

LENT

2021 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL



Comprised of the forty days (excluding Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, Lent is a sacred season of the Christian calendar traditionally observed as a time of reflection, repentance, and preparation. Our staff has thoughtfully created this booklet as a resource for engaging Lent as a meaningful part of your Christian journey this year. I encourage you to utilize it for the purpose of personal prayer or family devotions over the next several weeks. I pray that it would help you draw near to God, and that you would sense God drawing near to you (James 4:8).

Pastor Noel Schoonmaker

How to use this resource: Within these pages you will find a devotion each week of Lent and devotions for what are considered “Holy Days”: Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

Each devotion includes a word or phrase to focus on for the week. You will find these as headers in the devotion book and also a set of cards in your Lenten Take Home Box with the words on them. Each devotion also includes an object of remembrance that are included in your box.

We invite you to create a space in your home where you can do these devotions and add words and objects as we travel together to Easter. Each time you do a devotion, add the word or phrase card and the object of remembrance to the space you have created. We suggest taking a few moments to focus on the word of the day, reading the scripture passage together, discussing it using our Spiritual Formation section and then making a plan together to apply these things in the Spiritual Practices section.

Please see the back page for our Video Worship & Drive-Thru Event Schedule

Ash Wednesday

Psalm 51:1-17

Spiritual Formation: By the fourth century, the Western church had determined that the Lenten period of fasting and renewal should correspond to Christ's forty-day fast (Matt. 4:2), and, by counting forty days back from Easter (excluding Sundays, which remain "feast" days), arrived at the Wednesday seven weeks before Easter. The aim of Ash Wednesday is threefold: to meditate on our mortality, sinfulness, and need of a savior; to renew our commitment to daily repentance in the Lenten season and in all of life; and to remember with confidence and gratitude that Christ has conquered death and sin. The imposition of ashes is often a central part of worship on Ash Wednesday. Ashes have a long history in biblical and church traditions. In Scripture, ashes or dust symbolize frailty or death (Gen. 18:27), sadness or mourning (Esther 4:3), judgment (Lam. 3:16), and repentance (Jon. 3:6). So, as we prepare for the Lenten journey, let us think on the words of Psalm 51. Let us pray that God would "create in us a clean heart."

Object of Remembrance: Ashes

Spiritual Practice: This year, our Ash Wednesday service will borrow elements from the worshiping community of Taizé, France. This style of worship focuses on prayer through meditative singing, the reading of scripture, and most importantly, silence. Silence is an altogether uncomfortable state for most of us, but when practiced intentionally, we can find healing in the quiet. Find time this Lenten season to experience silence and listen for the voice of God.

Week 1: Reliance

Matthew 4:1-11

Spiritual Formation: Today, at the beginning of our own 40 days of Lenten observance, we turn to Jesus, tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Jesus is preparing Himself for His active ministry, and ultimately for His sacrificial death on the Cross. And so together we come again to celebrate Easter, the saving mystery of our redemption. So, with Jesus, for 40 days, Christians around the world focus on fasting, self discipline, spiritual exercises, and to active missions and helping those in need.

This scripture passage reminds us that on our own we are weak and liable to fall. But we are never alone. God is with us. Notice here that because Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, He took the time to prepare. He spent time fasting so that He would be able to focus and seek God. Jesus knew He needed God to make it through the wilderness of temptation and reminds us that we must truly rely on God, too. So in this season of Lent, reflect on how God has carried you through even your most difficult of days and respond by continuing to focus on your need for reliance in God today.

I wonder how you will prepare as the Holy Spirit leads you this Lent (this can be different for everyone!)?

I wonder how you can focus and seek God as we continue towards Easter?

I wonder what it means to you to fully rely on God?

Object of Remembrance: Christ Candle (do not light until Easter)

Spiritual Practice: Put down your distractions. Whether this is a phone, Netflix, games or something else, try putting them down for a certain amount of time each day. Spend that time to prepare like Jesus did. This may look like silence, or giving up something but it could look like taking something on - 40 days of letter writing, 40 acts of kindness, 40 scripture verses memorized, or 40 phone calls to the important people in your life. Talk with your family or friends about what putting down your distractions and relying on God looks like to you.

Week 2: Story of Glory

Matthew 17:1-9

Spiritual Formation: This week's text is the Transfiguration from Matthew's gospel. This is the story of Jesus taking Peter, James, and John up on a mountaintop. While there, Jesus is transfigured (shines brightly) and appears with Moses and Elijah.

