

PREPARE
OUR
HEARTS

THE JOURNEY TO EASTER

A SEASON FOR PRAYER, FASTING, & REFLECTION



2026 DEVOTIONAL

INTRODUCTION

As we approach Resurrection Sunday, you're invited to join the Discover family in daily devotions designed to draw us closer to Jesus (and one another). This is a shared experience written for our community, by our community. The reflections, prayers, and insights offer a beautiful tapestry of voices pointing us toward the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the joy of the empty tomb.

The devotion each Sunday is a time to reflect, pray, and catch up on any entries you may have missed during the busy week. No guilt, no pressure; just an open invitation to re-enter the journey and let God meet you where you are.

Whether your walk with Jesus spans decades or is just beginning, may these devotions guide you toward a deeper celebration of His loving sacrifice and His victorious resurrection, when He conquered sin and death forever!



CHANGE OUR HEARTS

BY EMILY PROFFITT

Read Psalm 51:1-12

When I was younger, I had a cat named Squiddy. And when Squiddy would try to hide from us, he would put his head under our couch, which might be a good plan. However, it left his entire body exposed. He thought because he couldn't see us, then we couldn't see him. As funny as that may be, this might be exactly what we do when we sin. We might try to run or hide from God like Adam and Eve did and put our heads under the couch, but in reality, God can still find us. Well, David is a good example of what we should do instead of running and hiding.

When you read these verses, you might have seen a sub heading that gives more context to when this was written. This Psalm was written after David made his most notable mistake. Mistake might be a generous word for what happened with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 11). But in this Psalm, David goes in prayer to God and asks for forgiveness.

David was not a perfect person, however, I truly admire his heart before God after he is confronted. He doesn't run and hide, but instead owns up to his mistakes. He doesn't try to give excuses for why he sinned, but instead, asks God for mercy and to help him change for the future. David laid down his pride because he understood how dependent he is on God.

I think this Psalm is so fitting for today since it's Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is a reminder to all of us how little we are compared to God. We are dust if it wasn't for God's breath of life. We deserve death on a cross until Christ took it for us. And I think this can go so easily forgotten. God has blessed us with everything we have, including life. Every time our hearts beat and every breath we take is a blessing from God. So, how are we using His blessings? Do we treat every moment of life like it is a blessing?

And I know this is so fun to think about but, how often does our pride get in the way of us seeing God? How often do we assume these blessings from God are things we deserve? James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

So, for this season of Lent, we should reflect on all the blessings God has given us, even the ones we take for granted. We should ask God to change our hearts to be more like His. And we should act like every beat of our hearts and every breath in our lungs is a gift freely given.

Dear God,

Thank you for your many blessings. Help us to lay down our pride and truly give you control. Thank you for how patient and forgiving you are. Open our eyes to see all the ways you have blessed us and change our hearts to be more like yours. Amen.

AS WIDE AS THE WORLD

BY BILL AND LORIENA ROBERTS

Read Psalm 67

Psalm 67 is a short psalm, but it carries a vision as wide as the world. It begins with a simple, humble prayer: “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us.” This is not a selfish request for comfort or success. It is a prayer that recognizes something profound—that when God blesses His people, it is never meant to stop with them.

The psalm continues, “So that Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.” In other words, blessing has a purpose. Grace has a direction. God’s favor is not an end in itself; it is a means by which His love, justice, and salvation are revealed to the world. Psalm 67 reminds us that our lives are meant to be signposts, pointing beyond ourselves to God.

At the heart of this psalm is a repeated cry: “May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.” Not some people. Not people who look like us, think like us, or live near us. All people. This is a radical vision of unity—one where every nation and culture finds joy not in power or wealth, but in knowing God. The psalmist imagines a world where praise rises from every corner of the earth, not out of fear, but out of gladness.

Verse four gives us the reason: “For You rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.” God’s reign is not harsh or chaotic. It is just. It is wise. It is trustworthy. In a world often marked by injustice and uncertainty, Psalm 67 offers hope that God is still guiding history toward His good purposes.

The psalm ends with confidence: “The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us.” This is a picture of abundance—spiritual and physical. When we align our lives with God’s heart, blessing flows. And once again, the psalm closes by reminding us why: “May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear Him.”

Psalm 67 calls us to live outward-facing lives. It invites us to receive God’s blessing with gratitude and to release it with generosity.

Dear God. May we be a people who shine with your grace, so that the whole world may come to know the joy of praising You. May we live justly, following your example, so that we may be blessed and be a blessing to others.

THE PURPOSE

BY MEGAN DAVENPORT

Read Isaiah 58:6-10

As a teen, I remember sitting in church in early February, pondering what I would “give up” for Lent. *What’s something I really like that would be hard to give up for 40 days?* I would keep a list and check off the days I successfully “didn’t do the thing” I had chosen. My attention was focused on what I was missing, and I mostly ignored the work God might be doing in my heart.

Fast forward to today. As my walk of faith has drawn me closer to God, my understanding of who He is, and what He desires for my life and the lives of His people, has deepened. In the Bible, fasting in its simplest form means abstaining from food while earnestly seeking God in prayer, rather than the shallow “giving up” of my teenage years. Scripture contains countless examples of fasting, including Jesus’ own forty-day fast in the wilderness to prepare for His public ministry. Even earlier, the Israelites practiced fasting as a way of humbling themselves before God. Yet, as with many human practices, fasting became distorted. In Isaiah 58, we see that this spiritual discipline had turned into an outward act disconnected from the heart.

In Isaiah 58:1-5, the Israelites miss the purpose of fasting entirely. They put on a show, as if to say, “Look at us, God! We’re fasting! We’re suffering! Won’t you bless us now?” But in verses 6-10, God makes His expectations clear. True fasting, He says, looks like setting free those held in chains, providing shelter for the homeless, clothing the naked, caring for family, feeding the hungry, and satisfying the needs of the oppressed. The focus shifts from personal sacrifice to loving action and the posture of the heart.

This message directly parallels Jesus’ teaching. Throughout His ministry, Christ emphasized that love (expressed through justice, mercy, and faithfulness) is central to God’s heart. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for meticulously practicing religious duties while neglecting what matters most: “justice, mercy and faithfulness.” Spiritual practices, He reminds us, are meant to shape our hearts toward love, not replace it.

God the Father and Jesus the Son deliver the same message: religious acts without a sincere desire to seek God and love others miss the point. If fasting becomes a performance or a box to check, we miss out on the power it has to change our hearts. While none of us strive to be like the hypocritical Pharisees, if we’re honest, don’t we, too, sometimes go through the motions of spiritual practices without truly seeking God or loving His people in need? Let us pray that God would draw us toward a different type of fasting—one that aligns with His desires for us.

Father God,

This Lenten season, guide our hearts toward what You most desire: that we would love You and love our neighbors. Help us remember that fasting without love and action misses the point. As we read your word, show us how to set free the oppressed, share what we have, and care for those in need. May we earnestly seek You and your will for our lives. Amen.

MY PURPOSE

BY KAY MELCHING

Read Romans 12:1-2

I retired in late 2024 after receiving a formal paycheck since I was 14 years old. How does one go from high stress, constant movement, daily meetings, a full calendar, to a world of little responsibility? I had been on the hamster wheel of working for 53 years. My work defined me. It brought me happiness, self-esteem, challenges, security, recognition, and now my life suddenly hit the brakes.

At this time, I felt lost. I cried out to the Lord “now what, what am I to do with my life, what is my purpose?”

God placed on my heart I needed to be still, which is something I am not good at. The Lord spoke to me and asked, “how can you discern and hear me if you cannot be still?” Stillness is hard in a busy world, where everything is at our fingertips.

So, I was still. I prayed, diligently read the Word, and became more intentional connecting with other Christians.

I listened for God’s guidance and He led me. Through the Holy Spirit I heard God’s will for me as I approach the final phase of His work on earth.

The Lord opened my world to new possibilities and His glorious blessings through serving. He humbled me and empowered me to stretch myself. He taught me to really see people and love them where they are.

During this time of Lent, allow yourself to be still; discern, listen for the Holy Spirit to speak and direct you. You will be blessed beyond your human dreams.

ANCHOR: AM I LOVED?

BY CINDY HERPOLSHEIMER

Jesus loves me, this I know.

Do you? Do you know it? God's love for you is as simple as a child's first song, and at the same time as deep as a theologian's life's work.

There is no number you can use to measure God's love – but he counts the hairs on your head as a picture of it. There is no question you can ask that is deeper than God's love – but he welcomes you to pose every question that troubles your heart. There is no darkness you can retreat to where God's love is absent – but he chases after you to bring you into the light of his love.

No matter how unlovable you might feel in this moment, this day, this season of life, know this: God loves YOU.

He loves you personally: he knows every follicle on your head, and he loves you on even the worst hair day. He imagined you, he created you, he treasures you. God loves the world, yes, but he loves YOU individually, the perfectly imperfect one in a billion that you are.

He loves you unconditionally: he sees every unkind thought, every hurtful action, and he loves you through each one. Your moods change, your priorities change. But God's love for you does not change – no matter what. It's just that real. EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.

He loves you immeasurably: he created every wonder in nature – every majestic mountain range, every awe-inspiring sunrise, every perfect snowflake – and he loves YOU above it all. God's love for you is SO BIG that he loves you exactly where you are, but he also loves you too much to leave you stuck there.

He loves you sacrificially: he knows the cost of love better than anyone ever could, and he loves YOU enough to pay that price. Every debt you think you owe to God is nailed to the cross and marked paid in full. Jesus paid ALL of it. And it was paid in the currency of LOVE.

As we lean into the Easter season, recognize that Jesus' every step toward the cross was paved with love for you. Each strike of a nail confirmed that love. And the tomb, though EMPTY, was actually FULL of the love that triumphed over sin, the world's and yours. YOU ARE LOVED, today and always, by the God who IS love.

