

lent

springtime of faith



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what is lent?



Lent is a period of 46 days (40 days not including Sundays) between Ash Wednesday and Easter, originally a period of preparation for those to be baptized at Easter. It later became a time of penitence and self-examination for all Christians. Lent is a word that many people associate with deprivation, self-denial, and drudgery. But this is far from its actual and intended meaning!

The word 'Lent' actually means Springtime! **Faithful Christians through the ages have always used the 40 days of Lent to restore vibrancy, life, passion, and vision in their walk with God.** The tradition of Lent reflects the wisdom of our Christian ancestors who understood that we seemingly can't help ourselves when it comes to accepting substitutes for God. C.S. Lewis, in his famous sermon *The Weight of Glory* said it well: "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased."

The forty days of Lent are meant to be symbolic of the forty days spent by Christ in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. By observing Lent, we follow Jesus into the wilderness, resist temptation, pray, and proceed "on the way" to Jerusalem and the cross of Good Friday. However, unlike Jesus, our Lenten journey is one of repentance, that is, changing directions from self, self-serving patterns and a myopic focus on our life, toward the others-focused way of life of following Jesus. On this journey, we follow Jesus in laying down ourselves for others and trust that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is enough to guide us in repentance and renewal. The intervention of God's gracious Spirit makes life-long changes become possible. Turning from the old self and experiencing a dying of old ways prepares us to truly experience the joy of Easter.

The season of Lent our prayers have repentance as their focus. *First*, we own our sin as it shows itself in the different aspects of our being, wrong thinking and attitudes, wrong affections and aspirations, wrong behaviors and actions. *Second*, we turn from our sin to Christ for forgiveness and strength to change and grow to be more like Him.

Lent is a sober reflection upon our condition, which leads us to faith and fresh trust in and leaning on the finished work of Christ. The reflection on our sin, our brokenness and all the ways we are tied to and contribute to the brokenness in the world, should serve to increase our gratitude and wonder at the love of God.

Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.
—Martin Luther

For so many, Lent only carries connotations of fasting and self-denial. To be clear, there is a place and call for fasting— from food, from situations, from elements of our environment. However, as Thomas Chalmers reminds us in his sermon, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, the rooting out of the sinful elements of the world is best accomplished by replacing that desire with something more powerful and desirable—the Gospel. Maturity is not just turning away from sin but rather it is the declaration of a dependance upon all that God is for you in Jesus...it's the power of grace becoming a renewed affection for you.

You can never replace something with nothing. With that in mind, **it is better to not be so caught up in the idea of giving things up for Lent as much as leaning into the disciplines of grace**— prayer, fasting, acts of mercy, meditating on the Word of God, the sacraments and the communion of the saints.

Thomas Chalmers also wrote: "In bygone days when God's covenant people sought to strengthen their piety, to sharpen their effectual intercessions, and give passion to their supplications, they partook of the means of grace in all holiness with humble prayer and fasting. When intent upon seeking the Lord God's guidance in difficult after-times, they partook of the means of grace in all holiness with humble prayer and fasting. When they were wont to express grief—whether over the consequences of their own sins or the sins of others—they partook of the means of grace in all holiness with humble prayer and fasting. When they sought deliverance or protection in times of trouble, they partook of the means of grace in all holiness with humble prayer and fasting. When they desired to express repentance, covenant renewal, and a return to the fold of faith, they partook of the means of grace in all holiness with humble prayer and fasting. Such is the call upon all who would name the name of Jesus. Such is the ordinary Christian life."

The following outline for this period of prayer and reflection is intended to assist you as you along the way. It is not meant to be a new legalism. But let's face it, we often need help in focusing on what is truly important and in laying aside distractions... and this guide is designed to provide that help. Use as much or as little of this as seems appropriate for you.

May this season be a "springtime of faith" for us all.

As a way of being accountable: Share your intentions for Lent on The City, with your housemates/family, with your community group or a friend.

Our Lenten Rhythm: A New Twist on an Ancient Practice

This season let's try something new...not for the sake of new or because the old way is broken. But in an effort to be more holistic and intentional, let's strike an intentional rhythm to the steps of our journey to the cross. This year our Lenten journey will look like:

Weekly Fasts

Each week, we'll be fasting from a particular pleasure. Lent Sundays are "Feast" days when in celebration of the goodness Jesus brings, we break our fasts. Do each fast for the week and only for that week; or, consider letting them build on each other, so that by the end of Lent, you are doing all six weekly fasts at the same time.

