



Week Six 2016 Lenten Study
Give Up Pettiness for Lent
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Hi, I'm Roger Spahr, the Glacial Lakes District Superintendent in the Dakotas. God's blessing on you and your church in this Lenten Season.

One of my fond memories in ministry is what I call the War of the Sacred Cloth. The worship coordinator of our church made the mistake of borrowing one of the church's white table clothes to use to decorate for Christmas. Little did she realize she was trespassing on the kitchen ladies' turf and using the cloth for dishonorable purposes.

So the next time she needed to use a table cloth for decoration, she discovered that the kitchen ladies had installed a padlock on the table cloth stash. Not to be deterred, the worship coordinator quickly figured out that if she pulled out the silverware drawer, she could reach her hand down behind the padlocked door, grab out all the white table cloths she needed for her dirty deeds and then put them back without notice.

But you probably already guessed it, someone noticed. So the next time the worship coordinator pulled the silverware drawer out and reached her hand down to steal the table cloths her hand ran into a board below the drawer that had been installed to keep her unwanted hands away from their cloths. No words were exchanged no blood was shed, but those cheap old table cloths became a wedge of contention in the church.

Does that story sound familiar to anybody? If you have been part of a church for very long, you know that people can get very petty. The word petty means: *To have undue concern with trivial matters.*

Pettiness is getting caught up in the minor things and losing sight of the most important things of life. We would like to think that of all the people in the world, the Christian church would not struggle with pettiness. After all, we are the people who are handling the most precious treasure in all the world. The Gospel has the ability to set people free, to redeem the lost and to heal a broken world. We have the keys that unlock the power of heaven on earth.

That is precious and important stuff! Yet the thing what seems to put the church into neutral more often than anything has been our **UNDUE CONCERN WITH TRIVIAL MATTERS.**

Whether it is fighting over a \$10 table cloth or the style of music on Sunday morning, to becoming more concerned about getting out of church in time to check the pot roast or the Packers, pettiness can take the precious treasures of God and sell them off at a bargain basement prices.

Perhaps the epitome of pettiness is seen in Judas on the night that Jesus was betrayed. Can you imagine walking with Jesus for three years, hearing the messages of life, seeing lepers healed, lame walk, multitudes fed and then trade it all in for this?



Then Judas Iscariot.... went to the leading priests and asked, "How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?" And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. Matthew 26:14-15 (NLT)

Thirty pieces of silver would be equivalent to about \$13,000 in today's market. That's a fairly good chunk of change for a day's work. But was it worth it? Even Judas realized he had made a huge mistake with his life. I don't want anyone to make that kind of a mistake with their life. So my invitation to you today is to give up **PETTINESS FOR LENT.**

What would that mean to give it up? It might mean giving up that Hatfield and McCoy grudge that you have held on to for years. Did you know the Hatfield's and McCoy's fought for 11 years, 12 people were killed, 10 wounded? And it started over a stolen pig. Holding on to offenses and grudges and never reconciling a relationship of a brother or sister in Christ is always Petty when seen from the lens of eternity!

To give up Pettiness for Lent could mean giving up my critical and complaining spirit. I have watched petty people latch on to minor issues like a dog tugging on rope. They rehearsed their disagreements and disappointments in front of their family and friends and spread their petty complains around like poison.

Giving up pettiness for Lent may mean giving up my personal preferences on how my church should be run in order to win the next generation to Christ. All of us have watched churches die because of petty personal preferences that became more sacred than the Great Commission.

And finally, giving up pettiness for Lent may mean adjusting your priorities. John Piper, in his book "Don't Waste Your Life" tells about a *Readers Digest* article that highlighted a couple from the northeast who were able to take early retirement in their mid 50's and now spend all of their days sailing on their 30-foot trawler, playing softball, and collecting sea shells.

At first Piper thought it was a spoof but then he realized it was serious. This is the American dream – to come to the end of this one and only precious life that you have been given on this planet and the last great work you accomplish before giving an account to your creator is that I played softball and collected a wonderful set of sea shells. Piper says,

"Picture them before Christ at the great day of judgment. "Look, Lord. See my shells'."

To give up pettiness may mean changing the goal for my life, giving

less of my time, talents, and resources to trivial things and more to the things that matter to God. Jesus said in the Gospel of Mark:

"And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" Is anything worth more than your soul?

Mark 8:36–37 (NLT)

You see, you were created for more than trivial pursuits. You were created for good works that will bring great glory to God.

Could I pray with you?

Some of you may be stuck in a rut. Sometimes no matter how hard we try it's never enough. God, you are awesome and beyond comprehension. You are the Pearl of Great Price. May our lives reflect the God we serve. You created us for good works ordained before the world was made. You have given us authority and power to change the world through your Holy Spirit. Direct us away from the petty things that waste our time and resources, so that we may be done with lesser things in order to accomplish the great things you have set before us. Forgive your church for our trivial pursuits and may we stand before you someday with eternal treasures that have been invested for your Kingdom and glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen

