

40 For Life Change

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. The length of 40 – whether 40 days or 40 years – has been significant throughout biblical history. Here are just some examples:

- The great flood lasted 40 days. (Genesis, chapters 6-9)
- Moses was on the mountain with God for 40 days before he brought down the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 34:28-35)
- The journey of the people of Israel out of bondage and into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:34)
- The establishment of the Kingdom of Israel was founded on its first three kings – Saul, David and Solomon – and each ruled for exactly 40 years.
- The prophet Elijah fasted for 40 days. (1 Kings 19)
- The warning to Nineveh to repent to avoid God’s judgment (Jonah 3:4-9)
- Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness for 40 days. (Luke 4:2)
- Jesus walked the earth for 40 days following His resurrection before returning to heaven. (Acts 1:3)

The common thread tying all of these together is that each period of 40 days or years was associated with something new—a new development in the history of God’s activity or new beginnings. In other words, God led people into various seasons of “40” – usually days, but sometimes years – for the purpose of inaugurating a new era or a new season in their life.

It’s a fascinating thing to explore—how a period of time, related to 40, marked the onset of God’s work. This is why throughout Christian history, 40 days has taken on a special significance, particularly through the season of Lent.

The word *Lent* comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word that simply means the Spring season of the year. In Christian history and tradition, it is a period in the Spring set aside for fasting in some way (giving up something for spiritual reasons) in preparation for Easter and the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

The purpose for Lent has always been to get spiritually ready. To use the time for life change by taking 40 days to turn away from something or turn towards something that will allow your life to honor God more deeply and to live the life you’ve been called to live.

Have you ever set aside a “40 day focus” to seek the Lord on a deeper level and address something that would turn your life in a direction that helps you align with what God is showing you He wants to do in your life or in your family?

For many years, research found if you wanted to change something in your life – to end a habit or start a new one – it would take just three weeks. So, all of the marketing strategies were focused on the number 21 to break a habit or form a new one.

But we've learned that's not really the best number to get something to stick. For whatever reason, 21 days simply isn't enough. In fact, research has now found that it takes twice that length – which comes out at right about... you guessed it, 40 days.

So research is just catching up with what we have known for a long time from God's Word. Therefore, whether the goal is to start something or stop something, reflect deeply on something, or remove something harmful from your vision completely, it would seem there's something about a period of 40 days – that God uses to move us towards an experience of life change.

May the Lord use these 40 days until Holy Thursday to draw us nearer to His heart.

By the way, did I mention this Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent?

Pastor Joe