Father God, you are the almighty Creator of the universe and King forever, and yet you call me your beloved! Help me every day to feel your love deeply, to accept your love freely, and to extend your love generously to others. Thank you for the gift that I could never earn nor deserve – your grace given in love through Jesus. Amen.

IF SOMEONE INVITED THEM

BY TYLER BRUNEY

Read Matthew 9:36-38

“The harvest is great, but the workers are few.” This statement by Jesus is both encouraging, because there is the potential of a great harvest, but it is also sad to think that there are not enough workers for that great harvest. The need for more workers is very real, and something that is still felt to this day, but that also means there is still a great harvest that is waiting for us today as well.

There are many people today who are interested in having conversations about God, with 82% of people who do not go to church saying that they would go to a church service if someone invited them. That should be really encouraging to us to hear! On the other hand, the very same research showed that only 2% of regular church goers ever invite people who do not go to church to come with them. Reading that feels a little discouraging, but it is exactly what Jesus told His disciples. This brings us to a very important question: what are we to do about this?

Jesus tells us that we are to pray and ask God to send more workers into the field. This seems like a very simple, almost Sunday school, style answer, but there is a great truth behind it. Prayer is such a powerful tool that we have access to, but it often becomes a last resort for us. It's what we turn to when we have tried to fix, and probably made the problem worse, using only our own abilities instead of turning to God and asking for Him to help us.

The other important thing for us to consider is who those new workers are. It is not a bad thing for us to pray for God to raise up others to be sent out into the harvest, but we should also be praying and asking for God to send us into the harvest as well. This looks different for all of us depending on where we are in life, but we can all reach someone. We just need to start where we are, and remember to trust God and rely on His power and guidance to help us, and not just our own abilities.

Heavenly Father, You are the Lord of the harvest and we are thankful that You have chosen us to be a part of it. I pray that You would not just raise up others to go out into the harvest, but that You would prepare me as well. Help me to notice those around me that I can reach have a heart that cares and the courage to reach out to those who need to know You, so that they can experience the same life changing love that I have. Amen.

BUT NEARNESS

BY HALSY PAXTON

Read Psalm 27

This world can be loud and chaotic. In overwhelming moments, fear can creep in, leaving us feeling stuck, anxious, and hopeless. Yet Psalm 27 speaks directly into that noise with steady hope and confidence. It reminds us that we are never alone—and that in Christ, we are eternally safe.

David writes this psalm as a hunted man. Danger was real. Fear was justified. And yet, he refuses to let fear have the final word. Instead, he declares:

*“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”* (Psalm 27:1)

David does not deny the threat around him; he anchors himself in the character of God. His confidence is not rooted in circumstances changing, but in who God is. So what does David ask for? What does he seek in the middle of fear?

*“...that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to inquire in His temple.”* (Psalm 27:4)

Not escape.

Not immediate relief.

But nearness.

David shows us that courage grows not from controlling fear, but from staying connected to God’s presence. When fear is loud, he chooses to focus on God’s beauty, faithfulness, and nearness. Safety, for David, is relational.

When fear feels overwhelming, we often ask God to remove the threat. Psalm 27 invites us to ask something deeper: “Lord, help me stay close to You.” Today, courage may look like choosing presence over panic and trust over control.

Continued on the next page >

BUT NEARNESS

BY HALSY PAXTON

Guided Prayer

God, You see the noise around me
and the fear within me.
You are not distant from this moment.

As I breathe in,
remind me of the sturdiness you provide
the peace that comes from resting in you,
and that I am never alone.

As I breathe out,
I release the fears I've been holding—
the ones I can name
and the ones I can't.

You are the stronghold of my life.
Even when I feel shaken,
You remain steady.

Lord, help me anchor my heart in who You are,
not in what might happen next.
When fear is loud,
draw my attention back to Your presence.

Like David, I ask for one thing—
to dwell with You.
To gaze upon Your beauty.
To rest in the truth that I am not alone.

Teach me Your ways, O Lord.
Strengthen my heart as I wait on You.
Give me courage that grows from trust
and peace that comes from nearness.

I place this moment,
and all that is ahead,
into Your care.

Be my light.
Be my refuge.
Be my peace.
Amen.

SIMPLE BUT CHALLENGING

BY ASHLEY FEENEY

Read Micah 6:8

How does God want us to act to please Him? One may think that He requires perfection in the things we do. God is the only perfect one. God is not asking us to sacrifice our most valuable possessions or our firstborn, nor does He require a grand gesture. God's desires are simple but still challenging.

First, God calls us to act justly. As disciples of Jesus, acting justly means making fair decisions at work and in our personal lives. We need to take action on our beliefs. We need to stand up when we are asked to go against our morals. We need to lead God-focused lives in every situation we face.

Next, God tells us to love mercy. Loving mercy isn't just showing mercy and grace to our close friends. Loving mercy is actually wanting to forgive and love everyone around us. We all need to work on this more. It is hard to give mercy to people we don't believe deserve it. God gave us mercy...did we deserve it?

Finally, we are invited to walk humbly with God. What does it look like to be humble? We need to understand how broken and messed up we are, and at the same time how loved and cherished we are by God. Instead of being prideful and expecting people to act like us, what if we followed God and invited others to do the same? It isn't about us. Humility is recognizing that we don't have all the answers and we don't walk alone.

Following Jesus is not just what we believe in our heads. It is what we do with our beliefs. I challenge you to ask yourself these three questions:

- Am I acting justly?
- Am I showing mercy?
- Am I walking humbly?

If you are like me, you can find a way to improve in at least one of these ways. You may even need to repent and change your ways so you are walking with God in the way He pleases.

Lord, please show me how to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly. Forgive me for my transgressions as I turn my heart back to you. Guide my words and actions so that they honor You and reflect Your love. Amen.

BRAVERY

BY JENNA SMITH

Read Esther 4:15-17

Esther was in a precarious yet unique position to save her people during Persian rule under King Xerxes. Jews were set to be murdered within the year. King Xerxes was talked into this murderous decree by an advisor named Haman. Haman was furious at the Jews because Mordecai, Queen Esther's Uncle, would not bow down to him at the City Gate. We see this full circle moment, of the main story being about just a handful of people, but consequences extending to an entire culture and group of people.

Merriam-Webster defines bravery as "the quality or state of having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty." The queen could not simply waltz in to speak with the king any time she wanted. We aren't talking about William and Kate here. While the British royals are regularly photographed together laughing, spending time together as a family, and easily talking to each other, things were not so during the time of Persian rule. The queen must be summoned or requested. Should the queen approach outside of being requested, she was risking her very life. Esther would need every ounce of bravery she could muster.

Once Esther realized deliverance was on her shoulders she pleaded for the Jews to fast from food and water for 3 days. Medically speaking, 3 days without water is very dangerous. This act alone could have brought her death but she was serious about her fast, serious about her preparation to meet with the king. Imagine what someone would physically look like after 3 days with no food and no water. As a child, I imagined Esther approaching in glorious robes with her hair and makeup to perfection. Now, I realize, she was likely dizzy, weak, fatigued and her skin and lips would have been quite dry and cracked. She was already nearly perishing-and we know that she was fully prepared to perish! Esther did not sit idly by waiting for "someone" else. She put her faith into action and asked others to join her in preparation by prayer and fasting, seeking God's guidance before ever addressing the king.

The Bible goes on to tell us that Esther approached the king and he was "pleased" to see her. While there are more details (and I encourage you to read the entire book of Esther), her act of devotion to the people was incredible and they were saved. Purim is a holiday celebrated, even today, in honor of Jewish peoples salvation through Esther at the hand of the Persian Empire.

Continued on the next page >

BRAVERY

BY JENNA SMITH

Read Esther 4:15-17

This Lent season leading us into Easter, this historical event reminds me that we have a King that we can approach with confidence when we have need. Hebrews 4:16. Each time we pray, we can boldly speak with our King and not worry in the slightest that we will be punished for speaking to our Heavenly Father. Esther didn't have to give her life to save her people but we have a Savior that gave His life and defeated death by returning for us. Mark 16:6, Matthew 28:5.

Esther is a reminder to all that we should physically seek God's guidance. This was an active faith that included prayer, fasting, and calling on others to do the same. Esther reminds us to fully submit to God's will with bravery and willingness. A courageous yielding of not what we want, but what God wants. What is God calling you to yield to this season? Where is God calling you to strengthen your active faith?

God-Thank you for always being there when I approach You. Thank you for being the Father that loves to see me, Your child. Show me where I need to yield to myself and do what you are calling me to do. Show me what steps I can take to have a more active faith in You. Give me bravery when I lack courage and faith when I lack trust. Thank you most of all for Jesus. Amen.

NO MORE TEARS

ANONYMOUS

Read Revelation 21:1-5

When we stop and take a look at the world around us, it's clear that there is a great deal of chaos and brokenness. If we turn on the news, it doesn't take long to hear about threats to our lives, our society, or our future—no matter which channel or site we choose. All of this leaves us with a deep longing for things to be better, for things to be made new.

That longing is exactly what God addresses in the vision He revealed to John and recorded in the book of Revelation. God promises that one day He will make everything new. He will restore creation to the way it was always meant to be when He first brought all things into existence. This is a powerful and beautiful hope—one that encourages us to keep going even when life feels dark and broken.

This promise does not mean that we ignore pain or pretend brokenness does not matter. Instead, it means we refuse to let it overwhelm us. We live with confidence that the brokenness we see now is not the end of the story. God is near, and He will one day set all things right.

With this hope in mind, we are also called to share it with others. We point people to Jesus so that they too can know this hope and look forward to the day when God wipes away every tear and makes all things new.

Lord, thank You for the hope of a new and restored creation. Help me to live each day with my eyes fixed on that promise and not be overwhelmed by the chaos and brokenness around me. Remind me that You are near, that You care for me, and that I can always turn to You. Use me to help others experience this same hope. Amen.

