

## **2018 Lenten Message Series: "I Give Up"**

Series Lens: It is traditional to give something up for Lent. Typically, it's a food item, a comfort item or some form of entertainment. While this is a temporary fast (to be picked up again after Lent), we explore the things in our life that ought to be given up for good.

Series verse: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

Feb. 18: (Andrew) "I Give Up...Excuses" Text: Exodus 3-4:17 (Moses' calling at the burning bush)

Feb. 25: (Teen Challenge) "I Give Up...Addiction" Memory Verse: "If the Son sets you free..."

March 4: (David) "I Give Up...Anxiety"

March 11: (Andrew) "I Give Up...My Plans"

March 18: (Andrew) "I Give Up...My Truth"

March 25: (David) "I Give Up...My Comfort"

## **SUNDAY, APRIL 1: EASTER**

Title: "I Give Up...My Wisdom!"

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:14 "God has raised the Lord and will raise us through His power."

Theme: God's wisdom transforms our lives, and we live new lives as Easter people.

Memory Verse: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

Holy Communion: People receive a white surrender flag.

Handout: Plastic Easter eggs with half of a red crayon in it.

Activity: People take the crayon from the egg and write their name on the flag.

Blurb: Easter falls on April 1st this year! Satan was gloating thinking that he had killed Jesus and defeated God's plan of salvation. But then, on Easter, God said to Satan, "April Fools . . . and you're the fool!" Easter is mind-blowing! It's beyond what makes sense. Yet, it is precisely because it is, that it brings us the only hope we truly have. Human wisdom is foolishness in front of God's wisdom. This Easter, don't miss worship. It'll blow your mind!

## ***WORSHIP OUTLINE:***

**Opening Song:** *Thine Be the Glory* -Sanctify

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

Happy Easter!

Today is April First...April Fool's Day!

It's spring: Weather had been warm, the trees are budding, and grass starting to turn green

April Fools! Snow on the ground, and a temperature of 8 degrees!

But this is also perfect for Easter!

Jesus was killed on the cross. It looked like evil won.  
 Jesus was buried in the tomb. It looked like death reigned.  
 It looked like God's plan of salvation was defeated.  
 But then, on Easter, the tomb opened, and Jesus' voice rang out:  
 April Fools!!  
 What you thought, isn't true! The way it looked, isn't real!  
 Jesus breaks in with a new reality!

We start with the greeting that Christians have been using on Easter for nearly 2,000 years:  
 I say, "Christ is risen!" and you respond "He is risen indeed!"  
 Three times. Ready?

Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed!] (3X)

Amen!

My name is David Werner, and I'm the pastor here at Forest Hills Church  
 Where we love God and others, grow in Christ, and serve in the power and leading of the HS  
 A special welcome to those who are here for the first time.

We invite you to stop by the welcome center on your way out and get a mug.

We want you to know that here your cup runs over with blessings from God!

& to everyone, come back next week, when we start our new message series: Core Strength.

We're going to read through 1 John and discover how God who is love, not only  
 gives us His love, but works His love in us to change us.

Easter is cool, but it doesn't mean anything unless it changes our lives.

Starting next week, we unpack how your life can look different, even your behaviors!

We're going to work on our spiritual cores, and build our core strength!

Today as part of our worship experience, we are celebrating Holy Communion.

I want you to know that when we do, everyone is invited to receive the elements.

It doesn't matter your church, what exactly you believe, or your age.

All you need to do is want to know Jesus more.

We use individual cups of grape juice and bread, with a rice cake alternative option.

And, if you can't make it down to the front, just wait, and we'll bring the bread and  
 juice to you.

**PP:** Memory Verse:

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing  
 of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good,  
 pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

**Memory Verse:**

Our memory verse today pushes us to give up thinking like the world does, and instead think  
 as God does. And when we do, everything changes!

Let's try it together...

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing  
 of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good,  
 pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

**Easter Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQk-8cmdBfw>

**Worship Music Set: - Sanctify***He Lives!**Resurrecting*

Worship Prayer

**CROSS Prayer: (Andrew)**

C.R.O.S.S. Prayer [Focus on "Send: Give us your heart for the lost."]

