

# *A 40-Day Lenten Bible Reading Plan*

*From Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday*

*Six sacred weeks — Return, Suffering, the Interior Life,  
Psalms of Ascent, the Servant, and Holy Week*

● 40 Days ● 8–12 min/day ● NIV ● All Levels

## ***You didn't pick up this plan by accident.***

Something in you is restless. Maybe you can't name it exactly — a vague sense that life has gotten louder but shallower, that you've been busy but not fully alive, that you've been saying the right things but feeling strangely distant from the God you say you love. You're not broken. You're not failing. You're just human. And somewhere deep in your bones, you know there's more.

That's exactly where Lent begins. Not with guilt. Not with a performance checklist. Lent begins with an honest breath and an open hand — the quiet, courageous admission that you want more of God than you currently have, and that you're willing to create the space to receive it.

*Lent is not about feeling bad. It's about becoming free.*

This plan moves through six sacred movements: Week One — Return (ash, wilderness, repentance); Week Two — Suffering (the cross as vocation); Week Three — The Interior Life (prayer, fasting, giving); Week Four — Psalms of Ascent (the pilgrim's walk toward Jerusalem); Week Five — The Servant (Isaiah and Gethsemane); and Holy Week (Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday). Come slowly. Come honestly. Come as you are.

WEEK ONE



## Return

*Ash Wednesday through Day 7 — Returning to the Father who runs to meet you.*

WEEK ONE — RETURN

### 1 Ash Wednesday: Remember

Joel 2:12–13 · Matthew 6:16–18

#### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:12–13 (NIV)

*"Even now, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments."*

Joel 2:12–13 (NIV)

#### REFLECTION

Ash Wednesday is not primarily about mortality — though that is part of it. It is about return. The word the prophet uses is *shuv*: turn, come back, reverse direction.

You are not starting something new today. You are coming home.

#### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

Skip one meal today. Let the hunger remind you that you are returning — not earning, not performing. Returning.

#### PRAYER

*Lord, I return. Not because I have cleaned myself up but because You are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Receive me. Amen.*

#### JOURNAL

What have you drifted from? Where do you most sense the distance between who you are and who you want to be?

## 2 **The Far Country**

Luke 15:11–24

### **TODAY'S SCRIPTURE**

Luke 15:20 (NIV)

*"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

Luke 15:20 (NIV)

### **REFLECTION**

The prodigal son's return begins with coming to his senses. That is repentance at its most basic: the moment you realize where you are is not where you should be.

Notice the father does not wait at the door. He runs. God's welcome is not grudging — it is extravagant.

### **LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER**

Pray the prodigal's prayer aloud: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Then sit quietly and receive the Father's answer.

### **PRAYER**

*Father, I have spent myself on things that do not satisfy. I am rising now. I am coming home. Meet me on the road. Amen.*

### **JOURNAL**

What "far country" have you been living in — physically, spiritually, emotionally? What does coming home look like for you this Lent?

### 3 **Into the Wilderness**

Matthew 4:1–11

#### **TODAY'S SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 4:1 (NIV)

*"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."*

Matthew 4:1 (NIV)

#### **REFLECTION**

The Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness — not away from God's will but into it. The wilderness is not punishment. It is preparation.

Jesus enters fasting and exits with power. What He does in forty days, He invites us to enter in these forty days.

#### **LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING**

Fast from social media or screens for the morning. Notice what the silence reveals about what you reach for when you are empty.

#### **PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, You were led into the wilderness and did not fall. Lead me through mine. When I am tempted to turn stones into bread — to fill myself with what cannot satisfy — speak Your word to me. Amen.*

#### **JOURNAL**

What is your wilderness this Lent? What temptation is most persistent for you right now?

## 4 **You Are Beloved**

Matthew 3:13–17

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:17 (NIV)

*"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"*

Matthew 3:17 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Before Jesus performs a single miracle, before He preaches a single sermon, before He does anything — the Father speaks this over Him. Identity precedes performance.

Lent begins here: you are beloved before you are useful. You are loved before you are good. This is the foundation.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Sit in silence for five minutes. Let these words wash over you: "You are my beloved child. I am well pleased with you." Receive it without arguing.

### PRAYER

*Father, I confess that I often believe my worth depends on what I do. Speak Your word of love over me today. Let me live from belovedness, not toward it. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Do you live from your identity as God's beloved, or are you still trying to earn it? What would change if you truly believed God delights in you?

