

A Family Devotional



# LENT

2017

Remembering Jesus'  
suffering and  
reflecting on His  
crucifixion and  
resurrection

southtulsa   
BAPTIST CHURCH



# Lent

The word “Lenten” means “lengthen.” The purpose of the season of Lent is exactly that; to lengthen the observance of Easter so that it will be more meaningful and the celebration more anticipated when it arrives. It is a very similar idea to the Advent season before Christmas.

Within just a couple of centuries after Jesus’ death and resurrection, Christians observed a 40-day fast in preparation for Easter weekend. *This was well before there was an officially recognized Roman Catholic Church.*

The purpose of a Lenten fast by early Christians was two-fold: 1) To remember the suffering of Jesus in the wilderness during his 40-day fast and temptation, and 2) to take regular time during a similar period of 40 days to reflect on the events leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection while participating in a partial fast from food or something else meaningful.

***The purpose of this devotional is similar.*** These thoughts and prayers are to be used weekly, preferably on Sundays, to help guide you through Scriptures, prayers, and acts of commitment to Christ.

# One

**READ:** “...*For dust you are and to dust you will return.*” (Genesis 3:19b)

These are the words used most often on Ash Wednesday, as the Lenten season begins. The reminder that we are dust turns our attention to the creative power of God, and His ability to heal the brokenness in our lives when we bring it to Him. That turning to God is the work of Lent, preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Ashes are an ancient sign of reflection on one’s sins and of repentance. The Hebrews, as a sign of repentance, would put on hot, itchy, uncomfortable sackcloth and then place ashes on top of their heads (see Job 2:12, Job 42:6, Ezekiel 27:30, Esther 4:1). As Christians began to celebrate Lent, they too used ashes and dust. Instead of covering one’s head completely with ashes, however, Christians simply made the sign of the cross. The idea: Christ’s sacrifice and death on the cross was the unique and final sacrifice needed for the sins of human beings.

In other words, *the cross was enough.*

**PRAY:** Feel free to pray your own prayer at any time during this Lent journey. If you would like a prayer to pray today, pray the following:

# 03.05.17

by Eric Costanzo

Lord Jesus, thank you for the cross. Thank you that the cross is a symbol of love; a symbol of sacrificial death; a symbol of forgiven sin; and a symbol of victory over death. Help me, in the power of the cross and in the power of your death, to live sacrificially for you as we look forward to celebrating your resurrection at the end of this journey.

**DO:** *Wherever you are and whatever you are doing today, take some time to meditate on the cross.* Perhaps you could gaze at a cross on a wall, or view a cross in some form of art, or listen to a song about the cross, or even visit a prominent cross somewhere near your home.

# Two

**READ:** “What are you giving up for Lent?” is a common question this time of year.

Although it is traditionally a religious holiday, many non-Christians join in and try to go without one thing for approximately six weeks. For many it is a fun exercise. Sometimes a person will even say at other times of the year, “I gave it up for Lent!”

Food items and technology often top the list. The food item usually at the top is chocolate. Is it really possible to have too much chocolate???

Regarding things to give up or things to change, this question comes to mind: If something is so important to make a change for 40 days, why is it not important enough to change year-round?

As Christ followers, Lent is a good time to examine our lives and identify things in our lives that need changing. As we pray and ask God, He will show us these things. As we pray and ask God, He can help us make these changes into new habits.

So, what are you giving up for Lent? Here is what Christ gave up for us.

*Surely He took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered Him punished by God,  
stricken by Him, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced for our transgressions,*

# 03.12.17

by Philip Stephens

*He was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on Him,  
and by His wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on Him  
the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)*

**PRAY:** Father, only with Your help can my life always reflect You. Reveal anything in my life that is not pleasing to You. Forgive me and help me live for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**DO:** When a man who was unfaithful to the Greek Empire was brought to Alexander the Great, the general asked the soldier his name. "Alexander," came the trembling reply. The general roared: "Change your life or change your name!"

As Christ followers, we wear the name "Christian." Our lives are to reflect Him not just during Lent but all year long. *Share your commitment to represent the name of Christ well with someone else this week.*

# Three

**READ:** *The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. (John 1:35-39)*

In the Biblical passage above, when the disciples tell Jesus what they want, He instructs them: “Come and see.” Notice that once they have expressed their longing, He invites them to follow up on their asking with some deliberate action. They need to do something. They need to act. There is a lesson in this for us when we ask God to rekindle our longing. Asking by itself is not enough. Complacency and apathy obstruct progress in our journey with God. We must also “come and see” by taking whatever necessary action we must do to follow up on our longing for God.

**PRAY:** Lord, rekindle my longing for you.



# 03.19.17

by Matt Wolff

**DO:** Read once more the Biblical passage in John 1:35-39. Allow this passage to help you again to engage with the Lord around your deep longings.

*Today, think about one thing you can do in order to show that you are taking your longing with real sincerity. Talk with the Lord about this and seek to put into practice however the Lord directs you.*

# Four

**READ:** During the season of Lent, people often give up things to remind them of the sacrifice Jesus made for giving up His life for us.

What you give up could be something you do as a family, or something that you do individually. Whatever you choose should be a sacrifice, something you will miss.

*Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. (Joel 2:12-13)*

Think about the times you wanted recognition for something you have done. Maybe a good grade, an athletic accomplishment, or just a good deed. Were you given a reward? Something that was a source of confidence?

God asks us to set all our attachments to those things aside, and rely solely on Him.

*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen, then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:5-6)*

When you decide what you want to sacrifice, let that also be a reminder to pray.

# 03.26.17

by Karen Pirtle

**PRAY:** Lord, thank you for your grace and compassion. Thank you that You are slow to anger and abounding in love. Help us to stay strong in you, and to continue this season of sacrifice and reflection with our hearts and minds focused on you.

**DO:** *Make a prayer pail!* Below you will find instructions for a family activity that is a fun way to teach your children spiritual disciplines and truths in your daily activities.

## PRAYER PAIL

All you need is:

- Large craft sticks
- Small Bucket (or you can use a flower pot, mason jar. Etc.)
- Markers, paints, ribbon

**Step 1:** Decorate the pail with paint, markers and ribbons, however you would like.

**Step 2:** Write the names of friends, family, the lost, missionaries we know, our church, our city and any other people or things you want to be praying for on the craft sticks. Oh, and don't forget to write some to thank Him and praise Him. When you are done, place them all in your bucket.

**Step 3:** Each night at the dinner table, let your children pick one (or a couple) of the sticks out of the prayer pail. Then everyone gets a chance to pray for whatever is on their sticks.

# Five

**READ:** Fasting is a discipline that not many Christians put into practice in our age. Perhaps the season of Lent has afforded you the opportunity to do this for the first time, or perhaps more consistently than ever before. Karen's devotional reminded us last week of Jesus' instructions in the Sermon on the Mount on how we should pray. In that same sermon, Jesus also gave us instructions on how we should fast:

*When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:16-18)*

Fasting is a very challenging discipline, even when it is done consistently. It is a practice that is rewarded by God with significant spiritual benefit, and at the same time cannot be done without His help and strength.

*Hang in there, this is supposed to be hard.*

**PRAY:** Instead of a simple prayer of words this week...perhaps a song will encourage us more:

*I need thee every hour  
Most gracious Lord  
No tender voice like thine  
Can peace afford*

# 04.02.17

by Eric Costanzo

CHORUS: *I need thee oh I need thee  
Every hour I need thee  
Oh bless me now my savior  
I come to thee*

*I need thee every hour  
Stay thou near by  
Temptations lose their power  
When thou art nigh*

*I need thee every hour  
Most holy one  
Oh make me thine indeed  
Thou blessed son*

**DO:** *As you continue your fast and commitments, take time this week to have a focused hour of prayer. Remember the prayer room at our church is available 24 hours a day for your use!*

# Six

**READ:** Today is Palm Sunday. On Palm Sunday, we celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem as recorded in the Gospels.

*They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*

*“Hosanna to the Son of David!”*

*“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”*

*When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Matthew 21:7-11)*

On Palm Sunday, we also celebrate the beginning of the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry before His death and resurrection.

Which means today is also the beginning of Passion Week. Today begins our reflection on Jesus’ journey towards Golgotha. Since we are so close to the end of our Lent journey, perhaps here is a good time to ask if any of us have failed in our Lenten commitments thus far?

# 04.09.17

by Eric Costanzo

It has been several weeks. Lots of things have taken place, and life often gets in the way. The following words from an ancient Christian who observed the Lenten season ought to encourage us:

“If you have sinned, do not lose hope because of your error. Pray instead. On the other hand, if you have done something good, never presume too much on account of your goodness. Never congratulate yourself excessively. Never look down on someone else for sinning, and remember that when the wayward soul prays and repents of doing wrong, the Lord will raise that person up, as he did Lazarus.”

--Aelfric of Eynsham (c. AD 1000)

**PRAY:** Lord Jesus, thank you that as your child my sins are already forgiven. Help me to focus my heart and mind on you this week in ways that I have before.

**DO:** *Watch a credible movie about the death of Jesus sometime this week.* There are several good options out there.

# Seven

**READ:** He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!

For centuries, Christians have repeated these words on Easter Sunday. Oh yeah...Happy Easter! We hope this Lenten season has been a blessed one for you in every way; whether this is your first time to observe the season or you are a regular.

One of the most powerful questions from Scripture on that first Easter Sunday came from an angel: “*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*” Wow! Those words never lose their weight. Here is the full story:

*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words. (Luke 24:1-8)*



# 04.16.17

by Eric Costanzo

**PRAY:** Lord Jesus, we give you thanks for the victory of the resurrection. Because you defeated death, the grave also has no hold on us. Today is a day of joy and celebration because of your grace and might. Let us experience the full joy of the Lord today!

**DO:** Today is a feast day...enjoy it! *Spend time with those you love most and celebrate the risen Lord. If you have given up something for Lent that is unhealthy for you in any way, leave it in the grave!* Otherwise, celebrate the resurrection in every way today.

**HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED!**

# Reflection

*Use this space to record your thoughts and prayers.*

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*How did this season of Lent make your observance of Easter more meaningful? What life-changes have you made as a result?*

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