Daily Readings & Prayers

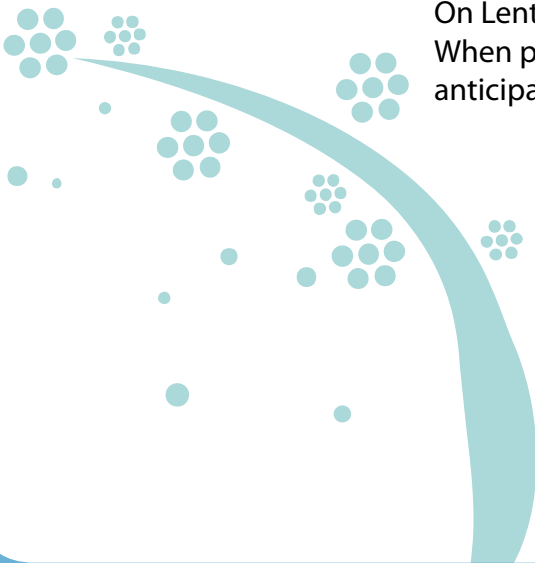
Our daily rhythm will be reading & reflection one day, prayer the next. On one day, you'll read a passage of Scripture and reflect on a specific aspect of it. On the next day, you'll use the Lord's prayer as a guide to pray through what you've discovered about your heart the day before. For example, on Day 1 there is a reading on simplicity with questions designed to help you wrestle with what things end up 'owning you'. On day 2, you would pray through the Lord's Prayer with the intention of letting each petition shape and challenge what you discovered in your heart the day before.

Corporate Prayer/Feasting Days

On Lent Sunday, feast days, we will all be using the Lord's Prayer as a guide to pray for Redemption Hill. When possible, do this with members of the Redemption Hill community in connection with feasting in anticipation for the 'great feast' that is Easter.

As we observe Lent, here are some other helpful practices to put into the rhythm of your daily life:

- Read a book for inner growth. Consider 'Counterfeit Gods' by Tim Keller; it goes well with this season.
- Read through one of the Gospels between now and Easter.
- If you don't already journal, begin now. Reflect on your readings, prayers and questions.
- Find a way to go to bed earlier, get enough rest and rise earlier.
- Make a list of people with whom you need to be reconciled. Pray for them and let Jesus guide you in your thinking and feeling toward them.
- List the priorities in your life at the beginning of Lent. Revisit at the end.



OUR LENTEN JOURNEY

WEEK February 13-19

1

Fast: Treats & Self Indulgence

WED: Simplicity / Matthew 6:19-34

THU: Lord's Prayer

FRI: Greed / Luke 12:13-21

SAT: Lord's Prayer

SUN: Corporate Prayer & Feasting

MON: Relationship / John 15:9-17

TUES: Lord's Prayer

WEEK February 20- February 26

2

Fast: Food/Meals

WED: Sin / Matthew 18:5-9

THU: Lord's Prayer

FRI: Rules / Matthew 23:23-24

SAT: Lord's Prayer

SUN: Corporate Prayer & Feasting

MON: Judgement / Luke 6:37-42

TUE: Lord's Prayer

WEEK Week Three: February 27 - March 5

3

Fast: Television/Music/Media

WED: Compassion / Matthew 9:35-38

THU: Lord's Prayer

FRI: Worry / Luke 12:22-28

SAT: Lord's Prayer

SUN: Corporate Prayer & Feasting

MON: Hatred / Luke 6:37-42

TUE: Lord's Prayer

WEEK Week Four: March 6 - March 12

4

Fast: Social Media and Internet

WED: Friendship / Matthew 9:9-13

THU: Lord's Prayer

FRI: Fear / John 14:15-27

SAT: Lord's Prayer

SUN: Corporate Prayer & Feasting

MON: Status / Mark 10:35-45

TUE: Lord's Prayer

WEEK March 13 - March 19

5

Fast: Time

WED: Pride / Luke 20:45-47

THU: Lord's Prayer

FRI: Criticism / Mark 3: 1-6

SAT: Lord's Prayer

SUN: Corporate Prayer & Feasting

MON: Results / Matthew 12:33-37

TUE: Lord's Prayer

WEEK March 20 - March 26

6

Fast: Time

WED: Generosity / Luke 12:29-34

THU: Lord's Prayer

FRI: Service / John 13:1-7

SAT: Lord's Prayer

SUN: Corporate Prayer & Feasting

MON: Joy / Luke 10:17-21

TUE: Lord's Prayer

WEEK Holy Week:

7

March 27 - March 31

Daily readings:

WED: John 12:27-36

THU: Matthew 21:28-32

FRI: John 17)

SAT: John 19:38-42

SUN: Matthew 25:31-46

Celebrate Easter!