ANCHOR: WORRY, ANXIETY, & STRESS

BY RACHEL MONTGOMERY

For many, 2025 was a rollercoaster of emotions. A stunning contrast of life's sweetest joys and the bitterness of the deepest sorrows.

For me, the feeling evokes the memory of a fictional candy that is featured in one of my very favorite books, *Because of Winn-Dixie*: the Littmus Lozenge. The candy is described as tasting like strawberries, root beer, and *melancholy*. The first time the story was read to me as a third grader, I couldn't understand why this word stuck with me. It wasn't until I reread the story as an adult, and cried through most of the second half of the book, that I truly understood why this concept lingered for so long in my mind.

Many of the characters in the book are faced with a variety of life circumstances that can naturally lead to worry, anxiety, and stress: a child grappling with a mother who walked out and an emotionally distant father, a sister coping with grief, an elderly woman facing social isolation due to chronic health challenges and exacerbated by a nasty rumor, and a young man reconciling with time spent incarcerated.

In the book, one of the characters says, "I believe, sometimes, that the whole world has an aching heart". During my first encounter with this story in the third grade, my teacher's husband was facing terminal illness. I can't help but wonder what her heart was carrying during those long days at school.

In John 16, Jesus warns His disciples of this truth. He says, "In this world you will have trouble." But He doesn't stop there. He encourages them with an incredible promise, "But take heart! I have overcome the world."

My teenage years were wrought with worry, anxiety, and stress. Some of this was brought on by specific situations like loneliness, environmental anxiety, academic pressure, or sins that I refused to acknowledge. Others times, it was generalized, and I was unable to pinpoint exactly what was agitating my weary soul. As an adult, I still deal with bouts of intense, almost crippling anxiety, sometimes even more palpable than ever. The difference, however, is my ability to lean on Jesus and the incredible hope I have discovered in Him. Take heart, dear friends. Jesus has already won the battle. It is finished.

Jesus invites us to experience the full depth of life in Him. In this world, we will have trouble. We will experience loss, disappointment, interrupted plans, tension, broken relationships, political unrest, wars, and even extreme persecution. But in the midst of sorrow and suffering, we can also experience His inexplicable joy and peace.

We know that 2026 is no different from every other year since the Fall until He returns again some day. So, hold fast to these truths as we ride the rollercoaster of life. Cling to Him, and He will soothe your aching heart.

NEW CREATION

BY VALERI DANIEL

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

The old things have passed away
And new things are now, here.
See what God sees
When you look in the mirror.

Proof that it's finished
Christ took it all.
Bruised and battered
He challenged "the Fall".

The one who redeemed us
And took all our sin,
For our redemption with GOD,
We believe in HIM.

From darkness to light,
The lines are not blurred.
We've been given salvation
Something we'll never earn.

Chains are breaking
And hearts are healing.
Christ is interceding
For what the enemy was stealing.

Free the stress.
Let the anxiety end.
Reach your hands to Heaven,
Jesus is the mend!

We will see things differently,
With new wonders each day.
We are freed from weighted sins
Having chosen the righteous way.

Lord, thank you for giving us new life in you. Open the eyes of our hearts. Allow us to see the new wonders that are all around us, that we have been missing. Grant us the freedom to step lightly having lost the weighted sins that we have carried. Continue to whisper to us that you are with us. Empower us with strength and purpose to be transformed and tell others of Jesus. In Christ, Amen.

NEW CREATION

BY KATHY FLORENCE

Read Psalm 1

Psalm 1 speaks of the joy found in following the guidance of the Lord and meditating on it day and night. Through this meditation, the Holy Spirit uncovers our sins and encourages us to let go of them. Relinquishing sinful habits glorifies God by allowing our lives to mirror His character—mercy, love, and justice—qualities that are often lacking in our world.

As we approach the Lenten season, many choose to "give up something" for a period of time to focus on Christ's temptations and His sacrifice on the cross. I invite you to consider giving up a habit for the rest of your life rather than just for a season. Instead of something like giving up chocolate for Lent, we might address more serious matters, such as self-deception, slandering others, gossip, neglecting daily Bible study and prayer, holding a grudge or keeping silent about our allegiance to Christ.

James 1:5 tells us that if we need wisdom, we should ask God, and He will give it to us. There is no ambiguity in this promise; if we ask for wisdom, God will grant our request. Psalm 1 also tells us the Lord watches over our paths and will direct. Romans 8 tells us that if we claim Christ then the Holy Spirit is living in us and we are not obligated to do what our sin nature urges us to do.

As we approach this blessed Easter season let us consider our lives, our over the top blessings we have been given and how we can allow the Holy Spirit to further sanctify us to delight our Father.

DRAW NEAR

ANONYMOUS

Read Hebrews 10:19-22

Hebrews 10:19–22 reminds us of an astounding truth: because of Jesus, we have full and welcomed access to God. The writer paints a picture of a new and living way opened for us: one that removes fear, distance, and uncertainty. Instead of standing far off, we are invited to draw near with confidence, with sincere hearts, and with faith that has been made clean.

In the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the most sacred space, and even then, only once a year. Ordinary people had no such access. But Jesus changed everything. Through His sacrifice and His ongoing work as our High Priest, the barrier has been removed. The place once restricted is now open. The invitation once limited is now universal.

And yet, access alone is not the full message. The posture of our hearts matters too. We come not with self reliance, but with sincerity. Not with guilt and shame clinging to us, but with hearts assured that Christ has washed us clean. The sprinkling of our hearts and the cleansing of our bodies symbolize a restored relationship: we are forgiven, accepted, and loved.

Still, many of us struggle to draw near. We carry old fears, past failures, or a sense that we need to “earn” our way back into God’s presence. Hebrews confronts that lie directly. It urges us to step fully into the freedom Christ purchased. We don’t approach God based on our performance. We come because Jesus made the way.

To draw near means to trust Him in the quiet moments, to bring Him our doubts, to confess our sins honestly, to worship without pretense, and to rest in His presence without fear of rejection. It means believing that God truly wants us close...not reluctantly, but joyfully.

Today, let this passage not only inform your mind but guide your steps. God is not distant. The way is open. And you are invited to boldly and confidently come.

Father, thank You for the incredible gift of access to Your presence through Jesus. Help me to draw near with a sincere and trusting heart, believing that You welcome me without hesitation. Cleanse my thoughts, calm my fears, and renew my confidence in Your love. Teach me to walk closely with You today...openly, honestly, and with deep gratitude for all You’ve done. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

BY LAURA BLACK

Read Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell those stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: “man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
-Matthew 4:1-4

At this moment in the wilderness, Jesus was extremely vulnerable to temptation. He was alone, hungry, and both physically and mentally exhausted. Satan used this opportunity to tempt Jesus into putting his own needs and desires above the will of his Father. First, he tempted Jesus into doubting that he was the one and only Son of God. Then, he challenged Jesus to perform a miracle to satisfy his immediate need of hunger. While Jesus was physically weak, he stood strong spiritually. Jesus knew that he was the Son of God and he knew that he could turn stone into bread at any given time. So rather than giving into the temptations, Jesus resisted Satan’s challenges and trusted his Father’s promise to always provide for him.

All throughout our lives, we are tempted by Satan. We don’t always know when the temptations will strike. It might be during the highs or lows of life, or somewhere in between. Or similar to Jesus’s story in the wilderness, it might be in times when we are weak and in need of help. Fortunately, we can follow Jesus’s example when we find ourselves challenged by Satan’s temptations and remember to trust God’s word that He will provide our needs not in our time or way, but His.

We must equip ourselves ahead of time so we can be ready to fight off temptation. We can follow simple strategies in our everyday routines to help us stay strong in our faith when temptation hits. Strategies such as reading and studying God's word daily, connecting with a strong Christian community for support, and practicing daily prayer and meditation are great tools to use. There are many helpful resources and support personnel that can be accessed by visiting or connecting with us at Discover Christian Church www.discovercc.org.

Reflection questions: What temptations am I being challenged with today rather than trusting God’s timing and provision? What step(s) can I take today to help equip me for future temptations?

Dear Lord, please give me the strength and wisdom to overcome the things that pull me away from you. Protect me from the devils’ temptations and the desires of my own flesh. Whenever I am tempted, help me stand firm in Your words just like Jesus did when he was tempted. In Jesus’s name I pray, Amen.

THE PROGRESSION

BY CINDY AND DAVE WELSH

Read Romans 15:13

Lent invites us into a sacred slowing—forty days of remembering who we are, who God is, and how deeply we need His renewing presence. It is a season marked by repentance, reflection, and recalibration. Yet in the midst of its somber tone, Paul’s blessing is alive with expectation. Lent is not only about what we lay down—it is also about what God longs to fill.

Paul names God as “the God of hope”, the God whose very nature is to restore, renew, and resurrect. During Lent, we often confront our limitations, our failures, and our need for grace. But this verse reminds us that God meets us in those places not with condemnation, but with hope. Hope is not something we manufacture; it is something God pours into us as we trust Him.

Notice the progression: trust → joy → peace → overflowing hope. Trust is the doorway. Joy and peace are the atmosphere. Overflowing hope is the outcome. Lent gives us space to examine what we’ve been trusting—our routines, our strength, our distractions, our self-sufficiency—and to turn again toward the One who alone can fill us.

Joy and peace may feel like surprising words for Lent. However, Paul is not referring to shallow happiness or the absence of struggle. He is describing the deep, steady joy that comes from knowing God, and the peace that settles in when we stop striving to save ourselves. These are gifts of grace, not rewards for good behavior.

