



Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced, wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

ELDERTALK:

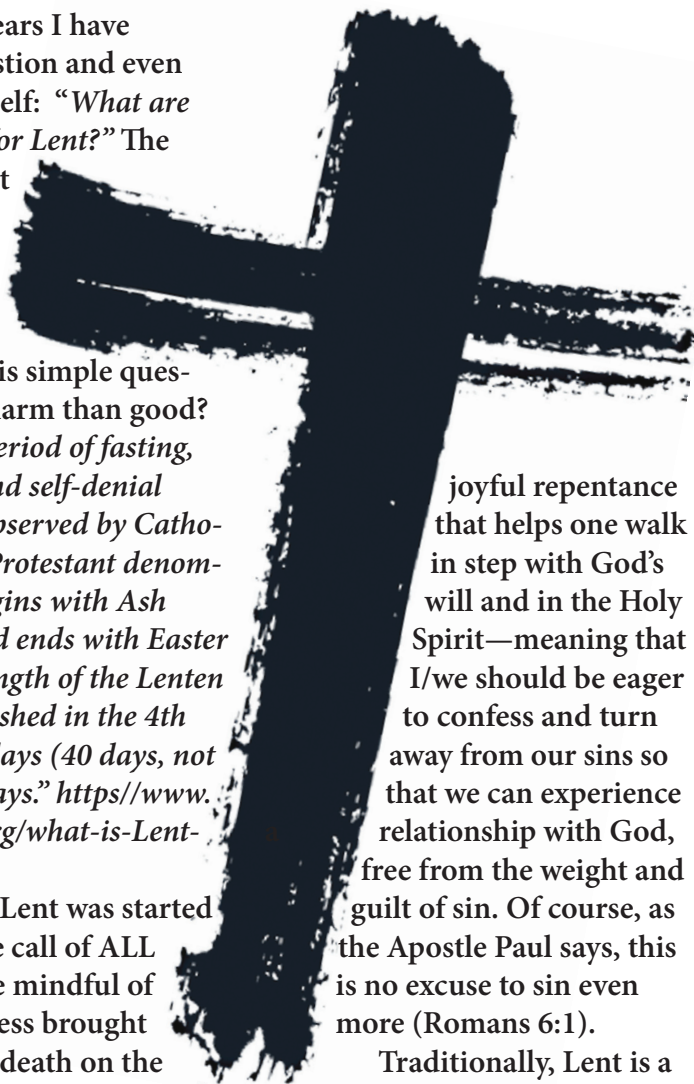
‘Should we ask others about Lenten plans?’

JADAÉ FOX

Through the years I have heard this question and even asked it of myself: “What are you giving up for Lent?” The question I want to ask you is, “Should we ask others about their Lenten plans?” Can this simple question do more harm than good?

“Lent is a period of fasting, moderation, and self-denial traditionally observed by Catholics and some Protestant denominations. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with Easter Sunday. The length of the Lenten fast was established in the 4th century as 46 days (40 days, not counting Sundays.” <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-Lent.html>

The reason Lent was started is rooted in the call of ALL Christians to be mindful of God’s forgiveness brought through Jesus’ death on the Cross. Lent also reminds us of our need for continued repentance (the admission of wrongdoing and the willful turning away from it). It is what I call



joyful repentance that helps one walk in step with God’s will and in the Holy Spirit—meaning that I/we should be eager to confess and turn away from our sins so that we can experience relationship with God, free from the weight and guilt of sin. Of course, as the Apostle Paul says, this is no excuse to sin even more (Romans 6:1).

Traditionally, Lent is a time to fast from meat or other foods. But there are many things that one could give up for Lent. Just remember the purpose for

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‘How Great Thou Art’ Gets New Verse for 75th Anniversary

Worship leader and Grammy-winning songwriter Matt Redman has written hundreds of songs in his celebrated career. For his latest release, however, he only wrote one verse that may have been one of the most challenging verses he has ever written. This was a new verse added to the 75-year-old classic, “How Great Thou Art.”

“This was interesting because the publisher reached out and said it’s coming up to the 75th anniversary of the hymn,” Redman told *The Tennessean*.

“Most of the song was written in the mountains of Ukraine. So they said they would like to focus on these two things by writing a new section and have all the proceeds from that go to humanitarian aid for Ukraine.”