WEEK

1

FEB 13-19

FAST: Treats & Self Indulgence

This week, resolve to spend nothing on yourself but what is absolutely necessary. Buy no new clothes or gadgets, books or music, don't go to the movies or buy coffee or candy. Eat cheaply, save money (or give what you would have spent on coffee, treats, entertainment for the week to our benevolence offering). Keep journal entries of what happens inside when you deny yourself something you've become accustomed to or something you really want. How does it affect you? Why?



WED Simplicity / Read: Matthew 6:19-34

Consider: In what ways have the things you own ended up owning you? Where could you simplify if you only had the will to do so? What are we really saying to God when we place such an importance on things? When we worry? *Pray:* That your worry would melt into trust, that your desire for things would be redirected into a desire for God and His kingdom.

THU Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

FRI Greed / Read: Luke 12:13-21

Consider: Why does Jesus talk so much about money? How is an over-emphasis on material things corrosive to our souls and our world? *Pray:* That God would show you where and how you are overly concerned about and tied to money, possessions and acquisition.

SAT Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

SUN PRAY CORPORATE PRAYER

MON Relationship / Read: John 15:9-17

Consider: What has been the story of your relationship with Jesus? How has He pursued you? How have you pursued Him? *Pray:* The God would help you know, feel and lean into the love of Jesus for you on a daily basis.

TUE Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

LENT SUNDAY

FEB 16



Prayer for Commitment: *This Sunday, pray for our people -- for their commitment to the Lord Jesus and for a renewal of our love for Him.*

Our Father in Heaven (Ephesians 1:3)

Request—Pray that we will gain a new appreciation that we are God’s children. Pray that we will worship the Father as one who cares for, and pursues the good of, His children.

Hallowed be Your name (Exodus 15:11)

Request—Pray that we will worship God for His holiness. Pray that we will increasingly thank Jesus for being perfectly holy on this earth and for eternity.

Your kingdom come (John 10:4)

Request—Pray that we will be so close to Jesus, and so familiar with His words as revealed in the Word, that we will always be loyal to Him and dedicated to His kingdom goals for our community.

Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Romans 12:2-3)

Request—Pray that our wills will be continually renewed by the Holy Spirit, so that God will use us to accomplish His will and purpose in our community and city.

Give us today our daily bread (Philippians 4:6-7)

Request—Pray that we will not surrender to fear and anxiety. Pray that we will be committed to trusting God for provision and that we will not rely on our own efforts.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Is. 53:6)

Request—Pray that during this period of prayer we will often meditate on what Jesus accomplished at the cross.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 24:4-5)

Request—Pray that we will be committed to learning and surrendering to the truth found in the Bible and that we will be increasingly deaf to false teaching.

WEEK

2

FEB 20-26

FAST: Food/Meals

Pick either a type of food (like meat or carbs or even “solids”) and fast from them for the week. Or alternately, pick a meal (like breakfast or lunch) to skip on a daily basis. If you skip meals, spend that time you would have spent preparing and eating food in doing something else: Prayer, or reading Scripture, or serving others, perhaps finding a way to bless someone with each of those blocks of time, even if it’s just time spent listening to them. Keep journal entries of what it’s like to go hungry, even if it’s just for one meal. What is it like to begin to assert some mastery over your body these past two weeks? How does your body/mind respond to that? If you forgo a whole category of food, consider: What is it like to deny a craving? Is it easy or hard. How does that craving grow the more you deny it? Does it eventually become easier? Why?

(As with all fasting, please consider your health & talk to a doctor before engaging more advanced fasts.)

WED Sin / Read: Matthew 18:5-9

Consider: In what ways does sin have a grip on you? What do you know you need to let go of, but have been unwilling up to now? How might your unwillingness to deal with that affect others? *Pray:* That God would search your heart and point out to you anything that needs to go, be let go of, be crucified in your life.

THU Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord’s Prayer.

FRI Rules / Read: Matthew 23:23-24

Consider: Do you think doing certain religious things (like fasting or observing Lent) or even not sinning makes you a better person? What’s more important? *Pray:* That God would use Lent to form you, to humble you, to convict you of your priorities and convince you of your place in serving others.

SAT Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord’s Prayer.

