

Growing in God 2022 “Making the most of Lent”

Lent is built around the 40 days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the wilderness before starting his public ministry. We read that, “*He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit*” (Luke 4v14), demonstrating how focussing on our relationship with God over this season of Lent is a wonderful opportunity to grow in God.

Part 1 Entering the desert

1. You can't go to a desert for the next 40 days, but we are encouraging you to keep a journal of this time. Scriptures you read, things God shows you, prayers you pray. You can then encourage each other by (appropriately) sharing some of these things when you meet in small groups. If you are not already in a group, we encourage you to join one for this season.
2. Read Luke 4v1-14, the account of Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness.
3. Jesus entered the desert and rid himself of all distractions to focus on his relationship with his heavenly Father. *Discuss how you can overcome distractions to press into God during this season.*
4. Jesus overcame strong temptation on 3 occasions, mainly by a knowledge AND understanding of scripture. *Discuss how you overcome temptation. Can you share examples which can encourage others in your group?*
5. Pray together:
 - For each other, especially those in a hard, isolated wilderness type place.
 - For God's kingdom to come in Ukraine

Part 2: The question of fasting

1. Read through Luke 4v1-14 again with particular attention to v1-4. Here we read that Jesus fasted for 40 days and then the devil tempted him, “*If you really are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread,*” to which Jesus responded, “*Man does not live on bread alone*”
2. The key point about fasting is that it accompanies prayer, bringing focus and strength to our prayers. It's all about seeking God with all our heart (see Psalm 42v1,2).
LOOK UP scriptures on prayer and fasting and discuss. Here's a few: Luke 2v37; Acts 13v1-4; Joel 2v12-13; Mat 6v16-18; Isaiah 58v3-7
SHARE any times that you have fasted and prayed? What were the circumstances? How did it help your prayers?
3. NEXT WEEK, Elim is arranging 3 days of prayer and fasting next Tuesday 22nd – Thursday 24th. Take a look at the 3 minute promo here https://youtu.be/m0e_W4qjW3s and discuss how you could take part as a small group
4. PASTORING: We are hoping that each GG group can help pray and pastor some other church members. Please have a look at your list and pray for them.
5. PRAY for each other's needs and also for the situation in Ukraine

Part 3: The parable of the wedding banquet

In the few days between Palm Sunday and Good Friday a lot happened and Jesus had a lot to say. Everything he said was significant, but the things people say just before they go away are often the really important things to them. So here we look at Matthew 22v1-14, the parable of the wedding banquet.

This parable was spoken primarily to the chief priests and pharisees. It points out

how they are rejecting God's invitation of eternal life. Further to that, it shows how the invitation has gone out to "the street corners". We're all invited! But have we got the God given "wedding clothes" (v12)? We can only be chosen if we have received God's gift of eternal life (John 1v12), ie received these wedding clothes, something that is discussed below.

1. READ Matthew 22v1-14

2. DISCUSS: What are our God given wedding clothes? Read Isaiah 61v10; Rev 3v4,5; Rev 7v9-17; Phil 3v9

3. INVITING OTHERS (Matt 22v8-10): How can we take on the role of inviters in our personal lives?

4. HOW can we get involved in these outreach events at church?

This weekend – Community Saturday and Mission Sunday

Fri 15th April Good Friday Walk of Witness

Sun 17th April Easter Sunday celebration with egg hunt

Tues 24th May – Weds 1st June: Mission

Sun 5th June Jubilee Sunday

16-19th June: Festival outreach

5. PRAY for each other's needs and also for the situation in Ukraine

Part 4 Signs of Jesus' return, and mission

Just days before Jesus' death he spoke with his disciples about future persecutions, the end of the age and his return. Some of these things were about things which were going to happen to the disciples, but other things he talked of were regarding the coming of his kingdom and the end of the age.

1. READ Matt 24v1-14

2. DISCUSS: A simultaneously frightening and exciting passage! On the one hand, Jesus speaks of wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution and hardship. On the other hand he speaks of the promise to those who stand firm, and of the gospel going to all nations.

3. PRAY: How exciting that a mission team that was en route to Romainia is now coming to join with our fellowship in late May. We are part of the gospel being preached to the whole world! Let's take time to pray into this.

4. PRAY for each other's needs and also for the situation in Ukraine.

Part 5 Easter week

1. This week we are making **high quality Easter week daily devotionals produced by Elim Bible college** available. There is plenty from them to discuss in your small groups this week. We have been posting them daily, but click here for the full set <http://www.ctr-iow.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Easter-week-devotionals-day-1-8.pdf>

2. ENCOURAGE each other to join the **Good Friday Walk of Witness**, starting 12.30pm outside the Congregational/Catholic church and ending at 2pm (ish) for refreshments at church on the Roundabout

3. ENCOURAGE each other to join in our **Easter Celebration and egg hunt** for all the family this Sunday at 11am

4. PRAY: Ukraine, our mission next month