Lenten



40 days of inspirational sayings and Bible verses with room for you to record your responses, thoughts, and prayers.

Yvon Prehn



Lenten Journal Introduction

Lent helps us to put the Christian life into a biblical perspective. Traditionally it is a time to focus on fasting, prayer, and service to others. It is a time to practice saying "no" to ourselves in little things so we can say a bigger "yes" to God in the larger dimensions of life.

We know the value of discipline to achieve our goals in every other area of life and this time of year reminds us of the importance of discipline in the Christian life.

The discipline of fasting during Lent has broadened to mean fasting from harmful mental and emotional practices or those things that keep us from deepening our Christian lives. To discover the areas that need work takes honest self-evaluation.

If there was ever a time when a Lenten self-evaluation might be useful after the season of the Covid pandemic, now is the time. It has been a time of incredible difficulty, loss, and isolation beyond what we ever imagined. We have lost health, loved ones, jobs, homes, friends. For most of us, our stress levels have been far above anything we experienced before and that we did not believe we could live with on a daily basis.

But we are still here, and we are still trying to serve Jesus as best we can.

I am looking forward to this Lent more than I ever remember. I am looking at it as a time to think, pray, and process the last year. Many externals have already been stripped out of my life and a flippant, "I'll give up sweets for Lent," or something similar seems almost sacrilegious.

I am wanting to dig deeper, to think about my walk with the Lord, and what needs to go in my heart and mind to make me more pleasing to Him.

To help do that, I looked up inspirational quotes and verses appropriate for Lent and put them into a journal format that I am sharing with you. It is for 40 days. Traditionally you can take off Sundays because as the Catholic Church puts it:

Sundays, even during Lent, are a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and are not part of the penitential season. We rejoice in the resurrection of the Lord on Sundays. If you feel that forsaking your Lenten sacrifices on Sundays is like cheating then you are encouraged to maintain your sacrifices. A person is certainly free to continue one's Lenten sacrifices on Sundays, but the Catholic Church does not require anyone to do this.

You can start using this journal on Ash Wednesday and use it until Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. My prayer for all of us during this time is that we grow closer to our Lord and more pleasing to Him as we forward to celebrating His resurrection.

Grace & peace,

Yvon Prehn

www.Bible805.com



Lent will last for 40 days (plus the Sundays) and if we apply ourselves to spiritual examination and renewal, we will make changes. But they might only be the start of changes and we must be at peace in knowing that.





But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written,
"Be holy, for J am holy."

1 Peter 1:15-16

You cannot study the Bible diligently and earnestly without being struck by an obvious fact—the whole matter of personal holiness is highly important to God.

A.W. Tozer

Commentary

To be holy means to be set apart. Today that might mean some very different attitudes and actions than the people around you. Consider the ways your life might be different if you considered yourself set apart for God's service.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

I do not consider myself to have

"arrived", spiritually, nor do

I consider myself already perfect.

But I keep going on

I leave the past behind and with hands

outstretched to whatever lies ahead

I go straight for the goal—

my reward the honour of being

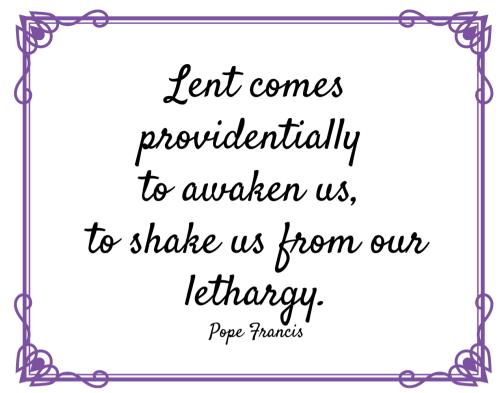
called by God in Christ.

Phil. 3:13-14 Phillips

Commentary

One of the MOST important things we can do to improve our spiritual and relational lives is to "leave the past behind." Our future is glorious, tomorrow and forever with Jesus and we need to focus on that.





Do you ever feel like you are sleep-walking in life? Or maybe numb?

Use Lent to feel even if it hurts and to allow Jesus to work on issues in your life that may be too painful to tackle on your own.



But be on your guard.