SUN PRAY CORPORATE PRAYER

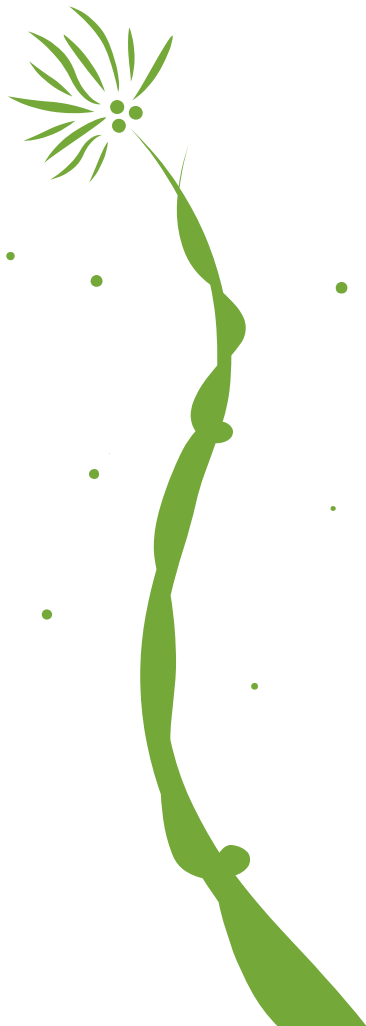
MON Judgment / Read: Luke 6:37-42

Consider: Who do you end up feeling most judgmental about? Why? How can we be passionate about the truth of the Gospel and convinced of the rightness of life in the way of Jesus without coming across as a jerk? If you were wrong about something how would you want someone to approach you? *Pray:* That God would soften your heart towards others and most specifically- show you the “specks” in your own eye.

TUE Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord’s Prayer.

LENT SUNDAY

FEB 23



Prayer for Servants: *This Sunday, pray for our church's continued commitment to be 'servants' of all in the name of King Jesus.*

Our Father in Heaven (John 4:34)

Request—Pray that doing the will of the Father and obeying His commands would be nourishment to the servants of Redemption Hill.

Hallowed be Your Name (1 Peter 2:9)

Request—Pray that God will continually mold servants into holy priests who minister to each other and to unbelievers—who proclaim the holiness of the Lord God.

Your kingdom Come (Matthew 13:33)

Request—Pray that the kingdom results that come from the gospel efforts of servants will be multiplied by God in unimaginable ways.

Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Colossians 1:9)

Request—Pray that servants will stay close to Jesus and be spiritually discerning by continually studying the Bible and being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Give us today our daily bread (Psalm 37:25)

Request—Pray that God will provide for all the material needs of servants. Pray that He will provide jobs that enable them to provide for their families.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Colossians 3:13)

Request—Pray that servants will be quick to forgive one another. Pray that they will show grace to one another. Pray that their love for one another will point unbelievers to Christ.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Request—Pray that servants will resist the attacks of the enemy, and pray that resistance and strong faith will encourage others to do the same.

WEEK

3

FEB 27- MAR 5

FAST: Television/Music/Media

This week, forgo the usual shows. In fact, turn off the TV altogether. Drive without the radio. Leave the iPod at home. What is it like to increase the silence/decrease the media inputs into your life? Do you miss it? Does it make you anxious? Relaxed? Something else? What does your reaction to this fast tell you about your connectedness to media? Keep journal entries of what silence does for you, what missing certain shows/events means. Spend the time listening for the still small voice of God.



WED Compassion / Read: Matthew 9:35-38

Consider: When was the last time you felt moved by compassion? What did you do because of your compassion? Are you truly moved by compassion if no action follows? *Pray:* That Jesus' prayer would be answered- that more and more people would be moved "out into the fields" to not only heal and love, but to preach the Gospel with words and deeds. Pray that God would show you your place in that.

THU Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

FRI Worry / Read: Luke 12:22-28

Consider: Do you worry about things? What place do possessions have in your heart? How easy or hard is it to trust God to give you what you actually need? *Pray:* That God would decrease your desire for more and more... and increase your desire for and trust in Him

