

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF DETROIT

Congregational Fast and Devotional

"Experiencing Jesus Together Through Lent"

40 DAILY DEVOTIONALS
TO CULTIVATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD

Fruitful



www.firstdetroit.org
Weekday Evenings at 7:15 PM
Devotional & Prayer call
Dial-In: 605-472-5814
Access # 593305039

What is Lent

Lent is the period of 40 days before Easter in the Christian calendar. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians replicate Jesus' sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days.

What is the Devotional Call?

Each Evening, we gather at 7:15 PM,
by calling 605-472-5814 Access: 593305039

to share in a scripture reading, a devotional reading, and a morning prayer. The call lasts about 10 minutes.

What is a Fast?

Fasting is an outward sign of an inward attitude. It is a time when spiritual nourishment replaces physical nourishment. We substitute things we enjoy for prayer. In doing so, we build a closer relationship with God.

Why should I fast?

- *Many people in the Old Testament fasted when they had a need or emergency. (II Samuel 12:16-23) (Esther 4:16)*
- *Fasting was often a sign of mourning or repentance. (I Samuel 31:13). (Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:3). (Jonah 3:5-10).*
- *Some fasted to receive revelation or direction from God. (Exodus 34:28), (Daniel 10:2-3), (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23).*
- *Jesus fasted before He began His ministry. (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:1-2).*

What is our Fast

At the heart of the sacred fast is always the denial of Food. We will be using the Daniel Fast, one that is extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline, and purification of the body and soul. Within the Daniel fast there is room for broad interpretation.

THE DANIEL FAST

A SUGGESTED GUIDE

FOODS TO ENJOY

FRUITS

APPLES
APRICOTS
AVOCADOS
BANANAS
BLACKBERRIES
BLUEBERRIES
CANTALOUPE
CHERRIES
COCONUTS
CRANBERRIES
DATES
FIGS
GRAPEFRUIT
GRAPES
GUAVA
HONEYDEW
KIWI

LEGUMES

BLACK BEANS
BLACK-EYED PEAS
KIDNEY BEANS
LENTILS
MUNG BEANS
PINTO BEANS
SPLIT PEAS

LEMONS
LIMES
MANGOES
MELONS
NECTARINES
ORANGES
PAPAYAS
PEACHES
PEARS
PINEAPPLES
PLUMS
PRUNES
RASINS
RASPBERRIES
STRAWBERRIES
TANGERINES
WATERMELON

VEGETABLES

ARTICHOKES
ASPARAGUS
BEETS
BROCCOLI
BRUSSEL SPROUTS
CABBAGE
CARROTS
CAULIFLOWER
CELERY
COLLARD GREENS
CORN
CUCUMBERS
EGGPLANT
GREEN BEANS
KALE
LEEKS
LETTUCE

LIQUIDS

WATER
VEGETABLE JUICE
FRESH FRUIT JUICE
COCONUT MILK
ALMOND MILK

MUSHROOMS

OKRA
ONIONS
PARSLEY
PEPPERS
POTATOES
RADISHES
RUTABAGAS
SCALLIONS
SPINICH
SPROUTS
SQUASH
SWEET POTATOES
TOMATOES
TURNIPS
YAMS
ZUCCHINI

FOODS TO AVOID

MEAT
BREAD
PASTA
CRACKERS
COOKIES
CHIPS
CHEESE
CANDY
ENERGY DRINKS
MILK & CREAM
EGGS
SWEETENERS
ALCOHOL
SOFT DRINKS
HONEY

FOODS TO DECIDE ABOUT

COFFEE
TEA
OILS
NUTS
BROWN RICE
QUINOA
OATS
SEASONINGS
GUM & MINTS

DONT GET CAUGHT UP IN THE DETAILS!

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DANIEL FAST IS THE HEART OF THE SACRIFICE - DISCONNECTING FROM REGULAR LUXURIES FOR THE SAKE OF CONNECTING MORE CLOSELY WITH GOD. ONLY YOU AND GOD KNOW WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE.

2021 Lenten Devotional Series

FASTING FROM MINDSETS

NO NEGATIVE SPEECH
NO PROFANITY
NO DESTRUCTIVE HABITS

2021 Lenten Devotional Series

FASTING FROM MOVEMENT

REDUCING UNNECESSARY ACTIVITIES
INCORPORATING INTENTIONAL SILENCE
INTO OUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

2021 Lenten Devotional Series

FASTING FROM MONEY

NO UNNECESSARY SPENDING
COMMIT TO TITHING
KEEP A SPENDING JOURNAL

2021 Lenten Devotional Series

FASTING FROM MEDIA

LIMITED SOCIAL MEDIA
NO TELEVISION
LIMITED PHONE USE

FASTING PREPARATION

1.) Prepare your heart:

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God appears to Solomon and explains that if His people are going through a hard time, they should seek Him and follow His ways. Then, He will hear their prayers and heal them. Be willing to hear what God says needs to change and be willing to change. Don't continue to sin. What are the paths He wants you to walk? How much does He want you to pray and read His Word? Tell God that you surrender your life to Him and that you want more of Him and His way.

2.) Prepare your motives:

Ephesians 1:3 says that there are spiritual blessings assigned to us. We can never exhaust them! Who knows what God wants to give you or show you? Maybe He wants to bestow gifts such as wisdom, anointing, prayer power, healing power, teaching power, joy, or encouragement. When you eliminate things that are keeping you from focusing on God, He is able to show you things about your life that you never knew.

3.) Prepare your body:

If you decide to eat only fruits and vegetables for your fast, it will result in cleansing of your physical body. You may feel sick as your body detoxes, but you'll make it! This isn't a mind game to see if you can survive eating less or not watching ESPN, but about experiencing God. Some people ask, "What does not eating have to do with my relationship with God?" A Ministerial response is, "Stop eating and find out."

- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and for extra energy.
- If you feel light-headed or dizzy, eat fresh fruit or a small meal.
- Headaches are normal when beginning fasting; you will adjust.
- Your last meal before the fasting period and first meal afterward should be lighter than normal.
- Any time you skip a meal, replace it with a prayer and devotion time.
- If you have any health concerns, please consult your healthcare provider.

4.) Prepare your schedule:

Decide where you will meet with God, what and when you will eat, and how you will spend your time differently. Remember, the fast is about communing with God, so don't fill your time with distractions that will keep you from feeling hungry. Create a plan and commit to spending more time with the Lord.

Fasting Guidelines:

- Explain to your family what you are doing.
- Avoid complaining or bragging about your fast.
- Find an accountability partner for prayer & encouragement.
- Journal as you pray and meet with the Lord. Write down the miracles God does in your life!

Fasting at First Baptist Church of Detroit

Lent traditionally lasts forty days, modeled after Christ's forty-day fast in the desert, and ends on Good Friday. In the Western Church, Lent officially begins with a reminder of our mortality on Ash Wednesday

Day 1, Wednesday, February 17th, 2021

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection of the dead." Philipians 3:10-11 NIV

A Call To: Draw Near

Ahhh, here's the point of Christian life—"I want to know Christ." To know Christ in every way! Earlier in this scripture passage, it talks about "not having a righteousness of my own," but one based on Jesus and faith in Him only, not my own attempts to be good. *Knowing* Jesus is more than *knowing about* Jesus. Knowing Jesus means trusting Jesus. Trusting He loves you and me. Leaning on His sinless life and death on a cross to save us because we can't ...absolutely cannot save ourselves! Relying on His resurrection for new life inside our own souls now, and eventually a new life physically, just like Jesus, when we too, are raised from the dead. What a massive relief to know that I cannot save myself, but Jesus can and Jesus does. Now good days, hard days, all days become about *abiding in Jesus*.

Reflection:

In what area of your life do you want to know Jesus and abide in Him more fully?

Praise + Prayer:

I want to know You more, Jesus! I don't want to keep You out of any area of my life. Instead, I want to know You in every single part of my life...good days and days where I am suffering. Help me trust and abide in You, knowing that Your death and resurrection life both save and sustain me. Thank you. Amen!