## 5 A New Heart

Ezekiel 36:25–27

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)

*"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*

Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Lent is not a self-improvement program. It is a heart-transplant surgery performed by God. You do not arrive at transformation — you receive it.

The disciplines of Lent — fasting, prayer, giving — are not the operation. They are how you lie down on the table.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Write down one area of your heart that feels like stone — hardened, closed, numb. Offer that specific place to God today.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I cannot change my own heart. But You can. Remove the stone. Give me flesh — something that feels again, that breaks again, that loves again. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Where have you grown hard? What calcified your heart — and what might it feel like to have that broken open by God?

## 6 **Forgiveness Received**

Psalm 51:1–12

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 51:10 (NIV)

*"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*

Psalm 51:10 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

David writes Psalm 51 after his greatest failure — and it is the most honest prayer in the Bible. He does not minimize. He does not bargain. He asks for mercy on the basis of God's character, not his own.

The goal of Lenten confession is not self-flagellation. It is the freedom that follows honest prayer.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Use Psalm 51 as your own prayer today. Read it slowly, substituting your own name and your own failures.

### PRAYER

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. Create in me a clean heart. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Amen. (Psalm 51)*

### JOURNAL

What do you need to confess this Lent? Write it out honestly. Then write: "Create in me a clean heart."

WEEK ONE — RETURN

## 7 **The Weight We Carry**

Matthew 11:28–30

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 11:28–29 (NIV)

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me."*

Matthew 11:28–29 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Week One ends with an invitation. Everything Lent asks of you — the honesty, the confession, the fasting — is not a burden to carry. It is a way of laying burdens down.

The yoke Jesus offers is not a lighter burden. It is shared weight. You are not meant to carry this alone.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Name the burdens you are carrying right now — not sins, but weights: worry, exhaustion, grief, uncertainty. Offer each one to Christ.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I am weary. I bring You what I have been carrying alone. Teach me to share the yoke with You — to live at Your pace, in Your rest. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What burdens have you been carrying that were never meant to be yours alone? What would it feel like to hand them to Jesus?

WEEK TWO



## **Suffering**

*Days 8–14 — The cross not as obstacle but as vocation.*

## 8 The Call to the Cross

Mark 8:34–38

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Mark 8:34 (NIV)

*"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

Mark 8:34 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The cross is not a metaphor for inconvenience. In Jesus's world, a man carrying a cross was walking toward execution. This is the starkest invitation in the Gospels.

Lent exists to ask: what does it mean for you to take up a cross? Not suffering for its own sake — but suffering that follows from love.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

Fast from comfort today — a warm shower, a soft chair, a convenience you take for granted. Let the small discomfort ask the larger question.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I confess that I want the resurrection without the cross. Teach me to follow You into the places where following costs something. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What cross have you been avoiding? What does "deny yourself" look like practically in your life this Lent?

## 9 The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1–9

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 17:9 (NIV)

*"As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.""*

Matthew 17:9 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The disciples see Christ in glory on the mountain — and then they must come down. The vision is not the destination. The cross is the destination.

God gives glimpses of glory to prepare us for the valley. Whatever you have seen of God's goodness — it is preparation, not arrival.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Recall a moment of spiritual clarity or closeness with God — a mountaintop. Then ask: how did God use that to prepare you for what came after?

### PRAYER

*Lord, thank You for the mountain moments. Help me to carry them into the valley — not as nostalgia, but as fuel for the way down. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What mountaintop experience with God sustains you in harder seasons? What did it prepare you for?

## 10 Fellowship of His Sufferings

Philippians 3:10–11

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:10 (NIV)

*"I want to know Christ — yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."*

Philippians 3:10 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Paul does not pray to be spared from suffering. He prays to know Christ through suffering. The cross is not an obstacle to intimacy with God — it is one of its deepest forms.

There is a kind of knowing that only comes through pain. Lent gives us language for it.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Pray for someone you know who is suffering right now. Ask God to meet them as He met Paul — not by removing the suffering, but by entering it.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You suffered not to avoid suffering but to redeem it. Walk with me in my suffering. Walk with the people I love in theirs. Make our pain holy. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Is there suffering in your life right now that you have been trying to escape or fix? What might it mean to enter it with Jesus instead?

## 11 Perseverance

Hebrews 12:1–3

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1–2 (NIV)

*"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."*

Hebrews 12:1–2 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The great cloud of witnesses are not watching us run — they are cheering. Lent is not a solo journey. It is a communal act of endurance.

