



THE SEASON *of*  
**LENT**  
*at* CHRIST CHURCH

*Daily Readings & Prayers*

# The SEASON of LENT

During the forty days leading to Easter (Sundays excepted), the church calendar sets aside time to deepen our walk with God through prayerful self-examination and reflection on the cross of Jesus Christ. These weeks, commonly known as Lent, are not magical and their observance does not merit God's approval through lavish displays of self-denial. Rather, Lent designates a voluntary season to focus on particular theological truths and spiritual practices that instruct and train us in godliness.

Consider the following benefits of a humble Lenten season.

*First, Lent affords us the opportunity to explore the depths of our sin and the dreadful consequences of sin.* With Good Friday approaching, visions of Jesus' gruesome death remind us of the dreadful reality of our rebellion. Here, our transgression is on display as the Lord of glory dies under the weight of our just judgment, inspiring personal introspection.

But, for such introspection to remain healthy, we must hold together two realities that converge at the cross: our corruption and God's grace. If we divorce the two, then our hearts will either swell with pride and self-righteousness, losing touch with our sinfulness, or sink into anxious despair and uncertainty, failing to grapple with God's mercy. However, confident of God's grace in Jesus Christ, we are free to probe the inner recesses of our hearts, unearthing sin's pollution. God's grace liberates us to explore our heart and face its filth rather than suppressing or succumbing to its contents.

*Second, Lent affords us the opportunity to move towards our neighbor in charity and to remember that we do not live by bread alone (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4).* Unfortunately, due to some abuses, fasting has fallen on hard times. Long misunderstood as a form of works-righteousness, Lenten fasting is not about scoring points with God. Scripture commends the practice of depriving our appetites of God's good gifts for a set time in order to expose our physical dependence, to remind us of the abundance God shares with us each day, and to orient us to the one true source of life--the living God who sustains and saves us. Additionally, by carving away some comforts and conveniences, we simplify for the sake of others. Simple living allows us to reserve time for others while also serving to curb our expenses. It is fitting to allocate these savings, along with other gifts, for charitable purposes, especially directing those funds to the poor and marginalized.

So, search your heart and go simple. Consider fasting from food, technology, and/or sources of entertainment. Live frugally, and do so for the sake of charity. Find a cause, and give sacrificially. And, in so doing, may you know the joy of Jesus who gave himself fully to us.

*Finally, Lent prepares us to celebrate the wonder and promise of the resurrection on Easter Sunday.* In rising from the dead, Jesus trampled down sin and death, defeating the devil (Heb. 2:14-15). After a season of humility and deprivation, the announcement of Jesus' resurrection floods our sorrow with life and light. In other words, Lent prepares us to join the disciples in their joy and bewilderment on that strange morning long ago (Mt. 28:8; Mk. 16:8; Lk. 24:12). Our Easter worship is a dress

rehearsal for our Lord Jesus' return when he comes to unite heaven and earth, making all things new (Eph. 1:10; Rev. 21:1-8).

And so, we invite you to feast this Lent! Take up the opportunity to dwell upon the grief of our broken world, the sin within your heart, and the deep love of God that exceeds these realities. Reflecting on the unreasonable kindness of God, consider the needs of your neighbor, especially those without life's basic needs. And, most importantly, in the gritty details of Lent, don't forget--Easter is coming!

## ABOUT *this* GUIDE

In Jesus, God is gracious and kind to forgive our sins, bringing us into his family. No longer slaves to our own desires, we are adopted sons and daughters who possess the privilege of knowing God as Father and living under his care (Gal. 4:6-9). This grace propels us into cultivating our relationship with God. By doing so, we don't seek to earn anything from God, but rather to grasp more firmly everything that is already ours in Christ. To that end, the twin practices of reading the Bible and conversing with God in prayer are essential.

This guide provides a structure for daily communion with God in Scripture and prayer. To provide options and variety, two formats are included: (1) Daily Prayer, and (2) Daily Devotions.

Daily Prayer is adaptable to individual or group usage (**bold** indicates portions for group participation). The form begins our encounter with God by calling us to examine our hearts and confess our sins. Then, we turn to give thanks to God, rejoicing in his forgiveness and love in Jesus Christ. Now, we are ready to hear from God so we read the selected passage from the Bible. Following the reading, we respond to God by affirming our faith with the Apostles' Creed and bringing our supplications to him. The format for prayer involves a mixture of structure and freedom to guide us into a healthy rotation of prayer concerns.

Daily Devotions is an individual format that focuses on Scripture reading and reflective prayer. The suggested structure is an edited form of Martin Luther's thoughts on the *Lectio Divina*.

There are also resources for families included. Our goal is for our kids to learn the three major standards of the Christian faith: the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. Through the Daily Prayer format, our children will receive regular exposure to the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. We suggest that parents include a time for Scripture memory around the reading of the Bible.