Don't let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap,... Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that's coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man."

Luke 21:34-36 msg

Commentary

We will all face Jesus someday. That meeting should be the North Star of our lives. That meeting should inform our dreams, shape our desires, guide our work.

Consider how you can keep that North Star in focus as you travel in life.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

"Good and evil both increase at compound interest.

That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance.

The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories

you never dreamed of.

An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible."

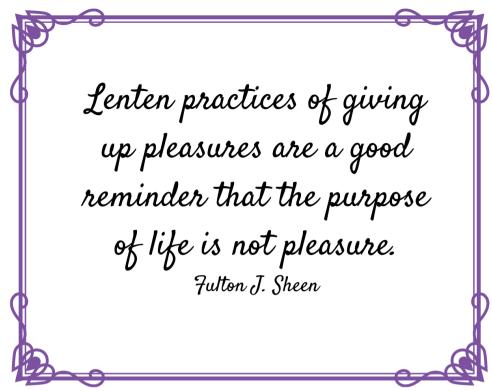
C.S. Lewis

Commentary

Our life is built moment by moment, decision by decision. Don't rush unthinkingly through your days. Be deliberate, good, and godly in your actions, no matter how small they seem and you'll build a life pleasing to God.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

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That the purpose of life is not pleasure would be a big surprise to many. But to the Christian, the greater emotion of joy is the reward when the purpose of our life is to please God.





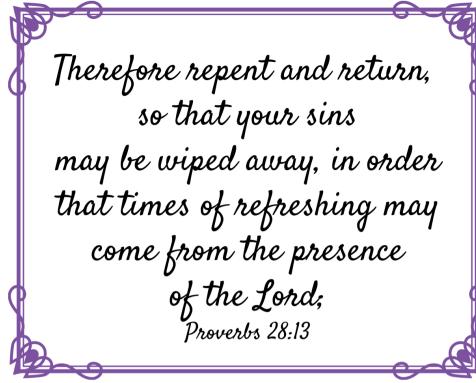
"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor.5:17)." You are a changed person!

What changes do you want to make in your world for Jesus' sake?

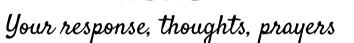


When we confess we have sinned and specifically name that sin we are acknowledging that there is Someone above us who sets the standard for what is right and what is wrong. And when we do that, He makes us clean.





Lent should be a time of great refreshing, a spring cleaning of our lives and souls. We can clear out burdensome grudges, mental messiness, and hoarded bad habits. When we do that, we can then breathe.



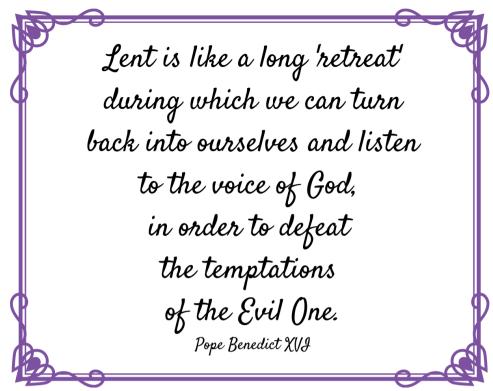
"Lent is a time for discipline, for confession, for honesty, not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing but because he wants [us] to know the joy of being cleaned out, ready for all the good things he now has in store."

N.T. Wright

Commentary

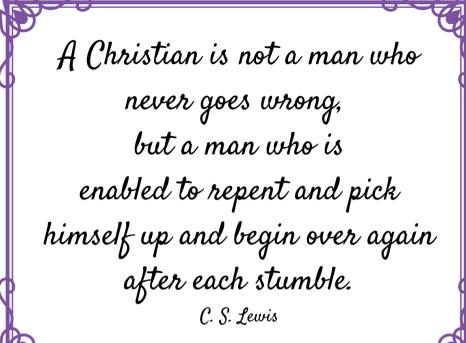
How would your life be different if you lived a carefully disciplined life? 2 Timothy 1:7 says "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." Live into that reality.

Your response, thoughts, prayers



God does speak to his people. He speaks with a clear inner voice if you quiet yourself enough to listen. The boy Samuel said, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening (2 Sam. 3:9)." When we pray that, we must be prepared to obey.