SAT Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

SUN PRAY CORPORATE PRAYER

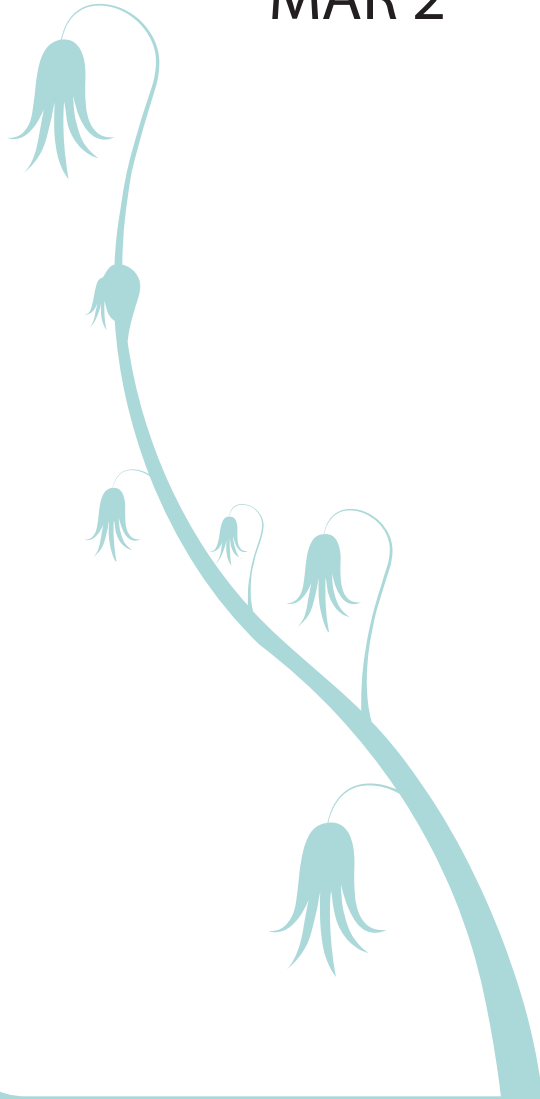
MON Hatred / Read: Luke 6:37-42

Consider: Who are your enemies with? Why? What would it look like to lay that down, give up what you think they owe you and instead forgive? *Pray:* That God would show you how to love even those you don't like.

TUE Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

LENT SUNDAY

MAR 2



Prayer for Leaders: *This Sunday, pray for our church leaders -- our elders, community group leaders, worship leaders and children's leaders.*

Our Father in Heaven (Galatians 4:6)

Request—Pray that leaders will often meditate on their relationship with the Father that is made possible by the Son.

Hallowed be Your Name (Jn. 17:17)

Request—Pray that leaders will live holy lives informed by the truth found in God's Word.

Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:33)

Request—Pray that leaders will seek the kingdom of God first and not their own kingdoms. Pray that they will seek God's plans rather than their own.

Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Psalm 143:10)

Request—Pray that the Lord will teach leaders to do His will, and that they will be discerning about the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Give us today our daily bread (2 Cor. 8:7)

Request—Pray that leaders will be models in the grace of giving. Pray that they will be able to lead in ministry to all of Greater Richmond enabled by the generosity of other believers.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Ephesians 4:32)

Request—Pray that leaders will be gracious toward each other and that they will be unified in promoting the gospel.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (John 17:15)

Request—Pray that, as leaders are a light to their community, the Lord would protect them from the evil one. Pray that they withstand the temptations of greed, power, pride, and immorality by looking to Jesus.

WEEK

4

MAR 6-12

FAST: Social Media & Internet

Turn off Twitter, Facebook, blogs and your internet news. Check and answer work emails and nothing else. Put a Lent "Out of Office" reply on your personal email letting people know you'll get back to them next week. Keep journal entries of what it's like to unplug and disconnect -- to not obsessively check email/Facebook, etc. Do you feel disconnected... or free?



WED Friendship / Matthew 9:9-13

Consider: Who are you friends with? Why? What would it look like to intentionally seek out people who need you to be their friend? *Pray:* That God would show you someone you can befriend in a way that others couldn't.

THU **Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.**

FRI Fear / Read: John 14:15-27

Consider: What are you most afraid of in life? What do you want to say to God about that? After spending some time listening and reflecting, what do you think He wants to say to you about that? *Pray:* That God would give you peace, trust in Him and the ability to see your fears through the lens of His presence alongside you.

SAT **Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.**

PRAY CORPORATE PRAYER

SUN Status / Read: Mark 10:35-45

Consider: What did Jesus think about self-promotion? What do you think about it? How would you rate your desire for status and acknowledgement? *Pray:* That God would show you clearly your need to matter and all that you do to get that need met. Pray that you would feel the love and acceptance of God, because of Jesus and His life and death on your behalf- not your performance.

TUE **Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.**

LENT SUNDAY

MAR 9



Prayer for Material Need: *If we only seek to minister “spiritually,” but neglect the material world, we create a false dichotomy. Pray that we will have wisdom as we minister to the material needs of communities in our city.*

Our Father in Heaven (Psalm 147:13-14)

Request—Pray that God will be generous in meeting the material needs of the community. Pray that He will grant safety and peace.

Hallowed be Your Name (1 John 2:15-16)

Request—Pray that idols in the community like false religions, materialism, immorality, etc., will fall to King Jesus and His gospel.

Your Kingdom Come (Romans 14:17)

Request—Pray that both believers and unbelievers in the community will realize that their need for Jesus is infinitely greater than any material needs they have.

Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Isaiah 58:6-7)

Request—Pray that outreach to the community will not be merely prayer and fasting, but that it will be an outreach to serve the hungry, give shelter to the wanderer, free the oppressed, and clothe the naked.

Give us today our daily bread (Ephesians 6:9)

Request—Pray that businesses in your community will be successful, treat their employees generously and fairly, and contribute to the well being of the community. Pray that employees will work hard, and be able to support their families.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Psalm 34:14)

Request—Pray that God will use believers to be peacemakers in the community. Pray that God will bring reconciliation between parties in conflict.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Proverbs 2:7-9)

Request—Pray that God will guard and protect the community from the destructive ambitions of Satan. Pray that justice and fairness would prevail instead of crime and wickedness.