Personally, we have experienced the full range of this cycle Paul describes: trust → joy → peace → overflowing hope when Dave suffered a stroke while serving on the staff of the Middle School Camp at Round Lake. He was taken to the hospital in Wooster, airlifted to OSU, and spent a week in the hospital so doctors could assess the stroke and the underlying heart issues that led to the stroke. During that entire time, Dave was never really scared. He trusted in God’s presence and took comfort in knowing God was with him. Dave felt joy in knowing that, in God’s perfect time, he would be spending eternity with Jesus. Throughout all of this, he felt a peace that could only come from the Holy Spirit.

And then comes the promise: “so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Lent is not meant to leave us empty; it is to make room for an overflow of blessings. The Spirit does not trickle hope into us—He fills us until it spills into our thoughts, our relationships, our decisions, and our outlook on the world. Overflowing hope looks at the brokenness within and around us and still believes God is working redemption.

May this season lead you not into despair but into expectancy. May you discover again that the God who calls you to repentance is the same God who fills you with hope. And may the Holy Spirit cause that hope to overflow—beyond your fears, beyond your failures, and into every corner of your life.

ANCHOR: GRIEF & LOSS

BY DANE ALEXANDER

“But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint.” - Isaiah 40:31

There are few places more revealing of the human condition than a funeral home. People move slowly through a line, offering condolences with the best intentions, yet the words can feel empty and painfully thin. “Be strong.” “You’ll get through this.” “They’re in a better place.” As if grief were a weakness to overcome or a season we should rush through. Our instinct is often to block suffering as quickly as possible, but grief does not yield to avoidance. We have to sit with it long enough for it to tell the truth about what we’ve lost.

In March of 2025, I lost my oldest brother. His life was taken suddenly and violently. Nothing in me wanted quick answers or easy explanations. I needed space to sit with what had been shattered. Lent offers that kind of space. It is a season of preparation for resurrection, but it doesn’t rush us there. It teaches us how to wait.

The days leading up to Easter invite us to remain with Jesus in the darkest places: the anguish of the Garden of Gethsemane, the brutality of the cross, and the silence of the tomb. As painful as grief is, we shouldn’t avoid it. It can become a place where God does deep and often hidden work within us. The problem is that many of us were never taught how to grieve. We try to solve it, explain it, or assign blame, often denying ourselves what grief has to teach us. Grief has been described as “unfinished hurt,” and until we learn to sit with it, it continues to ache beneath the surface.

Scripture reminds us that tears aren’t failures of faith, but often signs of it. They come when we finally admit something is wrong, unjust, and beyond our control. And there, God meets us.

Jesus could have turned away from sorrow or suffering, but he walked this world and took it in willingly. In doing so, he faced our brokenness, our grief, and even death itself, and chose to remain present. When grief makes it hard to face the world, Jesus becomes the one who faces it with us. Still, we are not meant to walk the path of grief alone. Caring for ourselves involves seeking out community, trusted friends, counselors, and companions who can help carry the weight as we wait.

Lent invites us to pause, stop, and rest while we grieve honestly in God’s presence. Resurrection will come, but for now, we anchor our souls in a Savior who is not afraid of the darkness and certainly will not leave us there.

God of comfort, Teach us to sit with you in the darkness without rushing from it. Receive our tears, our silence, and our unanswered questions, and be the anchor that holds our souls steady when this life feels overwhelming. Remind us that we are not alone, that you are near to the broken-hearted, and your love remains steadfast. Amen.

MOST BLESSED & GLORIOUS

BY JIM BRECHBUHLER

Read Romans 8:31-39

Dr. Jack Cottrell writes, “This paragraph is considered by many to be the most blessed and glorious in the entire Bible. In a way that is both spiritually satisfying and practically pleasing, it sets forth the believer’s unshakable assurance and its unassailable foundation in the love of God.”

John Whittaker, Bible teacher and church planter, writes, “Chapter 8 ends with a rhetorical flourish that is *beautiful and moving*. It’s the kind of thing *you want to sit and savor*.”

Wow...what’s in this passage that would make it “the most blessed and glorious” and “the kind of thing you want to sit and savor”? To fully understand its beauty, we begin with one of the main reasons Paul wrote Romans. He was writing to Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome. There was disunity between the two groups. The Jews were still greatly influenced by “works salvation”. The Gentiles had other issues. Paul wanted the two groups to worship together and love one another. His message to them was God loved them both the same, but it wasn’t because of their heritage or their performance. It was because of His love demonstrated by His Son’s sacrifice on the cross.

Because of this love, God also promises believers hope, to reveal His glory and give us new bodies in the future, that we’re His adopted children and heirs, that the Spirit intercedes on our behalf, and the list goes on. It all sounds so perfect, but what if we lose it all due to our unworthiness? What if we mess up? This is an all too common worry among believers.

This doubt is sowed by Satan who first lures us into sin and then condemns us. He wants us to feel guilt and hopelessness. But Paul notes it is God who justifies us. Jesus, our defense attorney, is sitting at the right hand of God declaring us righteous and saved. Paul then lists all the things that can’t separate us from God’s love: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, violence, death, angels, demons, the present life or the future, no other powers, nothing else in creation...whew...that’s a long list! God will go to any height or any depth because He loves us.

The beauty of this passage lies in the blessed assurance that if we place our faith in Jesus on an on-going basis...we can overcome anything Satan throws at us. He can’t steal us away. Our past, present and future sins have been paid for. Not only will we win the battle, we’ll win decisively with Jesus as our defender and co-heir! If God is for us, who can defeat us? No one!

Prayer prompt: On your device, find and sing along to the great old hymn, *Blessed Assurance*. It sums up this passage so beautifully. Then thank the Lord for his love and grace. Ask Him to help you with any lack of assurance you might have.

MAKE ROOM IN OUR HEARTS

BY KRUPAKAR DANDEM

Read Philippians 3:12-14

In Philippians 3:12–14, Paul says something honest and comforting: he has not reached the goal yet. He is still growing. He is still learning. But he does not give up. Instead, he keeps moving forward toward what God has for him.

This is a good message for Lent. Lent is a season when we slow down and look at our lives. We think about our choices, our habits, and our relationship with God. We do this not because God is angry with us, but because God loves us and wants us to grow closer to Him.

Paul says he forgets what is behind and reaches for what is ahead. This does not mean the past does not matter. It means the past should not control us. Our past mistakes can teach us, but they should not stop us from following Jesus today. God gives us a new chance each day.

Paul compares the Christian life to running a race. A runner does not look backward while running. They look forward to the finish line. For us, the finish line is Jesus. He is the goal. We are not trying to be perfect. We are trying to become more like Him.

During Lent, we pray more, give more, and sometimes fast. These things help us make room for God in our hearts. They help us focus less on ourselves and more on Him. They remind us that we need God every day.

As we walk through this season, we may notice our weaknesses and struggles. That can feel uncomfortable. But God is not ashamed of us. He walks with us and gives us strength. He does not ask us to run alone. He runs with us.

Today, we are invited to keep moving forward. Not because we are strong, but because Jesus has already taken hold of us. Since He has chosen us, we can choose to follow Him. One step at a time. One prayer at a time. One day at a time.

*Jesus,
Thank You for loving me even when I am not finished growing.
Help me let go of the past and not be stuck in my mistakes.
Teach me to look to You instead of my failures.
During this season of Lent, help me want You more.
Give me strength to keep moving forward in faith.
Change my heart to love what You love.
I trust You with my life and my journey.
Amen.*

A PILGRIMAGE

BY JOHN BROWN

Read Psalm 84

On September 16, 1620, a group of 102 passengers set sail on a small ship named the *Mayflower*. After 66 days of toil, worry, hunger, and a great deal of prayer, they reached a new world. Eventually, this small group, that we commonly call the Pilgrims, became part of a mighty nation. A common definition for pilgrims is a group of people on a spiritual journey to reach a sacred place, in this case a new land where they could worship freely.

We all have our “September 1620” moment—the day we were born. We begin our journey, and if we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior and rely on him for our strength, our journey becomes a pilgrimage. I believe this is what Psalm 84:5-7 is saying. We will have our times of toil, worry, hunger, and prayer—our valleys, but with Christ we can make them our times of growth. Verse 7 says we go from “strength to strength,” in other words, our struggles make us stronger followers of God, and we grow in our faith.

Finally, as the Pilgrims reached Plymouth Rock we will reach Zion, and it is not the end but the beginning. As Revelation 21:1-4 says, this is the beginning of our life with God in a new Heaven and a new earth.

Father, as we go on this pilgrimage, please guide us through our valleys of hardship and turn them into times of blessing. We do not know which way to go or even how to go, but You are an awesome Father who will guide our steps because You love us. Give us strength until we appear before You in Zion. Amen.

RESPOND WITH SINCERITY

BY MASON DAIL

Read Psalm 84

“The Ninevites believed God.” These are four words that the Israelites in Jonah’s time would never expect to see happen. We read in Nahum 3 that Nineveh was a city full of evil and cruelty. A city who would be least expected to turn to God in faith. But that’s exactly what they did.

After receiving a short proclamation from Jonah that they would soon be overthrown, Nineveh responded with incredible acts of faith. The king of Nineveh quickly humbled himself by wearing sackcloth and ordered that the people of Nineveh and their animals do the same. He called for a fast, commanding that the people and their animals refrain from eating and drinking. And he commanded his people to urgently call on God and to turn from their evil and violence. All of this out of hope that God would relent.

We are surrounded by people today who seem like they would never turn from their ways and cry out to God. The Ninevite’s response of faith provides us with hope that the people who seem furthest from God today are not a lost cause. If the Ninevites could lay down their pride and turn to God, it can happen with those we would least expect to do the same today.

The response of the Ninevites was evidence of their belief. If they didn’t believe that God is real or that Jonah’s proclamation would come true, they would have continued in their evil ways. But they responded with sincerity and God noticed.

God doesn’t need our acts to work miracles. But incredible things happen when our faith leads us to respond. We have numerous examples in scripture of what can happen when we respond in faith: the Ninevites turning from their evil ways, the wayward son returning to his father, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s trusting in God as they were being thrown into a furnace, and so many more.

