking and praying about the way in which we live out our faith, the themes of our first three services in March will give us opportunities to focus on: resisting temptation; prayer and fasting; repentance and forgiveness. The Bible readings related to these three themes will be about Jesus being tested in the wilderness, Jesus' teaching on fasting and Jesus' teaching about forgiving those who do wrong to us. On the face of it, these might seem to be quite straightforward themes to look at, yet each of them might result in our preachers or ourselves saying or thinking "It's complicated!"

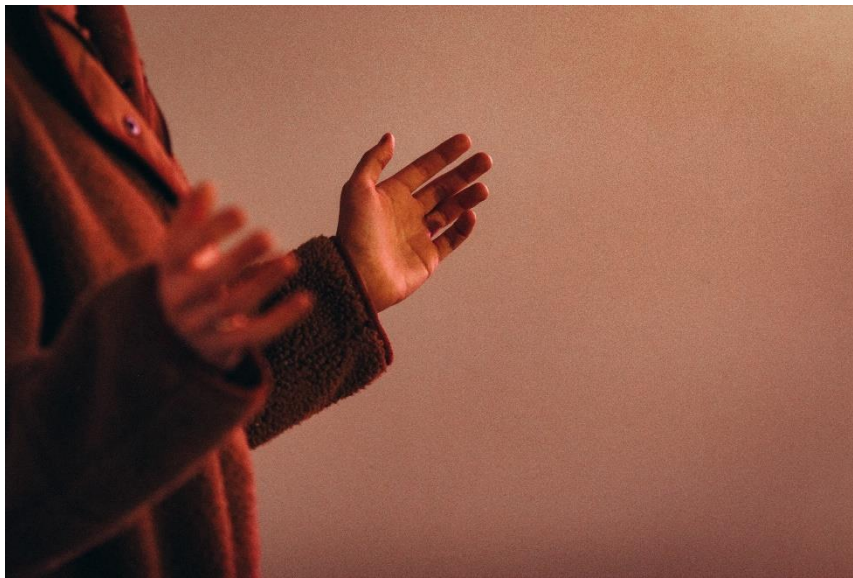


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If you are wondering why these themes might be complicated, it's simply (!) because they might all bring to mind aspects of our lives where it may sound good to do what we believe that God is asking us to do, yet where it might prove to be really hard to actually put that into practice. If you've ever given in to temptation, found yourself feeling that your prayer life isn't that great, felt that fasting isn't as easy to do as it sounds, or struggled to forgive someone who has deeply hurt you, perhaps you will know what I mean.

It can feel complicated in all of those ways to try to live out the teaching that we find in the Bible – and perhaps in many more. But just because something seems difficult or complicated, that doesn't mean that we should never try it. Neither should it mean that we should write ourselves off as hopeless failures when we don't manage to live up to our own aims or expectations – or to the aims or expectations of other people.

So one question that it might be really helpful to ask ourselves as we go through Lent might simply be "What next?" Or, to put it another way, "Given all that I know about God and all that I have learned in my life, what do I feel that God wants me to try to be, to try to say and to try to do?" OK, that may sound complicated too, but we've got quite a few weeks during Lent to think about it!

God bless,

Robert

Giving Up

It is customary, Lord
to give something up
during the season of Lent.
What would you have me do without?
I who have so much.
Chocolate?
Cream cakes?
Cigarettes?
Sweets?
Swearing?
The list is endless
and I could give up all those things
for the span of 40 days
quite easily and almost painlessly.
But what difference would it make
other than making me feel 'holier'
that my friend who makes no such sacrifice?

What would you have me do without?
I who have so much
Selfishness?
Conceit?
Envy?
Pride?
I fear before I ask,
that the answer might be 'yes'
and the giving up
would be all too real, Lord.
It would be difficult,
painful,
sacrificial,
a real cross to carry for 40 days,
and more?

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Pay Attention

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?' (Psalm 139:7, NIV)

God is omnipresent. Always present, at every moment.

We don't need to wait for God to 'show up'. What we need to do is open our awareness. Faith, in a way, is therefore merely the practice of paying attention.

That's easier said than done in the age of distraction, when we're encouraged to focus anywhere but the present moment. We can't be distant from God, but we can be distracted from God.

So here is a challenge for you this Lent: pay attention.

Pay attention to yourself. Your depths. Your aches. Your desires. Your tiredness. Your anger. God is in those things. Pay attention.

Pay attention to the world. It really is astonishing. Pay attention to other people. They're all going through something.

Pay attention to hope. It's real. While the news tends to focus our attention only on what's going wrong in the world, there is plenty going right. God is not in a state of dismay; God is moving, working, feeding the great work of restoration.

Always-present God, help us to pay attention. To the world. To other people. To ourselves. And, ultimately, to you. Amen.

Gideon Heugh

Gideon writes for Tearfund and is a poet and environmentalist

Reprinted with permission from the Tearfund Lent Daily Devotional: you can sign up at www.tearfund.org

Greg's Ghana Trip

I am off on one of my mission / ministry trips to Ghana on 2nd March. The proposal is to be there until the night of the 14th, returning to the UK morning of the 15th. That is right on the end of my latest two-year multiple-entry visa, so pray I don't get delayed or retained for any reason!