In the back of the guide, a weekly schedule for Scripture reading is provided. During Lent, we will work slowly through the Gospel of Matthew. This will follow along with the Lenten Luncheon series and the sermons during Lent this year. In addition, we have selected a Psalm for each day of the week. We encourage you to follow along with the notes in the *ESV Study Bible*. You will find this to be an invaluable guide to understanding and application.

# DAILY PRAYER *during* LENT

## ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE

*Begin by reading one of the following passages:*

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

*Psalm 51.17*

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*1 John 1.6-9*

Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.

*Psalm 143.2*

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

*Isaiah 55.6-7*

Rend your hearts and not your garment. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

*Joel 2.13*

Trusting in our gracious and merciful God, let's turn to him and confess the sins we've committed against him and our neighbor.

*After silent confession, then say one of the following prayers aloud:*

**Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out our transgressions. For we know our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us. Against you, you only, we have sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Hide your face from our sins and blot out our iniquity. Create in us clean hearts, O God, and restore to us the joy of your salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your name. Amen.**

*Follow with this prayer giving thanks to God for his grace:*

Gracious Father, we give thanks that you have removed our sins as far as the east is from the west in Jesus Christ. Seal your pardon to our hearts that, forgiven and cleansed of our sins, we may rise to walk in newness of life through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

*Then, respond to God by reading Psalm 95.1-7a.*

Let's give thanks to God, celebrating the goodness of our God and King!

**Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.**

## **LISTEN TO GOD**

*Read the selected passages found in the schedule. After the lesson is read, we respond:*

This is the Word of the Lord!

**Thanks be to God!**

*If with a group or family, take a moment to discuss. Following the reading, you may recite the Apostles' Creed or move straight into prayer.*

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit;  
born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate;  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**On the third day, he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,\*  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## SPEAK TO GOD

*Begin with a short prayer based on the Scripture lesson. Thank God for something revealed about himself, claim a promise, or ask for his help to obey a command given in the passage.*

*Then, transition to an open season of prayer, or choose a few of the biddings from below to direct the prayers. If with a group or family, read the bidding, allow a few people to pray, and then move to another one.*

Let's pray for those in our city without life's basic necessities, asking God to provide their needs.

Let's pray for the children of our church to grow up in the knowledge and love of God never remembering a day apart from Christ.

Let's pray for the spread of the gospel around the world, asking God to bless our mission partners and their labors for the sake of his Kingdom.

Let's pray for our church family, asking God to teach us what it means to take up our cross daily and follow him.

Let's pray for neighbors, co-workers, and family members who do not know Jesus Christ. Ask God to be at work in their hearts and to open doors to share the gospel with them.

Let's pray for our pastors, elders, deacons, and staff as they seek to shepherd and serve our community.

Let's pray for all in authority, especially for our President Donald Trump, all members of congress, and the justices of the Supreme Court. Pray that they govern well, pursuing justice and righteousness above all else.

Let's pray for our congregation, asking God for a heart of compassion that manifests the grace and restoration of God's Kingdom as we love our neighbor as ourselves.

Let's pray for the sick and suffering in our church community, asking God to give comfort, healing, and peace.

Let's pray for those around the world persecuted for the sake of their faith in Jesus Christ, asking God to strengthen them in their trials and to bless those who persecute them.

Let's pray for the day ahead and any particular needs we have.

*Close the prayer time with the following prayer:*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

# DEVOTIONS *during* LENT

## PREPARE

*Begin by reading one of the following passages:*

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

*Psalms 19:14*

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!  
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of your house,  
And you give them drink from the river of your delights.  
For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

*Psalms 36:7-9*

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.  
Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.  
For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

*Psalms 86:3-5*

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.  
The Lord preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.  
Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

*Psalms 116:5-7*

*After reading, take a moment to acknowledge God's presence, contemplate his character, or remember his grace. As these truths collect your attention, offer brief prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God. If pre-occupied, acknowledge this to God. Confess any anxieties or worries stealing your attention. Ask God to grant you focus and rest.*

## LISTEN

*Read the selected portions of Scripture. Using these questions, note the main emphasis of the passage:*

- What do I learn about God?
- What does this reveal about my heart?
- What claim does God put on my life?

*Then, read the passage slowly a second, even a third, time. Dwell on the words, especially if something grabs your attention. The purpose is to weigh and taste the truth.*

## REFLECT

*Contemplate the verse or truth that resonates, challenges, affirms, or confronts you from the passage. As you reflect, consider some of the following questions:*

- Why is the Holy Spirit bringing this to my attention today?
- How would I be different if this truth was alive in my inner being?
- What stands in the way of applying this? Why is it hard?
- What do I need from Jesus if I am to live in light of this truth?
- How does God's grace transform the way I hear this?

