

The Road Less Traveled

Weekly Devotional Readings and Guides

March 11-16

◇ *For more on Lenten Disciplines, see the box on page three of this study guide.*

Monday, March 11 Read Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

We often pay lip service to our trust in God, enjoying psalms like this one but in truth putting our real trust in our own talents, money, possessions and status. Read this psalm through again and reflect on what real trust and dependence on God might look and feel like for you. Is faith contingent on things going well? _____

How does the psalm describe God and how might that be helpful to your own understanding and faith in God? _____

◇ *Today's suggested Lenten Discipline: Satan uses twists this psalm in order to tempt Jesus. In your prayers today, think about how we sometimes use prayer to manipulate God into doing what we want. Ask God to show you how to pray for what God desires and listen for the answers.*

Tuesday March 12 Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Here the act of giving the tithe is an act of both remembrance and faith. How is that act much more important than the actual thing offered? _____

What does this tell us about our own hearts and approach to giving? _____
_____ Why
is attitude so important here? _____

◇ *Today's suggested Lenten Discipline: Prayer specifically today for your heart of giving. Do you tithe? If not, share with God why not. Discuss with God the things that tend to limit your own generosity. Listen throughout the day for His answers.*

Wednesday, March 13 Read Luke 4:1-13

Notice the nature of Jesus' temptations here: physical satisfaction (bread), power (kingdoms) and security (angels to protect). What do those perceived needs look like in your life? _____

On a deeper level Satan tempts Jesus to put serving himself first. Reflect on how many of your choices can be boiled down to a choice between getting what you want and think you need and what God desires and calls us to. _____



Today's suggested Lenten Discipline: In your prayers today, make a list of your top temptations for physical satisfaction, power/control and security and ask God to show you how to turn these over to Him.

Thursday, March 14 Read Romans 10:8b-13

Paul is referring to Deuteronomy 30:14 which is a call to turn back to God in trust, knowing that God is always present. God doesn't need to be convinced to love us or wait for proof of our devotion but God does need us to want His presence, and not simply through lip service.

How do we often separate *ourselves* from the closeness God offers? _____
_____ How can we ask Him in with our whole selves?

◇ *Today's suggested Lenten Discipline: Start today's prayer time by listing blessings and answered prayers. Prayerfully reflect on how these things can remind us of God's closeness and call us to put more trust in Him. Be sure to say 'thank you' for each of these blessings.*

Friday, March 15 Read Deuteronomy 6:1-15

How does this Great Commandment incorporate themes you've read this week about trust, temptation and keeping God first? _____

Reflect on human nature as you've experienced it and why do you think this is the most important commandment (as Jesus points out in Matthew 22)? _____

_____ What are some of the other 'gods' that draw us away from v.4 and why? _____

◇ *Today's suggested Lenten Discipline: Look back on your blessings and recall times when you have forgotten them and only seen the lack. For the day, memorize vv.4-9 and repeat them in prayer throughout the day.*

Sermon notes for

"Irritating the GPS"

Luke 4:1-13

1. Sin (and subsequent temptation) is rooted in putting ourselves before God and others.

2. Discipleship is about learning to see ourselves as God's instruments for His Kingdom.

3. Disciplined prayer is essential for connecting us to God's purposes.

Saturday, March 16 Read Psalm 25:1-10

Look at v.9. Why is humility such an essential part of the life of faith and how does that characteristic help us choose the path God has for us? _____

_____ Why is humility so difficult for so many of us? As you have gone through this week, reflect on how a disciplined prayer life can help us "take a back seat" to God.

Today's suggested Lenten Discipline: In your prayer time today, list some ways you find yourself putting yourself first. It could be in your expectations of others or a desire to be pleased. Hint: If you ever begin a phrase with 'All I want is...' then there could be a need for some humble confession. Ask God to show you ways to alter such attitudes.



Lenten Disciplines

Week #1: Choosing to Pray

“Rejoice always,” the Apostle Paul reminds us, “pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).” Prayer is God’s gift to us as a means of communication, instruction and increased relationship. Yet too many of us either don’t pray at all or reduce it some empty ritual or occasional platitude. To choose to pray is to intentionally seek God with mind and spirit and to prime ourselves to hear his response.

Each day of this week offers a suggested prayer activity designed to nurture a deeper prayer life. Here are a few more suggestions.

1. Increase the time you spend in prayer, adding some time to just listen.
2. Develop an ACTS model for prayer: Begin with **A**doration of God, then humbly share with God where you have failed to be Christ-like in a heart-felt **C**onfession. Next intentionally name that for which you are **T**hankful. Finally, share with God your **S**upplications, your desires and requests.
3. Memorize a scripture (perhaps the Romans 10 from Thursday or the Psalm 25 reading from Saturday), and pray over it throughout the week. What did God show you?

Small Group Discussion Guide

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-15 and share your answers to the questions from Friday’s reading, then discuss the following:

Given your readings this week, why do you suppose this is considered the “greatest commandment(see Matthew 22:37-38)”?

2. Look at the temptations Jesus faced in Luke 4:1-13. In Sunday’s sermon, it was suggested that these temptations represent our core desires of physical satisfaction, power and spiritual security. In your group, discuss the following:

- Do you agree with this understanding of temptation? What are some of the ways these core temptation play out in your life?
- While these needs are not bad in themselves, how do they draw us away from God? What are some ways we can avoid falling into such temptations?
- Discuss the rest of the questions from Wednesday. Do you agree that sin is really about putting ourselves first? Why or why not?

3. Reflect on the spiritual discipline of prayer that you were challenged with this week. Share some of your prayer experiences with your group. What do you think is meant by “disciplined prayer?” How does such a practice help combat our tendency to drift away from God?