Whether it is fasting, prayer, serving, or other acts of faith - God responds. What is God calling you to respond to today?

Dear heavenly Father. Thank you for being our God who responds. You are a God who sees your children and loves them. Help us to have faith that those who are the furthest from you today could take a massive step of faith in you tomorrow. Please remind us that you love everyone, even those furthest from you - and help us to love them and see the potential in them that you do. Holy Spirit, please guide us in the steps of faith you are calling us to take today. Help us to feel your prompting and to be moved in faith to follow your lead. We pray this in Jesus’s name. Amen.

LOVE OVERFLOWING

BY EMILINE ELLIS

“One of the legal experts came up, and overheard the discussion. Realizing that Jesus had given a splendid answer, he put a question of his own. ‘Which commandment’, he asked, ‘is the first one of all?’ ‘The first one’, replied Jesus, ‘is this: “Listen, Israel: the Lord your God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your understanding, and with all your strength.” And this is the second one: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” No other commandment is greater than these ones.” Mark 12:28-31, Kingdom New Testament

I love the old hymns and the rich history and poetry that helps preserve and celebrate the doctrine and stories of God's Kingdom. A hymn I grew up singing was “They’ll Know We Are Christians (...By Our Love)”. This song (born out of the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s - a time of great cultural and political turmoil in the U.S.) came to mind as I read our passage. Jesus says here (and elsewhere) that the defining characteristic of his followers should be love; *love for God, overflowing into love for others*. The natural response of a heart changed by God should be to love our neighbors...all of them: The ones we’d choose and the ones we wouldn’t. The ones we think deserve it and those we wish didn’t. The ones who can repay us, and those who cannot. Those we agree with and those we do not. Those who live according to our moral code, and those who make morally questionable life choices. The list goes on and on to include every person we will ever come in contact with.

We cannot love a person while denying their basic human rights. We cannot love a person and fear them at the same time. Ultimately, we can’t truly love someone while simultaneously distancing them, dehumanizing them, or denying their belonging. Jesus showed us God’s true heart for humanity, and treating any individual or group of people as “less than” or “unworthy” of God’s love is antithetical to the gospel message and the mission of Christ’s Church. So, let’s go out and LOVE like Jesus - stand with the marginalized, vulnerable, and ostracized. Give of our resources to support human flourishing. Spend time getting to know people who are different from ourselves. Let’s break out of our Christian bubble and see the world through Jesus’ eyes, with compassion, grace, and love.

This radical love we’re supposed to show others is only possible when we first love God and allow Him to shape us into the people of His Kingdom. Jesus came to show us this love with His living example, then empowered us with His Spirit to be able to accomplish this Kingdom-building work. Jesus consistently sided with the people that the world would call unworthy - the widow, the orphan, the immigrant, the woman caught in adultery, the tax collectors and prostitutes, the ostracized Samaritan woman, the mourning, the poor, the “least of these”. We are to build God’s Kingdom here and now by radically loving those the world tells us to hate.

Love can get uncomfortable, but if we’re truly to be Christ’s hands and feet in this world, our hands are going to get dirty and our feet are going to end up standing outside our comfort zones. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, we don’t need to be afraid of the world we’re called to love; we can bring God’s Kingdom to it here and now and see lives changed for Him.

ANCHOR: DEPRESSION

BY PAUL GRIFFITH

Depression has a way of dimming everything. Prayer feels harder. Scripture feels distant. Joy seems like a memory that belongs to someone else. In seasons like these, many people quietly wonder whether God has stepped away—or whether they themselves are failing somehow. Yet Scripture and human experience tell a different story: depression is not a sign of weak faith, nor is it evidence of God’s absence.

The Bible is filled with people who knew deep sorrow. Elijah asked God to let him die. David wrote psalms soaked in despair. Even Jesus wept, overwhelmed by grief. God did not turn from them in their darkness. He drew closer. That same nearness is promised to us, even when we cannot feel it.

Depression often whispers lies: *You are alone. You are a burden. Nothing will change.*

These voices can feel convincing, but they are not the voice of God. God’s voice is quieter and steadier, reminding us that we are seen, known, and loved—even when our minds tell us otherwise. Faith in these moments is not loud confidence; it is the smallest act of endurance. Getting out of bed can be an act of worship. Breathing can be a prayer.

There is grace for the days when worship feels impossible. God does not demand joyful words when your heart is aching. He invites honesty. “How long, O Lord?” is a faithful prayer. Silence can be faithful too. When you do not have strength to reach for God, trust that He is already reaching for you.

Depression can also tempt us to isolate, to believe we must fight alone. But God often works through people—counselors, doctors, friends, pastors. Seeking help is not a spiritual failure; it is an act of humility and hope. God’s healing frequently arrives through ordinary, human means.

If you are walking through depression, remember this: your worth is not measured by your productivity, your positivity, or your ability to “push through.” You are valued simply because you are God’s creation. Darkness may linger, but it does not have the final word.

The morning may come slowly. Light may arrive in thin, fragile beams. Still, God remains present in the night. Hold on—not because you are strong, but because God is faithful.

A MOTIVATION CHANGE

BY RON AND KAREN BLACHLY

Read Galatians 2:20-21

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

When Paul told the Galatians that he “no longer” lives, he used attention-grabbing language to show what a change Christ had made in his life. And did He ever! - from catching and persecuting Christians to becoming a model for others and even writing most of the New Testament. After his conversion, Paul spent 3 years in Arabia, then returned to Jerusalem. It’s no wonder the Christians there were wary of him. But he was a new creature, and not just figuratively. Christ lived in him!

I think it’s human nature to believe rewards follow right actions: e.g. work hard for a promotion. Study diligently and make good grades. We fall for the false belief that adherence to certain rules is necessary to receive salvation, oneness with Christ. But He is called our Savior for a reason. He saved us by his death on the cross. It was not until I was older that I realized works don’t earn one’s salvation; rather, it is a gift of God, who gave His Son freely. Our part is to acknowledge and accept that gift.

Paul is explaining the Galatian people’s new identity. The old concept of a performance-based relationship with God is gone - out the window. The new reality is being in union with Christ - so much in union in fact, that Christ is living in us - a transformation. Faith, not performance, is what drives Christian living.

Saint Augustine put it this way: “Love God and do whatever you please...” Sounds a little bit contradictory, doesn’t it? But he continues: “...for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved.”

When we train a puppy, or for that matter, our children, they obey at first for the reward of praise and treats. Eventually their motivation changes, as does ours for God, and our obedience flows not from hope for a reward, but from gratitude for what He has already given us. God’s love is the foundation, and the cross is central.

Paul puts us on notice: following God’s will out of desire for a reward “undermines” the cross. He warns the Galatians that trying to earn God’s love by acts of obedience is the wrong approach.

Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Son for saving us by grace and not our works. Help us to always have thankful hearts, being mindful of the cross and what it means for us.

NOTICING GOD IN THE DRY PLACES

BY DIRK, JACEY, TRISTEN, EVELYN NELSON

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel is brought by God into a valley of dry bones, lifeless, scattered, and beyond hope. God asks him, “Son of man, can these bones live again?” Ezekiel replies, “Lord God, you alone know.”

There are times when life feels like that valley. Loss can often dry up relationships, routines, and futures we thought would always remain. Recently, I found myself in one of those wilderness moments.

On a family trip to Grand Teton National Park, I continued a ritual I’ve kept for years: waking before dawn to watch the sunrise alone with God. But my heart was heavy. My workplace had gone through a reduction in force, and I had to say goodbye to team members who had become family through the years. I was devastated and unsure how to move forward. I drove carefully to what I thought was the perfect spot and waited—but the sunrise never came. I realized I had been facing the wrong direction. Embarrassment, anger, and disappointment flooded my heart. God, how could this happen? I thought. You knew I needed this special time with you, and now I don’t get it. Just like I don’t get to have my close friends at work anymore.

Before leaving, I felt this strong urge to look at the photos I’d taken. To my surprise, they were breathtaking. I had been so focused on what I thought I was missing that I had overlooked the beauty right in front of me. I returned to the spot, but for the first time, I was seeing what was there, instead of what wasn’t. The water lay so still that the mountain’s reflection appeared like a flawless mirror, framed by lush green trees. Even in disappointment, God was there, guiding me to notice what I had almost missed. Maybe at work, there will be beauty in the unexpected, just like I am experiencing now, I thought. In time, God would show me how He works all things together for good, just as He promises. Like in Ezekiel 37, God does not remove the valley. He breathes life into what seems dead, showing that restoration comes not by changing our circumstances, but by revealing His power and presence within them. Lent invites us to notice where God is already at work, even in places that feel dry or empty. What we believe is lost may simply be waiting for God’s breath.

Even when we feel we’ve taken a wrong turn, God can meet us there. The valley is never the end of the story.

Lord, open my eyes to Your presence in the dry places of my life. Help me notice the beauty and life You are bringing, even when I feel lost or disappointed. Fill my heart with peace and hope, and guide me to see Your work even in my valleys. Amen.

ERODED BY EARTHLY THINGS

BY JILL AND MARTY LANCE

Read Colossians 3:1-4;

also read Matthew 6:21, Ezra 9:5-15, Genesis 3:1, Revelation 21:22-27

During this Lenten season, as we devote time to studying scripture and drawing closer to God, we are reminded in the verses from Col 3:1-4 to set our minds on things above and not on earthly things (v2). The reward is great, but Satan is sly and so the temptations we encounter today on Earth are pulling us farther away from the reward we await.

Two years ago, I was lamenting that I could not find a book club that would accept me as a member (apparently, well-established book clubs are extremely exclusive and do not like to disrupt the bond between their members). That should have been my first clue that I was not pursuing the relationships God had intended for me.