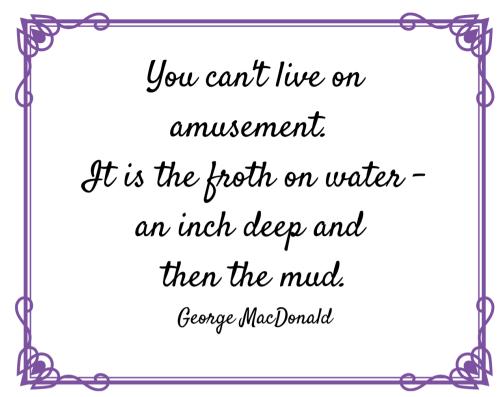
Your response, thoughts, prayers



Remember that Jesus told Peter he had to forgive 7x70--which meant an infinite number of times. That is how much God will forgive you--when you fall again and again and again--he is always ready to forgive.



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Take some time to evaluate what in your life is froth and what is the mud that underlies it after the froth floats away. What is an exchange you can make for an activity that has eternal value?





"I imagine Lent for you and for me as a great departure from the greedy, anxious anti-neighborliness of our economy, a great departure from our exclusionary politics that fears the other, a great departure from self-indulgent consumerism that devours creation.

Walter Brueggemann

Commentary

Being greedy at its core means we aren't trusting God. We can be greedy with possessions, with time, with love. As you think about this statement, think about when you may have been greedy and how to change that.

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A silly idea is current that good people do
not know what temptation
means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try
to resist temptation know how
strong it is... A man who gives in to temptation
after five minutes simply does
not know what it would have been like an hour
later. That is why bad people, in
one sense, know very little about badness. They
have lived a sheltered life by
always giving in.
C. S. Lewis

Commentary

What would it be like to resist a temptation that you easily give in to? God says he will always provide a way to escape and I imagine we might take it more if we thought ahead of time what those escapes might look like.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

And so, dear brothers, I plead with you
to give your bodies to God.
Let them be a living sacrifice, holy—
the kind he can accept.
When you think of what he has done for you,
is this too much to ask?
Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world,
but be a new and different person with a fresh
newness in all you do and think.
Then you will learn from your own experience how
his ways will really satisfy you.
Romans 12:1-2 tlb

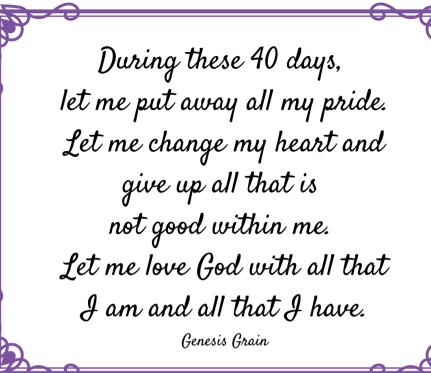
Commentary

One of the great surprises of the Christian life is that whenever we think we are giving up something for God and fear we will be empty, God fills us in ways we didn't expect. Not with what we wanted, but what we needed.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

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Loving God is not a mushy emotion or a feeling we work up during times like Lent. Jesus very clearly told his disciples in john 14:23 "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching." Obedience is truly loving God.

Your response, thoughts, prayers



Every little action makes a difference in the direction of our lives. Being quiet when we want to be mean or accepting when we want to be picky, each turning towards God's way instead of our own sets our course more surely.



No amount of falls will really undo us

if we keep on picking

ourselves up each time.

We shall of course be very

muddy and tattered children

by the time we reach home.

But the bathrooms are all ready, the

towels put out, and the clean clothes are

in the airing cupboard.

C.S. Lewis

Commentary

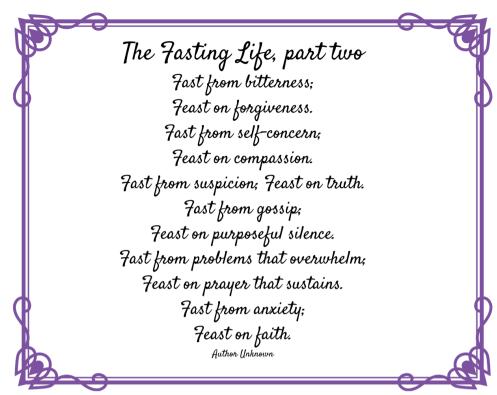
How wonderful it is to know we don't have to clean up ourselves for God. "Muddy and tattered" He loves us and will welcome us every time we turn to Him and ultimately into His forever home.