WEEK

5

MAR 13-19

FAST: Time

Go out of your way for others this week. Fast from indulging yourself time-wise. Get up a half hour or an hour earlier. Make it a goal this week: To daily bless someone else through your words or actions, to give someone else the gift of your listening ear- resist the urge to share your troubles and instead focus on someone else and helping to share theirs. Commit this week to doing something for someone else- help a friend move or paint, serve the poor, stop and help a stranger even if (especially if) you are in a hurry to get somewhere. Keep journal entries of what it's like to spend your time on others.



WED Pride / Read: Luke 20:45-47

Consider: What does having others' honor and respect do for you? What are you willing to do for it? What blinded the people Jesus was talking about to their character defects? What blinds you to yours?
Pray: That God would reveal areas of pride and self-righteousness to you and what you can do about them.

THU Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

FRI Criticism / Read: Mark 3: 1-6

Consider: Do you think you tend more towards criticism or encouragement? Which is easier for you to engage in? Which do you desire more of in your life? What do you think your criticism might be saying about you? *Pray:* That God would help you control your tongue and that your words would build others up, not tear them down.

SAT Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

SUN PRAY CORPORATE PRAYER

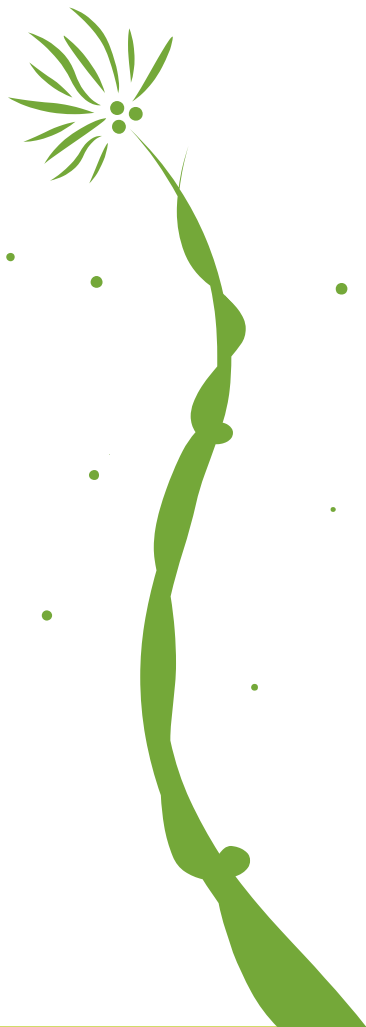
MON Results / Read: Matthew 12:33-37

Consider: What kind of "fruit" has been coming out of your life recently? What are you rooted in? What are you feeding yourself? Does the one have anything to do with the other? *Pray:* That God would help you do what leads to good results in your life.

TUE Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

LENT SUNDAY

MAR 16



Prayer for Spiritual Needs: *When we expand in the metro area, we want Jesus to expand His kingdom into the hearts of unbelievers. Most of the prayers this week re-state one central idea: unbelievers need Jesus.*

Our Father in Heaven (John 6:44)

Request—Pray that unbelievers in the community would be drawn by the Father to the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hallowed be Your Name (Isaiah 6:3)

Request—Pray that unbelievers in the community would join the angels in worshipping our holy Lord.

Your Kingdom Come (Matthew 3:2)

Request—Pray that God's kingdom will expand in our community through the repentance of unbelievers.

Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matthew 18:13-14)

Request—Pray that the Father will use us to find Jesus' lost sheep living in the community.

Give us today our daily bread (Proverbs 22:9)

Request—Pray that as we are generous in sharing our material blessings, we will also share the spiritual blessing of the gospel.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Acts 10:43)

Request—Pray that unbelievers in the community will receive forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Request—Pray that the light of the good news of Jesus will open the eyes of unbelievers who are now blinded by Satan.

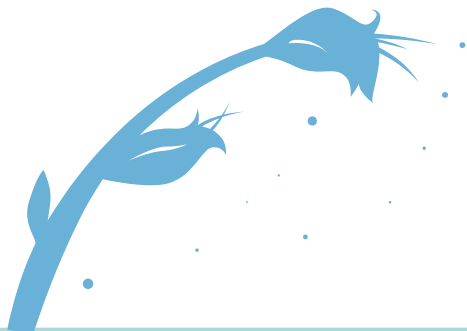
WEEK

6

MAR 20-26

FAST: Time *(same as week 5)*

Go out of your way for others this week. Fast from indulging yourself time-wise. Get up a half hour or an hour earlier. Make it a goal this week: To daily bless someone else through your words or actions, to give someone else the gift of your listening ear- resist the urge to share your troubles and instead focus on someone else and helping to share theirs. Commit this week to doing something for someone else- help a friend move or paint, serve the poor, stop and help a stranger even if (especially if) you are in a hurry to get somewhere. Keep journal entries of what it's like to spend your time on others.