A coworker invited me to her club, which was open to new members and met quarterly. When I found out they met in a bar on Sunday mornings at 11 (maybe a 2nd clue?), I thought this might be a mission field! On Sundays when we met, I could go to the first service at church and still make it to the meeting, convinced that I was still putting God first.

After a few meetings, it became clear that the books being selected, even the so-called, bestsellers and celebrity book-club picks, weren't aligned with what I truly wanted to read. My recommendations for a more wholesome pick were repeatedly ignored. I could find redeeming qualities in the characters even when the actions and situations described were not "setting my mind on things above." It was not until the middle of last year that I decided I would not finish books that compromised my faith.

I questioned my choice in joining this club. Satan was right there asking me – "Did God really say you cannot read things that mock his teaching if you are learning more about the culture you want to influence? Look at the vocabulary you are building, the history you are learning, and the many places you are experiencing through these novels. It is ok to stay and just skip over the parts in the books that bother you."

At the same time my Bible Study was studying Ezra Chapter 9. We reflected on the way sin seeps in quietly, softening our convictions until compromise feels natural. Eventually, I had to admit that I couldn't keep walking that road. In the time since, I've discovered on my own writers whose novels are rich, thoughtful, and unafraid to resist the glamor of our modern culture.

How have you been challenged or swayed in a subtle way to choose the earthly life that does not last over the things that keep us focused on our life in eternity?

God, help me pursue your eternal glory in the world I live in today. Help me recognize the traps the evil one sets for me and give me strength to resist earthly desires of the heart. Forgive me for not seeing the cunning ways I was drawn away from you. Give me boldness to share the incredible sacrifice and gift of grace you have given me. Put people in my path that need to know you and give me the words to speak truth and love to them. In your precious son's name I pray, AMEN.

WHEN YOU FAST

BY GEORGE AND KATHY FISHER

Read Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting is primarily the practice of going without food in order to draw nearer to God. It is often accompanied by prayer.

In talking to His disciples, Jesus says, “When you fast.” Notice that He does not say, “If you fast.” In fact, the Pharisees fasted twice a week (see Luke 18:12). Rather than criticizing the practice of fasting, Jesus takes it for granted that His followers will fast. That humbles me, because I rarely fast (hypoglycemia is my excuse).

During Lenten season, the practice in some churches is to fast. But Jesus warns about making a show out of our fasting, as if we were advertising our piety. So we need to check our motives and ask ourselves why we are fasting. Is what I do for show, to impress people, or is what I am doing so that I can draw near to God? If my motive is the former, then I am doing the wrong thing—and I am certainly doing it for the wrong reason.

While the emphasis during Lent in many circles is on giving up certain foods, we can fast from other things, as well. We can fast from types of entertainment. We can fast from certain activities.

But don't forget the point of a fast. It is to deny ourselves the things which might be a barrier between ourselves and God. While we think first and foremost of fasting from food, it could be many things which are a barrier to our relationship with God. So we need to ask ourselves: “Is my relationship with God more important than this thing or activity from which I am fasting? Is drawing near to God more important to me than having others know I am drawing near to God?”

So ask yourself: “How do I need to change my habits to more fully reflect that God is first in my life? How do I need to rearrange my schedule to make God a higher priority in my life? From what do I need to fast?”

When you make those necessary changes, people might not notice the activities you are doing, but they will notice the changes which God is making in your life!

Dear Holy Father, help me to recognize the things that come between me and you. I want to draw closer to you. Are my idols of comfort, security, and control hindering my relationship with you? Am I still trying to check off the boxes to prove that I am acceptable to you? Help me to remember that you have paid the price for my salvation, and that Jesus is enough. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

NOT EVEN A CATNAP

BY HANK AND KATHY TERMEER

Read Psalm 121

Psalm 121 is a beautiful picture of the perfect Father, the One who willingly sent His Son to become like us with all our human limitations. Jesus required all the things we need - food, sleep, companionship, help, love. One thing that seems incomprehensible in this Psalm is that God doesn't sleep, not even a catnap now and then.

Have you ever had a night or even a longer period of time when you just couldn't sleep? Maybe you were feeling anxious or fearful about something; maybe a medicine you took kept you awake; maybe you were just excited about something you had planned for and anticipated; maybe you've spent long nights watching over and caring for a loved one; maybe you're just a person who hasn't ever slept well and don't really know why.

We all may have had times in our lives when sleep was elusive. But our human bodies are wired to need sleep. We need regular rest in order to be at our best and to function well throughout the day. Even Jesus needed sleep while here on earth. But - notice what Psalm 121 says about the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. He is the Helper who never sleeps, never slumbers, and continually watches over us. When we consider this, it may be hard to believe because we cannot relate. We cannot imagine going days, weeks, months, years without sleeping.

What this Psalm teaches us is that when we are overwhelmed, we can lift our eyes to the mountains where we will find the help we need because we know the One who isn't sleeping on His watch. It's not always easy to remember this truth, but we can lean into it when things are difficult and we just don't know if we have the energy to go on. Our help comes from the One who watches over us 24/7, day in day out, month after month, year after year.

As we walk through this season of Lent, let's slow down and reflect on the One whose life was given for us, the One who became like us and needed sleep but who no longer sleeps. He is watching over us both now and forevermore.

Heavenly Father, thank You that Your eyes are always on us, that we can be at peace because You never tire of watching over and helping us. You truly are the God who sees. Help us rest in this knowledge, that even as we sleep, You are awake and You are with us.

ANCHOR: SUICIDE

BY STEVE AND THERESA MURPHY

This devotion is connected to the theme of self-harm and suicide in our teaching series *An Anchor for My Soul: A Series on Biblical Mental Health*. **If you are considering suicide or self-harm, call or text 988, and reach out to someone today.**

When darkness feels overwhelming; when our enemy speaks the lie that life is not worth living; when hope seems distant, God is near. “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” (Psalm 34:18, NLT). No one is beyond the reach of His love and mercy. “No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39, NLT)

Those in deep distress can benefit from hearing God’s gracious truth: “You matter. Your life is precious.” (Read Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13, and Luke 12:6-7). Emotional pain makes it hard to truly hear and comprehend, which means these truths are best understood when expressed through love, compassion, and presence. As we are reminded in 1 John 3:18, “Let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions” (NLT). Galatians 6:2 further says, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Every Christian is called to embody hope, compassion, and truth, reminding each person (including ourselves) that God’s grace and light can pierce any darkness.

For those who’ve lost a loved one to suicide, the grief is uniquely heavy and complex. Questions linger, emotions surge, and wounds reopen unexpectedly. When entering into their sorrow, tread softly. Avoid explanations or clichés. Often it’s better not to say anything except, “I’m so sorry. I’m here for you.” Offer presence, listening, and shared tears. Remember, though Jesus knew He would soon call Lazarus out of the grave, He still wept with those who mourned (John 11:35).

Father God, in the name of Jesus, we ask You to draw near to those who feel overwhelmed by pain, hopelessness, and sadness. May Your gentle, healing truth speak louder than the enemy’s destructive lies. Holy Spirit, provide us with wisdom, compassion, and love as we carry the hope of Jesus to each wounded heart.

WASH AND REPEAT

BY CARSON FANT

Read Hebrews 9:11-15

In celebrating God's new covenant, the Hebrews writer contrasts the characteristics and effectiveness between the animal sacrifices of the old covenant and Jesus' sacrifice in the new covenant. This contrast always makes me consider dry, cracked hands in winter. I'll explain.

I enjoy cooking, and I'm mindful about washing my hands after touching raw meat or eggs or if I have to pick something up off the ground. Cleanliness is good, of course, but the problem is that my hands don't stay clean for long. I'll wash my hands and in less than a minute I've already dirtied them again. Wash and repeat. Wash and repeat. In the arid winter air, my hands suffer.

In the old covenant, God required animal sacrifices to keep the Israelites in relationship with Him, but the frequency of these sacrifices and the number of animals sacrificed is difficult for us to comprehend. Furthermore, though the cows, goats, and sheep sacrificed were without physical blemish, they were still only cattle, and those offering them were imperfect people. God made the old covenant in His infinite wisdom, and though it was a blessing to the Israelites, it was imperfect by design. The old covenant did, however, point to something better God had in store for His people.

In God's new and better covenant, Jesus is both the sacrifice and the high priest, and in both roles, He perfects God's plan. Jesus offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice, once and for all time. The blood He shed through love covers us, and we are forever free from the "dead works" of animal sacrifices.

The writer also gives Jesus another designation, "mediator." This means that Jesus brings believers into a new, more intimate relationship with God. Whereas only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies in the temple, and then only once a year, believers now have a continuous relationship with God.

Hebrews has been one of my favorite books of the Bible since I had a class on it in 9th grade. The book, my teacher told us, could be summed up by the word "better." As in, everything about Jesus and His new covenant is better than what came before. We don't have to continue in a cycle of offering sacrifices, figuratively washing our hands over and over and never really being truly clean. The measures God takes to have a relationship with us is astounding, and the mercy and grace He gives for us to be in this relationship should fill us with gratitude and love.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for being a God who seeks a relationship with us, so much so that You sacrificed Your only son. We thank You that His blood covers our many sins and that His resurrection means we have an "eternal inheritance" with You. May Your love for us be reflected in our lives and how we treat others. We praise You Lord, and our prayer is in Jesus's name, amen.

KNOW OUR PLACE

BY PATTI BUSHONG

Read James 4:7-10

To be humble is to truly look at yourself in comparison to God (and others). Surely we hold God as the #1 Highest Honor, but do we place ourselves right below Him? God tells us to hold others above ourselves. To submit to God. To accept the will and authority of God. To look to Jesus' example as a servant. We need to know our place; a child of God.