These figures from the Hebrew Bible signal to Peter, James, and John that Jesus is indeed who He says He is. Peter misreads the situation, and he suggests that the group stay on the top of the mountain by building a dwelling to keep the leaders of the law, the prophets, and the son of God on retainer. After this transfiguration, Jesus inexplicably holds the messianic secret and makes the disciples vow to hold this in confidence until after the resurrection. Why would Jesus do this?

When we encounter God's glory, are we ready to share it with others? Do our daily actions show that we're redeemed by the one who fulfilled the law and the prophets? What can we do this week to be more Christlike?

Object of Remembrance: Candle or Tea light

Spiritual Practice: Peter's reaction to a holy moment is to make camp in that spot. That's generally how we react to a mountaintop or sacred gathering, we want to stay in that place and never leave. Jesus challenges the group further by insisting they not tell others about what happened. Obviously, we're not bound to keep silent about Jesus, but the disciples are charged to act and live with the awareness of God's glory ever present in their minds. Sometimes in service, we can miss the connection with God's glory and majesty throughout all of time and history. When we serve and worship God, our faces don't shine in majesty, but we recognize God's story of glory.

This week, find a way to worship each day. Maybe that's singing in your car or listening to a devotion or sermon on a walk. Maybe you have a daily devotional that you read, but this week - dive deeper. Try and connect these lessons through the law and the prophets to the redeemer, Jesus. Find a way to serve and make that connection between mission, discipleship, and worship.

Light a candle or tea light as a family as a reminder of the way that Jesus shined in the transfiguration. Be reminded to let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Week 3: Complaining/Standing Up ***Exodus 17:1-7***

Spiritual Formation: In this story, Moses accuses the Israelites of quarreling and testing; he basically accuses them of being whiny. But the people actually have a point: they need water to survive, and so do their dependents, and Moses is the one who's led them to a waterless place. Were they just being quarrelsome, or were they advocating for justice (God seems to have thought it was the latter!)?

What's the difference between whining and advocating for a just world? What do they have in common? How do you know which one you're doing?

Think about the last time you raised your voice in protest at home, at work, at school, or in the world. Were you truly building the world God longs for, or were you just whining?

Does whining have a place in the life of faith? Can you think of a character who whined or complained, or a story where whining or complaining plays a role?

Object of Remembrance: "Stand Up" small pins from SilverTree Art Studio

Spiritual Practice: This week, pay attention to when you're tempted to whine and then ask yourself if the whining energy can be redirected into something more constructive: standing up for a solution, or advocating for justice. Tempted to complain about what's for dinner? Try redirecting that energy toward discussing food insecurity in Richmond, and brainstorming with someone about what you might do about it. Tempted to grumble about something small at work? Try redirecting that energy toward a constructive solution, or even toward supporting legislation to fight workplace discrimination. As you tackle this challenge, be as creative as you can, and check in with family or friends about how it's going. Don't complain - stand up!

Week 4: Gratitude

Psalm 23

Spiritual Formation: In chaotic times like these, where does our help come from? Psalm 23 gives a strong reply: in the Lord God, we have a loving shepherd who provides for us and watches over us, particularly in hard times. Embracing that reality will enable gratitude to take the place of anxiety and anger.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Jesus Christ is our good shepherd who seeks lost sheep like us (Luke 15:1-7); calls His sheep by name, knows them, brings them in, and leads them (John 10:3-4, 14); protects the sheep and does not abandon them in times of trouble (John 10:11-14); and, lays down His own life so that the sheep may live fully and be saved (John 10:9-10, 14).

Trusting in such a good shepherd, we can say - even in times of confusion and uncertainty - “I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). In Christ, I am not lost or lacking; I am not forgotten or forsaken. The Psalm concludes with a similar expression of security, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long” (Ps. 23:6).

The first and last verses are so good, but it’s important to see that we live our life in between those verses - in a mixture of experiences. There are green pastures and still waters, straight paths and restoration (Ps. 23:2-3). But there are also dark valleys, evil, and enemies (Ps. 23:4-5). In all times, we can look with faith and say in gratitude to Christ, “You are with me” (Ps. 23:4).