Day 2, Thursday, February 18th, 2021

"Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."

Jeremiah 29:12 NIV

A Call To: Draw Near

Have you ever been in a place in your life where you have thought, "I never thought I would ever be here." Maybe your health declined. Maybe a tragedy happened and you felt alone. Maybe God moved you to the other side of the country or world, away from all that was familiar. You felt alone and by yourself.

Jeremiah reassures you that you're never alone. God is with you. He has a plan for you even in the unfamiliar. He's with you to give you peace, a future, and a hope. He wants you to call on Him and pray. Tell Him all that is on your mind. Every hurt.

Every fear. Every disappointment. He wants to hear it all. He's the ultimate listener. He actually yearns to listen to all that's on your mind.

In this moment, right where you are, lay it all out to Him. He's listening.

Reflection:

When was a time you felt alone? How did you handle the situation? Did you call on God?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, You know this isn't what I had planned for my life. I never saw this coming. I'm thankful You're here with me, though. You're my friend and I can talk to You anytime of day or night. You're always listening and answering my prayers. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 3, Friday, February 19th, 2021

“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Psalm 91:1-2 (NIV)

A Call to: Draw Near

Location, Location, Location. It’s more than a well-known catchy phrase; it’s the number one rule in real estate. You hear it from every real-estate agent, see it on all of the HGTV shows and read it in the apartment and home finder magazines. Where a property is located directly impacts its value. This real-estate truth is also a gospel truth. When it comes to experiencing God during Lent, finding just the right spot matters even more. According to Psalm 91:1-2 the best location to be is dwelling in God’s shelter because that is the place that allows you to rest and abide in His protection. It’s the safest, most secure and valuable location to be. This is such a prime location that no matter what is going on in the world around you or what your circumstances are, you will be in a place of serenity and peace that cannot be penetrated.

Accept the invitation to draw near and take refuge in God so that you can be in the right place at the right time, all the time because *location, location, location* matters.

Reflection:

Abiding in God’s protection is not like unpacking boxes and moving into a home permanently. Unfortunately, it’s very easy to constantly change locations because location is a choice. The protection offered in this secret location is conditioned upon a decision you have to make every day to dwell and take refuge in the presence of God. Have you been wandering away from God’s protection? What can you do to make sure you take up residence in the most valuable location and stay there daily?

Praise + Prayer:

Thank You Lord for being a God that I can really trust to keep me safe. Thank You for covering me so well that even in times of trouble when it looks like my world is falling apart, my spirit and my heart are safe with You. Thank You that I can have peace because You are with me. You are mighty to save and You have the power to withstand all of Satan’s attacks, so I have no need to fear or fret as long as I stay in the right location. Lord I don’t want to move around any more. In this season of Lent, as I turn to You, help me make dwelling my habit so that I can stay in Your presence. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen

Day 4, Saturday, February 20th, 2021

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 1:14-17 NIV

Call to: Draw Near

Jesus is the very real, flesh-and-blood Son of God. Incarnation literally means “in the flesh”. Yes, in the earthly presence of God’s Son, John saw His glory, grace and fullness.

This is the mystery of the divine housed in an earthly body to make the crucifixion even more powerful. In His divinity, Jesus bore the weight of the sin of mankind. In his humanity, he experienced all the pain, agony, and humiliation of the cross.

And out of the human/divine reality, we experience grace upon grace. Only God could do that. And our only gut response is love, praise, worship and thanksgiving.

Reflection:

Sit, think and meditate for a moment on the divine miracle, the divine paradox of Creator God becoming the suffering Savior. Now, what are you feeling inside about your relationship to Jesus? And what is your natural response?

Praise + Prayer:

Jesus, my Savior and Friend, You lived the perfect life that I could not live. You died to pay sin’s penalty that really I deserved to pay. I thank You for Your great love, the unbelievable price you paid to leave the glory of heaven to come to this broken world to save us from ourselves. I love You, Jesus. I receive Your gift of grace upon grace. And inwardly, and outwardly, I fall to my knees in praise and adoration for who You are and what You’ve done. Amen

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Hebrews 4:9

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Day 5, Monday, February 22nd, 2021

“The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, “Look! There is the Lamb of God!” When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them. They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” “Come and see,” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.” John 1:35-39 (NLT)

Call To: Draw Near

Here we have a first hand account of the calling of Jesus’ first disciples - John and Andrew. Isn’t it interesting that these two were already disciples of John the Baptist? They were seekers. I wouldn’t doubt they were there the day before seeing John the Baptist - their leader - baptize Jesus.

Every step of Jesus was intentional. His public ministry was just 3 1/2 years in length so every day counted. Here He is walking by the same place He did the day before. John the Baptist sees Him again and uses the same phrase when he first saw Jesus “Behold the Lamb of God.” But this time something happened - two of John the Baptist’s disciples were signaled out by Jesus and asked a direct question “What are you seeking?” These two seekers asked where Jesus was staying and followed him - not just that day but the rest of their lives. Their search was over. They had found what they were looking for. They would spend the rest of their time with Jesus and become bold witnesses for Jesus after His death.

Reflection:

There is an emptiness in our lives that can only be filled by the presence of Jesus. Picture Jesus walking by you right now. He turns and ask you this question “What are you seeking?” What would you say?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, You have a special purpose for my life. I desire to seek You first and I know that everything else will fall into place. In Jesus’ name, Amen

Day 6, Tuesday, February 23rd, 2021

"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Hebrews 2:14-18 NIV

A Call To: Draw Near

As the men walked out after Bible Study, I noticed that one guy was seated in the corner, his eyes fixed on the floor. When I asked what was going on, he quietly said, "I have an addiction problem with my computer. My wife has no idea that I've battled this for over ten years." Hebrews 2 declares that because of the death of Jesus, we have been set free and are not "held in slavery." That day in a locker room, the question hung in the air. If we are no longer slaves to sin, then why a decade of defeat?

To answer the question, we began by talking about the mercy of Jesus. Hebrews 2 describes him as our "merciful and faithful high priest," which means that our sin doesn't change His love for us. Hebrews 2 also declares that "He is able to help those who are being tempted." But how does he help us? As we talked, a question formed in my mind. "In light of this, would you say that your Christian life has become about sin management?" The answer was immediate. "Yes. When I manage to stay pure for a few weeks, I feel good about my faith walk. When I stumble and fall, I feel like I'm far away from God. It's all I can think about."

We talked and prayed, and then I suggested something radically different. "Here is your assignment. For the next several months, I want you to stop focusing on sin, and instead focus on Jesus. Delight in Him. Sing to Him!" Several months later, I was in another locker room when suddenly I saw him, and as he walked across the room, I could see the light in his eyes. He whispered, "It worked! I'm free!"

Reflection:

Has your walk with Jesus become a life of sin management, or do you still delight in the Lord? How does worshipping Jesus help you when temptation knocks on your door?

Prayer:

Jesus forgive me for allowing my walk with You to drift into sin management. Forgive me for treasuring my sin instead of treasuring You.

Day 7, Wednesday February 24th, 2021

“Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.”

Matthew 6:21 NLT

A Call To: Draw Near

The word treasure can evoke many images. One may think of an old pirate treasure of rubies, silver, and gold. There have been many treasure hunters who would devote their lives to this elusive loot. Some men and women have gone as far as losing their life in the peril of the search. When I read Matthew 6:21, it is sobering to realize that a wrong desire that becomes a strong desire can lead to the loss of my life. There is another word for such strong desires: it is called lust. Many of us are familiar with lust, especially in a sexual context. I once pictured lust as a spirit that lures the human desire beyond love or affection. It can become so strong that the pursuit of this false love can become exploitative. In today's culture, it is the very thing that destroys relationships, marriages, along with one's own life. For some, it's not another person we lust after; it's food, a pick-up truck, or shopping, or sultry series on Netflix.

We must be careful not to let false treasure lead us and lure us away from the real treasure in our lives. When we align ourselves with the pure desire for God, we then allow Him to be the fulfillment of that desire in our hearts. He is the only one who can quench that desire. Through the consistent reading of His Word, He supplies us with the answers we have been looking for in the wrong places.

