

DENY YOURSELF

N O T G O D

LENT 2024





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Lent is a season of preparing spanning the 40 days (not counting Sundays) between Ash Wednesday and Easter. This period reflects the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his public ministry. In the same way that Jesus denied himself food in order to sharpen the focus of his prayers, so too does Lent call us into a season of self-denial as we prepare to remember his death and his resurrection.

This brief study looks at six passages which use some form of the word “deny”. They call us into self-denial but, even more, confront us with the reality that our lives often do not proclaim Christ - and may often even deny him. Lent is a sober season, and this study invites us to soberly reflect upon the truth about our lives.

For each week there are only a few questions for each passage. I expect that these questions, if honestly engaged, will lead to much sharing and conversation. But if your discussion ends more quickly than normal, I encourage you to use the extra time to pray.

IN THIS STUDY



MATTHEW 10:21-33

I.



MATTHEW 16:21-28

II.



MATTHEW 26:31-35,
69-75

III.



JOHN 1:19-23

IV.



2 TIMOTHY 2:8-13

V.



2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9

VI.

MATTHEW

10:26-33

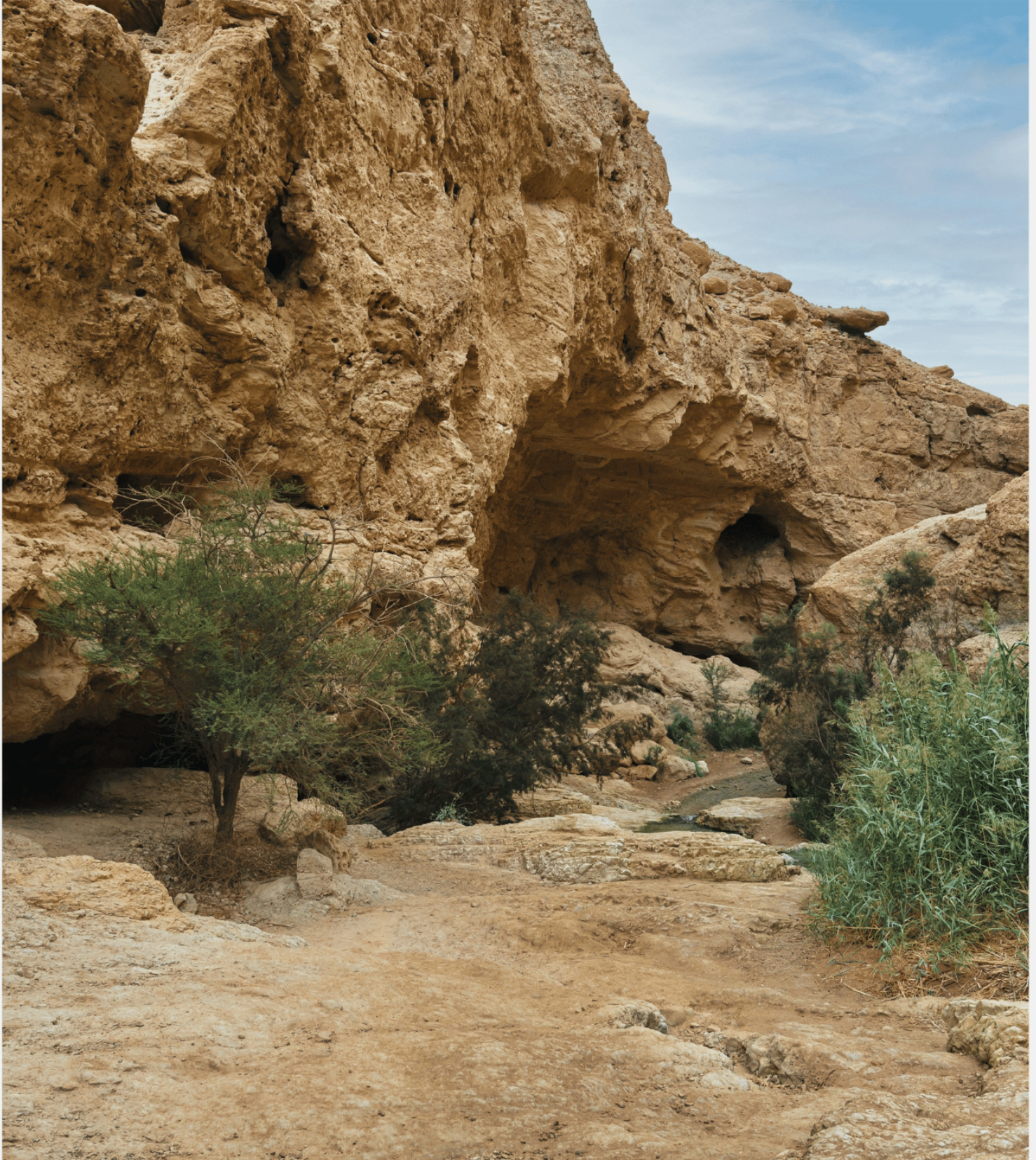


26 “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

32 “Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

*I. What are the ways a person can acknowledge Jesus? Or deny him?
Is it mostly about words? Or actions? Or something else?*



II. How does your life acknowledges Jesus? And how might your life deny Jesus?

III. In the first part of this passage Jesus commands us not to fear, both because the truth will come to light and because, while people can hurt your body, they cannot touch your soul. What role does fear play in preventing us from acknowledging God? Or even in denying God?



MATTHEW

16:21-28

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?”

27 “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

I. Why does Peter rebuke Jesus? And why does Jesus respond so forcefully?

II. What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus? What does this look like? What are some examples of people who have done this? Do you think you've done it yourself?



III. Likewise, what does it mean to deny yourself? What does this look like? What are some examples of people who have done this? Do you think you've done it yourself?

IV. Would you rather save your life or lose your life? How does losing your life lead to finding your (true) life? What makes this difficult to trust? And to do?

MATTHEW

26:31-35, 69-75



31 Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”

32 “But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” 33 Peter said to him, “Even if all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” 34 Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” 35 Peter said to him, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And so said all the disciples.



I. Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him three times, and Peter vehemently insisted that he would not deny Jesus. Why did Peter deny Jesus anyway? Why did he not carry out his intentions?

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A female servant came to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." 70 But he denied it before all of them, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." 71 When he went out to the porch, another female servant saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene." 72 Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." 73 After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." 74 Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