**Come:** Pour out your Holy Spirit on your church.**Renew:** Awaken in us a hunger for more of You.**Oneness:** Bind us together to the work God is calling us to.**Stretch:** Push us into boldness.**SEND: GIVE US YOUR HEART FOR THE LOST.****Grow Moment:**Video on small groups, edited: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5PPp9QcMYI>

Small groups introduction (David)

Starting next Sunday, we are launching our next small group series.

It's following our message series on First John - Core Strength

It's for seven weeks, and there are group options Sundays before and after worship,

Mondays at 10, Tuesday evening and Wednesday evening.

It's for the whole family!

Last time, back in February, we had over 80 folks involved in the groups

And the feedback was exciting!

"This group helped me meet new people. I'm so much more connected now!"

"It was so helpful to hear the insights of others."

"This really helped me take seriously my own daily walk for Jesus."

"I'm so sad to have the group stop. I can't wait for April!"

Well, April is here! And I invite you to sign up for a group today!

There are sign-ups on the table in the lobby.

And, if you sign up, you also get this excellent daily devotional book!

Start it before your 1<sup>st</sup> session, you need to complete four days before your 1<sup>st</sup> group

Joining this Bible Study is a great way to let Easter transform you! Don't miss out!

**Holy Communion & Offering**

Last week we joined together to celebrate a special meal, that Jesus had with His small group

And He told His small group to do it again and again as a way to remember His sacrifice

We call it the Lord's Supper, because whenever we do it, Jesus is the Host

Jesus is not dead, but alive,

and so He is here with us today, and hosting this sacrament again with us today.

The Lord's Supper is most importantly a proclamation.

It is a witness to the salvation that Jesus won for us.

When we celebrate it, we proclaim that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

We proclaim that Jesus allowed His body to be broken, and His blood to be shed

To bring life to all who put their trust in Him

And so, on Easter, we share this special meal again,

To proclaim that Jesus is not dead, but alive!

Let's join together and proclaim the faith, as summarized by those who saw the risen Jesus with their own eyes. Stand with me, and proclaim with joy!

### **The Apostle's Creed**

"I believe in God the Father Almighty..."

Be seated.

Jesus, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried."

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this, whenever you do this, in remembrance of me."

And then, when the meal was about over, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to His disciples, saying, "Drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sin. Do this, whenever you drink this, in remembrance of me."

"On the third day He rose from the dead..."

Hallelujah!

Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed!]

Let's pray.

Risen Jesus, we celebrate your great victory! Because you are alive, we are alive. Because you conquered death, we conquer death. Because you live forever, we live forever! We pray that the Holy Spirit would come upon us now, to help us remember and proclaim. Make this bread and juice be for us the body and blood of Christ so that we might be the body of Christ redeemed by His blood. Overflow our joy, so as Easter people, we would splash the joy you give us to all we meet. May our joy never fade! In the name of the victorious Jesus we pray. Amen!

Jesus gave up everything to have us. He calls us to give up our lives to have Him.

When we replace ourselves with Him as our Lord, new life begins!

So, today, as you come up for Holy Communion, as you proclaim His death and resurrection, I invite you to use this as a way for you to give yourself to Him. Invite Him into your heart. And as a sign of that, up here with the bread and juice, are our surrender flags.

We've been using these for the last month to proclaim our surrender to Jesus.

When you come up to receive Holy Communion, take a surrender flag back with you.

And hold on to it. We'll use it later in the service.

If you bring offerings to God's work, you are invited to place them in the offering plates as you come down to the front.

But please know, this is only for those who want to fund the work of God through this church. All the moneys received support this church's witness for Jesus into the community.

Then come up and take a piece of bread, and a cup of juice.

Eat and drink remembering Jesus.

Then take a surrender flag, and head back to your seats, along the outside aisles.

You can place your cups in the baskets as you go.

Jesus is our host. He calls us to come. Let us remember and proclaim!

**Song:** *Reckless Love*

**Easter Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdn1R90kX9A>

**Message:** “I Give Up...My Wisdom!”

**PP#1:** I Give Up ...

My Wisdom!

