

The

Season
of
Lent

A wooden bowl filled with dark soil, with a small wooden cross placed on top. The bowl is set against a background of green foliage, possibly a garden or field.

Scripture and reflections to guide you through the season

THE SEASON OF LENT

Throughout church history, Christians have celebrated the season of Lent during the 40 days leading up to Easter. The 40 days of Lent commemorate the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting in the desert before beginning His ministry. Lent is considered an opportunity to set aside distractions, sacrifice certain luxuries and pleasures, and intentionally focus on Jesus in the weeks leading up to the most significant and world-changing event in human history.

Different Christian traditions have different approaches to celebrating Lent. What is common among them is the recognition of this season as an opportunity to make practical changes to our daily routines in order to focus our hearts on Christ. During the season of Lent, many Christians fast from certain types of food, specific forms of technology, or other luxuries. Many Christians also incorporate spiritual practices into their observance of Lent, like new rhythms of prayer, Scripture reading, or meditation. Recognizing Lent is not an obligation and has nothing to do with earning God's approval or favour. It is simply one of many ways that we can be intentional about focusing on Jesus and opening ourselves up to the gift of His transforming work in our lives.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR LENT

In this guide you you will find a rhythm of spiritual practice that may provide a helpful tool for you as you intentionally focus on Jesus throughout Lent.

There are four components to this practice guide:

1. Ideas for families observing Lent together
2. Suggestions for weekly fasts
3. A daily practice of Gospel Meditation.
4. A Prayerful Review of the events of each week

The pages that follow will guide you through each of these practices. Our prayer is that this guide will help you make space to grow closer to Jesus and become more aware of God's presence every day.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FAMILIES

Including children in spiritual practices is a great way to help them grow as followers of Jesus and to understand the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Here are some suggestions for how you could observe Lent as a family:

- Pray the Lord's Prayer each day of Lent together as a family. Consider praying it at the same time each day to make it a part of your daily rhythm. If you'd like, you can include gestures with the prayer as a way of praying with your entire body. [Click here](#) or visit <https://vimeo.com/229206547> to see Aaron Niequist walk through the Lord's Prayer with gestures.
- Give something up for Lent as a family. Decide if you want to fast from the same thing for all 40 days or fast from something different each week. Make the decision together and encourage each other to stick with it over the season.
- Decide one day of the week to go "screen free" as a family.
- Set up an "almsgiving box" (donation box) - take one thing from your pantry each day and add it to the box. Donate the items to the food bank.
- Countdown the days of Lent with a Lenten calendar. You can download one by [clicking here](#) or visiting evergreenheights.org/lenten-calendar.
- Wash each other's feet on Holy Thursday as Jesus did with His disciples.
- Light Lenten candles. You can find a description of this activity by [clicking here](#) or by visiting <https://thelittlesandme.com/lenten-candles-family-activity>.

WEEKLY FASTS

Fasting is an opportunity to focus on Jesus, to recognize our dependence on Him, and to draw closer to Him.

Fasting can reveal the things that are controlling us. It can reveal where, outside of Christ, we are turning for comfort and pleasure. Fasting reminds us that it is God alone who sustains us. God is our provider, our comforter, and the only true source of hope and joy.

Maybe you sense God calling you to give up something specific this Lent. If that is the case, we encourage you to move forward with that, trusting that God will work in powerful ways as you respond in obedience to Him.

If you aren't sure, consider trying a different fast each week, Monday through Saturday, throughout the season of Lent. Here is a suggested rhythm to follow:

Week 1 (Feb 14-17): Fast from a type of food, or from one meal each day.

Week 2 (Feb 19-24): Fast from streaming services, television or movies.

Week 3 (Feb 26-March 2): Fast from social media.

Week 4 (March 4-March 9): Fast from making purchases that aren't essential.

Week 5 (March 11-March 16): Fast from music or podcasts.

Week 6 (March 18-March 23): Fast from complaining or criticizing.

Week 7 (March 25-March 30): Wake up 30 minutes earlier than usual to spend time with God through prayer, Scripture reading, journaling, or meditation.

Feel free to adjust this schedule as you sense God speaking to you about the areas of your life that need to be re-oriented towards Him.