Originally penned by Stuart K. Hine, a missionary in the 1930’s traveling in the Carpathian Mountains in central Europe, the song was inspired by his 300 mile journey through an area that now includes Ukraine.

Redman accepted this challenge with a bit of trepidation,

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‘Should we ask others about Lenten plans?’ (continued from page 1)

giving things up is to draw us closer to God. We want to devote extra time for things like confession of sin, prayer, reading the Bible, and praising God.



What should you give up for Lent? This is a question for you to consider with the Lord. I will, however, give you a place to start.

- What in your life do you value (even good and needed things) that may be taking more of your time and attention than it should?
- Do you have things in your life that are out of balance?
- What do you run to in order to solve your problems other than God?
- What in your leisure time could you do without for a season and devote it instead to time with God?

Whatever you choose, try not to draw the attention of others to it. When we point it out, it makes our focus self-centered, and we consider what others think of us. The Bible tells us not to make it obvious that we are fasting, even to make it hard to notice by others (Matt. 6:16-18). In this way our fasting is focused on God and what He would share with us.

Lent is not meant to be a time of boasting or trying to earn God’s favor and love. God is love, and His love for you is unchanged by your actions, good or bad. As for God’s favor, *“It is impossible to please God without faith”* (Heb. 11:6. Also see Micah 6:8).

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‘How Great Thou Art’ Gets New Verse for 75th Anniversary (continued from page 1)

saying: *“This is one of the world’s most beloved hymns. That’s usually something you don’t mess with.”* But he didn’t mess with it alone. He called in 15 friends to help. The new verse, written by Redman and Wong, says:

Until that day
When heaven bids us welcome,
And as we walk this broken, warring world,
Your Kingdom come,
Deliver us from evil,
And we’ll proclaim
Our God, how great You are!

-Matt Redman & Mitch Wong

The new verse is a continuation of the song’s final verse.

Adapted from an article by Melonee Hurt who covers music and music business for The Tennessean of the USA TODAY NETWORK.

MARCH 2024

1-31 March of Prayer every night.


Schedules on Welcome Center Table.

2 GAMES REACH at GFC. 6:30-8:30 pm.

3 Greg Frankenfield preaches: Heb.10:1-18.

4 GFC hosts March of Prayer, 6-8 pm.

10 Elder Matt Godsil preaches:

Heb. 10:19-25. 

14 Women of Grace Bible Study and Prayer, 9-10 am.

17 Pastor Eric Bryrom preaches: Heb. 10: 26-39.

24 PALM SUNDAY Matt Godsil preaches. 

31 EASTER SUNDAY Eric Byrom Celebration Worship!

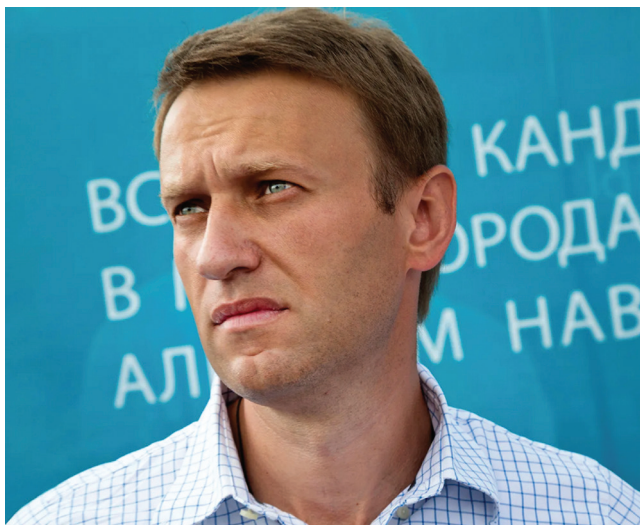
He is Risen!

What a Murdered Russian Dissident Can Teach Us About Moral Courage

Alexei Navalny's Christian faith gave him the courage to stand alone

Russian President Vladimir Putin murdered another Christian, Alexei Navalny, last week. It was just another day in Putin's supposed project of protecting "the Christian West" from godlessness. Mr. Putin said, "After all, they tell me, one can't create a Christian nationalist empire without killing some people."