## SPEAK

*After listening, turn and speak to God. Begin by praying through your reflective thoughts. Do not concern yourself with order or tidiness. Adore God for who he is, give thanks to him, confess your weaknesses, delight in his forgiveness, express your confusion, or ask him for help.*

*Visualize what it would look like if these truths were alive in you, in our church, in our city, and in the world. Pray for God to work in all these areas.*

*Close by saying the Lord's Prayer:*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

# RESOURCES *for* KIDS

Our kids are a gift from the Lord. In his grace, God sets them apart and promises to be their God. They are not second-class citizens at church, but rather heirs of promises for the continuation of God's mission to the nations.

As parents, God calls us to bring them up in his nurture and admonition. We believe one of the greatest means for fulfilling this call is to immerse our kids in daily worship. Through the routine of reading the Scriptures, confessing sin, reciting creeds, praying, and discussion, God shapes and forms our kids in his presence.

We encourage parents to teach their kids the three standards of the Christian faith: the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. Please take time to memorize these with your kids and reinforce this memory work through the regular use of these elements in Daily Prayer and Scripture discussion. We are also providing a list of memory verses to use with our kids to provide a solid foundation in Scripture.

## TEN COMMANDMENTS

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honor your father and you mother.

Do not murder.

Do not commit adultery.

Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Do not covet.

## SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Romans 6.1-4

1 Corinthians 15.3-4

# READINGS *for* LENT

## WEEK ONE

Wednesday, February 14	Psalm 51	Matthew 1.1-25
Thursday, February 15	Psalm 25	Matthew 2.1-23
Friday, February 16	Psalm 130	Matthew 3.1-17
Saturday, February 17	Psalm 143	Matthew 4.1-25

## WEEK TWO

Sunday, February 18	Psalm 103	Matthew 5.1-16
Monday, February 19	Psalm 32	Matthew 5.17-48
Tuesday, February 20	Psalm 38	Matthew 6.1-18
Wednesday, February 21	Psalm 51	Matthew 6.19-7.11
Thursday, February 22	Psalm 25	Matthew 7.12-29
Friday, February 23	Psalm 130	Matthew 8.1-22
Saturday, February 24	Psalm 143	Matthew 8.23-9.8

## WEEK THREE

Sunday, February 25	Psalm 103	Matthew 9.9-34
Monday, February 26	Psalm 32	Matthew 9.35-10.15
Tuesday, February 27	Psalm 38	Matthew 10.16-42
Wednesday, February 28	Psalm 51	Matthew 11.1-30
Thursday, March 1	Psalm 25	Matthew 12.1-37
Friday, March 2	Psalm 130	Matthew 12.38-50
Saturday, March 3	Psalm 143	Matthew 13.1-23

## WEEK FOUR

Sunday, March 4	Psalm 103	Matthew 13.24-58
Monday, March 5	Psalm 32	Matthew 14.1-36
Tuesday, March 6	Psalm 38	Matthew 15.1-39
Wednesday, March 7	Psalm 51	Matthew 16.1-28
Thursday, March 8	Psalm 25	Matthew 17.1-27
Friday, March 9	Psalm 130	Matthew 18.1-14
Saturday, March 10	Psalm 143	Matthew 18.15-35

## WEEK FIVE

Sunday, March 11	Psalm 103	Matthew 19.1-29
Monday, March 12	Psalm 32	Matthew 20.1-34
Tuesday, March 13	Psalm 38	Matthew 21.1-27
Wednesday, March 14	Psalm 51	Matthew 21.28-46
Thursday, March 15	Psalm 25	Matthew 22.1-46
Friday, March 16	Psalm 130	Matthew 23.1-39
Saturday, March 17	Psalm 143	Matthew 24.1-28

## WEEK SIX

Sunday, March 18	Psalm 103	Matthew 24.29-51
Monday, March 19	Psalm 32	Matthew 25.1-46
Tuesday, March 20	Psalm 38	Matthew 26.1-29
Wednesday, March 21	Psalm 51	Matthew 26.30-75
Thursday, March 22	Psalm 25	Matthew 27.1-26
Friday, March 23	Psalm 130	Matthew 27.27-66
Saturday, March 24	Psalm 143	Matthew 28.1-20

## HOLY WEEK

Sunday, March 25	Psalm 24	Matthew 21.1-11 Zechariah 9.9-17
Monday, March 26	Psalm 71	Matthew 21.12-13 Malachi 3.1-5
Tuesday, March 27	Psalm 69	Matthew 22.41-46 Isaiah 49.1-7
Wednesday, March 28	Psalm 54	Matthew 23.37-39 Jeremiah 22.1-10
Thursday, March 29	Psalm 109	Matthew 26.26-29 Jeremiah 31.31-34
Friday, March 30	Psalm 22	Matthew 27.45-50 Isaiah 52.13-53.12
Saturday, March 31	Psalm 88	Matthew 27.62-66 Ezekiel 37.1-14
Sunday, April 1	Psalm 118	Matthew 28.1-10 Amos 9.11-15



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