Reflection:

Can you imagine if we pursued God with the intensity of diving for treasure at the bottom of the ocean, and the response we would get from our heavenly Father? The next time you are in worship, think about the time and energy it takes to pay for your dream car and think about how you can give more energy and time to praise God. Pursue Him and listen for His voice. In times of silence, lean into what He has already spoken in His Word.

Praise +Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I ask that Your love and mercy move us to pursue You with greater intent. That we would search for Your voice in our lives as if it were the ultimate treasure. I pray that our hearts would be filled and healed by Your love. Let it overshadow all other desires so that our hearts become reliant on Your love alone.

Day 8, Thursday, February 25th, 2021

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits;” Psalms 103:2-12 NKJV

A Call To: Reflect

It's so easy to forget, isn't it? I forget people's names, sometimes I forget meetings and one time I forgot my jacket at a restaurant! I never saw it again. There have been times I went looking frantically for my phone only to realize I couldn't find it because I was talking on it! It was right there in my hand, but I wasn't paying attention. Blessings are often like that. We have them, they're in our hand...but we're not paying attention to the Giver and we forget them.

Lent is a time to remember. To intentionally recall God's goodness and the benefits of His love and care. To pay attention to Jesus by spending time valuing Him, treasuring His presence and honoring Him for the very real and lasting benefits only He provides. New life, forgiveness, redemption, satisfaction, compassion. Amazing! All these blessings come from His nail scarred hands into our own. We are blessed! Take time to remember what's really important today.

Reflection:

If you have time, read all of Psalm 103 and praise God for all the specific ways He is blessing you today.

Praise + Prayer:

God, thank You for all the ways You bless my life...starting with caring for my soul. Jesus, You've changed me forever by forgiving me and saving me.

Day 9, Friday, February 26th, 2021

“Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth.” 1 Chronicles 16:12

A Call To: Reflect

Do you know someone who has an incredible memory? This may even be you! My brother is 60 years old and he can give me details about people and places from when we were young kids. I’m not like him; I can’t even remember what happened yesterday! I *want* to remember the details of the past, but I can’t.

I started a new tradition this last Thanksgiving. I put a quart size mason jar, small notepad, and pen on our front entry table. My husband and I will write what we’re thankful for on the small notepad papers, put them in a jar and next Thanksgiving we’ll read them. We’ll think back throughout the year and remember the good times and what we were thankful for at that moment.

1 Chronicles 16:12 tells us to “remember His wonderful deeds which He has done.” One way I’ve done this is by journaling. I write down those good things God has done in my life in a journal. At any moment, when times are good or when times are bad, I can look back at my journal and be encouraged by God’s faithfulness and love for me.

Reflection:

During this Lent season, take a moment to pause and think about the good things God has done in your life.

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, I thank You that I don’t have to rely on my own memory for all that You have done and for the promises You have made for me. I thank You for the Bible that I can read through the pages and be reminded of Your faithfulness and love. I want to become a good steward of keeping record of the answered prayers and miracles in my own life so I can leave a legacy for my family. I need Your help so that I can be disciplined to write them down. I ask for Your spirit of wisdom, knowledge and revelation to remain with me. Amen.

Day 10, Saturday, February 27th, 2021

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (NIV)

A Call To: Reflect

The call to reflect during Lent is an encouragement to take time to look and think deeply and carefully about Jesus. John 3:16 is an easy one to reflect on because it's so well-known.

You probably didn't even need to read the verse when you saw it was John 3:16. It is one of the most well-known and loved verses which is awesome, but that also means it's easy to move past the old familiar verse and not really take time to thoughtfully consider or remember the messages in it.

The word “love” is thrown around. You've heard it, or perhaps like me you've casually said “I love chocolate,” or “I love your outfit.” But looking again at John 3:16 we come back to the reminder that love is more than a mere affection or vote of approval.

Biblical love is an action, a verb. God's love for us was not left to a verbal expression. No, He was moved to demonstrate His love for us and He went big. He GAVE His Son, a generous, sacrificial and long-lasting gift that keeps on giving. How's that for proof that actions speak louder than words? On top of that, it's not an exclusive, limited edition of love. It's a love that is available to anyone. It's no wonder why this verse is such a favorite. What a special gift to reflect on this season.

Reflection:

Reflecting during Lent is also a time to use the Bible as a mirror to see your image in God's image. The John 3:16 image of God's love is meant to be empowering because we are made in God's image which means we were made to love and give. Think of some ways you can be more giving to show your love.

Praise + Prayer:

God, Your love is so amazing. Thank You for the gift of Jesus. Thank You that You would have given the same gift even if I was the only person in the world. Thank You for being a generous God, making me in Your image so that I can show love and give. Fill me with Your Spirit and help me show love with an overflow with generosity.

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Day 11, Monday, March 1st, 2021

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

A Call To: Reflect

Love is more than a noun. It's more appropriately a verb. Love is demonstrated by an action. Love is not primarily an emotion, though the world emphasizes the feelings of love.

“But God demonstrates”. He puts His love in very concrete, even unbelievable terms. A righteous and holy God created us in His image. But mankind chose to go his own way and made a big mess of things. While we were in that unattractive state, He actually DIED for us, voluntarily laying down His life that we might be restored to our holy and righteous God.

Reflection:

What would motivate the all-powerful creator to stoop to this planet and actually die a painful, humiliated death for awful, terrible, rebellious sinners? What do you want to say to Jesus?

Praise + Prayer:

Dear Jesus, I can't even begin to comprehend such unconditional, extravagant love. You didn't just think it, or feel it, You actually showed it in the way you died on the cross. I'm humbled and grateful. Thank You, Jesus. Amen

Day 12, Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021

“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” Philippians 2:6-8(NLT)

A Call to: Reflect

As a child I liked to watch superhero’s. One of my favorites was SuperMan. He was disguised as mild-mannered Clark Kent, but then when a major crisis happened, he would slip into a phone booth and become SuperMan! “Faster than a speeding bullet - more powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap a tall building in a single bound.” I would love it when the bad guy would show up and SuperMan, in his power, would crush the evil!

Good should always triumph over evil - but we don’t see this in the first part of the Lent story - at least what we can see in the time frame up until the cross. Jesus, who we can’t even compare to SuperMan because He is infinitely greater, takes a different approach. With all the “super powers” of God, He empties Himself of those and clothes Himself with humility. He is obedient to a bigger plan and allows Himself to apparently “lose.” While He could have exercised His power and destroyed those who were persecuting Him, instead He chose to humbly die a painful death on the cross. But that’s not where the story ends. His humility and obedience lead to resurrection and life for all who believe! And for generations to come!

Jesus taught the greatest in the kingdom would be the least. He not only taught this, He also modeled it during His life and in His journey to the cross.

Reflection:

For a moment think about humility and your life. Are there areas where you need to empty yourself of your pride?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, I know You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Reveal any blind spots in me so that I can empty myself of them. I want people to see Jesus through my words and actions. In Jesus’ name, Amen

Day 13, Wednesday, March 3rd, 2021

“And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:2

A Call To: Reflect

It has been said by friends and family that I love people! Truthfully, I really do!! I have colleagues at praiseLive that say to me, “You know everyone!” Obviously, that is an exaggeration, but it makes me pause and reflect on “knowing everyone.” Jesus knows everyone, He is the creator. He even knew the ones that would betray Him, the ones that would reject Him and the ones that would crucify Him and yet He loved them! Jesus loves you so much that He was willing to be crucified on a cross--that is true love and sacrifice. That is the kind of love I want to strive for, with the help of Jesus, that I would be able to love others so sacrificially.

What is a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God? Jesus knew that the Father is drawn to pleasing scents - the scent of a holy offering and a loving sacrifice. What does that look like? Jesus released that scent, a heavenly aroma, in this world. His fragrance conveyed the sweetness and beauty of the love of the Father. It is the aroma of love, grace, mercy, kindness, goodness and holiness.

