



AN EASTER JOURNEY

*Look up, and be alert to what is going on
around Christ—that's where the action is.*

See things from his perspective.

Colossians 3:2 (MSG)

**A devotional guide to prepare your heart for the
Easter season.**





CONTENTS

What in the World is Lent and Why Should I Care?

(Spoiler Alert: it's not what you find in the dryer!)

In this guide, you will find various suggestions and ideas for you to practice during the season of Lent (roughly 40 days leading up to Easter), to help prepare your heart for the Easter celebration.

Option One: “Self-Examination Method of Prayer”

Option Two: “Prayerful Bible Reading Method”

Option Three: Using The Lord’s Prayer as a Model of Prayer

Option Four: Read Through the Entire Gospel of John

Option Five: “Digital Detox”

Option Six: Plan Your Own Easter Journey





WHAT IN THE WORLD IS LENT AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

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Lent is a term that describes a season of the year in which Christians voluntarily choose to grow in their faith and to embrace the discipline of self-denial. Lent has been practiced by many Christians around the world since the 4th Century. It begins on Ash Wednesday (March 6) and ends on Easter Sunday (April 21).

During Lent, Christians typically fast from certain items or foods, or they choose to concentrate on growing in certain life disciplines that are important teachings in the Bible. There are no hard and fast rules about Lent. It is simply a season of time to concentrate intentionally on maturing as a Jesus-follower.





SELF-EXAMINATION METHOD

An ancient and proven method of self-examination and prayer still exists today and is quite encouraging, simple, and helpful for people who are committed to cultivating a healthy prayer life. This method has four steps which usually take about 10-15 minutes, although there is no set amount of time required or recommended. It is up to your own pace.

Step 1: Ask God for “light”.

We want to look at our day through God’s eyes, not merely our own. Pray that God will help you to see neighbors and situations from God’s perspective. Pray for wisdom for the issues that are challenging you.

Step 2: Give thanks.

Take some time to consider that this day is a gift from God. Be grateful for it. Reflect on at least five things for which you are thankful and express your thanksgiving to God.


Step 3: Review the day.

In the morning, consider the day ahead. Consider that there may be interruptions which may actually turn into opportunities to serve God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you guidance and discernment about how you schedule your day and deal with problems which may arise.

In the evening, look back on the day completed. Thank God for opportunities to serve God and others.

Step 4: Face your shortcomings.

Ask God to forgive you of your sins. Accept God’s forgiveness and be thankful for another chance to serve God effectively.





PRAYERFUL BIBLE READING METHOD

Another tried and true method of Bible reading can be done both individually and in a small group. If done in a small group, a facilitator selects a Bible verse or passage and leads the group in the following steps.

Step 1: Get still.

Take a few moments to be restful, still, quiet, and to focus on God.

Step 2: Reading

Read the given verse/passage slowly. What are some key words or phrases that strike you?

Step 3: Prayer

Talk to God silently about the passage you just heard or read. Tell him your thoughts and interpretation and ask God to make the meaning clear and helpful to you. Listen for God's response.

Step 4: Meditate on the passage and share.

Take a moment to think seriously about the passage/verse. If in a group, individuals may share their interpretation of how God is speaking to them.

Step 5: Action

Consider the practical steps you can take in living out the passage/verse.





PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer, or Model Prayer, was taught and enacted by Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:9-13). The prayer is simple without being simplistic.

It is also a model by which we can structure our prayer times for maximum effectiveness and clarity. Below you will find the phrases of the Lord's Prayer and the phrases' meanings for your use.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Recognize that God is our Creator, not a creature. God is, however, personable and loving. We then should pray in reverence and in personal, relational terms. Ask God to make himself known and glorified in the world today.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The Kingdom of God is the rule of God, or that which disrupts and overthrows Satanic and evil influences. Our entire allegiance is owed to Christ the King in this kingdom. Pray then that God's kingdom would break into your sphere of influence. Ask that his will would be accomplished and submit yourself to God's will.

Give us today our daily bread.

Pray for spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being for your neighbors and yourself.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Consider your relationships with others. How is your life in service to a neighbor reflective or not of Jesus? Ask God for forgiveness of your sin in relation to the *reconciliation* and forgiveness you give to others.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Ask God to help you recognize temptation and to enable you to use wisdom and knowledge to flee sin and Satanic influences.