We can't focus on a behavior or attitude we want to give up or it will take up more and more space in our minds. Instead, focus on the options in this list. Take one or two and pray about them, think of them until they are a part of your life.





We are the result of our thoughts and our thoughts are under our control. Choose to think of the positive things on this list. Journal here how your life would look if they were a consistent part of it and pray it will be so.





If you've gotten anything
at all out of following Christ, if his love has
made any difference in your life, . . .
Agree with each other, love each other,
be deep-spirited friends.
Don't push your way to the front,
don't sweet-talk your way to the top.
Put yourself aside,
and help others get ahead.
Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage.
Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.
Philippians 2:1-4 msg

Commentary

Lent has not been a time of punishment, but a time to live into what we are called to be as God's special possession. Lent has given us the opportunity to consider what in our lives keeps us from doing that, to learn, and prayerfully change.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

Lent is a time of going very deeply
into ourselves...

What is it that stands between us
and God?

Between us and our brothers and sisters?

Between us and life,
the life of the Spirit?

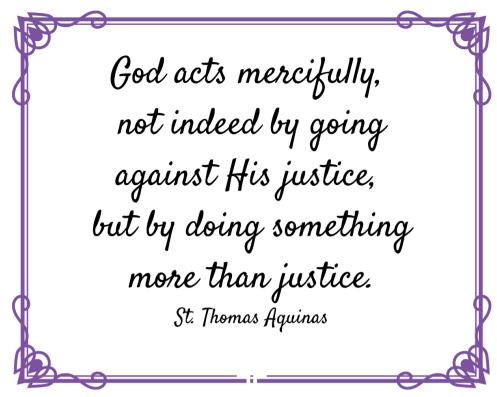
Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it
out, without a moment's hesitation.

Catherine Doherty

Commentary

What are those things for you? You've been journaling, praying, and meditating for over three weeks of Lent now. Pray for wisdom to see what barriers mentioned in the above quote are in your life and how to remove them.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

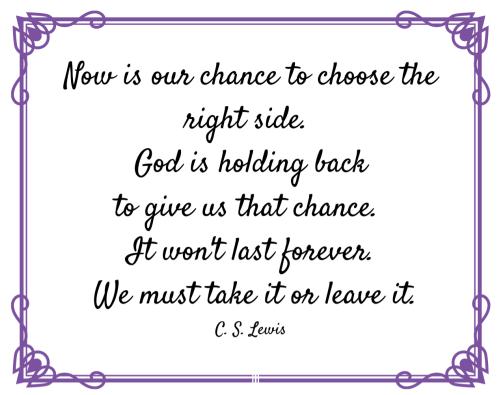


Grace is God's substitute for justice. His unmerited favor to us. As the song says, "amazing love, how can it be, that thou my God would die for me."

Today, simply be thankful for what you don't deserve but that God delights to give.



What is the "common good?" What does it mean to you? To your community? What can you share with others? Money aside, share your love, prayers, encouragement, hope in Jesus. People need these gifts.



Our world is at war with the powers of darkness and we can't choose to sit on the sidelines. To do nothing means to choose darkness. To choose the right side, God's side, takes continual, purposeful action. Be brave and choose to do right.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

Faith in the Lord Jesus
Christ is the foundation upon
which sincere and meaningful
repentance must be built.

If we truly seek to put away sin,
we must first look to Him who is
the Author of our salvation.

Ezra Taft Benson

Commentary

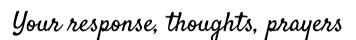
We can't repent on our own. We can't even see where we need to because, truth be told, far too often when we compare ourselves with others, we think we look pretty good. But to look at Jesus first--that changes everything.