GOSPEL MEDITATION

Central to the gospel is the incredible reality that we have been reconciled to God through Christ. We have been forgiven for our sin and adopted into God's family. He is our Father, and we are His children. He loves us and desires a relationship with us. Romans 5:8 says it this way:

6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. 10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

J. I. Packer says "a little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about Him."

It is easy for us to learn about God cognitively without getting to know Him personally. But God has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit empowers us to experience an authentic relationship with Him.

Gospel meditation is a practice that helps us get to know God rather than just knowing about Him.

It is a way of asking the Spirit to draw us in to the life of Jesus and observe how he walked, talked, and interacted with people. It is a practice that can help us encounter Jesus again and again in new ways as we commune with Him, learn from Him, and walk with Him every day.

HOW TO PRACTICE GOSPEL MEDITATION

The approach to Gospel Meditation and Daily Review that follow are based on the David G. Benner's approach to the practice as described in his book "The Gift of Being Yourself".

Ready to practice Gospel Meditation? Here is a framework that can get you started:

- Take a few moments to centre yourself in God's presence. Quiet your heart and mind. Breathe deeply. Remind yourself of His love for you and desire to commune with you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in this practice of Gospel Meditation. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your imagination as you encounter Jesus through Scripture.
- Slowly read through the Scripture passage several times. It may help to read it out loud.
- Allow yourself to imagine the situation that was described in the Passage. Imagine the setting and the people involved, but most of all, pay attention to Jesus. Look at his face. Hear his voice. Don't try to analyze the passage or think through applications based on what you have read. Just be present to Jesus and aware of your response to Him.
- Spend a few moments in worship, thanking God for the gift of being able to know Him through the person of Jesus.

In the pages that follow, you will find a Scripture reading plan that carries through the season of Lent and is designed to be used for Gospel Meditation.

A PRAYERFUL REVIEW OF YOUR WEEK

God is present and active in our lives every moment of every day. However, in the midst of all the busyness, noise, and distraction, we often don't recognize His presence or see how He is at work. Richard Rohr says "we cannot attain the presence of God. We're already totally in the presence of God. What's absent is awareness."

The Prayerful Review is a simple practice that is designed to help us learn to discern the presence of God in our daily lives - in the good and the bad, the joys and the struggles, the big things and the small things. As we become increasingly aware of God's presence, we will become more open to experiencing his peace and joy. We will become more able to discern his promptings to love and serve those around us and step out in obedience.

Here is a framework for practicing a Prayerful Review:

- Take your journal and find a quiet place where you can be alone with God.
- Take a few moments to centre yourself in God's presence.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in reviewing your week to discern God's presence and activity in it.
- Allow the events of the week to replay before you. Thank God for His blessings and ask for His guidance and comfort as you recall challenges and struggles.
- Ask God how He is calling you to move forward. Is there a word He wants you to carry with you into the week ahead? Is there something He is calling you to do?
- End your time by thanking God for the gift of His presence and work in your life. Take a few moments to rest in His love.

Each Sunday throughout the Season of Lent, we will encourage you to practice a Prayerful Review of your week to help you become more attentive to the ways God has been working within you and around you.

WEDNESDAY , FEBRUARY 14TH

*All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.
-Ecclesiastes 3:20*

Today marks the first day of the season of Lent.

On Ash Wednesday, we remember our humanity. Our fragility. Our brokenness.

On Ash Wednesday, we remember that God created us from the dust, and to dust we will return.

On Ash Wednesday, we come before God, in our weakness and vulnerability, and confess our sin, remembering that God is the only one who can forgive us, heal us, and make us whole.

Pray the following prayer to mark the beginning of this Lenten journey:

Jesus come and save us,

We are but dust,
We are like ashes,
but you can touch our unclean souls.

Jesus come and forgive us,

Our hearts are heavy,
Our burdens are great,
Cleanse us with the water of life.

Jesus come and heal us,

Restore our sight,
Teach us truth,
Speak to us words that bring us wholeness.

Jesus touch us with your heart of love,

Cleanse us with the water of life,
Restore our sight that we may see,
Teach us truth that we may lead Godly lives.