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Not on your performance. Not on how far you have to go. On Jesus — who endured the cross for the joy set before him.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Name three people from church history whose faith inspires you. Let them be your witnesses today — your cheering section.

### PRAYER

*Lord, when I am tired and want to stop, fix my eyes on You. You endured. You persevered. You are the reason the race is worth running. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What are you running from this Lent, instead of toward? What would it look like to fix your eyes on Jesus specifically — not on the finish line?

## 12 Lament

Psalm 22:1–11

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 22:1 (NIV)

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?"*

Psalm 22:1 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Jesus quotes this psalm from the cross — the opening cry, in Aramaic, in a loud voice. He is not making a theological argument. He is praying a psalm.

Your darkest prayer is already inhabited. The Son of God has already prayed these words. Lent gives us permission to pray them too.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Write a lament prayer. Be honest about what feels absent, what feels broken, what God seems to be silent about. Do not resolve it. Just say it.

### PRAYER

*My God, my God — I do not understand Your silence. But I will not stop speaking Your name. Even now, You are my God. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What have you been afraid to say to God? What is the honest lament underneath your polite prayers?

## 13 Solidarity With the Suffering

Matthew 25:34–40

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

*"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The cross does not just redeem us — it reorients us toward the suffering of others. Lent is inward and outward. What we find in prayer we must enact in action.

Jesus identifies with the poor, the prisoner, the stranger, the sick. To encounter them is to encounter Him.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: ALMSGIVING

Give something today — money, food, time — to someone in need. Do it anonymously if possible.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, help me to see Your face in the faces I tend to overlook. Make my Lent not just inward but outward — not just penitent but active. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Who is the "least of these" in your community? What is one concrete thing you can do this Lent to serve them?

## 14 Hope Through Suffering

Romans 5:1–5

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Romans 5:3–4 (NIV)

*"We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."*

Romans 5:3–4 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Paul does not say suffering feels good. He says suffering produces something — if we let it. The chain from suffering to hope is not automatic. It requires the orientation of faith.

Week Two ends with hope — not as escape from suffering but as fruit that grows through it.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Reflect on a past suffering. What did it produce in you? Write a thank-you to God for what the hard season grew.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I do not always understand the suffering. But I trust the process You are working in me. Produce in me the character that produces hope. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What has suffering produced in you — even suffering you would not have chosen? Can you trace the chain from hardship to hope?



## Interior Life

*Days 15–21 — Prayer, fasting, giving, the Examen, solitude, simplicity.*

## 15 **The Secret Place**

Matthew 6:5–8

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:6 (NIV)

*"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen."*

Matthew 6:6 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Jesus is not condemning public worship. He is prescribing a different kind of prayer — the kind that has no audience. Secret prayer forms a self that does not need to be seen.

The self that performs for others is exhausting to maintain. The secret place is where you can simply be.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Find a truly private place today. Set a timer for fifteen minutes. Pray to the Father who is unseen. No performance. No audience. Just you and God.

### PRAYER

*Father, who sees in secret — I am here. Not to be seen. Not to perform. Just to be with You in the quiet. Speak, Lord. I am listening. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

When did you last pray without any audience — real or imagined? What does your prayer life look like when nobody is watching?

## 16 Contemplation

Psalm 46:10

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

*"He says, "Be still, and know that I am God.""*

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The Hebrew word here — raphah — means to let go, to release. To be still is not passive. It is an active laying down of the striving that masquerades as faith.

Contemplative prayer is not emptying the mind. It is filling it with God — slowly, attentively, without agenda.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Practice contemplative prayer: repeat "Be still, and know that I am God" slowly five times. With each repetition, drop a word: "Be still and know that I am." "Be still and know." "Be still." "Be."

### PRAYER

*You are God. I am not. That is enough for today. Let me rest in the difference. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What would you need to release to truly be still? What noise — internal or external — most prevents you from resting in God?

## 17 Fasting for Freedom

Isaiah 58:3–7

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free?"*

Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Isaiah rebukes Israel for fasting without justice. True fasting is not an internal discipline disconnected from the world. It loosens what has been bound — in us and in others.

The freedom fasting creates in us is meant to create freedom for others. The interior life has an exterior address.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

Fast from a meal today and donate the cost of that meal to an organization serving the hungry or oppressed.