WED Generosity / Read: Luke 12:29-34

Consider: Does worry impede generosity? What are we forming in ourselves when we worry? What are we forming in ourselves when we choose generosity?
Pray: That God would show you how and where to be more generous.. and if it's hard, why this is hard.

THU Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

FRI Service / Read: John 13:1-7

Consider: What do you think it was like for the disciples to see Jesus humble Himself this way? What's it like for you? What work is beneath you? What would you absolutely never do for someone else if they really, truly needed it? Why? *Pray:* That God would help you understand what the disciples had such a hard time getting.

SAT Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

SUN PRAY CORPORATE PRAYER

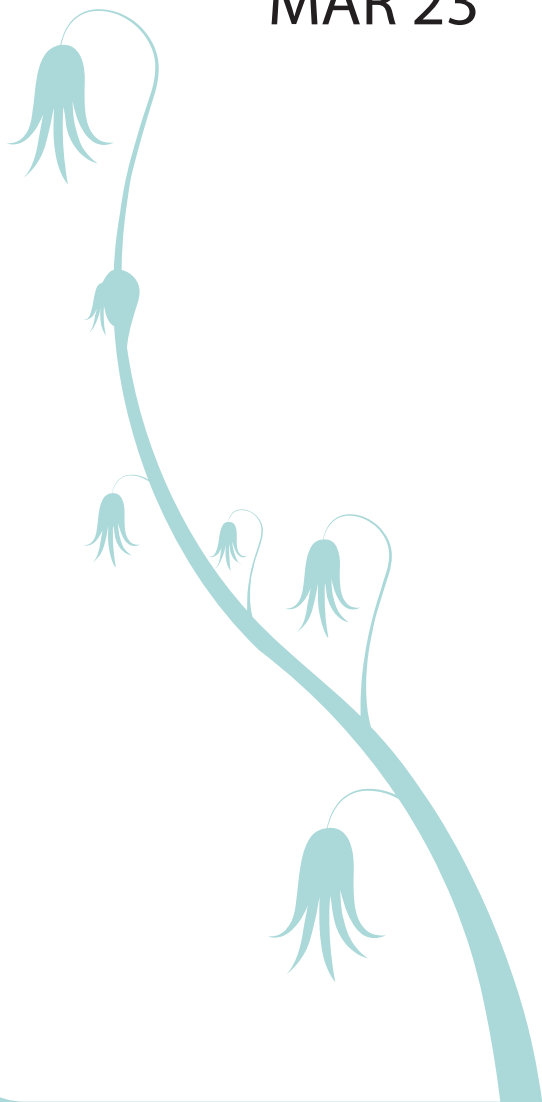
MON Joy / Read: Luke 10:17-21

Consider: What brings you joy? What do you really need to be happy? What stops you from remembering that? *Pray:* That God would realign your ideas of what it means to be "happy" and filled with joy- and that you would be both of those.

TUE Pray your reflections from yesterday through the Lord's Prayer.

LENT SUNDAY

MAR 23



Prayer for God's Glory: *We exist to bring God glory. Pray that our efforts throughout the land, the repentance of unbelievers, and the advance of the gospel will bring great glory to Jesus.*

Our Father in Heaven (Philippians 2:10-11)

Request—Pray that Jesus and the Father will receive much glory through the bowed knees of those in our community who come to believe in Christ.

Hallowed be Your Name (Ezekiel 36:23)

Request—Pray that the Sovereign Lord will show Himself holy to the entire community.

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (John 17:24)

Request—Pray that unbelievers in the community will see the glory of Jesus on this earth, and that they will one day see His glory face to face.

Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Col.2:13-15)

Request—Pray that God will be glorified when many people in our community are made alive in Christ through His triumph on the cross.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Revelation 17:14)

Request—Pray that Jesus will receive glory when people see Him overcome Satan in their own lives and in the lives of others in the our community.

WEEK



HOLY WEEK
MAR 27-
MAR 31

Holy Week Readings taken from City Church, San Francisco

WED **The Way Down is the Way Up (John 12:27-36)**

The message of Jesus is radical, and sometimes troubling. His disciples expected a Messiah who would ride into Jerusalem like Patton before his army, wiping out their enemies. What they got was a Messiah who makes the bold claim that victory emerges out of failure, that a rise to glory emerges out of brokenness. His rhetorical question in this passage hits the nail on the head: "Should I ask the Father to save me? No!" So much of the fear and insecurity we feel comes from a sense that we need to be careful, vigilant, self-protective, surviving...never really risking. Yet, the way of Jesus is upside down. The way down is the way up. The way of risk, and perhaps even failure, is the way of victory. Are we willing to walk down this road with Him?