“God has raised the Lord and will raise us through His power.” -1 Corinthians 6:14

I Give Up ... My Wisdom! 1 Corinthians 6:14 “God has raised the Lord and will raise us through His power.”

**PP#2:** *Main image of the jester from* <http://hoaxes.org/aprilfool>

Hoaxes.org rated the top 100 best April Fools Day hoaxes of all time. The top five included a man who lit a huge pile of tires in the creator of a dormant volcano in Alaska, and the billowing smoke, wreaked havoc on the people in the nearby village, not to mention the environment! And an acclaimed businessman boasted to tow an iceberg into Sydney, Australia, duping thousands until rain washed away the firefighting foam and shaving cream revealing a barge.

**PP#3:** *Image of the Great Spaghetti Hoax*

But hands down, and by far, the #1 hoax of all time came in 1957. The respected BBC news show *Panorama* announced that due to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop! The show even included footage of Swiss field workers harvesting strands of spaghetti from trees. The British, somewhat new to pasta, were taken in by the thousands across the country. The BBC was flooded with calls by people wanting to know how to grow their own spaghetti trees. The BBC diplomatically explained, "Place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best."

Even the director-general of the BBC later admitted that after seeing the show he checked in an encyclopedia to find out if that was how spaghetti actually grew (but of course the encyclopedia had no information on the topic).

That hoax duped more people than any other on record. What people see, and what is reported as true, by a source we have come to trust, often has people believing foolishness!

I had a teenager in youth group some years back that actually believed that chocolate milk came from brown cows! Well, at least she knew milk came from cows!

**PP#4:** *Cartoon of Jesus, wearing shirt saying, "I'm with stupid," next to the Grim Reaper*

But I disagree with hoaxes.org. The number one hoax of all time was Jesus' supposed defeat. The Jewish leaders, the crowd, the Roman authorities, the soldiers, and even Jesus' friends and disciples, all believed that Jesus was defeated. His mission was over. Yes, He had tried to teach them otherwise, but seeing is believing, and they saw Him die.

But the Easter miracle was that God actually used this defeat to bring victory. It was through Jesus' human failure that God actually achieved success. What the people saw, what was reported as true, by sources that seemed trustworthy, what seemed so sure and what they came to believe was not what was actually happening. Human wisdom, when trying to contain the things of God,

becomes foolishness, and what may seem like godly foolishness to many, is ultimately revealed to be what is eternally true.

I've been saving this image since last year. I just love it! I had to use it for April Fools Easter. The Grim Reaper, perhaps the embodiment of the human fear of death, and death's utter and seemingly total power, is reduced by Jesus to a fool. It's perfect! It's the Gospel in cartoon!

**PP#5: I Give Up ... My Wisdom!**

So Easter becomes the great reveal of the greatest hoax. It's God's declaration that what we thought was true, was not. Yes, Jesus really died. But He was not defeated. God's plan of salvation wasn't thwarted, it was achieved!

Now, it's also true that although here we can proclaim Easter, and people will cheer with you, when you leave here, you will more commonly encounter people who think you are the fool. God, saving people through Jesus dying on a cross? Really? You believe that? It makes no sense.

Easter proclaimed is joy. But Easter *lived* requires that we give up. In order to live into God's plan of salvation, to have the life abundant and eternal that Jesus offers, requires that we give up our human wisdom, our control of what makes sense.

You see, we want to understand God, and as we try to do that, we can start to demand that God make sense to us. He has to fit into our understanding, in our current world view. We can start to know enough to be dangerous, getting so used to understanding our reality, that we have a hard time accepting something that doesn't make sense to what we know. It can become hard to take leaps of faith and let God blow our minds.

**PP#6: I Give Up ... My Wisdom!**

1. Let God be bigger than my current understanding

And so, on this Easter, we—learned as we are—need to give up our wisdom in order to receive the life-giving truth of God's salvation. The leap of faith required to receive all that Jesus won, is to let God be bigger than our current understanding. Not that we shouldn't think hard and deeply about God, and strive to understand more and more. God will develop in us a human wisdom that is good and helpful. But it means that no matter how much we come to know, that we don't limit God to fitting into our current mindset.