Jesus loved so much that He gave His life as a sacrifice for everyone, but also as an act of worship to His Father. Jesus smelled Heavenly!!!! His aroma was undeniable and people wanted to carry His same aroma. He draws us to the Father so that we can have eternal life through Him, Jesus our Saviour!

Reflection:

What is your aroma? Do you want to release the same aroma that Jesus did? What does love look like in your life when someone hurts you or betrays you?

Praise + Prayer:

Dear Jesus, We praise and adore You! You are worthy of all our praise!! Your name is above every other name. You are Holy and there is none beside You! Please show us how to love as You love! To love “everyone.” Jesus, let us have Your aroma to draw people into relationship with You! Let our aroma be a fragrant and sweet offering, a sacrifice, an act of complete worship to You! Amen

Day 14, Thursday, March 4th, 2021

“For the greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all. And this great love is demonstrated when a person sacrifices his life for his friends,” John 15:13

A Call To: Reflect

I envision myself being wrapped in his love, like a fuzzy blanket on a cool winter night, when I read this verse. I envision Father God looking into my eyes with his fiery eyes saying, “My child, I love you so much that I sent my son to die in your place. I asked him to do this so that you will have eternal life with me in Heaven. I chose you before the beginning of time. I never had a plan B.”

Perfect love is also loving someone knowing that they may not love you back. God has never held back in his relationship with you or me. He’s not afraid of rejection or our imperfections. He’s not afraid of our doubts or our process. He has already chosen you and provided us with a redemptive plan---JESUS! He is a perfect father with an everlasting love. Reflect on how sacrificial his love truly is for you.

Reflection:

Ask Jesus if there are any lies that you are believing about his perfect love for you? If you heard yes, ask him to show you what they are. Repent for believing the lies and then ask Jesus what the truth is.

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, we praise You and thank You for being a perfect Father to us. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to take our place and die a horrific death so that we can spend eternity with You. Thank You for choosing me first. Help me have a greater revelation of Your love for me. I want to encounter Your love in fresh ways. Soften my heart so that I may receive all that You have for me today. I love You, Father. Amen.

Day 15, Friday, March 5th, 2021

“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” Isaiah 26:3 NIV

A Call To: Meditate

The word ‘steadfast’ means, “firmly fixed in place.” No one is born steadfast; we slowly become steadfast through training and repetition. It is a choice to over and over and over again think about God and walk out our trust in Him. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness after fasting 40 days and nights, He was able to stay firmly grounded in truth because He had cultivated a steadfast mind through years of personal devotion to His Heavenly Father. Jesus was firmly fixed in place. His faith wasn’t limited to certain moments; it was every moment.

Jesus remained resolute at a time when His identity was being questioned. Every moment His mind, heart and actions were aligned with God the Father and in that alignment, there was perfect trust, and perfect peace. This could not have been easy since scripture says, “...He learned obedience from what he suffered.” (Hebrews 5:8) To say ‘yes’ to God and His plan is to learn through everyday situations, both good and difficult, how to be resolute. Peace follows saying ‘yes’ to God and His ways over and over and over again. Just like Jesus.

Reflection:

Where do you set your mind?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord Jesus~thank You for being steadfast! For trusting God the Father all the time. I confess I struggle. Since You are my Lord and Savior, fill me with Yourself. Train me to be steadfast in my trust of Your love, forgiveness and plan. And, as a result, may I experience daily the peace only You provide. Thank you! Amen.

Day 16, Saturday, March 6th, 2021

*“Oh, the joys of those [blessed] who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with the mockers. **But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.** They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.” Psalms 1:1-3 NLT*

A Call To: Meditate

Recently, I moved to a new state. That meant I had to get a new driver's license. So, I got my little driver's practice book and set it on the coffee table. I had been a good driver for 43 years so I didn't think I really needed to study. I could just skim the book and I knew I could pass the test just fine. I *knew* how many feet to park away from a curb. I *knew* all the road signs by only their shapes. So before the test, I just skimmed through the driver's book not really meditating or digesting every detail of what I needed to know. Confidently, I walked into the DPS, took the test, and sure enough...I failed. No joy. No happiness. I felt depressed and down.

It's easy to sit down to do our devotions, skim through the verses and chapters, and not really let it soak into our spirit. We get up two minutes later after reading the Bible and our lives never change. We still feel down. No joy. No happiness.

When we meditate on God's Word, we should look at a verse in the Bible and read it slowly - thinking about each word. It takes time. That verse is on our mind all day. Then, we tell others about the verse. We go to bed thinking about the verse. When we meditate on God's Word, the Bible says we have joy, we are blessed, and we prosper!

Reflection:

Find a quiet spot in your home and slowly re-read Psalms 1:1-3. Meditate on each word. What does this verse mean to you?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, I want to live a joy-filled, blessed life. I want to prosper in all I do. Thank You for giving me Your Word to meditate on each day. Help me to make my time with You're always a priority In Jesus' name, Amen

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Sabbath rest

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Day 17, Monday, March 8th, 2021

"I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done." Psalm 143:5 NIV

A Call To: Meditate

What do you think of when you hear the word 'meditate?' Do you imagine a quiet, dark room, sitting with your legs crossed, taking deep breaths through the nose with throaty exhales? Then what do you think about? Guided meditation has become a rising star in the mental health, self-help and self-care worlds. It's a popular talk show topic, supported by research studies and all the streaming music platforms have playlists to aid in developing a practice. Why? Because it works well.

But, this shouldn't be a surprise to the believer since most 'newly discovered' beneficial therapies are essentially guided by Biblical truths. Meditation is not a new fad but there is a difference in the Biblically endorsed meditation. Meditation is a tool used to reflect on the Word and work of God. It's meant to be a practice, meaning you have to do it often because if you can't remember what you had for lunch last week, how will you remember what the Lord has done unless you intentionally take time to focus and think about it. Biblical meditation is the best form of meditation. If you want to develop this optimal meditation practice, the focus of your meditation must be on the Lord, His Word and His work in your life.

Reflection:

What do you find yourself meditating on (thinking about over and over again) when you are still? How can you be more intentional about Biblical meditation? What about starting with Psalm 143:5 and meditating on all that God has done for you this week?

Praise + Prayer:

God, thank You that you are the originator of every good and perfect thing. Thank you that You knew we need meditation as a practice in our lives and You didn't leave us to figure it out on our own or rely on man. You have given us instructions on how to meditate so that You are glorified and our faith grows. I have so much to meditate on because You have done so much for me. Help me to not give in to the enemy who would want me to forget all Your works. Help me commit to meditation daily so that I can always remember. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 18, Tuesday, March 9th, 2021

“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.” Psalm 119:97-99

A Call To: Meditate

I love Lent. Some people “give up something for Lent”. I remember as a kid going to very somber Lenten services in my little country church.

But now Lent is something very sweet to me, very personal, very contemplative. This is a time to meditate on His word. To review His commands. To seek His wisdom, which is wiser than the purported wisdom of this world. To gain insight into God’s eternal plan for our salvation.

Break away from the formalities and traditions and take your humble place at the foot of the cross. Get alone and tell God how much you love Him.

Reflection:

Here’s your question to ponder: What in your life do you need to set aside right now to gain a greater appreciation for what Jesus has done for you through His death (to defeat sin) and His resurrection (to defeat death)?

Praise + Prayer:

Dear loving Father. I pause just now to meditate on your Word. Give me wisdom and insight into Your ways. Help me to carry those thoughts with me in the coming days as we observe Your death and resurrection. I love you, Jesus. Amen

Day 19, Wednesday, March 10th, 2021

"With my lips I proclaim all the judgments of Your mouth. I rejoice in the way of Your testimonies as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word." Psalms 119:13-16
Berean Study Bible

A Call To: Meditate

Proclaiming the truth of God's Word is an honor. But, preaching God's Word to ourselves is what changes us and gives us credibility to share about Jesus with our inner circle. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones says it this way: "Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?"

When you have a moment, write these phrases from Psalm 119 and ask the Holy Spirit to help you personalize each statement.

