

A scenic landscape of a mountain valley with a lake reflecting the mountains and sky. The mountains are rugged and rocky, with some snow patches. The lake is calm and reflects the surrounding scenery. The sky is a soft, pale blue with some light clouds. The overall tone is peaceful and serene.

SCRIPTURE AND PRACTICES

FOR THE SEASON
OF LENT

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 amongst them is the recognition of this season as an opportunity to make practical changes to their daily routines in order to focus their hearts on Christ in a special way. 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. It is simply one way that we can be intentional about focusing on Jesus and opening ourselves up to the gift of His transforming work in our lives.

The idea of giving something up for Lent may seem strange to consider this year - after all, throughout this pandemic we have all had to make sacrifices that we never would have chosen for ourselves. But Lent isn't about the magnitude of our sacrifices. It's about adjusting our lives to draw closer to God and make space for inner reflection, repentance, and intimacy with our Father. This is something that is always important, but perhaps even more crucial in this season where our lives have been interrupted and thrown into disequilibrium. How is God inviting you to draw closer to Him during Lent this year?

Scripture and Practices for Lent

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

The Scripture Reading Plan will take you through all four gospels over the course of the season, by reading 2-3 chapters each day. This will allow you to focus on the life and teaching of Jesus in a very intentional way throughout this season. If you get behind on readings, don't worry too much about catching up! Jump back in and continue with the readings on the date you start up again.

Each day will also give you a practice that is designed to help you connect with God and live out your faith in a practical way. We hope that you have fun with these practices and experience God's presence in some new and exciting ways as you engage in both new and familiar forms of prayer, reflection, and service.

Using a Journal Throughout Lent

Many people find journaling to be a helpful way to reflect on their experiences and to pray with a greater level of focus and depth. As you journey through Lent this year, consider using a journal throughout the process. Journal about the things that stand out to you about Jesus as you read the Scripture passages. Reflect on how you are impacted by the prayers and practices. Open yourself up to everything God wants to do in you and through you during this season.

Scripture and Practice Guide

✓	Date	Scripture Reading	Practice
	February 17 th	Matthew 1-3	What do you need to let go of today? What do you need to receive from God? Practice the Palms Down, Palms Up reflective prayer (p.5)
	February 18 th	Matthew 4-6	Anonymously drop off a surprise for somebody to brighten their day.
	February 19 th	Matthew 7-9	Go for a walk outside, even just a short one. As you walk, focus on each of your senses one at a time. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Thank God for all that He has created.
	February 20 th	Matthew 10-12	Reflectively pray the Prayer of St. Francis three times today – once in the morning, once at noon, and once in the evening. (p. 6)
	February 21 st	Catch Up/Worship Together	Think of somebody who you struggle to love. Make a list of three things to admire about them. Then pray a blessing over them.
	February 22 nd	Matthew 13-14	Listen to your favourite worship song. Focus on the words. Sing it in your heart or out loud as a prayer.
	February 23 rd	Matthew 15-16	Send somebody a note or card in the mail.
	February 24 th	Matthew 17-18	Take the day off from social media and TV.
	February 25 th	Matthew 19-20	Pull out your phone. Pray for the last person you messaged, the last person you took a picture of/with, and the last person you spoke with.
	February 26 th	Matthew 21-22	Pray the Prayer of Relinquishment by Richard Foster (p. 5)
	February 27 th	Matthew 23-24	Make today a "day of curiosity." Get curious as you read Scripture, as you go outside, as you read the news, and as you interact with others. Hold your questions before God throughout the day. Allow yourself the freedom to have questions rather than answers.
	February 28 th	Catch Up/Worship Together	Tell somebody something you appreciate about them.
	March 1 st	Matthew 25-26	Put together a bag of groceries and donate them to a food bank or Evergreen's pantry.