There is conclusive empirical evidence of the reality of Jesus' resurrection. But it becomes life-giving when we put our trust in the living Jesus and invite Him live in our hearts.

**PP#7: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (CEB)**

18 The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved. 19 It is written in scripture: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will reject the intelligence of the intelligent." (Isaiah 29:14) 20 Where are the wise? Where are the legal experts? Where are today's debaters? Hasn't God made the wisdom of the world foolish?

The Bible is blunt when it acknowledges that Jesus' death as the gateway for salvation seems like foolishness to human wisdom. Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth—that's in Greece. It seems that they were being ridiculed by their neighbors and told their beliefs were foolishness.

Paul tells them, "Yes, it does seem like foolishness to your neighbors. But all they have is their limited human understanding." 1 Corinthians 1, 18, he writes, "The message of the cross is

foolishness to those who are being destroyed. [Those who won't receive God's salvation.] But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved. [If you accept it, it becomes the very path of life!] 19 It is written in scripture: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will reject the intelligence of the intelligent." (Isaiah 29:14) [God will not be constrained to human understanding. He will not be limited by what people can grasp.] 20 Where are the wise? Where are the legal experts? Where are today's debaters? Hasn't God made the wisdom of the world foolish?"

No matter what the wise and learned may think, the Grim Reaper still waits for them. When seen from the perspective of salvation, of life eternal, from God's point of view, the human wisdom that so many trust, is what is utterly foolish!

God didn't try to use human wisdom to bring people to Him. If He did, it would require perfect purity, perfect sinlessness, and a legalism that would choke and kill. It would bring hopelessness and death. So God's greater plan was to do for us what we could not do ourselves. And it seems to me that rather than calling it foolishness, we should be jumping at the chance for true and real abundant life.

**PP#8:** 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (CEB)

21 In God's wisdom, He determined that the world wouldn't come to know Him through its wisdom. Instead, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching. 22 Jews ask for signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, which is a scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 24 But to those who are called—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. 25 This is because the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Verse 21, "In God's wisdom, He determined that the world wouldn't come to know Him through its wisdom. [Thank you, God! Hallujah!] Instead, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching. [A simple telling of what Jesus has already done: the Gospel!] 22 Jews ask for signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, which is a scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 24 But to those who are called [and called here means those who have answered God's calling of salvation]—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. 25 This is because the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."

Happy Easter! Praise be to God!

**PP#9:** I Give Up ... My Wisdom!

1. Let God be bigger than my current understanding
2. Change the lens by which you view reality

Without what so many call God's foolishness, our reality becomes closed, our world becomes small, and our future becomes hopeless. And we can become such slaves to our own thinking, to how things make sense to me, that we become trapped.

Easter is not just Jesus achieving victory through what seems to be foolishness, it can also be a lens through which our view of life can be dramatically altered.

In a previous church, there was a lady who just couldn't stand me. She and I were very different on many of our views, and she just couldn't stand it that I said things she didn't agree with from the pulpit. For example, I preached that without Jesus you cannot be saved. I said people were

sinful without God, and that unfortunately, the reality was that some people were going to hell. At first she challenged me to my face, but I couldn't get her to show me biblically where I was wrong. And she didn't have the good graces to simply go away! Usually, when people don't like me, they just don't come back. But not this woman. It was the opposite! She made it her life's mission to challenge me at every chance. At least I caused her increase her attendance!

Well, I didn't much care for her, either, you might imagine. And how I wanted to be rid of her. The letters to the staff-parish team, calls from the District Superintendent, letters to the Bishop. It started to creep into my heart, and I made our relationship an adversarial one.

I was wining one day to another pastor about this—not that pastors ever talk about people to other pastors! Just this one time!—and the other pastor pointed out, “You know, she's not your enemy. She's God's beloved child, and you need to see her that way.”

On my drive home, I had to admit in my heart to God that he was right. Jesus died for me, as sinful as I am. And Jesus died for her, no matter what I think about her. I needed to leave my wisdom and take on God's. I needed to see her through the cross. I needed a new lens.