Your response, thoughts, prayers

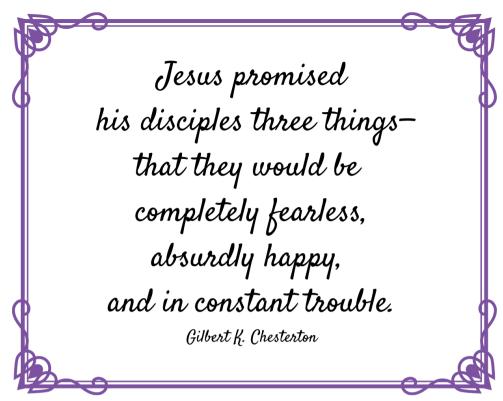
As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:1-2

Commentary

These verses seem impossible to fully obey. But what goals to strive for! Today we may not feel worthy, but if we intentionally are a bit more humble, a little more gentle, patient a few more minutes, these virtues will grow.

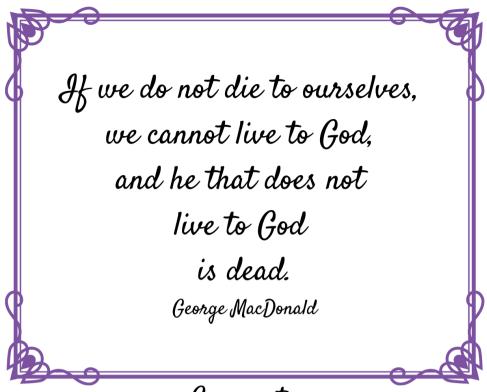






Bravery in the midst of challenges--John 16:33 TLB puts it this way, "I have told you all this so that you will have peace of heart and mind. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world."





And yet the wonder of wonders is that when we feel we have died and given all to God, He turns everything around and we realize that this is what we were created for, this is what will give us true joy and satisfaction in life and forever.

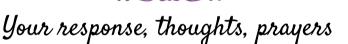


May this time be one
of outward focus;
seeking you in those we often ignore.
Help us live a Lent focused on
freedom, generosity, and encounter.
Give us hearts hungry
to serve you and those who need
what we have to give.
Anon

Commentary

It is tiresome to always be thinking about yourself and ultimately not fulfilling.

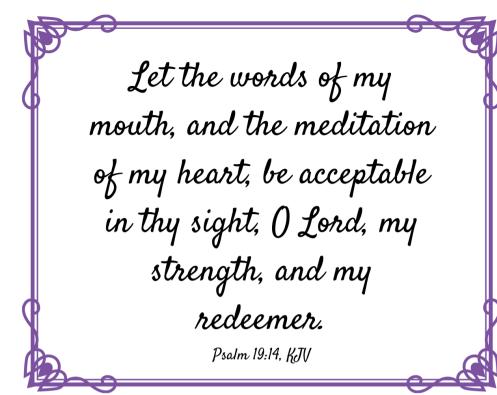
Outward focus, generosity, and encounter--if during Lent we try a focus on those things I pray we will find real fulfillment.





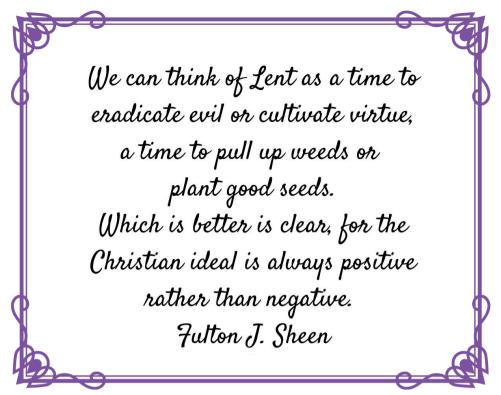
To be a friend of Jesus--it is incredible that is even possible. And to do that is not some out of reach impossible goal--He simply asks we do what He commands--and He gave us a very big book--the Bible that spells it all out.