*Written by Christine Sine, and posted on the Godspace website.
<http://msainfo.us/2012/02/17/join-us-at-godspace-during-lent>*

Gospel Meditation: Matthew 3:13-17 | The Baptism of Jesus

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH

Gospel Meditation: Luke 4:1-13 | The Temptation of Jesus

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

Gospel Meditation: Luke 4:14-21 | Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

Gospel Meditation: Luke 5:1-11 | The First Disciples

SUNDAY , FEBRUARY 18TH

A Prayerful Review

- Take your journal and find a quiet place where you can be alone with God.
- Take a few moments to centre yourself in God's presence.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in reviewing your week to discern God's presence and activity in it.
- Allow the events of the week to replay before you. Thank God for His blessings and ask for His guidance and comfort as you recall challenges and struggles.
- Ask God how He is calling you to move forward. Is there a word He wants you to carry with you into the week ahead? Is there something He is calling you to do?
- End your time by thanking God for the gift of His presence and work in your life. Take a few moments to rest in His love.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

-1 John 3:16-20, NIV

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH

Gospel Meditation: John 2:1-11 | Jesus Changes Water Into Wine

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH

Gospel Meditation: John 2:13-22 | Jesus Clears the Temple

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST

Gospel Meditation: John 3:1-17 | Jesus and Nicodemus

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

Gospel Meditation: John 4:1-26 | Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD

Gospel Meditation: Mark 2:1-12 | Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 2:13-17 | Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew)

SUNDAY , FEBRUARY 25TH

A Prayerful Review

- Take your journal and find a quiet place where you can be alone with God.
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- Allow the events of the week to replay before you. Thank God for His blessings and ask for His guidance and comfort as you recall challenges and struggles.
- Ask God how He is calling you to move forward. Is there a word He wants you to carry with you into the week ahead? Is there something He is calling you to do?
- End your time by thanking God for the gift of His presence and work in your life. Take a few moments to rest in His love.



And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

-Romans 8:38-39

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH

Gospel Meditation: Luke 5:12-14 | Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH

Gospel Meditation: Luke 7:1-10 | The Faith of a Roman Officer

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 4:35-41 | Jesus Calms the Storm

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 10:46-52 | Jesus Heals Bartimaeus

FRIDAY, MARCH 1ST

Gospel Meditation: Luke 8:40-56 | Jesus Heals in Response to Faith

SATURDAY, MARCH 2ND

Gospel Meditation: Luke 10:38-42 | Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

SUNDAY , MARCH 3RD

A Prayerful Review

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*Taste and see that the Lord is good.
Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!
Psalm 34:8*

MONDAY, MARCH 4TH

Gospel Meditation: John 5:1-15 | Jesus Heals a Lame Man

TUESDAY, MARCH 5TH

Gospel Meditation: John 6:1-13 | Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6TH

Gospel Meditation: Luke 19:1-10 | Jesus and Zacchaeus

THURSDAY, MARCH 7TH

Gospel Meditation: John 8:1-11 | A Woman Caught in Adultery

FRIDAY, MARCH 8TH

Gospel Meditation: Matthew 14:22-33 | Jesus Walks on Water

SATURDAY, MARCH 9TH

Gospel Meditation: John 9:1-6 | Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

SUNDAY , MARCH 10TH

A Prayerful Review

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- End your time by thanking God for the gift of His presence and work in your life. Take a few moments to rest in His love.

*God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.
... "Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world."
Psalm 46:1, 10*

MONDAY, MARCH 11TH

Gospel Meditation: Matthew 16:13-30 | Peter's Declaration about Jesus

TUESDAY, MARCH 12TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 9:2-13 | The Transfiguration

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 9:14-31 | Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

THURSDAY, MARCH 14TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 9:33-37 | The Greatest in the Kingdom

FRIDAY, MARCH 15TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 10:17-27 | The Rich Man

SATURDAY, MARCH 16TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 12:28-34 | The Most Important Commandment

SUNDAY , MARCH 17TH

A Prayerful Review

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*"I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;
apart from me you can do nothing.
-John 15:5*

MONDAY, MARCH 18TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 12:41-44 | The Widow's Offering

TUESDAY, MARCH 19TH

Gospel Meditation: John 11:1-44 | The Raising of Lazarus

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20TH

Gospel Meditation: John 12:1-8 | Jesus Anointed at Bethany

THURSDAY, MARCH 21ST

Gospel Meditation: Matthew 21:1-11 | Jesus' Triumphant Entry

FRIDAY, MARCH 22ND

Gospel Meditation: John 13:1-17 | Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

SATURDAY, MARCH 23RD

Gospel Meditation: Mark 14:12-25 | The Last Supper

SUNDAY , MARCH 24TH

A Prayerful Review

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- Ask God how He is calling you to move forward. Is there a word He wants you to carry with you into the week ahead? Is there something He is calling you to do?
- End your time by thanking God for the gift of His presence and work in your life. Take a few moments to rest in His love.