	March 2 nd	Matthew 27-28	Read Paul's list of the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Choose one to focus on living out in everything you do today.
	March 3 rd	Mark 1-3	Drive or walk the block around our downtown site and pray for it as you do.
	March 4 th	Mark 4-6	Refrain from complaining, gossiping or grumbling all day today.
	March 5 th	Mark 7-9	Write a list of as many names of God as you can come up with (e.g., "Healer," "Redeemer," "Alpha and Omega.") As you write each one, pause to delight in its significance.
	March 6 th	Mark 10-12	Fast from at least one meal today. Pray for those in our community and in our world who are hungry.
	March 7 th	Catch Up/Worship Together	Do something practical to serve somebody else today.
	March 8 th	Mark 13-14	Quit something. A habit, a job, a way of thinking – something you sense God calling you to move on from.
	March 9 th	Mark 15-16	Practice the Welcoming Prayer (p. 6)
	March 10 th	Luke 1-3	Write a list of 25 of your favourite things. Thank God for them.
	March 11 th	Luke 4-6	Read Matthew 11:28-30 slowly. Read it as an invitation from Jesus. Imagine yourself coming to Jesus and receiving His rest.
	March 12 th	Luke 7-9	Draw a picture for God. Imagine Him hanging it on His fridge.
	March 13 th	Luke 10-12	Walk or drive through your neighbourhood. Pray for your neighbours.
	March 14 th	Catch Up/Worship Together	Practice lament. Hold your pain and sorrows before God. Write a poem or prayer if it helps. Then light a candle and ask God to remind you that he is light within your darkness.
	March 15 th	Luke 13-14	Don't buy anything today.
	March 16 th	Luke 15-16	Before you start your work day, wherever it may be and whatever it looks like, thank God for your work and ask Him to help you be a light to your coworkers/the people you interact with.
	March 17 th	Luke 17-18	Practice solitude – spend 5 minutes in silence.
	March 18 th	Luke 19-20	Repent of something. Ask the Spirit to show you where in your life you need to repent.
	March 19 th	Luke 21-22	Make a list of 10 things you are thankful for.

March 20 th	Luke 23-24	Pray through the Lord's prayer. As you do, imagine yourself standing alongside believers across the world and throughout history. Be reminded that you are part of God's family.
March 21 st	Catch Up/Worship Together	Practice the Examen before you go to bed tonight (p. 7)
March 22 nd	John 1-2	Donate/give away \$5 every time you say something negative or indulge a critical/judgmental thought about someone today.
March 23 rd	John 3-4	Pray the Infinitum Posture Prayer (p. 8)
March 24 th	John 5-6	Send some encouragement to a friend.
March 25 th	John 7-8	Pray the Prayer for Every Moment (p. 6) Carry it with you and pray it every time you enter a new space today.
March 26 th	John 9-10	Open up whatever source you use to get the news. Pray for a local or global issue that stands out to you
March 27 th	John 11-12	Receive God's forgiveness for something you've been beating yourself up over.
March 28 th	Catch Up/Worship Together	Read Psalm 139 out loud. Choose a word or phrase to carry with you for the rest of your day.
March 29 th	John 13-14	Give something away.
March 30 th	John 15-16	When you are in waiting in a lineup (grocery store, coffee shop, etc.) give up your place to the person behind you.
March 31 st	John 17-18	Reflect on your story of coming to faith. Thank God for His work in your life.
April 1 st	John 19-20	Wake up early and watch the sunrise. Thank God for the beauty of creation.
April 2 nd (Good Friday)	John 21	Practice centering prayer. Set a timer for 5 minutes and focus on a word or image that you sense God leading you to (e.g., "beloved"). Don't worry if you get distracted. Just gently allow your attention to be drawn back to the word or image. Carry this word or image with you throughout the day.
April 3 rd	1 Corinthians 15	Every time you see somebody today, declare in your heart and mind that they are a beloved child of God. See how the way you see people shifts.
April 4 th (Easter Sunday)	Romans 8:1-2	Happy Easter! Whatever else you do today, delight in the Good News of the Gospel all day long!

Supplementary Resources

Palms Down, Palms Up

Palms down, palms up is a simple meditative exercise that Richard Foster describes in his book *Celebration of Discipline*. This is a practice can help you surrender your concerns and challenges over to God, and open yourself up to receive the blessings that God wants to pour into your life.

Sit quietly and centre yourself in God's presence

Set aside any distractions and take a moment to centre yourself in God's presence. Take a few deep breaths and remind yourself that even now, He is within you and all around you.

Turn your palms down, and release your concerns to God

Start by resting your hands on your knees and turning your palms down as a symbol of releasing your cares to God. Allow your heart to surrender your burdens to Him. You might pray something like "God, I surrender my anger towards (*insert name*)...to you.", "Lord, I give you my worries about this meeting", or "God I release my fear about (*insert situation*)...to you". You might feel a sense of release in your heart or in your hands as you pray. Take a few moments to lean into this posture of surrender.

Turn your palms up, and receive from God

Now turn your palms upwards and posture your heart to receive from God. Ask God to provide you with whatever it is that you need. You may pray something like "God, I pray that you will fill me with Your love for (*insert name*)...", or, "Father, please give me Your peace as I enter into this conversation". Whether you need God's joy, peace, grace, hope, or whatever else it may be, name it as you hold your hands open before God. Take a few moments to enjoy God's presence. Allow your heart to rest in fellowship with Him.