**PP#10:** *An image or phrase that relays that prayer changes the one praying.*

I decided that I would pray for her each day, and ask God to bless her. Each time I saw her, and my defenses went up, I would tell myself, “She loves Jesus, and she is God's beloved child.”

It didn't take long. My heart began to soften. You know, it's hard to keep resenting someone whom you ask God to bless! My attitude toward her began to change. Not that she ever started to like me, even a little. But I came to see her as giving me opportunities to exercise God's grace through me. And love even grew in my heart for her. I can't say I ever liked her. But I came to love her.

Easter became my new lens. And that lens changed my reality. It didn't fix the problem like my human wisdom wanted. But God worked in me to grow me in love and grace. And I was released from the bitterness and anger and resentment. I was freed! My reality changed. I had a new future.

You know, Easter wisdom here, if there is someone in your life that you can't stand and that just drives you crazy, ask God to bless them! The Easter lens will change your reality.

When you choose to live with God's Easter lens, your life is freed. Your soul is filled with love. Your mind is cleared of negativity. Your heart is released from bitterness. It changes you...it changes your life, your future. You look at things differently. You see God where you could not before. Burdens and hardships become witnesses to you of God's sustaining grace. Life becomes rich and full. Not easier, no. But meaningful and having real value.

God's wisdom is a choice. It's giving up the constrains of human wisdom. It's opening your reality to God, who is beyond you. It's taking Easter, Jesus' resurrection, as your very purpose in life. It's choosing a different lens, which opens up a brand new world.

**PP#11:** I Give Up ... My Wisdom!

1. Let God be bigger than my current understanding
2. Change the lens by which you view reality
3. Make Easter your new identity

It has been my tradition for the past 20 years, on Easter, to hand out plastic Easter Eggs with some mysterious item inside. So, I'm going to ask the ushers to pass around this year's eggs. Now, don't open it yet. Let it be a surprise. In fact, shake it and try to guess what it might be. I would be surprised, however, if anyone could guess what is inside without looking...no matter how wise or smart you are!

As the eggs are being passed around, I want you to take a hold of your surrender flag. For the past number of weeks, we've used them to signal how we have given up to God excuses, our addictions, our anxiety, our selfish plans, our limited truth, and our comfort. Today I want the flag to remind you to give up your slavery to human wisdom.

**PP#12:** *Image of white surrender flag*

On Easter, white cloth are part of the story. The white linen cloth that was wrapped around Jesus' dead body, and the white cloth that covered His face, were still in the tomb. They were neatly folded and left behind. They became a witness to Jesus' resurrection.

So today, my this white cloth remind you of Easter, and bear testimony to Jesus' resurrection.

Also in the story, on Easter, the clothes that Jesus was wearing became dazzling white. His purity and holiness shown out like light!

As an Easter cloth, may your white flag also remind you of Jesus' purity and divinity.

But, remember Easter is only transforming if you live it as your new reality. When you receive the resurrected Jesus of Easter, He gives you His perfection, and He makes you white and clean as well. This cloth reminds you of your holiness before God; this is how God sees you through Jesus!

**PP#13:** I Give Up ... My Wisdom!

1. Let God be bigger than my current understanding
2. Change the lens by which you view reality
3. Make Easter your new identity

But this new reality is an Easter gift.

Go ahead and open your egg. It's a red crayon. Anyone guess that?

I want you to write your name on your flag with your crayon.

For on Easter, Jesus comes to you and says, "By my shed blood, I have called you by name, and have cleaned you from all sin. It is my Easter reality for you!"

This makes your surrender flag an Easter flag!

Yes, it marks your surrender of your life to Jesus. It marks your surrender of all that keeps you from godly living. It testifies to Jesus' resurrection. It reminds you of Jesus' purity and divinity. And, it reminds you that by His blood, He chose you by name and made you His. His Easter becomes your new reality!

Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed!]

**Bumper Video**

**Closing Song:** *Jesus Paid It All* - Sanctify

*Wave white flags*

*Noise makers*

**PP:** Memory Verse

**Announcements:**

Sign up for Small Groups

**Benediction:** -Pastor David