

CONNECTING POINT

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Getting Started

The reason for this newsletter is to provide a monthly Connecting Point with your pastors. In each newsletter you'll find two articles:

The first article will be from Pastor Brian Larson. Pastor Brian's main focus and major strengths in ministry include Pastoral Care and Teaching. Pastor Brian's articles will be connecting us with the various themes of the church year and why they are still relevant today. He'll also be connecting us with various truths found in scripture and discussed in worship. This will be a forum for him to expound upon those ideas a little.

What did you give up for Lent?

By: Pastor Brian Larson

Did you make a Lenten sacrifice? From chocolate and soda to meat and beer, many of you follow the tradition of denying yourself a simple pleasure for the 40-day season. Even in worship, the old tradition suggests that we stay away from singing Alleluias until Easter when our songs are filled with Alleluias.

Lent is the season of the Church Year from Ash Wednesday to Easter set aside for spiritual preparation prior to celebrating Jesus' resurrection. During Lent we ponder Jesus' passion (an old word for suffering) that included betrayal, temptation, bloody sweat, arrest, false accusation under trial, beatings, insults, unjust sentencing, crucifixion, death, and burial. Jesus gave up a lot for Lent.

So, with such a sacrifice from Him, what is the point of

The second article will be from Pastor Derrick Hurst. He'll be focusing our attention on the various ways that we can connect the people around us to the life-giving truths of Jesus in winsome and relevant ways. Pastor Derrick will also focus on several issues and topics related to discipleship and provide a simple Connect! idea to provide a monthly outreach connection.

Our prayer is that you find Connecting Point to be more than a newsletter and more of a way that you can better connect with the truths of Jesus. We pray that these new, or renewed, connections will enable you to connect people to Jesus as your life reflects the beat of Jesus' heart for the world around you!

*If you gave up something for
Lent, enjoy it on Sunday! It's
your little Easter!*

your sacrifice? You can't earn anything more from God than Jesus has already earned for you! You can't acquire any further blessing from God than what Jesus has already put in your possession! Even though we wait to see some of them fulfilled, we no less possess those blessings: eternal life (we live that now), citizenship in heaven, God's love, etc.

It's probably (and hopefully) obvious that the point of Lenten sacrifices is not to earn something from God. So then, what is the point?

For some, it's connection. Hopefully your sacrifices connect you to a sacrifice greater than your own – the sacrifice of Jesus. Don't get caught up in your own sacrifice so that you end up trusting what you can do for God. Rather, get caught up in what God has already done for you.

For others, it's tradition. Traditions, like fasting and bodily preparation, can indeed be fine for outward training (see the explanation of the Lord's Supper in Luther's Small Catechism). Traditions are built up over time to impart truth.

It's become a fad in today's Church to speak ill of tradition because so many ills have come from emptying those traditions of their meaning. What we should speak against is empty tradition and meaningless religious observance. What's the truth imparted from the tradition of your Lenten sacrifice? Is there a truth imparted?

The tradition should impart the truth that Jesus' sacrifice was a struggle. It wasn't easy. It was hard as nails, hard as the rock they rolled in front of His tomb. And it was enough!

In fact, during the season of Lent, even with all its disciplines and sacrifices, there is grace infused into the tradition. The Lenten season of 40 days has

built-in relief to remind you while you sacrifice that Jesus' sacrifice was enough.

Count the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter. You should arrive at a number higher than 40. The Sundays in Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent. They are extra days within the season. Every Sunday, even the ones in Lent, is a little Easter. They are days to remember Jesus' Easter resurrection.

The resurrection (and our celebration of it) shows that Jesus' sacrifice was enough. God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and honored Jesus for it by raising Him from the dead. Sundays are opportunities for celebration. Jesus is risen - His sacrifice was accepted on your behalf - God loves you - Enjoy living in grace - Enjoy life!

If you gave up something for Lent, enjoy it on Sunday! It's your little Easter! Have a piece of chocolate, a soda, a little taste of what you had given up. And enjoy the news of resurrection which reminds you that salvation is not dependent on your sacrifice because Jesus has already given the one sacrifice for all (Hebrews 9:26).

What can you NOT live without?

By Pastor Derrick Hurst

Yesterday my wife picked the boys up from school and the school counselor stopped her. Amy wanted to talk to Carrie about something the boys said in class that day. The counselor goes to each classroom once a year and asks what the children have that they can't live without.

Matthew and Lucas both, without hesitation, said, "Jesus, we can't live without Jesus." Amy continued the dialogue by asking them "Why is Jesus something you can't live without?" Without missing a beat, Matthew and Lucas answered her with this reply, "Because without Jesus we wouldn't have heaven!"

Have you ever had a situation come up like that? One that you knew the answer to and without question that answer was Jesus. So, what did you do? Did you tell everyone that it's Jesus that you can't live without? Or did you hide behind your fear? It's easy to hide. I've done it. Most everyone has at one time or another. But Jesus calls His disciples to a life of connecting people to Him not to a life of fear!

In the months ahead, you'll be reading different ways that you can connect people around you to the Living

Truth of Jesus - not to a group of people or to a church building but to the life-giving truth of a Savior who died and rose for the world. We call that making an atoning sacrifice! It's amazing how the names of our two campuses convey such a powerful message of life and truth in Christ.

This month look around you for the opportunities to demonstrate to people the truth that you cannot live without. Jesus showed that He didn't want to live without you. That's why He died and rose for you. Let this season of Lent be a constant reminder for you of the One who gave up everything for you. So what is it that you can't live without this Lenten season?

Connect !

This month's connecting point is Easter. As you prepare for your celebration of Easter, take time to remind your children what Easter is really all about. Invite your friends and neighbors to discover the empty tomb. Invite the people where you live, work, and play to join us for our special Easter services or to our Easter Egg Hunt.