Let us be obedient to His call for action in our lives and serve others with love and compassion. Let us give praise to our God, for He deserves all praise and honor. Let us get on our knees to thank Him for His constant presence and direction in our lives; He will never leave us or abandon us; He is always near. We should remember that without God, we can not accomplish the goals He has for us. All we are is because of Him. He made us and gave us our special talents. Forever thank Him for making us the way we are and give Him the glory and praise.

Almighty God, thank you for being a constant presence and guide in our lives that we can discern your path for us because You alone know what's best for us; You open our hearts to work Your plan to spread Your Good News. When our focus is on You alone, You powerfully lift us up to accomplish Your will.

Thank you, Lord.

*In Jesus' name,
your humble servants*

RENEWED TO FACE ANOTHER DAY

BY DIANA PARISH

Read Isaiah 40:28-31

Isaiah 40:28-31 – Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depth of his understanding. **He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.** Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But **those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.** They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Life has a way of draining us, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. In Isaiah 40:28–31, God reminds us that His strength is limitless, His understanding is beyond measure, and His care for us never fades. Many times, it is easy to think we have reached the end of our rope. But this passage assures us that it is not the end. It is the place where God’s power begins to work most of all.

When our granddaughter (Eliza) was born and was struggling to even breathe, we were told she wasn’t going to make it through the night. The Lord kept her alive. The struggles were great for several years, every day was a challenge and exhausting, but each day the Lord renewed us to face another. He strengthened each of us to face each new challenge. Today Eliza is almost nine and doing amazingly well. It is through our Lord that she soars on the wings of eagles.

There are times when we take things for granted, including what the Lord does for us every day. Lifting us up, giving us the power we need and strengthening us. God never grows tired; His energy and wisdom are beyond compare. He gives strength to the weary, not just enough to survive, but enough to soar. Those who wait on Him, trusting, resting, and relying on His timing, will rise above life’s storms like eagles, run without exhaustion, and walk without fainting. Waiting on God isn’t passive; it’s an active trust that He is working even when we can’t see it.

Question

When you are tired, weary or challenged, where do you turn, a spouse, parent, friend? Where does your strength come from?

Father, thank you for all you do for us. Help us, Father, to remember where our strength comes from and to lean on You in all situations. When we are weary, remind us that You are an endless source of strength. Help us to wait on You with trust, so we can rise above our struggles and walk in Your presence. Amen.

SUGARLOAF

BY DEANNA LEE

Read Acts 13:2-4

Sugarloaf was a small Christian camp in northwestern Kentucky. It was nothing special and full of imperfect Christian workers and teens. I was not expecting to learn life changing lessons about fasting and prayer. It started with a conversation between the dean and a few of us kids. He and his helpers talked about praying and fasting. When we expressed surprise and curiosity about fasting, he smiled. We were soon giving up our free time to meet Kevin to prepare for our fast.

I arrived believing fasting was old-fashioned, depressing and for the spiritual elite. Recently awakened to saving grace, fasting felt like a step back to legalism. My worldly thinking made me think of fasting as giving something up. Fasting is about temporarily replacing something good with richer communication with God. Richer communication can provide clarity of God's will and plan for your life.

Early in the fast, during self-evaluation, I admitted my anger at God. The drought, recent losses and injustices were on my list of complaints. I was even angry with him about being hungry. Distracting myself from hunger, I grabbed my Bible and God revealed a wondrous truth. I was a child of God! He had plans for my life and they did not include harming me. I sat there and sought God's will and committed to trusting his guidance.

Another lie to overcome was that God does not care about the "small" things. Kevin invited the fasting group to the shelter for a pep talk. We were really struggling and talk alone was not working. We decided to pray but remained silent. Kevin looked around thoughtfully, smiled and suggested we pray at the same time. It was like a dam burst and there were prayers everywhere. As we prayed, the drought and heat occupied our prayers. We found ourselves in a circle holding hands praying for rain. We were so intent, we did not notice the rain until we heard cheering. It was a nice gentle rain and we danced and sang praises. It was not going to save many crops, but it spoke loudly of our value to God and the joy found in a life lived with him. By the end of the week, I associated fasting with bold prayers, God's guidance, and dancing in the rain.

God's enemies will lie about who we are in Christ and cause you to ignore powerful tools like prayer and fasting. Stop believing them. You are a child of God. You are valuable and never alone. His power and love is for anyone who seeks him. Seek God's will and joy while following the biblical examples of prayer and fasting.

Lord, I am a child of yours and seek your voice. Protect and guide me as I am faithful to your call for fasting and bold prayer. Amen.

YES, YOU!

BY HEBA MARZOUK

Read Matthew 28:18-20

The devotion today is about one of the most famous passages of the Bible. It's the words that Jesus gave His disciples shortly before His ascension. The final words of someone before their departure shows the importance of their message, and now this passage from the Bible is known as the Great Commission.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "commission"? A commission that is great? I would think that it's a very serious task that is so great, and it takes great people to do great things! Certain criteria and qualifications need to be present before you can do your task.

The words of Isaiah echo in my ears when he said, "Here am I. Send me." It seems to me that he was ready. He was qualified! Going back to Isaiah's encounter with God in Isaiah chapter 6 shows what happened right before he was able to say "here am I."

1. He was in the presence of God (Isa 6: 1 – 4), meeting with God and developing an ongoing relationship with Him. It makes us know who He is and what He has done for us. It only happens in His presence, when our eyes are opened to see His sovereignty, Holiness and greatness.
2. In the presence of God, we don't just see Him as He is, but also see ourselves as we are. His light shines through our darkness (Isa 6: 6 – 7). The verses here don't just show how God's presence brings us to the reality of the status of our hearts, but it shows us how our loving God is there to cleanse and purify us, removing every barrier that could stand between a deeper intimacy with Him.
3. In verse 8 Isaiah was able to hear God's voice, to hear God's heart, looking for someone to send out, to reach out, to deliver His message. Isaiah was ready to say, "Here am I. Send me!" Was Isaiah ready because of how great he was? No, he just cried "I'm ruined!"

Continued on the next page >

YES, YOU!

BY HEBA MARZOUK

Read Matthew 28:18-20

Isaiah didn't feel qualified but knew he was called. His qualifications were that he experienced God, had a repentant heart and had a heart which desired to go and deliver God's message. The great commission is God's love to us and to those who are around us.

Who's called? You! Yes, you! If you have known Him you would make Him known. I grew up in the Middle East where it's a crime to give a bible or share your faith. It's a crime for non-Christians to even question their beliefs and they face the penalty of death or prison if they chose Jesus. What are your fears of sharing the gospel here in the States?

What an opportunity for the church, to have all the nations come and become your neighbor! Right in your neighborhood God has brought the mission field. Right in your neighborhood, it's not life threatening to share the gospel, and it's not life threatening for our brothers and sisters who came from closed countries to hear the gospel. Jesus ended the great commission by saying "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." He commissioned us and He is doing it with us!

My heavenly Father, Thank you for loving me and calling me even when I didn't deserve it. I want to know you and love you to the point where I can't help but share your love. Purify my heart. Let me see people the way you see them. Here am I. Send me. Amen.

ANCHOR: IT'S NOT OVER (HELP & HOPE)

BY STEVE GEMMA

Begin by reading Isaiah 40:28-31 and Jeremiah 29:11-14.

“We regret to inform you...”

Here were those words again. The ones I had seen so often before; however, this time it was from the last medical school I had applied to and now been rejected by.

For as long as I could remember, I had wanted to be a physician. Maybe it was a way of identifying with my emotionally distant father who was a surgeon. I did everything I could growing up to achieve my goal: I studied hard in school and received good grades; I volunteered at a local children’s hospital; I did research in a botany lab at college; I worked part time as a phlebotomist; and I was even the vice president of my university’s pre-med honor society. So I was shocked, devastated, and humiliated when I was not accepted to any of the medical schools I applied to. What was I going to do now? There was no “plan B.”

This stressor exacerbated the emotional difficulties I had struggled with all my life: anxiety, depression, anger, and low self esteem. Each of my parents contributed some of these problems to me, and their divorce, while I was still in grade school, made things even worse.

Initially, I was angry with God. Hadn’t I recently committed my life to Him and pledged to be the best physician I could be? Why would He allow several non believers, who I knew, to be accepted to medical school and not me? My anger was soon replaced by anxiety over the realization that I was no longer in control of my future. And finally, depression and low self esteem returned to once again rob me of my energy, interests, and motivation in life.

It was a slow, difficult journey to recover from my despair. I gradually began to perceive that God knew what He was doing with my life better than I did, and that I needed to let go of my control and trust Him. In the year following my setback, I drew closer to God and others, began dating my future wife, and was accepted to medical school when I applied again. By submitting to His will rather than my own, God had taken me from a valley of darkness to a mountain top.

God, when rejection shakes my confidence and the future feels out of my control, help me release my plans and trust that Your wisdom is leading me to a good place, even when I cannot see the way.

HUMILITY

BY CHRIS HEASLEY

Read John 13:1-17

Jesus, just before the Passover Festival, wanted to make a statement to his disciples during their “Last Supper” together. His statement was bold and amazing...made without saying a word!

Jesus got up from the meal, knelt, and humbly washed their feet. Afterwards, Jesus asked, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” (John 13:12). Jesus then said to them, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14).

Jesus showed that even He was willing to perform the humblest of tasks for His disciples and they too must be willing to perform humble tasks for others.

Jesus further says, “No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent Him” (John 13:16). If Jesus is the master sending out the messengers, and His disciples are the servants delivering the messages, we can see how Jesus’ actions and words were an expression of an expectation He set for his disciples. This expectation was that they must be humble in delivering His message, and that their actions must humbly reflect his message. Jesus’ teaching at the Last Supper wasn’t a spoken message per se, but a lesson in how to share his message.