Prayer of Relinquishment

From *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard Foster

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to You.
May Your will be my delight today.
May You have perfect sway in me.
May your love be the pattern of my living.
I surrender to You my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions.
Do with them what You will, when You will, as You will.
I place into Your loving care my family, my friends, my future.
Care for them with a care that I can never give.
I release into Your hands my need to control, my craving for status, my fear of obscurity.
Eradicate the evil, purify the good, and establish Your Kingdom on earth.
For Jesus' sake,
Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

The Welcoming Prayer

I gently become aware of my body.
I gently become aware of my interior state - thoughts, feelings
I allow myself to focus, feel, and sink into
the feelings, emotions, thoughts, sensations and commentaries in my body.

I welcome and consent to the presence and action of the indwelling Spirit of God
in the feelings, emotions, thoughts, commentaries, or sensations in my body by saying
"Welcome"

"I let go of my desire for:
safety and security,
esteem and affection,
power and control.
I let go of the feeling to change the situation."
I let go of the desire to change any situation, feeling, condition, person, or myself.
I open to the love and presence of God and the healing action of grace within me.
Amen.

A Prayer for Every Moment

From the Eternal Current by Aaron Niequist

Loving God
Who fills the universe, this entire room, myself and everyone in it,
please help me to notice what you are doing -
in me and in the other person -
and to join in that good work.
Amen.

The Examen

The Examen is spiritual practice that helps us become more aware of and engaged in God's activity in our lives – both in the big things and the small things. The prayer involves reflecting back on everything that happened over the course of the day, paying special attention to how God was moving and how you were responding. As we open ourselves up to the Spirit in this reflective practice, God will be able to speak to us about the gifts he has given us, the way we have been responding to Him and to others, and how He may be calling us to move forward. It creates the space for God to do his work of transforming us from the inside out as we take an honest look at our lives and receive His grace to move forward.

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead this time of prayer:

Start by centering yourself in God's loving presence. Take a minute to remind yourself that God is all around you, that he is closer than the air that is filling your lungs. Try sitting up straight with your feet flat on the floor. Take some deep breaths. Breathe in God's love. His grace. His peace. His joy. Breathe out everything that is not of him – your anxieties, your fears, your anger.

It may be tempting to skip this step and rush ahead, but resist the temptation! This is not meant to be a cognitive exercise or a self-assessment. Centering our hearts and minds in God's loving presence is essential.

Give thanks:

Take a few moments to express your gratitude for the gifts that he has given you over the course of the day – both big and small. Don't rush to create the longest list that you can come up with. Instead, take the time to really savour these blessings.

Review your day:

Hour by hour, review the events that took place over the course of your day. Who did you see? What did you do? Spend more time focusing on significant moments, and pass more quickly over less relevant moments. When were you aware of God's presence? Was there an instance when you were so focused on yourself that you missed an opportunity to be used by God? When were you at your best? When were you at your worst? Pay attention to and name the feelings that surface as you review your day in this manner.

Choose one or two feelings or situations to pray from:

Bring your feelings about the situation before God. Then, take some time to be silent and listen to him. Receive his love, his guidance, his forgiveness.

Look ahead to tomorrow:

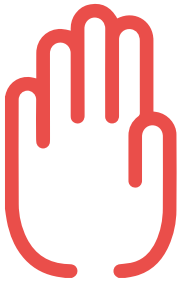
Scripture tells us that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). What did God reveal to you during this time of reflection that you want to bring into tomorrow? How is he calling you to move forward? Receive God's grace and ask the Spirit to empower you as you look forward to the day ahead.

INFINITUM

Daily Prayer.

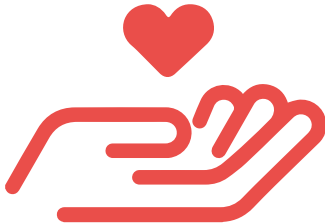
One way of beginning your day is to use the hand postures that are shown in our icons.
Hold your hands in these specific positions/postures to mirror your intention to live these vows out today.

Surrender Hands Up



I choose to hold my hand up as a symbol of surrender.
My life is not about me.
I surrender to your Lordship.
I surrender my preferences, prejudices and position to you.
I surrender my fears, finances, friends and family to you.

Generosity Hands Open



I choose to hold my hands out open as a symbol of generosity.
What I have is not mine.
I am only a steward of all that you have given me.
I want to mirror the way that you opened your hand to us and lavished your love and life upon us.
I want to live an open handed life in a closed fist culture.

Mission Hands Forward



I choose to hold my hands forward as a symbol of mission.
I want to live for something greater than me.
I want to embrace your kingdom mission.
I want to embrace and welcome your mission.
To the lost, last, least and lonely.
To the poor, powerless, privileged and persecuted.