"With my lips I proclaim..."

"I rejoice in..."

"I will meditate on..."

"I will delight in..."

"I will not forget..."

As you speak to yourself, faith and hope will arise because your God sees your determination not to forget His word.

Reflection:

What is an area in your life where you have been listening to yourself instead of preaching God's Word to yourself?

Praise + Prayer:

Jesus, I rejoice in such great salvation, and I meditate on Your sacrifice. I will not listen to my emotions or the messages that tell me I don't have enough. I delight in You!

Day 20, Thursday, March 11th, 2021

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God,'" Matthew 4:4 NLT

A Call To: Meditate

Have you ever fasted from anything for 40 days? Depending on what you are fasting from, the temptation to break your fast is real. A couple of years ago the Lord asked me to do the Daniel Fast. I was unsure of how I would complete this since I was so used to drinking coffee every morning and loved sweets, especially chocolate! As the fast progressed, I was amazed at the grace that God had given me to go without coffee or sweets. There were still temptations to break my fast, and I caved one time, but I do believe that His grace is sufficient for us! Because of this experience, I have incorporated fasting more regularly into my life.

I often thought of Jesus when he was fasting in the wilderness for 40 days, only consuming water and having the enemy constantly provoking Him. He didn't have the comfort of His home or distractions to take His mind off of what He didn't have. His convictions were strong. Between the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, He was able to overcome all that the enemy threw His way.

I have given in too often to my flesh more than I would like to admit. As I have let the Word of God renew my mind and transform my perspective, saying *no* has become less of a struggle. Discovering the grace that God provides is life changing. It truly takes the pressure off of feeling the need to be perfect. Allowing the Holy Spirit to minister to my heart and heal the broken places of my life adds another level of confidence in what God is capable of doing in my life. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that Jesus understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same tests we do. Let's be believers that are sustained by the Word of God to satisfy our temptations.

Reflection:

Is there an area of your life where you are needing Jesus' help to overcome an area of temptation? Invite Jesus into this area of your life. Ask Him if there are any lies that you are believing around this temptation and then ask Him for the truth and how He sees you.

Praise + Prayer:

Father, I thank You that we don't have to overcome temptations on our own. I thank You for Your grace. I thank You that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always with me and that I'm never alone in my weakness. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and let the Fruits of Your Spirit be more evident in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 21, Friday, March 12th, 2021

“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” Philippians 2:6-8(NLT)

A Call to: Meditate

As a child I liked to watch superhero’s. One of my favorites was SuperMan. He was disguised as mild-mannered Clark Kent, but then when a major crisis happened, he would slip into a phone booth and become SuperMan! “Faster than a speeding bullet - more powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap a tall building in a single bound.” I would love it when the bad guy would show up and SuperMan, in his power, would crush the evil!

Good should always triumph over evil. But we don’t see this in the first part of the Lent story - at least what we can see in the time frame up until the cross. Jesus, who we can’t even compare to SuperMan because He is infinitely greater, takes a different approach. With all the “super powers” of God, He empties Himself of those and clothes Himself with humility. He is obedient to a bigger plan and allows Himself to apparently “lose.” While He could have exercised His power and destroyed those who were persecuting Him, instead He chose to humbly die a painful death on the cross. But that’s not where the story ends. His humility and obedience lead to resurrection and life for all who believe! And for generations to come!

Jesus taught the greatest in the kingdom would be the least. He not only taught this, He also modeled it during His life and in His journey to the cross.

Reflection:

For a moment think about humility and your life. Are there areas where you need to empty yourself of your pride?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, I know You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Reveal any blind spots in me so that I can empty myself of them. I want people to see Jesus through my words and actions. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day 22, Saturday, March 13th, 2021

“From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” Matthew 4:17 NLT

A Call To: Repentance

Do you remember when you first accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

Almost 30 years later and I can vividly remember that moment. I was nine years old, sitting in the church basement after the Easter service, enjoying brunch with my family and the gospel message was shared. I remember this tugging feeling in my heart and I knew that I needed Jesus. I repented of my sins and confessed with my words that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and rose again so that I could have eternal life. I made a decision that day to live my life for Him.

“Repent of your sins and turn to God.” When I read that, I see that God had already chosen me. He was already pursuing me, I just needed to choose Him in return. I didn’t have to get my act together before I could enter into a relationship with Him, it was just a gentle prompting by the Holy Spirit that I was missing something--- that was Jesus. Sin keeps us separated from God. He is inviting us into something so much greater!

Reflection:

Write down your salvation testimony and then ask God for an opportunity to share it with someone.

Praise + Prayer:

Father, Thank You for Jesus and thank You for choosing me. Purify my heart and mind. Show me the areas of my life that I need to repent and trust You. I ask that You would open up an opportunity where I can testify of how good You are! Open my eyes to see the one that needs you today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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remains a

Sabbath rest

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Hebrews 4:9



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Sunday, March 14th

 **LIVE**

We'll See you for Worship at 11:00 am

Day 23, Monday, March 15th, 2021

“And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5:31-32

A Call To: Repentance

A few years ago God, in his kindness, showed me areas of my life where I was valuing religion over relationship with Him and others. I was trying to do things in my own strength not living from peace, but for peace. Anxiety and striving were good friends of mine and their presence was a constant in my life. I was more concerned about making sure I followed all of the rules and that others did too. I valued rules over getting to know the heart of God or people. I know that I hurt people close to me because I thought I was doing the right thing. Fear was my motivator rather than love.

In that moment I repented for operating from a religious heart versus from a place of love. This was a blind spot in my life. Sin disconnects us to the heart of God. In his mercy and grace His conviction leads us back in his arms of loving kindness. He is quick to forgive us when we repent and turn away from our old ways. He is always calling us higher! When we are connected to the heart of God it's easy to follow God's commandments because we are in relationship with him. We want to honor him with our words, thoughts and actions.

There is no sin in your life that is too big for Jesus not to forgive. The enemy would love to keep you in shame, but Jesus came to give you abundant life! God sees us through the lens of love, you can trust him with your heart. Lay the lies, the secret sins, the areas of your life that you keep doing in your own strength at the foot of the cross. Repent and ask our perfect Father to forgive you. Walk in the freedom and grace the cross provides for you!

Reflection:

Do you put rules above relationship with Jesus? Are you more concerned with checking your “Christian Checklist” than getting to know the heart of God? Do you love the idea of God or have you truly gotten to know God?

Praise + Prayer:

Thank You, Father, for Jesus. I thank You that you always had a redemptive plan. I ask for forgiveness of (list an area of your life that you need to repent of). I lay these sins at the foot of the cross, they are not mine to pick up again. I ask for Your grace and healing to cover those areas of my life. I thank You for Your forgiveness and unconditional love.

Day 24, Tuesday, March 16th, 2021

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” Proverbs 28:13 NLT

A Call To: Repentance

I have always found confession of sins a fascinating aspect of our faith. I am sure each of us has different views on this very idea. My ideas have evolved throughout my faith journey. At times, confession can feel religious-like something mandatory. There was a point in my journey when I discovered the power of confession. A pastor was giving a sermon on James 5:16 and the gospel account of when Jesus healed the paralytic man in Matt 9:1. In James, it says, "confess your sin to one another and pray for one another, for the prayers of a righteous man is powerful and effective." The paralytic man wasn't necessarily confessing his sin, but he made his needs known to his friends. His friend's belief that Jesus could heal him was so strong that they pushed through the crowds of people and broke a hole in the roof where Jesus was holding a meeting. Here is the interesting thing; Jesus responded by saying, "Son, your sins are forgiven." At that moment, a crippled man received a revelation. Jesus is more than a miracle worker. He is the Son of God who can forgive us and heal us at the same time!

Imagine a child skinning their knee, doing something they should not have been doing. They hide it from their parents because of the shame they feel. Then because they did not seek treatment for the wound, it becomes infected and gets worse. I imagine God feels this way when we think we have sin under control or when we wait for it to get so bad before we confess and ask for help. The funny thing is that God already knows what you have done. He is just waiting for you to expose the problem to a trusted believer who joins you in faith and approaches God for healing. Not only does God promise to heal, but He also gives mercy, not punishment.