Jesus was not only asking his disciples, but also asking us, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” (John 13:12) Just as Jesus expressed His expectations of humble service to be demonstrated by His disciples, He also expressed those same expectations for everyone believing in Him as Teacher and Lord. Jesus wrapped up his teaching by saying, “Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13:17)

Now is the time ‘to do’ and ‘be blessed’.

Continued on the next page >

HUMILITY

BY CHRIS HEASLEY

Read John 13:1-17

REFLECTION:

Does a person have to be humble full time to be considered a humble person, or just part time? If you're like me, we both need to work on becoming more full time than part time. If I serve others on occasion, does that mean I'm a humble person? I must admit there are times when I'm serving that I do it with a questionable attitude. God sees that attitude even when people don't and it's embarrassing when He steps in, with his perfect timing, and serves me up a big piece of humble pie.

Humbly serving with a positive attitude of joy and thanksgiving is how a humble servant obeys Jesus' expectations expressed at the Last Supper. He directs us to live our lives in service to each other, and that we should be humble in everything we do. I try to be humble, but I fall short of that frequently. I suspect most of us fall into the part time category. This Lenten season we should make it a goal to achieve that full-time category. It will take God's help, but I believe that whoever embarks on this journey will experience great blessings just as Jesus promised!

BONUS RESOURCE

Revisit *Christ in the Passover* with Jeff Morgan to learn more about the Passover Festival!



Find it on YouTube!
youtu.be/XczeabVDYU8



SENT INTO THE WORLD

BY JIM AND LORA DAVENPORT

Read John 17:15-23

In this passage Jesus acknowledges that we, as his followers, should not be isolated from the world and its troubles, but should remain in the world but be protected from the evil one. He is sending his followers into the world but also prays that those who believe in Him be sanctified by the truth (His word).

How often do we pray to be removed from our troubles instead of praying to keep us faithful and strong in them so that others can see His presence in us? When we pray for others, are we praying for short-term results or long-term protection in His love?

Jesus also prays for unity in his followers just like he is in perfect unity with God. The glory that God gave to Jesus is given to his believers so that we may reveal God's love for the world. We should seek connection with other believers but not isolate ourselves so that others can see God's love through us. Today, when you encounter someone, even a non-believer, who is experiencing their own troubles, ask how you can pray for them. You might be surprised by how willing they are to accept your offer.

Jesus offered these prayers just days before his crucifixion. The focus of his prayers is on others and their protection and sanctification even though he knows his own fate. Too often our prayers are focused on our needs instead of being thankful for our blessings and praying for the needs of others.

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank God for this day and his sacrifice during this Lent season.
- Ask for his guidance to be an example of His love in your daily life.
- Ask God to help you recognize a moment today when he puts someone who could use encouragement and prayer in your path.

THE LAST SUPPER

BY BOB AND TINA HOLT CAMP

Read Luke 22:14-20

We can only imagine what Jesus' disciples thought about as they witnessed all the moments leading up to the Passover meal. While any day with Jesus was special to say the least, did they think this Passover meal was going to be even more meaningful? As they reclined at the table, Jesus made it very clear that this Passover meal was going to be of much greater significance than ever before. It was going to be His last Passover meal before He suffered death on the cross. The Passover meal would be transformed into a remembrance of his impending sacrifice, establishing a "new covenant" in his blood, and directing his followers to "Do this in remembrance of me."

For Christians, it replaced the imagery of lambs' blood around the doors of the Israelites homes in Egypt, and defined Jesus as the true Lamb of God who would shed His blood for our sake. This meal established that the body (represented by the bread) and the blood (represented by the fruit of the vine) of Jesus would be for spiritual nourishment until the Kingdom of God fully comes. It signifies a new relationship with God, centered on Jesus Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection, replacing older Jewish rituals with a tangible memorial of His saving act. Jesus says in Luke 22:16 that He "will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." The fulfillment refers to the completion of the Jewish ceremonial law and the inauguration of the New Covenant through his sacrifice.

God's New Covenant gives us the opportunity to be with Him for eternity. Every time we share in communion, representing the Last Supper, we are reminded of Jesus' sacrifice that ushered in His new covenant, allowing us to be His children. We are reminded of how much He loves us and wants a relationship with us. In verse 15, Jesus says, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." This reminds us that He is fervently pursuing us every moment of our lives, just as a shepherd pursues his lost sheep.

We are also cognizant of the fact that, while communion reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice, He was resurrected on the third day, defeating death on the cross. Jesus saves us! He conquers death for us and gives us eternal life with Him because of our faith in Him as our personal Savior and our obedience to His word. Praise God!

In this passage, Jesus asked us to:

Remember. He asked us to remember His life and sacrifice. Remember that He also defeated death and entered into a New Covenant, giving us eternal life.

Act. Just as Jesus was eager to eat the Last Supper with His disciples, be eager to have communion in the presence of our Lord and Savior.

Pray. Make communion a time for spiritual nourishment through prayer.

This day concludes the Lent Season.

TETELESTAI

BY LIZ AND BRUCE CARPENTER

Read John 19:28-30 (Bonus: Psalm 22)

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. — John 19:28-30 (NIV)

In these final moments on the cross, Jesus reveals profound humanity and divine triumph. Physically exhausted, dehydrated from blood loss and hours of agony, He cries, “I am thirsty.” This is no mere complaint — fully human, He shares the depths of suffering we know in our frail bodies. Yet He spoke deliberately, “knowing that everything had now been finished,” to fulfill Scripture (Psalm 69:21). Even in thirst and agony, Jesus remains sovereign, completing God’s prophetic plan of redemption.

The sour wine or hyssop — a bitter, cheap drink — echoes the mockery and rejection Jesus endured. It moistens His lips just enough for one final declaration: “It is finished.”

It is finished in Greek is tetelestai — a single, powerful word meaning “paid in full,” “accomplished,” “completed.” The debt of sin is settled. The sacrifice for humanity’s rebellion is offered once for all. The mission the Father gave to seek and save the lost, to bear the wrath we deserved is triumphantly done. No more is needed; His cross accomplishes eternal redemption.

Jesus’ thirst invites us to reflect on our own spiritual thirst. We chase temporary satisfactions such as success, comfort, approval, or relationships that leave us parched. Yet the One who thirsted on the cross offers living water that satisfies forever (John 4:14). His “It is finished” assures us: forgiveness is secure, access to God restored, hope unshakable.

In this season, we pause to consider what this means for our journey. Jesus’ words call us to rest in His finished work, trusting His grace is sufficient. They also urge us to respond by loving deeply, forgiving freely, and carrying the message of His redemptive work to a weary world.

Continued on the next page >

TETELESTAI

BY LIZ AND BRUCE CARPENTER

Read John 19:28-30 (Bonus: Psalm 22)

Action Points

1. Spend time in quiet prayer naming areas you seek fulfillment apart from God (e.g., success, comfort, approval, relationships). Confess and turn to Him as the true source of fulfillment.
2. Read Psalm 22. Prayerfully identify moments of suffering and hope that point to Jesus.
3. Look for someone “thirsty” around you who is lonely, hurting, or overlooked, and extend simple kindness, reflecting Jesus’ compassion.

Lord, You thirsted on the cross so I might never thirst eternally. Thank You for enduring every agony to fulfill the Father’s will and declare, “It is finished.” Forgive me for seeking satisfaction elsewhere. Your mercy is complete; the cross needs no addition. Quench my soul with Your living water. Help me rest in Your finished work and share Your love with those who thirst. In Your holy name, Amen.

BETWEEN

BY JENNIFER AND DEREK FISHER

Read Psalm 13

Today, the day between the cross and the empty tomb, we wonder what happened and where will this all end up. Thankfully we do know how it ends up in this case, but in our lives we are often left with so many questions and needing to trust God that He has a plan.

Yesterday we remembered the death of the one who seemed to be the promise and today we are left with more questions than answers. Life can feel like this, and for our family the last nine years have felt like we are questioning what happened and wondering what is next. Nine years ago Derek suffered a life-altering stroke that left him unable to talk, walk or do anything for himself. Those first few years were filled with fear for the future.

When a situation seems to be filled with uncertainty and life seems so overwhelming we cry out much like David did in Psalm 13:

- 1: How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2: How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

Here we are 9 years later, and thankfully Derek can walk and talk better than that day, but he continues to have medical issues, falls, and headaches that we deal with, plus the knowledge that there will likely be another stroke in his future. Rather than focusing on that we turn our eyes to God and hold on to a hope and peace that only He can provide.

Instead of despair we trust and remember the final 2 verses of Psalm 13:

5 But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

6 I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me.

When life keeps us in the place of waiting and uncertainty we can choose to live in fear or we can trust God. Throughout these difficult years God has provided us with so much support from family and friends. He has been faithful in all circumstances. When you find yourself in a place of waiting, uncertainty, doubt and fear remember to trust in the Lord and sing His praises. That shift in focus will have such an impact in how you handle the situation.

EASTER SUNDAY

Today the Discover family gathers to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus through worship, prayer, sharing in Communion, hearing God's Word, studying together, and encouraging each other.

Rejoice in this truth from 1 Peter 1:3-9 (NLT):

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

He is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed!

As you reflect on your journey through this book of devotions:

- What truth about God stood out or was strengthened in your mind?
- What did you observe about people — including your own heart and habits?
- What practices is the Holy Spirit prompting you to pursue?
- How have you prayed for others, and how have you brought your own concerns to God?

Prayer prompt: Pause and be still. Reflect on God's steady presence throughout this time of daily devotions, and thank Him for being with you in both the highs and the lows. Ask Him to shape your vision so you see people the way He sees them, and to give you a humble yet courageous spirit to step into opportunities to serve or to enter into spiritual conversations.

Thanks for joining the Discover family in this time of daily devotions. If you missed any days, take the time soon to catch up. Let go of any pressure and receive the gift of God meeting you right where you are.

Join us for more devotionals by adding Discover as "My Church" in the YouVersion Bible App:

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