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Reading plan for March 3 - April 21

March 3-9 (Week 1)

John 1:1-18
John 1:19-34
John 1:35-51
John 2:1-12
John 2:13-25
John 3:1-21
John 3:22-36

March 31-April 6 (Week 6)

John 12:1-19
John 12:20-50
John 13:1-20
John 13:21-38
John 14:1-14
John 14:15-31
John 15:1-17

March 10-16 (Week 2)

John 4:1-26
John 4:27-42
John 4:43-54
John 5:1-18
John 5:19-46
John 6:1-21
John 6:22-59

April 7-13 (Week 7)

John 15:18-27
John 16:1-15
John 16:16-33
John 17:1-19
John 17:20-26
John 18:1-11
John 18:12-25

March 17-23 (Week 3)

John 6:60-71
John 7:1-24
John 7:25-44
John 7:45-8:11
John 8:12-30
John 8:31-59
John 9:1-12

April 14-20 (Week 8)

John 18:26-38
John 18:39-19:16
John 19:17-30
John 19:31-42
John 20:1-18
John 20:19-31
John 21:1-14

March 24-30 (Week 4)

John 9:13-34
John 9:35-10:6
John 10:7-21
John 10:22-42
John 11:1-27
John 11:28-44
John 11:45-57

April 21 (Easter Sunday)

John 21:15-25



DIGITAL DETOX

A 30 Day Challenge (March 22-April 21)

During this challenge, you may choose to spend the time that would have been used focusing on technology to build spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible reading, meditation, etc.) or to reconnect in the physical world around you.

Day 1: Pay attention each time that you feel an impulse to check your devices/computer. If it is unnecessary to check your device at the time, keep your device put away.

Day 2: Refrain from using your device/computer when socializing or interacting with people in public/family/outside of work.

Day 3: Store your device/computer out of sight when it's not in use. Do not hold a device in your hand or put it in your pocket.

Day 4: Refrain from using any device/computer for at least the first hour after you wake up. If your device serves as an alarm clock, then treat it as such without checking any messages.

Day 5: Refrain from using any device/computer for at least an hour before you go to bed.

Day 6: Turn off all alerts after a certain hour of day (i.e after work hours) except for an alarm clock function if needed.

Day 7: Refrain from using your device in public.

Day 8: Name four simple recreational activities that bring you pleasure without using a device or computer. Pick one of the four activities to accomplish today. Engage in the other three on subsequent weeks.

Day 9: Refrain from using your device in any line (store, restaurant, etc.).

Day 10: Refrain from using any technology in your car other than the radio.





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Day 11: Refrain from using your device while waiting for something / someone.

Day 12: Make your bathroom a tech-free zone.

Day 13: Begin to set aside 15-20 minutes a day for reading the Bible and praying.

Day 14: Refrain from using technology when you are walking or driving.

Day 15: Remove all computers and tech devices from your bedroom for better sleep.

Day 16: Set aside a three-hour block of time when you will be tech-free.

Day 17: Refrain from using technology while exercising, unless using music.

Day 18: Refrain from using the internet to find non-work-related information (i.e. the name of an actor you forgot).

Day 19: Refrain from using tech while cooking or during mealtimes.

Day 20: Refrain from using tech while outside or in nature.





DIGITAL DETOX

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Day 21: Commit to at least one tech-free day a month. Consider committing to at least one tech free day a week!

Day 22: Plan your next vacation or outing to be tech free for a significant part of your trip (unless work absolutely has to be done).

Day 23: Refrain from using your device/computer around your children. If you do not have children, then refrain using around your pets.

Day 24: Take a half-hour tech-free walk outside.

Day 25: Spend at least ten minutes in the day resting, doing nothing but sitting still and being quiet.


Day 26: Send an encouraging handwritten letter or card to a friend.

Day 27: Plan to call someone or spend time with a friend rather than text or email.

Day 28: Write down three things that you are grateful for today that aren't tech based.

Day 29: Set aside three different 15-minute segments of your day to pray.

Day 30: Have a TV/movie-free day when you don't watch Netflix, Apple TV, etc. Instead read or do fun outdoor activities.





PERSONALIZED PLAN

Get creative! How do you plan to prepare your heart for the upcoming Easter celebration? There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to spiritual growth. Are you committing to one of the previous mentioned methods or perhaps a combination of two or three of those listed above? Would you prefer to come up with a plan all on your own? Use the space below to map out your own personalized Easter Journey.

Step 1: Set the date.
My Easter Journey will begin on _____.

Step 2: Map it out.
During this time I commit to:

Step 3: Know your goals:
My goal in this season is to gain/grow/understand/learn/etc.:

Step 4: Do it!

Step 5: Reflect
How did you do? How do you feel? Will you adopt any of these habits during the rest of the year? What are your next steps?