### PRAYER

*Lord, let my fasting do what Isaiah describes — break chains, not just in me but through me. Make my emptying someone else's filling. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What does fasting reveal about your attachments? What do you reach for when you are empty — and what does that tell you?

## 18 Giving in Secret

Matthew 6:1–4

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:3–4 (NIV)

*"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret."*

Matthew 6:3–4 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Secret giving is the most countercultural act of Lent. We live in an era of visible generosity — social media charity, named buildings, publicized donations.

Jesus calls us to give in a way that produces nothing for us — no thanks, no recognition, no spiritual credit. This is the purest form of love.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: ALMSGIVING

Give something today that no one will ever know about. No post. No mention. No receipt. Just give.

### PRAYER

*Father, I confess that I want credit for my goodness. Teach me to give freely — without needing to be seen, thanked, or recognized. You see. That is enough. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What is the difference between giving and generosity? When have you given in a way that cost your ego, not just your wallet?

## 19 The Daily Examen

Psalm 139:23–24

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 139:23–24 (NIV)

*"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

Psalm 139:23–24 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The Ignatian Examen is a daily prayer practice: review the day with gratitude, notice where you sensed God's presence, confess where you fell short, and ask for grace tomorrow.

The goal is not guilt. It is attentiveness — the practice of noticing God in the ordinary.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Tonight, practice the Examen. Review your day: Where were you most alive? Least alive? Where did you sense God? Where did you miss Him?

### PRAYER

*Lord, search me. Not to condemn me — but to lead me in the way everlasting. Show me what I need to see. Give me what I need to change. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What would it look like to end every day this Lent with five minutes of honest review? What patterns do you notice across a week?

## 20 Solitude

Mark 1:35

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:35 (NIV)

*"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."*

Mark 1:35 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The day before this verse, Jesus heals dozens of people. The success is enormous. And His response is to go alone and pray before dawn.

Solitude is not the reward for having no demands. It is the discipline that makes you capable of meeting the demands. Jesus modeled this.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Wake up earlier than usual tomorrow. Spend the first fifteen minutes in solitude and silence before anything else.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You knew the crowds would always come. You chose solitude anyway. Teach me to make space for aloneness with God — not as escape but as replenishment. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What is the difference between loneliness and solitude? When did you last experience solitude — not isolation, but intentional aloneness with God?

## 21 **Simplicity**

Luke 12:15–21

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 12:15 (NIV)

*"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."*

Luke 12:15 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The rich fool's problem is not wealth. It is orientation — he has organized his entire life around accumulation, and death renders it absurd.

Lenten simplicity is not about poverty. It is about loosening the grip of things so that they do not become the organizing principle of your life.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

Fast from shopping and consumption today. Do not buy anything non-essential. Notice what you reach for.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I confess that I accumulate to feel secure. Teach me to hold things loosely — to be rich toward You rather than toward myself. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What do you own that owns you? What one thing could you give away this Lent that would be an act of freedom?

### WEEK FOUR



## **Psalms of Ascent**

*Days 22–28 — Pilgrim songs for the walk toward Jerusalem.*

## 22 **Where My Help Comes From**

Psalm 121

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 121:1–2 (NIV)

*"I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

Psalm 121:1–2 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The Psalms of Ascent were sung by pilgrims walking up to Jerusalem — climbing the hills, making their way to the city of God. They are travel songs for the journey.

Psalm 121 is the first step: where does my help come from? Not the mountains — they are just the backdrop. From the LORD who made them.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Take a walk today, if possible. As you walk, sing or pray Psalm 121 aloud. Let your body participate in the pilgrimage.

### PRAYER

*My help comes from You, Lord. Not from circumstance, not from clever planning, not from my own strength. From You — who neither slumbers nor sleeps. I am watched over. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What do you tend to look to for help before you look to God? What would it look like to make God your first resort rather than your last?

**TODAY'S SCRIPTURE**

Psalm 122:1 (NIV)

*"I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD.""*

Psalm 122:1 (NIV)

**REFLECTION**

The pilgrim arrives in Jerusalem and is overcome with joy — not just at being there, but at being there together. Community is built into the structure of worship.

Lent is not only private. It is communal. We fast together. We pray together. We make this journey as a body.

**LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER**

Pray for your church community today by name — your pastor, three friends, someone you find difficult.

