Lent is a man-made tradition, but, at its heart, it’s not just some annual ritual; true Lent insists we deal with our heart’s biggest spiritual issue: We are prone to wander, forget, blame, and hide. We want our own way. Control our own lives. We sin.

What if LENT could become the LENS through which I more clearly see my sin, the cross and death … to see what the mercy and grace of the cross accomplishes through death - what my life in the flesh can never do.

For there to be life in the Spirit, there must be death to the flesh.

In our “sacrifice” we identify, in the smallest of ways, with His suffering. Sharing in His suffering and death, prepares us for the joy of the resurrection.

What I feed lives and grows … What I starve withers and dies.

Most of us learned early in life not to eat anything, especially not sweets, before dinner or we would “spoil our appetite”, right? If we avoid the unnecessary thing, we preserve our appetite for the real thing, the main course. Nourishment.

By now, we all know from personal experience that the consumption of sweet things often ruins our appetite for the main thing.

During Lent we choose to “give up” something important to us in order to “give in” or give thanks to the Lord for His ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross.

How many things in our lives have actually become, quite literally, appetite suppressants? Buy more, have more, watch more, scroll more, post more, tweet more, snap more, chat more, face-time more, and the list goes on and on … suppressing any appetite for real food for my soul. Relationship. God.

We all “consume” to satisfy something. But what am I really hungry for? And what am I choosing as my “comfort food”? Am I filling myself with empty things? Our Enemy tells us to “be our own god. Fill ourselves. Market ourselves. Serve ourselves. Sit on our own throne. How will this status or photo post? How many likes, follows or favorites might I get?” Maybe that will satisfy me …

We were created to bear the image of our Creator, yet it is our own images and words that are projected on screen after screen, in app after app, minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day … What if I gave that up? Or at least consume far less of what fills my time, but can never fill my soul?

I want to be done with ruining my appetite. Done with snacking. Empty calories, devoid of substance. I want a Lent that ruins my appetite for anything less, anything other, than God Himself.

What if the things I give up aren’t physical like food? What if I give up gossip? Complaint? Jealously, comparison, or envy? What if I listen more and talk less? What if, instead of giving up chocolate or coffee, I give up negativity or insensitivity or self-gratification?

Maybe that’s really the point: to give up what I am dependent on to recognize what I actually need most …

That whatever suppresses my appetite deadens me to the hunger pains that remind me to increase my appetite for God. And, maybe my pain, my hunger, is ironically, satisfied with a different hunger: a hunger for God.

The only hunger that satisfies all other hunger.

If our love for lesser things fills up our need for greater things we will never be truly satisfied. God’s grace and mercy are infinitely greater than any sin we may unearth in our heart during the season of Lent. God desires to shape us into His love-full, joy-full, thank-full people who will fill up, feed, a dark, aching, unsatisfied, and hungry world with more of Himself, the Bread of Life.

May Lent simply be an opportunity to increase our appetites for righteousness, suppress our appetites for the lesser things, and, ultimately, crowd out our “self” and make more room for Christ.