Reflection:

Could you use a few friends fighting for you in prayer? Ask Jesus who your praying friends are for this season of your life.

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, show me friends who I can trust and begin to build deep bonds and relationships with in this season of my life. I pray that these friends will go to great lengths to help hold me accountable towards my healing and wholeness. I pray that I will be brave to share my struggles with these trusted friends and that You would be working in their hearts to hear my heart. Thank You for going ahead of me and working everything out for my good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 25, Wednesday, March 17th, 2021

"Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away."
Acts 3:19 NLT

A Call To: Repentance

"Sorry, I'm late." "Sorry, I yelled at you." "Sorry that I forgot." The list goes on. You have people in your life that have apologized, and you accepted their apology because you knew it was sincere. You have other people who apologize to you over and over, and it's clear, "I'm sorry" is just empty words.

Webster's dictionary defines repent as "to turn from sin and to change one's mind." But C.S. Lewis takes it a step further. "Repentance means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death." So how do we repent in a way that we turn away? A great place to begin is a long conversation with Jesus. Ask Him to show you why this sin has a hold on your heart and how He can change the desires of your heart.

As you repent, consider the cross of Christ.

"It was the sight of Thy dear cross,
First weaned my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools, the pride of kings." Henry Bennett

Reflection:

Is there something that even as you repent, you still treasure in your heart? Since Jesus has wiped your sins away, is there any way that you need to walk away from sin?

Praise + Prayer:

Jesus, I praise You for setting me free. I now see that my repentance is choosing You and running into Your arms.

Day 26, Thursday, March 18th, 2021

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” 1 John 1:9

A Call To: Repentance

I remember memorizing this verse at Pioneer Clubs as an elementary child. I didn't understand the significance and power that this verse held at the time, but as life happened and I was faced with situations where either I sinned or I needed to forgive someone who hurt me, this verse was a simple reminder that he will forgive me--it's a promise! God wants to see us free from sin more than we ever could. If we can't bring our sins into the light because of fear, rejection, or shame then what was the point of Jesus dying on the cross?.

Fear is a liar. The more we humble ourselves and go before God in repentance the less scary it becomes. Imagine your child coming to you to confess that they did something wrong. Imagine yourself getting down to their level, holding their sweet little face in your hands & staring into their eyes as they come bravely before you to say that they are sorry and to ask for forgiveness. Compassion overcomes you and of course you will forgive them. You are so proud that they came to you and you love that child so much you wouldn't want to have anything in between your relationship that could break connection with them.

I imagine God approaching us in a similar manner. God is just, and we should have a holy fear and reverence for him, but his wrath was justified on the cross. There are consequences for our choices, but not punishment. A friend of mine explains that discipline or a consequence is to spur you on to do better and punishment is payment for your sins, there is not a lot of intentionality around it and the motive could stem from anger or fear. Our punishment was paid on the cross!

Reflection:

How do you view punishment versus consequences? In your own relationships in life are you motivated out of fear or love when you feel hurt, offended or lied to? Do you view God as an angry God or a loving God?

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, Show me if there are any areas of my life that I'm viewing You through a lens of fear. Thank You that I can approach you at any time, that You are a safe place for me to reveal my heart too-- my struggles, sins, passions and goals. You are so good. Thank You for sending Jesus to take my punishment. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 27, Friday, March 19th, 2021

“But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die.” Ezekiel 18:21

A Call To: Repentance

Do you ever wish you could see a Bible character come to life in your day and age? Would you like to see the radical transformation of Saul of Tarsus to Paul? Saul was a wicked person who killed Christians. He lived a life of sin. When God came into his life, he was radically changed.

A few months ago, I watched a church service on tv where an angry rapper who lived for himself, fame, and love of money radically changed. He went from singing songs about money and wild living to singing about how “Jesus Is King.” Today, he no longer sings his old songs at concerts. He only sings songs that glorify God. He completely turned away from his sin to follow Jesus.

Maybe you’re not as wicked as Saul or the rapper, but “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23. There comes a point in everyone’s life when we have to decide whether or not we’re going to repent, turn away from sin, and follow Jesus. I pray today is that day for you. If you turn away from all your sin, you will surely live!

Reflection:

Is there an area in your life which isn’t pleasing to Jesus?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, I am a sinner. Forgive me for when I have failed You. I repent of my sins and want You to be Lord of my life. Wash me clean and give me a new heart for You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Day 28, Saturday, March 20th, 2021

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9 NIV

A Call To: Repentance

Does anyone ever say “Take your sweet little time” anymore? Usually that’s the last thing we want to here in the age of right now where deadlines are fast and furious and patience is a lost art. Everything is about speed. High speed internet, microwaves, instant oatmeal, Amazon same day two hour delivery, the Disney speed pass, you name it, there’s a quicker way to do it. We don’t have to wait for much so we don’t like to wait. Afterall, who’s got time to wait?

That’s when we discover that our sense of time and speed is very different than God’s. Finishing fast, being in a hurry and shaving off time is not always a good thing. Repentance is an area for slow and deliberate speed that we can come to appreciate with the Lord.

Making changes to turn away from sin is required in order to avoid perishing. God, is making an accommodation by being slow. He is giving more time for more people to turn around and make changes because He doesn’t want anyone to perish. Lent is the perfect time to benefit from his generous patience and work on your own areas of repentance and for reaching out to others who are lost and need to be brought to repentance. It’s not God’s demand but it is certainly His desire.

Reflection:

What is the Lord giving you more time to change? Who can you reach out to and start sharing your faith journey of repentance with to inspire their repentance?

Praise + Prayer:

God, thank You for Your patience with me. In the speed of life I often want to rush Your timing, but I know that You have a purpose in the slowness and it’s for my good. It’s because You want what’s best for me, my family and my community. You won’t force us but You want us all to make it. Thank You for this season of Lent to work on areas of repentance and glorify You in the process.

So then, there
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Hebrews 4:9

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Day 29, Monday, March 22nd, 2021

“Praise the Lord, my soul! All my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Psalms 103:1-5

A Call To: Praise

This is actually one of my favorite Psalms. Whatever it is that we call worship doesn't compare to this exuberant expression of praise. It means praise God with all we've got! It means the external expression coming from the internal feeling of love and praise: soul and body.

Think about all He's done for you. Don't you forget it! He's forgiven your nasty sinfulness. He even makes you healthy. When you're in the pits, He brings you out and redeems you from your hopeless condition.

On top of fixing the nasty stuff, He replaces it in your life with an experience of love and compassion. He causes us to desire good things, not bad. AND, at my stage of life, he renews my energy, passion, and youthfulness. I can fly! Like an eagle!

Reflection:

What are some of the things you can bring to mind that God has done for you in terms of forgiveness, wellness, wholeness, love, desires and energy? List them.

Praise + Prayer:

Holy God, where can I begin this lenten season to adequately praise You for all You've done for me. My soul is bursting with expressions of praise for salvation, health, wholeness, joy, love, and energy. May my outward expression of praise this lenten season reflect the feelings in my soul. And if my soul is not in tune, tune me up for greater appreciation for You and what You've done for me. Amen.

Day 30, Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021

“Always be joyful. Never stop praying.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 (NLT)

A Call To: Praise

As we are walking with Jesus during this season of Lent, it's hard to think of this season as joyful. If you have watched any Easter movies depicting the last days of Jesus on earth, then you have seen the pain and misery He went through. So how can we always be “joyful?” The answer is simple. Joy isn't an emotion. It's a deep knowing that our God is in charge and in the end, we win. We don't always understand the whys, but we can always put our trust in a loving God who is working all things for our good.

Paul, the writer of this book, also wrote a letter to the Church at Ephesus. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he tells them to “Rejoice in the Lord, always.” Where was Paul when he wrote that? Was he in his home sitting on his favorite chair enjoying his favorite beverage? No, he was in prison. The prisons then were dark and gloomy. His future was uncertain. But Paul said- rejoice! He saw the positive because he had complete trust in God.