**PRAYER**

*Lord, I rejoice that I am not on this journey alone. Thank You for the church — imperfect, beautiful, necessary. Bind us together in Your love this Lent. Amen.*

**JOURNAL**

What is your relationship with Christian community right now? Is it a source of life, or have you been on this journey alone?

## 24 **Our Help Is In God's Name**

Psalm 124

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 124:8 (NIV)

*"Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

Psalm 124:8 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Psalm 124 is a song of deliverance. If God had not been on our side — the psalmist returns to this phrase like a man shuddering at what almost happened.

Lent is a season for remembering: what has God delivered you from? Name it. Mark it. Tell it.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Tell God the story of a time He rescued you — out loud. Speak it as a testimony, even if only God is listening.

### PRAYER

*Lord, if You had not been on my side — I know what the story would have looked like. You stepped in. You delivered. I will not forget. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Write a short testimony of deliverance — a moment when God intervened and you know it. Share it with someone this week.

## 25 **Those Who Sow in Tears**

Psalm 126

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 126:5–6 (NIV)

*"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

Psalm 126:5–6 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Psalm 126 holds both mourning and joy — not in sequence but simultaneously. You can sow with tears. The harvest comes anyway.

This is the Lenten hope: the weeping is not wasted. The seeds planted in grief are the seeds of the coming joy.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

What are you sowing in tears right now? Name it. Then say aloud: "I will return with songs of joy."

### PRAYER

*Lord, I am sowing in tears. But I trust the harvest. What I plant in grief, You can raise in joy. I will return singing. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Where are you sowing in grief right now — in relationships, in faith, in work? Can you trust the harvest even when the sowing is tearful?

## 26 **Childlike Trust**

Psalm 131

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 131:2 (NIV)

*"But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content."*

Psalm 131:2 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Psalm 131 is one of the shortest psalms — three verses — and one of the most profound. David has given up striving. He has stopped trying to understand things too great for him.

There is a maturity that looks like childlikeness. Not naivety — wisdom. The kind that has tried to control everything and finally surrendered.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Identify one area where you are straining to understand or control something beyond you. Practice the prayer of release: "I do not need to figure this out."

### PRAYER

*Lord, I have occupied myself with things too great for me. I lay them down. I am content to be Your child — held, not striving. Still. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What are you trying to figure out that is beyond your capacity to understand? Can you practice the Psalm 131 posture of released trust?

## 27 **How Good and Pleasant**

Psalm 133

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 133:1 (NIV)

*"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"*

Psalm 133:1 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Psalm 133 is about community at its best — the rare, precious moments when God's people actually get along. The psalmist uses the image of sacred oil and morning dew: it is anointing and refreshment.

Unity is not uniformity. It is love chosen across difference. Lent is a good time to repair what has been broken between us.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: ALMSGIVING

Reach out today to someone you have been estranged from or have been avoiding. Begin the repair.

### PRAYER

*Lord, where I have contributed to disunity — with a word, a silence, a held grudge — forgive me and give me the courage to repair it. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Is there a broken relationship in your church community or family that Lent is calling you to address? What would one step toward reconciliation look like?

## 28 Bless the Lord in the Night

Psalm 134

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 134:1 (NIV)

*"Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who minister by night in the house of the LORD."*

Psalm 134:1 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Psalm 134 is the last of the Psalms of Ascent — a benediction. Praise in the night, when there is no crowd and no visible reward. Blessing God when no one is watching.

Week Four ends here: the pilgrim arrives, blesses God in the dark, and receives blessing. This is the shape of Lenten faithfulness.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Tonight before you sleep, bless God. Name three things — however small — that are good. Receive His blessing in return.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I bless You in the night. In the ordinary, in the quiet, in the unremarkable evening. You are worthy of praise in every hour. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What does it mean to worship when nothing feels particularly worshipful? What sustains your praise in the dark?

### WEEK FIVE



## The Servant

*Days 29–35 — Isaiah's servant songs and the towel and basin.*

## 29 The First Servant Song

Isaiah 42:1–9

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 42:1 (NIV)

*"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him."*

Isaiah 42:1 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Isaiah 40–55 contains four poems about the mysterious Servant of the LORD — a figure who would bring justice, bear suffering, and redeem Israel. The New Testament reads them as fulfilled in Jesus.

The first song: the Servant is gentle. He does not shout or crush what is fragile. This is God's idea of power.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Meditate on verse 3: "A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."