*I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.
-John 8:12*

MONDAY, MARCH 25TH

Gospel Meditation: John 14:1-13 | Jesus, the Way to the Father

TUESDAY, MARCH 26TH

Gospel Meditation: Mark 14:32-42 | Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27TH

Gospel Meditation: John 18:2-12 | Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested

THURSDAY, MARCH 28TH

Gospel Meditation: John 18:29-38 | Jesus' Trial before Pilate

A Maundy Thursday Prayer

By Linda Kurtz (<https://pres-outlook.org/2021/04/maundy-thursday-prayer/>)

Glorious God,

There was a time –
centuries ago –
when the Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood.
The Word was called “Jesus”
and his birth was heralded by angels and animals alike.

Just a few decades later,
the world had too much of the Word

and its topsy-turvy, the-last-shall-be-first ways.
It was then that Jesus was persecuted
for being too equitable,
too countercultural,
too loving.

So then, one night, after dinner with his disciples,
Jesus donned an apron and put water in a basin.
Having loved his friends,
he continued to love,
tenderly washing feet —
even as death drew devastatingly near.

But God,
you know —
they weren't just his friends.
They were also his betrayers.
The ones whose dusty feet Jesus made clean
were the ones who would let him down
again
and again.

Those events —
that story —
seem so distant from our reality.
So today, O God,
we recall that Jesus set an example, that we are called to do as he did:
love as we have been loved.

Love.

Before the cross comes into view,
today let us love.
Let us celebrate love.
Let us love with abandon.
Let us love even those who let us down.

Let us experience and express holy,
no-holds-barred,
messy, imperfect
Love.
In the name of Love itself.
Amen.

FRIDAY, MARCH 29TH

Gospel Meditation: John 19:16-37 | The Crucifixion

A Good Friday Blessing
By Kate Bowler

O dear God,
we're in darker places
then we've ever known

God, light the way
for this whole sad earth,
for the helpless ones,
and for me

God have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Spirit have mercy.

night has fallen
on the light of the world
and betrayal seems
the order of the day.

love itself is handed over
to brutal ignorance
and cunning that loves the dark.

o God,
you chose to feel what we feel—
how it is to die totally alone,
ghastly to behold
in your outstretched
arms of the cross.

are you gathering to yourself
every hideous thing?
every failure,
travesty, and wrong?
blessed are we
who shout: yes! do it!
turn things right side up again!

blessed are we
who bow and wait
for the morning of the world.

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness
has not overcome it.
John 1:5

God have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Spirit have mercy.

open your hands.
receive it—
love that comes
gently as the dawn.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30TH

Gospel Meditation: Matthew 27:62-66 | The Guard at the Tomb

A Holy Saturday Meditation

By Jonathan Martin

There is grace this Holy Saturday, for all kinds of in-between spaces.

Grace for not being who you were, but not yet who you are to become.

There is grace this Holy Saturday for those in the liminal, shadowy place between crucifixion and resurrection.

There is grace this Holy Saturday for those in between waking and sleeping, dancing and grieving, hope and heartbreak.

There is grace this Holy Saturday for not knowing, for holding tension, for being unsure, for making a bed in the belly of the whale.

There is grace this Holy Saturday to rest, be still, and know or not know.

Because resurrection doesn't depend on you or need your permission.

SUNDAY , MARCH 31ST

Easter Sunday

Gospel Meditation: John 20:1-18 | The Resurrection

A Prayerful Review

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- Ask God how He is calling you to move forward. Is there a word He wants you to carry with you into the week ahead? Is there something He is calling you to do?
- End your time by thanking God for the gift of His presence and work in your life. Take a few moments to rest in His love.

An Easter Prayer
By Michaela Youngson

When everything was dark
and it seemed that the sun would never shine again,
your love broke through.

Your love was too strong,
too wide,
too deep
for death to hold.

The sparks cast by your love
dance and spread
and burst forth
with resurrection light.

Gracious God,
we praise you for the light of new life
made possible through Jesus.

We praise you for the light of new life
that shone on the first witnesses of resurrection.

We praise you for the light of new life
that continues to shine in our hearts today.

We pray that the Easter light of life, hope and joy,
will live in us each day;
and that we will be bearers of that light
into the lives of others.
Amen.