So where can we get this strength to be joyful? The verse right after this is the key. Never stop praying. Prayer gives us the strength. Prayer is the pipeline to the source of joy. When we plug into the Holy Spirit, we are connected to real joy - no matter what the circumstance. Prayer isn't something we just say over a meal or at the beginning of church meetings as if it were a “to do” item we check off our list. No, it's continuous. The Holy Spirit is with us 24 hours a day. Prayer is a conversation we can have and it's as simple as whispering His name - Jesus.

Reflection:

On a scale of 1-10, how joyful are you? Is there an area where you need to trust God more?

Praise + Prayer:

Lord, I want to have joy in my life. Forgive me for not always trusting You. I need You in every area of my life. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit that is with me every moment of my day. I am not alone. You are with me and I am grateful. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 31, Wednesday, March 24th, 2021

"Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our hearts rejoice in Him, since we trust in His holy name. May Your loving devotion rest on us, O LORD, as we put our hope in You." Psalms 33:20-22 ESV

A Call To: Praise

As a teenager, my Aunt Mini challenged me to read from Genesis to Revelation each year. When she saw the hesitation in my eyes, she quietly said, "I read this book cover to cover four or five times a year." In the years that followed, I began to read cover to cover and discovered Jesus at the center of the story.

In Adam and Eve, he covers our shame. In Abraham, he keeps his promise of a son; in Jacob we wrestle until we finally trust Him. In the book of Daniel, a fourth man appears in a fiery furnace that looks like a God. Isaiah prophesies of a lamb who is pierced for our rebellion and crushed for our sins.

When we finally turn the page to the book of Matthew, we see Jesus. He is worth the wait! We cry out, "Our soul waits for the LORD: He is our help and our shield." We bring our treasure and lay it at his feet, and we place our hope in Him. He is our long-awaited Messiah, and our hearts rejoice in Him.

Reflection:

Are you waiting for someone to change your life? Is your hope slowly turning to this person, or are you waiting for Jesus? During Lent, do I focus on what I am giving up, or what Jesus has given up?

Praise + Prayer:

Jesus, I see You in the pages of Scripture, and today I see You in the pages of my life. Forgive me of any time when I turned away or grew impatient. May Your loving devotion rest upon me.

Day 32, Thursday, March 25th, 2021

“Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. For our God is a devouring fire.”

Hebrews 12:28-29

A Call To: Praise

Living a lifestyle of praise requires a mindset shift. It requires me to see God as who He says he is; not seeing Him through my own brokenness or with a lack mindset. In these verses it reads that the Kingdom is unshakable. That translates to me that nothing is too big for God!

Have you ever been worshipping God and the atmosphere shifts and you experience the holiness of God? In that moment, all I can do is kneel down, get low, because of who He is. There is a reverence that is required when You experience the holiness and fear of the Lord. I became so aware of my need for a Savior. I imagine what it will be like in Heaven worshipping in the Throne Room of God singing, “Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty!”

“Our God is a devouring fire.” Can you picture what that might look like? If I know that God is love, I don’t need to be afraid. If I know that God has good things for my life, then I need to trust Him. I envision Him engulfing me in His love. As I allow him to embrace me, He is purifying my heart, allowing lies and strongholds to melt away as I encounter Him.

Let’s begin to cultivate a lifestyle of worship--turning our hearts towards Him in all we do!

Reflection:

I invite you to close your eyes. Use your imagination to picture God engulfing you with His love. Ask Him what He loves about you? Next, let God know what you love about Him.

Praise + Prayer:

God, I thank You that Your Kingdom is unshakable! Oh how I love to worship You and linger in Your presence. I’m in awe of Your holiness and how Your love is like a devouring fire. Mold me, transform me into the person You created me to be—purify my heart, my mind and my soul! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day 33, Friday, March 26th, 2021

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.” Ephesians 1:3-4

A Call To: Praise

I love this promise from God, “...he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.” Because of the cross, God sees us united or in another translation it reads “wrapped into Christ.” These spiritual blessings are a love gift from God.

Everything we will ever need to fulfill our calling and purpose has already been given to us - we just have to learn how to access the gifts. This is an invitation to pray with God--pray what's on His heart for you, for your family, your community, etc. Thank Him for what He has already deposited inside of you with the expectation and faith that He will come through.

Reflection:

Do you truly believe this verse to be true? Do you truly believe that He has blessed you with every spiritual blessing? If not, ask God what lie you are believing that you are unable to receive this truth? Repent of the lie. Maybe there is someone you need to forgive. Declare this verse over your life out loud, and let your mind be renewed.

Praise + Prayer:

Thank You, Father, for blessing me with every spiritual blessing!! Help me to trust You with this truth. I want to pray what's on Your heart and want to walk in step with where You are leading me. I am inviting You to invade my day! Help me to renew my mind with what You say about who I am. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 34, Saturday, March 27th, 2021

*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to **give your bodies to God** because of all he has done for you. Let them be a **living and holy sacrifice**—the kind he will find acceptable. **This is truly the way to worship him**. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but **let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think**. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” Romans 12:1-2 NLT*

A Call To: Praise

In order for us to be able to give our bodies to God as a holy and living sacrifice, we need to have the fundamental belief that **God is good**. If we don’t believe He is good, then it makes it difficult to trust Him. The world is screaming for our attention. It’s screaming for us to react versus respond in self control - to hold onto worldly possessions tightly and to put ourselves before others.

Jesus told his disciples to, “Come, follow me.” That meant they laid down their jobs, their families, their homes, all of their desires to walk with Jesus. They knew that they could trust Jesus and that He was different from anyone else they had ever met. They knew that what they would lay down, He would have something better.

Laying it all down for HIM is beautiful surrender, an offering that only YOU can offer to Jesus. Worshiping HIM should cost us something. There is nothing sweeter than remaining in his Presence singing of his love and goodness; encountering him when we open the Word of God or in our secret place when He speaks to our hearts. Oh, to stay there just a little bit longer and linger in His love. Let God’s Word wash over your mind. Declare the scriptures out loud so that your heart can receive the truths of what God is saying to you! God is good!

Reflection:

A guest speaker recently talked on the topic of surrender. He asked if there were areas of our lives that we are struggling to surrender to God. I am asking you the same question. Do you need God to break the glass ceiling that you have placed on your life and let Him show that there is more?

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, I thank You that You are a good God. You are so trustworthy. Reveal to me the areas of my life that I’m still holding onto, the areas that I need to fully surrender to You. I repent of holding onto things that need to be released. I repent for not fully trusting You with my life. Transform me into a new person by changing how I think. Help me learn to know Your will for my life. I know that it is good, pleasing and perfect! Amen.

So then, there
remains a

Sabbath rest

for the people of God
Hebrews 4:9

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Fruitful



Day 35, Monday, March 29th, 2021

“But the time is coming--indeed it's here now--when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

John 4:23-24 NLT

A Call To: Praise

A right heart...that's a tall order! It's pretty simple to show up inside a church building, but that doesn't mean we've met with God or even really know Him. It can just mean we've sat in a pew for 45 minutes. So, what does it mean to have a right heart? 1 John 4:13 helps us define this mystery: “This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.” God's Spirit inside us!

God doesn't live inside a building....He lives inside of you and me when we receive His love, mercy and forgiveness through Jesus. Jesus makes our hearts right! Receiving God's love changes our hearts and we're able to love Him back, truly. God longs for us to worship Him this way—out of love. “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.” 1 John 4:15-16

Reflection:

Do you have a right heart? If you're not sure, ask Jesus to be your Savior in this quiet moment. Remember, God loves you! “...and sent his Son (Jesus) as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10b) As you spend time with Jesus today thank Him for His Spirit that makes your heart right. Worship Him for His incredible love that saves you.