II. Why does Peter weep?

III. What does Peter's failure teach us? How are we like him? Do we fail despite the best of intentions? How can we do/be better?





JOHN

1:19-23

19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.



I. Some people thought that John might be the messiah, but he “did not deny it” - it being the truth about who he was. Do you think this was an easy thing to do? Or might he have been tempted to let people think he was the messiah?

II. Do you ever find yourself conforming to expectations that don't fit? Or trying to be someone you're not?

III. Is it difficult to see and acknowledge the truth about yourself? Do you struggle more to recognize the good in yourself or the not-so-good in yourself?

IV. What is the truth about us - both good and bad - that we should especially see in the weeks leading to the cross?

2 TIMOTHY

2:8-13

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11
The saying is sure:
If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

12
if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us;

13
if we are faithless, he remains faithful – he cannot deny himself.





I. You may already have answered this in previous weeks, though it might be worth discussing again: What does it look like to deny him - that is, Christ Jesus? Is this something you either do or don't do? (is it all or nothing?). Or do all of us at times deny Christ?

II. Why would Christ deny us if we've denied him?

III. What does it mean that "he cannot deny himself"? What would it even mean for Christ to deny himself? Was he ever tempted in this way? Was there ever a chance he would falter?



2 TIMOTHY

3:1-9



1 You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. 2 For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unfeeling, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them!

6 For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate immature women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, 7 who are always studying yet never able to recognize truth. 8 As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth. 9 But they will not make much progress because, as in the case of those two men, their folly will become plain to everyone.

I. Verse 5 is (at least to my mind) one of the more arresting statements in Scripture. It declares that we will encounter people who are “holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power”. And when I hear this, I feel compelled to ask myself, “Am I the sort of person who goes through the religious motions, who says and does the right things, but who doesn’t really believe that God can and will act, that God in Christ makes new creation?” Question: what do you think and feel when you read this verse?



II. What are some of the ways that a person might “hold to the outward form of godliness” but “deny its power”? What does that look like? (It probably doesn’t need to look as dramatic as the list of things named before and after). And if you haven’t addressed this already, can you recall times when perhaps you can the outward appearance of faithfulness while the truth lay elsewhere?



III. How do we know if our faith (and the faith of others) is mature and solid? How might we see beyond mere appearances?

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