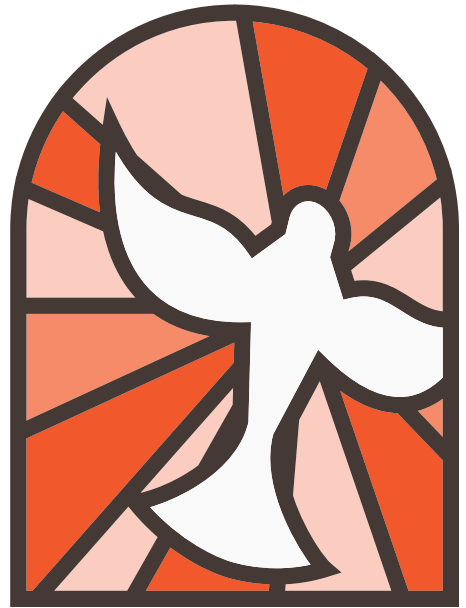
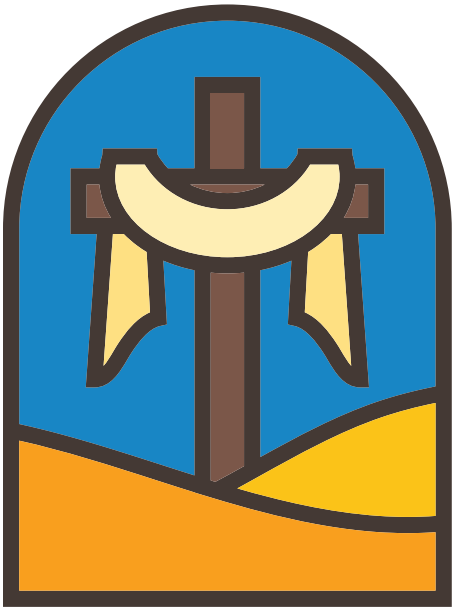
This Psalm can be a model for our days, bookending them in praise and faith for our ever-good and ever-present Savior and Shepherd. By starting and ending our days this way, Christ will empower us to handle whatever happens in between so that we can live grace-filled and grateful.

Object of Remembrance: Pencil as a reminder to write in gratitude journal

Spiritual Practice: During Lent, keep a “gratitude journal,” which can consist of a simple pad or notebook next to your bed. When you wake up in the morning, write down three (3) things that you are thankful for. It could be something simple like having a warm bed, or hot coffee or a loving family or friends. Then, spend a few moments thanking God for those things and ask the Spirit to help you stay close to Christ the Shepherd during the day. At the end of the day before going to sleep, take a few moments to reflect on your day and the moments that took place - good moments or hard moments - where you could say to God, “You were with me!” Thank God for the love of Christ and fellowship of the Spirit.



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Week 5: Dwelling in Mystery

John 11:1-45

Spiritual Formation: This Scripture passage recounts the day when Jesus miraculously brought His friend Lazarus back from the dead. As you read the story, don't miss the mystery.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived in Bethany just outside of Jerusalem, and they had a very close relationship with Jesus. When Lazarus fell terribly ill, the sisters sent an urgent message to Jesus asking for His help. The message reached Jesus, but even though Jesus loved them, "He stayed two days longer in the place where He was" (John 11:6). Why? If Jesus loved them, why wouldn't He come immediately when He knew Lazarus was sick? Why does God seem so far away during our hardest times? It is a mystery. But we do know this, it isn't because He doesn't love us.

After several days, Jesus tells the disciples that they were going to Bethany because Lazarus died (John 11:14). But why go now, after Lazarus is already dead? To the disciples, it is a mystery. But we know this, even death itself is not the final word to Christ.

When Jesus arrives in Bethany, Lazarus has been dead four days (John 11:17). It was a Jewish superstition that, after death, a person's spirit lingered around the body for three days in hopes of being restored to life. But now it is the fourth day... there is no hope. So why does Jesus go to Lazarus' tomb? (John 11:38). It seems like a mystery. But we know this, no situation is hopeless when Jesus is in it.

Jesus met with Mary and Martha, and many were weeping over Lazarus' death (John 11:20-33). Even though Jesus knew that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, Jesus wept too. Why? Here Jesus touches on a great spiritual mystery that all of us face: the mystery of life, death, and Jesus Christ Himself. As fully human, Jesus displays the grief that we all feel about the evil of death. As fully divine, Jesus Christ embodies the reality that death is not ultimate.

Object of Remembrance: A small rock represents the stone rolled away from Lazarus' tomb, reminding us of the assurance of Christ's power in the face of the mysteries of life.

Spiritual Practice: As we pray each day of Lent, let's practice embracing the mystery of life and the assurance of Christ, holding two things in creative tension. That is what we see in Lazarus story - weaving together of mystery and assurance, pains of life on earth and hope for eternal life in Christ. Aspects of our life are shrouded in mystery; many things happen and we don't know why. But we do know this: Christ loves us; there is no situation that is hopeless before Christ; Christ weeps with us in times of trouble; and Christ embodies the power and promise of Resurrection Life. In our prayer life, let us preach to ourselves the assurance of Christ even as we face the mysteries of each day.

