



*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*

Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)

No matter our age or how long we have had a relationship with Jesus, we are on a spiritual pilgrimage of learning and discovery. We are seeking to know and to experience more fully the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ. We are seeking to know the mind of Christ and how to pattern our lives after the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are seeking how to be open to the call and movement of God and the transforming power of God's Spirit in every aspect of our lives.

The season of Lent is a time to reflect on our call to discipleship and our journey of faith. These 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter can be transformational should we choose to surrender ourselves to this holy invitation.

During Lent we are invited to slow down, take a step back from the busyness of our daily routines and intentionally create space for the inward work of "cross examination." Taking time to reflect on our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It's a time to self-examine your faith and ask has it become ritual or stagnant, have life circumstances caused you to question or doubt your faith, or do you find you are lacking in faith?

We are invited to a season of study, fasting, praying and self-denial ... choosing to take off and let go of the things that trip us up and weigh us down ... anything that has become a barrier in our relationship with Christ, our relationship with each other and our relationship with our neighbors.

This "cross-examination" calls us to examine whether our love and actions reflect what we profess to believe about the gratuitous love, humility, compassion and grace of God and who we profess to be as servant leaders of Jesus Christ. Are you a credible witness? Does the light and love of Christ shine in and through your life?

I invite you to observe a holy Lent. I invite you to a journey of surrender. I invite you to surrender yourself to a journey of learning and discovery through scripture, prayer, fasting and self-denial. I invite you to be humble and courageous ... being open to what God reveals to you about your personal spiritual growth, your connection with one another, and your relationship and ministry with your neighbors.

I offer this prayer from Ephesians 1:17-19 (CEB) as a blessing for your journey of surrender: "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of God's glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers."