



# FAMILY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

2019



bethany | community church



HE  
EMPTIED  
HIMSELF,  
TAKING ON  
THE FORM  
OF A SERVANT

# INTRODUCTION

## THE HISTORY OF LENT

For a long time the church has celebrated Lent in the weeks just before Easter. It's meant to help us prepare ourselves to celebrate Easter well. Often, people like to fast from things during Lent or focus on being extra kind. The very first Lent was when Jesus and his disciples hiked from Galilee about a hundred miles all the way to Jerusalem. They were going there for Jesus to die.

Jesus knew, though, that his disciples didn't understand why he had to die. On their long walk, he taught them all about how God wants us to take care of other people before we take care of ourselves. Jesus was dying because that's what he had to do to take care of us. In this Lenten devotional, there are lessons for each week and then one each for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. By reading this devotional, we are walking with Jesus and his disciples and learning with them. We are getting ready to remember how Jesus died for us just like Jesus was getting his disciples ready to understand that his sacrifice was for the whole world, all people for all time.

Our goal with this devotional is for everyone in the family to understand the sacrifice of Jesus – and the new life that Jesus offers to us, too! We think it is best if parents will read the devotions with their kids. We hope that this devotional will help your family prepare together to remember Jesus's death and resurrection and to grow together as disciples of Jesus.

## THE FORMAT

Take some time to read the passage with your family (and perhaps have older kids help read the scripture, too). Then, read through the devotional provided. Before sharing the prayer together (and again, perhaps having one of the kids read it...or read it all together as a family), ask your family about the ONE THING that each person will remember about the scripture and devotional reading.

# LENT WEEK ONE

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 8:22-9:1

Once, when Jesus healed a blind man, it didn't happen right away. It took two times of Jesus touching the man's eyes for the healing to work.

The first time the man could see, but not very clearly. He said that all the people looked like trees! After the second try it worked! Now that is important to remember. The man saw things, but not the right way, so Jesus had to help him a second time.

Shortly after that, Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he really was. Was he just a smart teacher or a really nice man or maybe something more? Peter answered that he was the Messiah; that special person the Bible talked about who would save them.

Jesus told Peter he was right and that because of this he had to go to Jerusalem where the important leaders would laugh at him and beat him and then kill him. Peter tried to convince Jesus that he shouldn't go. That was because Peter and all the disciples didn't understand and thought that Jesus would save them by becoming the king and being in charge of everything. They were being just like the blind man who saw things but not correctly.

Jesus had to help them understand that, even though he was strong enough to become king, that was not how they needed to be saved. To see Jesus the right way, they needed to understand that he had to act weak and allow himself to be hurt and killed so they, and all of us, could have a life-giving relationship with God! (As well as be forgiven for the wrong things we do.) Even though Jesus was actually God, he had to die and then come back to life to be able to fix everything.

Like Peter and the other disciples, we all need Jesus to help us see things the right way.

RESPONSE PRAYER:

*God, help us to see and understand your kingdom correctly. Help us not to worry about being first or best, but instead to please you by doing what is best for other people.*

# LENT WEEK TWO

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 9:2-10

Think of someone you know that you *really* admire. Got it? Now how would it feel if you were with them out in the middle of nowhere and they just started *glowing super bright*? That would be strange enough but NOW, what if your two greatest heroes from history appeared and were glowing right there with your first person? I would totally freak out!

That's how Peter, James and John felt when they went up to the top of a mountain with Jesus. When they got to the top, Jesus began to glow and get as bright as a bolt of lightning. Then all of a sudden Moses and Elijah appeared and were talking with Jesus. It was so overwhelming that they didn't know what to do.