Week 6: Purpose

Matthew 21:1-11

Spiritual Formation: In this week's text, Jesus send two disciples ahead into Jerusalem to prepare a donkey for His triumphal entry. Jesus fulfills ancient prophecy of Zechariah and Isaiah and rides in on a lowly donkey, and not a warhorse like a military leader.

What does this story teach us about Jesus? Why does Jesus need a donkey? What does this animal suggest of Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem? Going to get a donkey can seem like a lowly and humiliating task, but it's very important: what can this story teach us about listening to Jesus' call on our lives?

Object of Remembrance: A string tied

Spiritual Practice: Kings and Rulers ride in on noble steeds, but the King of Kings rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. As people, we love recognition, pomp, and circumstance. Jesus is welcomed in a parade in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but He knows this heroes welcome will not last for long.

How can we enter into spaces (work, our neighborhoods, mission sites, or volunteer efforts) with humility? When reflecting on purpose, often areas of leadership or expertise get mentioned. What can Jesus' example teach us about leadership? What can we lay down before the Lord?

Look for purpose today. The donkey tied up in town had no idea the purpose that he would achieve of bringing Jesus into Jerusalem, and we never know when we'll be a vehicle for the gospel in our lives as well. Seek an opportunity today to encourage someone for their hard work and effort, write a note to a loved one and thank them for living out their purpose and inspiring you. Look at objects in your home that could serve a purpose for someone else. This is a great opportunity to donate a coat that your child has outgrown or donate an outfit or shoes that someone could wear to a job interview. Make sure the items that you 'lay down' still have purpose for the future recipient and offer a prayer for their purpose as well.

Maundy Thursday

John 13:12-17

Spiritual Formation: Jesus models the way of servant leadership in John's gospel by putting on a robe and washing the disciple's feet. This lowly and (honestly) disgusting job would often be done by a servant, but it was necessary in the ancient world. People walked everywhere and the dust of the road and trails left their feet dirty and in need of washing. A towel and basin would be refreshing for the guest and help welcome them into the space to stay awhile and relax. Jesus washes their feet, but He also teaches a lesson to His disciples that they should serve one another, and He challenges them to act upon wisdom, "if you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

How can we be offering hospitality in Jesus' name? How can we authentically take the role of a servant and model the way of Jesus? What does service mean to you? How can you be a giver and receiver of grace?

Object of Remembrance: Bread and cup

Spiritual Practice: Jesus serves on Maundy Thursday. He gathers His disciples and those that are closest with Him, but He also brings together ones who would deny Him, the one who would betray Him, and all that would gather fearfully hiding from the Roman authorities. As followers of Christ, we are called to serve as well. Our service is not reserved for only those worthy of service but extends to all.

Today, look for an opportunity to serve someone. This can look many different ways: maybe it's bringing in a special treat for your team at work, writing a card of appreciation for your spouse, making a special opportunity to listen to your children or parent when they share about their day. Maybe you have a neighbor that could need some assistance or an old friend that could use some cheering up. Find a place where God has skilled you and share for the good of God's kingdom.

Spiritual Formation: It has been said that the great aim of most religions is the avoidance of suffering. Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall puts this so well when he observes that “the basic distinction between religion and [Christian] faith is the propensity of religions to avoid, precisely, suffering: to have light without darkness, vision without trust and risk, hope without an ongoing dialogue with despair - in short, Easter without Good Friday.”

In Jesus Christ, we have a suffering Savior. At the cross, Christ willingly identified Himself with the human experience of vulnerability, pain, abuse, and suffering. “Therefore [Jesus] had to become like His brothers and sisters in every respect, so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself was tested by what He suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested” (Heb. 2:17-18).

But there is more going on at the cross than Jesus simply identifying with the suffering of humanity. Christ’s suffering has cosmically profound spiritual meaning. At the cross: God’s love is displayed (John 3:16); our sins are forgiven, and we are redeemed (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7-8); all of creation is reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20); we are brought back into relationship with God and made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18); we are redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13); our debt of sin is canceled (Col. 2:14); and, the power of the devil and death are destroyed (Heb. 2:14).

Jesus’ suffering was not pointless, and Jesus was not an overpowered victim: “No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again” (John 10:18). As pastor and author Joshua Ryan Butler observes, “The cross did not happen to Jesus, Jesus happened to the cross.”

Object of Remembrance: Small cross.

Spiritual Practice: During Lent, identify with someone in your life who is going through something hard, something difficult, something painful. Talk with them, pray for them, offer them your consistent companionship, your listening ear, and your caring heart. You may not be able to eliminate or alleviate their suffering, but you can be with them in it, just as Christ suffered with us and for us on the cross.

Easter Sunday: Witness/Celebration ***Mark 16:1-8***

Spiritual Formation: We have finally made it to the mystery of Easter! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Today we can celebrate that HOPE is here. The hope found in the resurrected Jesus is a path to peace, to living beyond yourself, to a life with JOY and no fear because our hope is in Jesus.

Take a moment to light the Christ Candle and wonder together:

I wonder what you would do if you were one of the women at the tomb?

I wonder if there is anything the women did that surprised you?

I wonder if there is anything the women did that did not surprise you?

Close in prayer. You might say, "Risen Lord, Thank you for the empty tomb and for life with You! Help us to tell Your story and the story of our life with You. Amen."

Object of Remembrance: Christ Candle

Spiritual Practice: Experience Worship today however you are able and CELEBRATE! In Acts, Peter talks about being a witness for Jesus. He talks about telling the things he saw, heard and felt in his life with Jesus. I wonder what you could share about the things you've seen, heard, and felt in your life with Jesus?

Make a plan to share hope over the coming weeks and months. Share hope with your family by continuing to meet each week for check ins (use Second Baptist's Easter and Eastertide take home box for added tools!). Share hope by loving your neighbors in whatever way that looks like for you and your family. Share hope by volunteering or donating to non-profits in our area or with ministries ongoing at Second Baptist. Share hope by sharing with others what you have seen, heard and felt in your life with Jesus!

Video Worship and Drive-Thru Event Schedule

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| 2/17 | Ash Wednesday Service: A Contemplative Time of Worship in the Style of Taize Prayer
Premiere at 6:00 p.m. on YouTube and Facebook |
| 2/28 | Journey to the Cross, Part 1: Musical Meditations for Lent with Dr. Mary Beth Bennett
Premiere at 6:00 p.m. on YouTube and Facebook |
| 3/14 | Journey to the Cross, Part 2: Musical Meditations for Lent with Dr. Mary Beth Bennett
Premiere at 6:00 p.m. on You Tube and Facebook |
| 3/28 | Palm/Passion Sunday Worship: The Well (9:00 a.m.) & Sanctuary Service (11:30 a.m.) |
| 4/1 | Maundy Thursday Worship: 6:00 p.m. from the Sanctuary |
| 4/3 | Easter Take-Home Kit and Egg Hunt Kit Drive-Thru Event: 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. |
| 4/4 | Easter Worship: The Well (9:00 a.m.) and Sanctuary Service (11:30 a.m.) |

Ministering With You

Dr. G. Noel Schoonmaker, *Senior Pastor*
Dr. Raymond L. Spence, Jr., *Pastor Emeritus*
Reverend Kathi Traficanti, *Minister of Senior Adults*
Reverend Katie Vance Lucas, *Minister of Children*
Reverend Ben Brown, *Minister of Students*
Mr. Taylor Vancil, *Minister of Music & Worship*
Mr. Tom Mitchell, *Director of Discipleship & Missions*
Mrs. Ainsleigh Gaskins, *Director of Creative Learning Center*
Reverend Louis C. Orsatti, *Pastor, Spanish Language Ministry*
Reverend Agayby Shehata, *Pastor, Arabic Language Ministry*
Reverend André Amaral, *Pastor, Portuguese Language Ministry*
Mrs. Hilliary Larsen, *Music Associate*
Mrs. Judy Mawyer, *Children's Choir Coordinator*
Mrs. Wanda Kensinger, *Children's Choir Coordinator Assistant*
Mrs. Virginia Moore, *Director of Recreation Ministry*
Mrs. Kathy Driver, *Office Manager*
Mrs. Patty Dimowski, *Administrative Secretary*
Mrs. Griendora "G" McDowell, *H.R. Coordinator*
Ms. Lisa Davis, *Financial Administrator*
Mrs. Joanna Landrum, *Communication Administrative Assistant*
Mrs. Olivia Simms, *Communication Administrative Assistant*
Ms. Beverly Stewart, *Administrative Assistant*
Mr. Adam Schumm, *Director of Food Services*
Mr. Billy Petruska, *Supervisor of Events and Maintenance*



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