



WEEK 6

TOPIC: **MINISTRY**

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Why do we practice Lent? We do Lent as a way to prepare our hearts and minds to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It isn't commanded in scripture, but here at Eleven22, we do it because we believe it's beneficial at times to tell our flesh no, so we can tell Jesus yes.

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WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

"Remember my chains. Grace be with you." Paul ends his letter to the church at Colossae with that simple statement, "remember my chains." What was so important about his chains and imprisonment that Paul wanted them to remember? You have to wonder what was going through Paul's mind as he sat in a dark, oppressive prison chained to the wall. If I was chained in prison, I can imagine myself thinking, "Aren't chains a bad thing? Doesn't God set us free? If He set us free why am I in here?" But you don't find Paul thinking that. In fact, you find Paul telling people outside to "remember his chains." Paul was free because God had set him free, and that is exactly why he was chained in there. Paul was a minister of the gospel because the gospel had set him free and gave him new life, and there was nothing that compared to knowing Jesus. As a minister of the gospel, Paul had boldly proclaimed this good news to as many people as would listen, and for that, he was in prison and wearing chains. That is what Paul wanted the church to remember: that following Jesus, being part of ministry in Jesus' name, often leads us into places we don't want to go and would never choose to be. But here is Paul's secret: prison with Jesus is better than palaces without Him.

Lent is a season of denying oneself so we can follow Jesus more. Often when we start engaging in ministry, we think it will make life so much better to be in ministry. We follow Jesus and reach other people in His name, and we find that our lives don't get better; they get harder. Our following leads us to chains.

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Has your life gotten harder over this period of Lent? Have you found that you feel it costs you more to follow Jesus and actively take part in ministry (trying to reach others with the gospel)? It's natural to be discouraged. But we are not part of something natural, but supernatural. The Bible says rejoice in that hardship and know ministry does not happen apart from resistance. We can literally be encouraged when it is hard, when things seem to be going against us, when we have chains on because we were sharing Jesus Christ. Lent is about walking toward Easter; and is patterned after Jesus walking alone in the wilderness for 40 days. If Lent is about walking in Jesus' footsteps in the wilderness, which grew harder with each step, then ministry is about walking in the footsteps of Jesus in His ministry, which led Him to be imprisoned, chained, and crucified. When it becomes hard for us, we take hope, we look to the cross, and we REMEMBER.

QUESTIONS

- 1. Where is life getting harder as you minister to others during Lent?**
 - 2. What can you do today to remember that ministry is not without hardship, but that Jesus in hardship is better?**
 - 3. Is there anyone you have let the hardship of ministry discourage you from pursuing for Jesus?**
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FAMILY APPLICATION

(An opportunity for you and your children to practice Lent together.)

Get together as a family and pray for people you know by name that are in ministry, people that God wants you to minister to as a family, and those you know of that life has gotten harder because they followed God.

After praying, choose one person or family that your family will go out of its way to bless this week. Whether that is bringing them food, offering free babysitting, or doing yard work, etc.