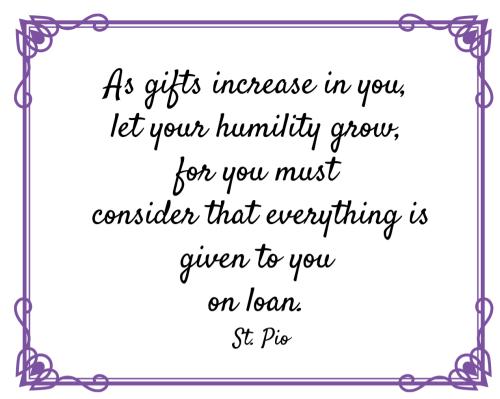
What is in our hearts is what comes out of our mouths. During this time, let's focus on cleaning up the unspoken thoughts in us and what comes out of our mouths will be much more acceptable to our Lord.





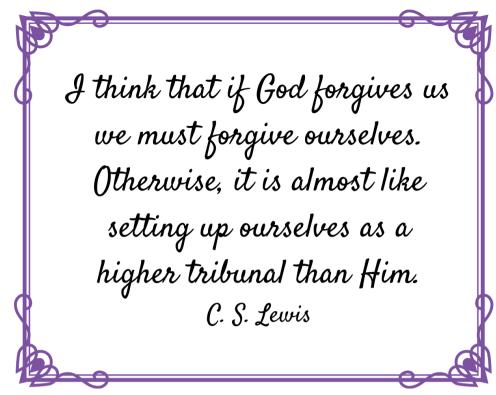
Jesus said he did not come into the world to condemn it, but to save it. In all our Lenten meditations may we have a positive, joyful attitude to make the changes that reflect salvation and not condemnation.





Spiritual gifts are always given to us to share with others, not as an award to be flaunted. That God would trust us with the opportunity to serve is a great privilege and an immense responsibility. How will you act, knowing that?





A danger in Lent is that in the pursuit of cleaning up our hearts and lives we can begin to wallow in our sins. We then focus more on our misery than God's forgiveness. If we do that our focus is in the wrong place. Forgive yourself and rejoice!

Your response, thoughts, prayers

Strive to attain to the greater virtues, but , do not neglect the lesser ones.

Do not make light of a fall even if it be the most venial of faults; rather, be quick to repair it by repentance, although many others may commit a large number of faults, slight and grievous, and remain unrepentant.

Saint Basil

Commentary

It is in practicing the little, less-noticed virtues that true godliness grows. That's where we learn to play to an audience of one--our Lord Jesus. His knowledge of what we do and approval are what are by far the most important.



"Even now," declares the LORD,

"return to me with all your heart, with
fasting and weeping and mourning."

Rend your heart and not your garments.

Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and
abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity.

Joel 2:12-13

Commentary

As Lent draws to a close, most likely there have been victories but also a sense of how far you have to go on your pilgrimage to please God. Remember He is always there waiting for you to take the next steps in holiness.

Your response, thoughts, prayers



If you have taken it seriously, Lent has hopefully been one long Good Friday of selfexamination, discipline, and spiritual growth. Now is time to look back and record the progress you have made and rejoice that Easter is coming!



A personal note from Yvon Prehn

One of the most important things you can do during Lent and always is to read your Bible and make it the North Star and foundation for your life.



When Jesus was talking to people, whose lives were filled with challenges and questions, like ours are today, he summed up their core problem by saying,

"You are in error, because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God." Matt. 22:29

Just as it was for them, not knowing the scriptures—our Bible—is the core cause of our problems today.

To help you learn to know, trust, and apply the Bible, I've got resources for you. Please go to www.Bible805.com where you will find links to a podcast about the Bible, blogs, notes, videos, and other resources that will help you ground your life in God's Word.

Some popular posts and podcasts you may find helpful are:

- ⇒ The Bible—Human Story or Divine Revelation?—answer & implications, part 1 (this also has some fascinating content about God's view of Time)
- ⇒ What is truth? how historical truth relates to religious truth, plus what makes the Christian Bible unique among other scriptures
- ⇒ 9 Reasons to Read or Listen to Your Bible in Chronological Order, plus 5 Reasons Why You Probably Haven't Read Your Bible in Chronological Order, and Why Your Bible Isn't in Chronological Order-the history & why it matters

All these and many more are at www.Bible805.com. You can listen to the podcast on iTunes or anywhere else you listen to podcasts.

My prayer for all of you is that during this Lent and always you will get into God's Word and allow it to change your life and help you become more and like Jesus.