Are you a bruised reed? A smoldering wick? Rest in the Servant's gentleness.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You are the Servant who came not to crush but to restore. Come to what is bruised in me. Come to what is barely burning. You are gentle. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Where in your life do you feel like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick? How does the Servant's gentleness meet you there?

## 30 **The Second Servant Song**

Isaiah 49:1–6

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 49:6 (NIV)

*"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob... I will also make you a light for the Gentiles."*

Isaiah 49:6 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The Servant's mission expands: not just Israel but the nations. The scope of God's redemption is larger than anyone expected.

Your Lenten journey is not just for you. What God is forming in you through these forty days is for the world.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Pray for someone outside your faith community — a neighbor, a colleague, someone who does not know Jesus. Ask God to make you a light to them.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I want to be a light for the people around me. Burn away what is obscuring Your light in me so that others can see You clearly. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Who in your life needs a light right now? How might what God is forming in you this Lent be for their sake, not just yours?

## 31 The Third Servant Song

Isaiah 50:4–9

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 50:6 (NIV)

*"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting."*

Isaiah 50:6 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The third song: the Servant suffers willingly. He does not resist, does not retaliate, does not hide. He trusts that God will vindicate.

This is the deepest countercultural teaching in Scripture: the power of voluntary suffering, borne in trust. Jesus embodied this on the cross.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

Fast from defensiveness today. When criticized or wronged, do not immediately defend yourself. Practice the Servant's posture.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You did not open Your mouth in self-defense. Teach me that posture — not weakness but the deep confidence of one who knows God will vindicate. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Where are you defensive right now? What would it look like to trust God's vindication instead of engineering your own?

## 32 The Fourth Servant Song (I)

Isaiah 52:13–53:6

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

*"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."*

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Isaiah 53 is the center of Lent. Written 700 years before the cross, it describes the crucifixion with devastating accuracy.

Read this slowly. This is not theology at a distance. This is your sin He carried. Your peace He purchased. Your healing He bled for.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Read Isaiah 53 in full, slowly. After each verse, pause and say: "Lord, this was for me."

### PRAYER

*Lord, He was pierced for my transgressions. He was crushed for my iniquities. The punishment that brought my peace was upon Him. By His wounds I am healed. Receive my gratitude. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What verse in Isaiah 53 stops you? What does it reveal about the cross that you tend to minimize or rush past?

## 33 The Fourth Servant Song (II)

Isaiah 53:7–12

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 53:12 (NIV)

*"He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*

Isaiah 53:12 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The song ends with vindication. The Servant who was silenced, crushed, assigned a grave with the wicked — is given a portion among the great.

The cross is not the end of the story. Even in Isaiah, death is penultimate. Resurrection is the arc.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Pray for someone today who has been treated unjustly. Ask God to vindicate them the way He vindicated the Servant.

### PRAYER

*Lord, Your servant was wrongly treated and ultimately vindicated. Give me faith that the arc of Your justice bends toward the right — for me, and for those I love. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Where in your life do you need to trust God's vindication over time? What injustice are you waiting for God to address?

## 34 **The Towel and the Basin**

John 13:1–17

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 13:14–15 (NIV)

*"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example."*

John 13:14–15 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Jesus, knowing who He is and where He is going, takes a towel and kneels. Power used for service. Glory expressed through washing.

The Servant of Isaiah becomes the servant with a basin. This is God on His knees. Lent asks: will you kneel beside Him?

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: ALMSGIVING

Do one act of genuine service today — something beneath your dignity, done quietly, for someone who cannot repay you.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You knelt before the ones who would betray You and deny You, and You washed their feet. Give me that love — the kind that serves without keeping score. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Whose feet need washing in your life right now? What act of humble service is Jesus calling you to that you have been avoiding?

## 35 The New Commandment

John 13:31–35

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 13:34 (NIV)

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*

John 13:34 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Jesus says "new command" but love is not new — it is in Leviticus. What is new is the standard: "as I have loved you." The cross is the measure.

You cannot love this way by trying harder. You love this way by abiding in the One who loved you to the end.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Name the person you find hardest to love. Ask God to love them through you — because you cannot do it alone.

### PRAYER

*Lord, the standard You set is impossible without You. Love this person through me. Love this community through me. Let Your love be the source, and me just the channel. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

Who do you love well? Who do you find it hardest to love as Christ has loved you? What would change if you asked God to love them through you?