Apathy / Read: Matthew 21:28-32

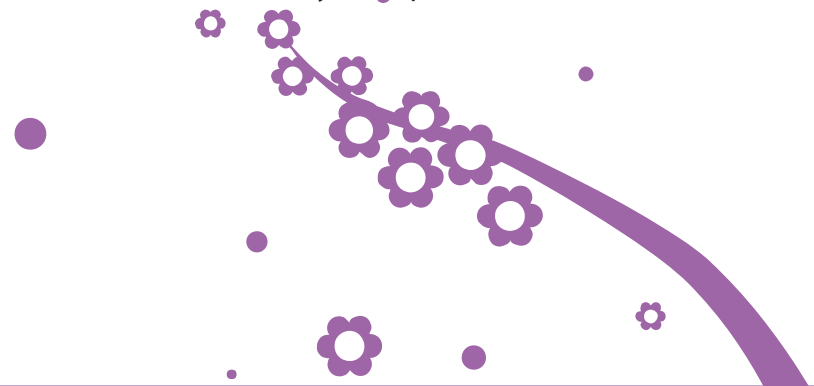
Consider: Have you ever told God you would do something, felt Him stirring you to care and act about a certain situation and then failed to follow through? Why? What keeps you from putting your values into more consistent action? *Pray:* That God would again stir your heart for others- that he would show you where and how you can make a difference.

THU **MAUNDY THURSDAY: God will Protect You**

Holy Week reminds us that the way of the Cross is not just a matter of historical record, but an invitation for us to participate in the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. There are many best-selling Christian books about living your best life, but contrary to popular opinion Jesus assumes that our best life emerges out of suffering. His prayer in verse 15 is not that we would be saved from struggle in this world, but that we would be held in the midst of it. Picture a mother holding her newborn on a crowded city bus. To get where she's going, she needs to take the crowded and germ-infested bus. But, she'll hold her child tightly until the destination is reached. God doesn't promise us a pain-free life. However, He invites us to feel His embrace as we journey through it.

Read: John 17

Consider: As you read Jesus' great prayer to the Father, you'll see that He prays for us. What does this prayer mean to you? Does it give you courage? How does it make you feel and how should you respond?





GOOD FRIDAY

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Theme: The Dark Night of the Soul (John 13:36-38)

The darkness of Good Friday reminds us of St. John of the Cross, a 16th century Spanish friar and reformer who penned his now well-known Dark Night of the Soul while in a cold, rat-infested prison. Amazingly, John wrote that though the dark nights of our lives are “miserable,” they humble us, emptying us of “all natural affection and attachment,” allowing us to “stretch forward to unrestricted liberty of spirit.” In this passage, Jesus is talking to Peter, a young and overly confident young man who thought he was ready to take on the world. Read ahead through John 21, and you’ll see that Peter had to be stripped of many things in order to be spiritually-formed for leadership. In fact, that’s what “following” Jesus means. Good Friday invites us to see that our struggle is not a road-block to joy and peace, but very well may be the difficult wilderness road that takes us to the Promised Land.

HOLY SATURDAY

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Theme: The Garden of God (John 19:38-42)

The irony would not have been lost on the first-century readers of this passage: God’s story began in a garden, and now it seems to have ended in a garden. John notes twice that the location of the tomb of Jesus was in a garden. Details like this provide important clues to John’s intentions. In fact, the big dreams of God in the first garden seemed to have died after Adam and Eve’s fall, and now God’s dreams seem to be dead again. But are they? A couple I knew once said, “Our marriage needed to die before it could really live and thrive.” Author Larry Crabb writes, “Through the pain of our shattered (smaller) dreams, we wake to the realization that we want an encounter with God more than the blessings of life.” In other words, God re-defines our understanding of blessing – a nice car, a seemingly happy marriage, a good income. In the tomb, our smaller dreams appear dead. But, just wait...God may just be tilling up the garden in order to plant something far more beautiful. The dawn of Easter Sunday is about to break through!

EASTER SUNDAY

EASTER SUNDAY

(Matthew 25:31-46)

Together, let’s pray: Christ the King, We rejoice and celebrate that on this Easter day, you came, despite our unfaithfulness to reconcile us to you. We celebrate the sacrifice that you have made on our behalf. We ask that you would transform us into a community of servants, that might see your glory and expand your kingdom through humbly serving the needs of this your city and throughout the world. We desire to be faithful in your mission and work until your Kingdom comes to fruition and look forward to the day to witness the glory of your “new heaven and new earth.” Amen.