Before the world forgets the corpse of Alexei Navalny in the subzero environs of an Arctic penal colony, we ought to look at him—especially those of us who follow Jesus Christ—to see what moral courage actually is.



Alexei Navalny as a free man but with obvious concern

Navalny was perhaps the most-recognized anti-Putin dissident in the world, and he is now one of many Putin enemies to end up "suddenly dead." He survived poisoning in 2020, recuperated in Europe, and ultimately went back to his homeland, despite knowing what he would face. Speaking of his dissent and his willingness to bear its consequences, Navalny repeatedly referenced his profession of Christian faith. In a 2021 article he explained, in strikingly biblical terms, what it means to suffer for one's beliefs.

"The fact is that I am a Christian, which usually sets me up as an example for constant ridicule in the Anti-Corruption Foundation, because mostly our people are atheists, and I was once quite a militant atheist myself," Navalny said. "But now I am a believer, and that

helps me a lot in my activities because everything becomes much, much easier."

"There are fewer dilemmas in my life, because there is a book in which, in general, it is more or less clearly written what action to take in every situation," he explained. "It's not always easy to follow this book, of course, but I am actually trying."

Specifically, Navalny said, he was motivated by the words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6 NASB).

"I've always thought that this particular commandment is more or less an instruction to activity," Navalny said. "And so, while certainly not really enjoying the place where I am, I have no regrets about coming back or about what I am doing. It's fine, because I did the right thing."

Adapted from "Moore to the Point," the newsletter of Russell Moore.



Alexei Navalny in a Russian prison - Getty Images



Alexei Navalny while in a Russian court in 2021 - Getty Images

'Should we ask others...?' (continued from p. 2)

What is not commanded in the Bible is that we *must* fast. Fasting is a good discipline for us to practice. We may consider fasting before an important decision (Acts 13:2). Fasting draws us closer to God when coupled with prayer (Luke 2:37, 5:33). It helps to remove distractions and reprioritize what is most vital in life.

If observed correctly, Lent can be a great blessing. If not, it can put your focus on the wrong things. I enjoy Lent and the benefits it brings. Just remember that we are called to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8). Repentance is a way of life for a believer, not a special activity just for Lent.



Easter Paschal Homily JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

347-407 AD

Let all pious men and lovers of God rejoice in the splendor of this feast; let the wise servants blessedly enter into the joy of their Lord; let those who have borne the burden of Lent now receive their pay, and those who have toiled since the first hour, let them now receive their due reward. Let any who came after the third hour be grateful to join in the feast, and those who may have come after the sixth, let them not be afraid of being too late.

For the Lord is gracious, and He receives the last even as the first. He gives rest to him who comes on the eleventh hour as well as to him who has toiled since the first. Yes, He has pity on the last, and He serves the first and is generous to the other. He repays the deed and praises the effort.

Come you all; enter into the joy of your Lord. You the first and you the last, receive alike your reward. You rich and you poor, dance together.

You sober and you weaklings, celebrate the day. You who have kept the fast and you who have not, rejoice today. The table is richly loaded; enjoy its royal banquet. The calf is a fatted one; let no one go away hungry. All of you enjoy the banquet of faith. Let no one grieve over his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep over his sins, for pardon has shone from the grave. Let no one fear death for the death of our Savior has set us free. He has destroyed it by enduring it. He has despoiled Hades by going down into its kingdom. He has angered it by allowing it to taste of His flesh.

When Isaiah foresaw all this, he cried out, "O Hades, you have been angered by encountering Him in the nether world." Hades is angered because it is frustrated; it is angered because it has been mocked; it is angered because it has been destroyed; it is angered because it has been reduced to naught; it is angered because it is now captive. It seized a body, and lo, it discovered God. It seized earth, and, behold, it encountered heaven. It seized the visible and was overcome by the invisible.

O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and life is freed! Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of the dead! For Christ, being risen from the dead, has become the Leader and Reviver of those who had fallen asleep. To Him be glory and power forever!

(Editor's note: John Chrysostom is a 5th century Church Father. He exhorts all, even those who have not kept the Lenten fast, to rejoice and enter into the Easter feast!)

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Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor

Jadaé Fox Elder

Matt Godsil Elder

Jerry Mathias Elder

(A complete list of church functionaries
will return next month)