### HOLY WEEK



## The Passion

*Days 36–40 — Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday. The week that changes everything.*

## 36 Palm Sunday: The Unexpected King

Matthew 21:1–11

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:9 (NIV)

*"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!""*

Matthew 21:9 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

The crowds expect a warhorse. Jesus arrives on a donkey. They are shouting for a military deliverer; He is enacting a prophecy of peace.

Palm Sunday is the beginning of the week when everything converges. The city shouts Hosanna. By Friday it will shout Crucify.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Pray for those who are close to faith but have not yet committed — people who shout "Hosanna" but have not yet understood who Jesus is.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, You rode into Jerusalem knowing what the week would bring. You went anyway. Help me to follow You this week into what I would rather avoid. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What do you genuinely expect from Jesus? Are your expectations shaped by what you want from Him, or by who He has revealed Himself to be?

## 37 Holy Monday: The Temple

Mark 11:15–17

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Mark 11:17 (NIV)

*""Is it not written: My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.""*

Mark 11:17 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Jesus clears the temple the day after Palm Sunday. He is angry — but it is not rage. It is grief. The place of prayer has become a place of transaction.

What has become transactional in your faith? What have you turned from communion into commerce?

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Ask God to clear the temple of your own heart today. What tables need to be overturned? What has cluttered the house of prayer?

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, come and clear what needs to be cleared. Turn over the tables in my heart that are keeping others from encountering You. Restore the house of prayer. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What has taken up space in your inner life that is crowding out prayer? What is God's passion driving out this Lent?

## 38 Maundy Thursday: The Last Supper

Luke 22:14–20

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:19–20 (NIV)

*"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."*

Luke 22:19–20 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Jesus takes the Passover meal — already loaded with Exodus memory — and fills it with new meaning. The bread is His body. The cup is His blood.

Do this in remembrance of me. He does not say "believe this as a doctrine." He says do this. Communion is an enacted memory, a physical act of faith.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

If possible, take communion today — alone or with your family. Hold the bread. Hold the cup. Remember.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, we remember. We proclaim Your death until You come. You gave Your body. You poured out Your blood. We receive. We are grateful. We are Yours. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What does the Lord's Supper mean to you now, compared to when you first took it? How has your understanding of what Jesus gave deepened?

HOLY WEEK

## 39 Good Friday: The Cross

John 19:16–30

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 19:30 (NIV)

*"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."*

John 19:30 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

It is finished. In Greek, *tetelestai* — a single word. The word used on paid receipts. The debt is cancelled. The work is complete.

Good Friday is not a tragedy with a silver lining. It is the hinge of history. The moment everything changes. Sit here today. Do not rush to Sunday.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: FASTING

Observe a fast today — from food, from entertainment, from noise. Keep silence as much as possible. Let the weight of the day be felt.

### PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, it is finished. You finished it. Not us — You. We receive what You accomplished. We stand at the foot of the cross, overwhelmed. Thank You. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What does "it is finished" mean for you personally? What debt has been cancelled? What burden has been lifted? Sit with this today.

HOLY WEEK

## 40 Holy Saturday: Waiting at the Tomb

Matthew 27:57–66

### TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 27:60 (NIV)

*"He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away."*

Matthew 27:60 (NIV)

### REFLECTION

Holy Saturday is the day nobody preaches about. The day of sealed silence, of broken hope, of bodies going home to empty houses.

But the Author of life is writing the next chapter. The stone is not the final word. Tomorrow is not in this plan — but it is coming. Keep watching.

### LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRAYER

Sit in silence today. Do not resolve the grief. Do not rush to resurrection. Stay in the Saturday. Practice waiting on God.

### PRAYER

*Lord, it is Saturday. The stone is sealed. We wait. We do not understand. But we remember: You have always been faithful. Even here. Even now. Come. Amen.*

### JOURNAL

What "Holy Saturday" are you living in right now — a place of waiting, uncertainty, sealed-door silence? What does it mean to wait on God in the dark?

## The forty days are complete. Now go to the tomb.

Lent ends at the sealed stone. The forty days of preparation are not for themselves — they are for the morning that follows, which is not in this plan because it is beyond all plans: the empty tomb, the folded cloths, the gardener who speaks her name.

Take what Lent has produced in you — the repentance, the disciplines, the suffering accepted, the psalms sung, the servant's posture, the Gethsemane prayer, the cross received — and bring it to Easter morning. The person who has kept Lent honestly receives the resurrection more fully.

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*"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."*

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

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*"It is finished." — John 19:30 (NIV)*

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