Praise + Prayer:

Jesus, You died upon a cross
And rose again to save the lost
Forgive me now of all my sin
Come be my Savior, Lord, and Friend
Change my life and make it new
And help me, Lord, to live for you
thesalvationpoem.com

Day 36, Tuesday, March 30th, 2021

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.”

Psalm 139:23-24 NIV

A Call To: Prepare

Have you ever noticed how a vast majority of posts on Facebook, Instagram and SnapChat are presented in the most positive light with the most interesting information? Probably because a choice is made to tell only what you want others to know. You take care in what you let others see. Admittedly I have omitted photos that I didn't think were flattering and have often skipped posting on the challenging things in my life. But when I have been vulnerable and shared struggles, it's been a huge connecting opportunity and there are benefits.

The Lord gives you this choice as well. He is not going to pry in your life, but you can ask Him to look at you beyond your pictures and posts to expose the things that you need to work on. When you do, He is not going to think less of you. He wants to help you make changes that will prepare you for eternity while you are here on earth.

As you continue to focus on preparing your heart for Lent, you can choose to move beyond letting God only see your face to letting Him see your heart so that He can help, heal and guide you. Don't be afraid or ashamed of what He will find. He loves you unconditionally and actually already knows. So take courage in knowing that whatever He exposes and reveals to you is for your benefit and He has a remedy to help you so that you will grow!

Reflection:

Have you been superficial in your conversations with God? Have you had the courage to ask God to search your heart? What will you do today to open yourself up to the Lord?

Praise + Prayer:

God, thank You for wanting to lead me. There is nothing that is in me that will surprise You because You know everything. But I thank You that You don't want to force a relationship with me but You give me a choice. Thank You that You have an unending devotion to me because You love me. I pray right now that You will search my heart, test me, know my anxious thoughts and see if there is any offensive way in me. I want to know You and I want You to lead me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 37, Wednesday, March 31st, 2021

“The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the Lord weighs the motives. Commit your works to the Lord And your plans will be established. The Lord has made everything for its own purpose.” Proverbs 16:1-4 NKJV

A Call To: Prepare

I believe it was Robert Burns that said, *“The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.”* I’m sure you have had a time or two in your life when the situation didn’t go as planned. Some respond by not planning anything, taking whatever comes. Others plan in minute detail and then try to control all the factors to ensure completion of the plan just as envisioned.

I think we can all agree that strategizing and creating a plan to achieve a desired goal is important. Allowing for the unknown is also wisdom. Solomon reminds us that while we may have a thought and planned in our hearts, God and life have a way of intervening. Life will often try to stop us. In contrast, God knows our heart desires and loves to give them to us, when we delight in Him (Ps. 37:4). All too often our plans are limited in their scope and impact (self). God has a big purpose and he’s looking for those who are willing to dream and believe big with him so that, when your plan is established, His purpose is fulfilled.

Reflection:

As Jesus was drawing closer to the appointed time of the Passover, he knew the purpose the Father had for him. The disciples and other followers had other plans, thoughts of what the future would hold. Jesus knew he could trust the plan because the Father’s purpose was so much greater. What plans have you created? Have you partnered with God? Ask Him today to give you a vision that requires God to step in and establish it, then enjoy the journey and adventure.

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, we praise You and thank You that Your plans for us are way better than we can even imagine. Thank You that for the joy set before Him, Jesus walked out Your plan and endured the cross so that we could know You. Today Father, give us a bigger vision of what’s possible and how we can partner with You. Give us courage to step out in faith. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for leading us. Amen.

Day 38, Thursday, April 1st, 2021

“Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.” John 12:3 NLT

A Call To: Prepare

Mary knew how to receive from Jesus. She understood the value of sitting at His feet. I often think to myself, would I have been like Martha or Mary? Have I been caught up in performance and striving and missed out on the opportunity to be present with Jesus? Or would I chose to sit at his feet and not miss a word he would share?

How often do we miss what Jesus is saying to us because we are too busy doing life? We have our list of things to do and run from one thing to the next. How would our relationship with Jesus change if we invited him into our day-to-day activities and took time to sit and be still before him?

Mary didn’t realize that what she did was a prophetic act of preparation of what was about to happen to Jesus--he would die and rise again. In verse 7 Jesus tells Judas that she is doing this in preparation for His burial.

Mary shows humility in anointing Jesus’ feet and drying them with her hair. Culturally women rarely ever let down their hair in public. She shows extravagance towards Jesus using the expensive perfume to anoint his feet. It’s said to be worth a year’s salary of a working man.

Reflection:

Have you learned how to sit at the feet of Jesus and receive from him? If the answer is *no*, ask God to show you what is preventing you from receiving.

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, Help me to discern when I need to serve, like Martha, and when I need to sit at Your feet and receive, like Mary. I lay down my agenda for my life, the mundane tasks and submit those to You. Show me what You want to accomplish each day. Help me to remember to be still and to receive from You. You are worthy of it all. I don’t want to miss a word that You are speaking to me. Open up my ears to hear You, my eyes to see You and my heart to receive You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Day 39, Friday, April 2nd, 2021

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” Romans 13:11 NKJV

A Call To: Prepare

Do you remember the road trip? You barely got going and the children began to ask, “Are we there, yet?” You respond, “No, not yet. We just started.” 10 minutes later, “Are we there, yet?” “No, not yet. I’ll let you know when we’re close.”

Anticipation. That’s what drives the questions. That’s what fuels the adrenaline laced excitement. Hope deferred through a long journey is what brings the crash into sleep.

Every journey requires three important elements: a destination, a map and road signs. Road signs give us perspective. They tell us we’re on the right path, when we need to make adjustments, and more importantly, they remind us that we’re getting closer and we can eventually answer, “Wake up! We’re almost there.”

Paul was given understanding. He experienced with all the church the anticipation of the promise. Even though the church was just beginning, they had hope and excitement for their own personal journey. But for us, we have the road signs. Signs that say the hope, the promise is almost here. Signs that tell us it’s time to awaken.

Reflection:

Jesus was drawing closer to his destination of purpose. He knew the time and season of his journey’s end. There was much to be done, final ideas to be emphasized and modeled for us. Things like “love”, “service”, and “community”. As we see the signs and understand the season, what preparations do we need to make? Take a moment to ask Holy Spirit how you can prepare as we await, with anticipation, the arrival of the “bridegroom”, the destination of promise.

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, we are so grateful that Jesus was prepared to complete His journey and give us the privilege of following Him. God we thank You for the invitation and the right to come boldly before Your presence. We pray for the Holy Spirit to lead us as we awaken to love and serve as a global family, In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 40, Saturday, April 3rd, 2021

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:10-11 NKJV

A Call To: Prepare

“What do you do for a living?” “Where did you go to school?” “Where are you from?” “What kind of jobs have you had?” “What is your experience?” “What are your accomplishments?” We have all either asked or been asked these questions. Questions that are designed to qualify and quantify the perceived value we bring to the world around us. Ouch. True, even if it hurts.

I think there are better questions. “Who do you want to become?” “What do you want your life to look like?” “What do you want to be known for?” Paul understood this all too well. He had it all: the name, the home town, the degrees, the respect, and honor of his associates. But the older he became, the more he realized all those things had zero value in comparison to what really mattered. Becoming. Learning to love. Representing well, the one who had already achieved everything on his behalf.

Reflection:

Jesus prepared himself for the Passover, knowing full well what he would have to suffer. In his humanity, Jesus had become a man of deep faith, conviction and character. He accepted the role the Father gave him to suffer and accomplish what no one else could. We cannot match his suffering. But because he did, we can choose to live as he lived with deep faith, conviction, compassion and love.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any lies you may be believing that are hindering you from experiencing the full expression of his love; the full benefits of his suffering. Then ask God to replace those lies with His truth. Repenting and forgiving when needed.

Praise + Prayer:

Father God, thank You for the privilege of calling You, Abba. Thank You, Jesus, for suffering on my behalf so that I can boldly partner with You. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for helping me become a unique expression of the beauty of Jesus and the love of the Father to the world around me. Thank You for the hope and promise of the resurrection. In Jesus' name, Amen.



**HAPPY
EASTER!**