The purpose is as the last few trips: Firstly, to continue with the investment programme into the village churches to help them to become more financially independent of European support, and to look at an investment project into the central church management team, which will make a huge difference.

Secondly to call the leaders of the 11 branches together to continue the teaching and envisioning for each church to major on making disciples rather than mere church members, so that 'the whole body is built up ... reaching unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ', as clearly set out in Ephesians 4:11-16, one of my favorite scriptures. That might sound an ambitious project, but with God's help and now, the cooperation of the whole central church leadership team, it is what we need to reach out for. For so many churches in Ghana, the distraction is to 'have more members' and to 'have a building / better building / improve the building'. Noble as those things are, they are not the sole reason Jesus died! The other enemy in Ghana is of course the 'Prosperity Gospel'. Enough said on that one!

So, if you could pray please that I travel in safety, can flow in the Spirit in all the teaching, and in all the meetings, and stay healthy, that will be great! As normal these days, I have to travel without insurance, since they only cover the things for which you would never want to make a claim! God is greater than all, and He has looked after me thus far. Hopefully I can give a good report in the next issue in April.

Greg Hall



Events, Opportunities and Training

Christian Aid, Changemakers Conference.

Saturday 4 March 2023, 10am-4pm, on Zoom. This year's **Online Conference** will include an exciting range of stories of the Christian Aid work and a first look at this year's Christian Aid Week film. You can watch it Online on your own (even if you can't watch it all, watch what you can). Find out more about the event at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/events/changemakers-conference>

Refresh Women's Conference.

Saturday 11th March 10am – 3pm, Mansfield Baptist Church NG19 6AB. £15 per person (includes lunch and refreshments). Join the Refresh team for their spring conference for a wonderful day of worship, teaching, encouragement and lots of refreshment. Hosted by Revd Dianne Tidball with guest speaker, Rosie Bunker (Grace Church, Nottingham).

Registration opens at 8am on Saturday 28 January! For more information and to book your place: <https://eastmidlandbaptistassociation.churchsuite.com/events/z17cnejr>.

Booking deadline: midnight on Wednesday 08 March 2023.

2023 East Midland Baptist Association AGM

Saturday 24 June 2023 at Melton Mowbray Baptist Church, Leicestershire. Further information to follow in due course.

EMBA Safeguarding Training Programme.

Please see <https://www.embaptists.co.uk/how-do-we-help/safeguarding/safeguarding-training/> for further details of our 2023 training programme. Please do keep checking the website, as new dates will be added as and when they are confirmed.

Operation Agri (OA)

OA is looking for new Trustees, including a new Chair. OA, now in its 62nd year, was established to support the agricultural missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society (now BMS World Mission) and still maintains close links with the society. For more information on becoming an OA trustee or to have a chat without commitment please contact Nigel Jones, Secretary, on 07889 023 706 or email NigelJones@operationagri.org.uk

Dates for your Diary – March

Sunday 5th All Age Service:10.30am - Leading & Preaching: Team

Weds 8th Craft and Chat 9.30-11.30am

Warm Welcome 12.30pm to 4pm

Sunday 12th Morning Service: 10.30am – Leading: Jonny White, Preaching: Robert Foster

Weds 15th Craft and Chat 9.30 – 11.30am

Warm Welcome 12.30pm to 4pm

Sunday 19th Communion Service :10.30am -Leading: Jean Harvey, Preaching: David Harvey

Weds 23rd Craft and Chat 9.30 – 11.30am

Warm Welcome 12.30pm to 4pm

Sunday 26th Morning Service: 10.30am – Leading: Su Churm, Preaching: Robert Foster



Photo by [Libby Penner](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Notices

Sunday Services:

Sunday services have resumed in the building but any who cannot come in person will also be able to join via Zoom using the details below:

You can join by visiting <https://zoom.us/j/3431622013>

... or using the Zoom app and meeting ID 3431622013

... or phone (0330) 0885830 and enter the meeting ID 3431622013 then #

The meeting password is available via the pastor or church secretary.

Please pray during the week for those who are due to lead, preach and cover the technical aspects of the service. Also please pray for all those who lead the online children's work before, during and after the service.

Prayer Meetings

There will be daily prayer meetings at 7.30am every weekday morning and 9am on weekends and bank holidays – using the following Zoom details: Meeting ID: 899 0084 1018 / Password:

Bible Study Notes

Fiona Worrall orders bible study notes for many people in the fellowship. If you would like to place a regular order or discuss which notes might suit you please see Fiona in person or she can be contacted by phone or text on and by e-mail at

Food and Community Hub: General Shopping List

We have **many gaps** so if you are shopping in the near future and could donate one of these items we would be very grateful:

Tinned Potatoes and Packets of
Mash
Tinned Fruit
Steamed Puddings
Rice pudding
Tinned Meat Meals e.g: curry, chilli
Fray Bentos style pies
Vegetarian Meals
Corned Beef/Cooked Ham, Hotdog
sausages

Toilet Rolls, in smaller packs
preferably
Tea, Coffee
Sugar
Shampoo, shower gel, deodorant etc.
Wrapped cake bars and biscuits
UHT Milk
Cat and dog food