So Peter (of course Peter, who often spoke before thinking) says, "Hey Jesus, we should make special tents for each of you guys. You know, to sort of make this special...or something..." Then God covered them with a cloud (maybe to get Peter to stop talking?) and says, "This is my Son...*LISTEN TO HIM!*"

God wants *us* to listen to Jesus too. It's so easy to do the first thing we think of and not stop, pray, read our Bibles and think what would GOD want us to do. But that is exactly what Jesus wants from us. AND once we learn to check in with God more often, we get better at loving people and listening to them, as well as loving and listening to God! It doesn't make life perfect, but it's sure a lot better!

### RESPONSE QUESTION & PRAYER:

***Can you think of a situation in your life where you could stop to listen to God better? If you can, talk to God about it and ask God to help you to listen better to the Holy Spirit.***



# LENT WEEK THREE

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 9:30-37

Have you ever tried to tell someone about something important and realized that they weren't listening and didn't really care? This happened to Jesus. He was traveling with his disciples to Jerusalem and telling them that when they got to the Holy City he was going to be hated and killed, but that after three days he would come back to life. Because this was so different from what they were expecting to happen, the disciples didn't understand and were too embarrassed to ask Jesus what he was talking about.

Jesus was telling his closest friends about the hardest and most important part of his life, but he could tell that they weren't really paying attention. Instead, they had started talking about themselves and who was most important. That probably made Jesus feel very alone and frustrated!

So, then Jesus had a child come and join them. Now, back then children were not considered very important and grown-up men didn't pay much attention to them until they became young grown-ups. Jesus was trying to teach his friends that if they wanted to be great and important in God's way, they should care more about other people than themselves—even children! To God, treating everybody as important is what makes God most happy and makes us great!

### RESPONSE PRAYER:

***Father, help us to not worry about being important. Instead, help us to show and tell our friends how important and great You are!***

# LENT WEEK FOUR

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 10:17-27

All of us, at least some of the time, want to only do as little as possible, not as much as we can. Like when we have to pick up our things or clean our rooms; we only want to do what we have to do, not the best we can do. We ask; “Is that enough?” instead of “Is there any more I can do?”

Jesus met a young man who was like this. You can read about him in Mark 10:17-27. He was a nice person and well behaved and Jesus liked him. But the young man, who was very rich, wanted Jesus to tell him if there was anything else he *needed* to do to go to heaven. He didn’t ask if there was more he *could* do to please God.

Now, Jesus knew that this man would become even better (actually experience God’s best for himself, God’s calling to be generous) if he gave away all his money to the poor people and then worked for Jesus. So that is what Jesus told the man. But the man went away sad because he thought his money made him important to other people and he wasn’t willing to give that up. So, he went away and missed out on being the best and happiest person he could be.

When Jesus died on the cross, he gave up everything for us because he knew that was best, even though it was the hardest thing for him to do. When we follow Jesus, sometimes we will need to do what is the best for other people instead of ourselves. It may be very hard to do but it will make us the best and happiest people God wants us to be!

### RESPONSE PRAYER:

*Jesus, we want to be the special and useful people you want us to be. Help us to be like You and to listen to you when you tell us how to be better.*

# LENT WEEK FIVE

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 10:32-45

Have you ever *really* wanted your mom or dad to say, “Yes” to something but were afraid they would say, “No?” James and John felt that way when they asked Jesus if they could have the two most important places in heaven, so they tried to get him to say, “Yes” before they asked! (Warning: both Jesus and parents are too smart to fall for that ploy!)

Do you know the real reasons James and John were feeling uncomfortable about their question? Well first, they really knew it was a very selfish request! The whole way to Jerusalem, Jesus has been talking about how important it is to think of other people as more important than ourselves and to always try to serve God by helping other people.

Listen to some of the things they heard Jesus teach on this Journey:

- “Sell everything that you have and give it all to the poor.”
- “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

So, do you think that it was a good idea for James and John to ask Jesus to let them sit in the most important places in heaven? That’s pretty selfish!

*Plus*, if you read verses 32-34 again, you’ll see that Jesus just shared with them some seriously scary news. If you came to your best friend and told them something you were really worried and scared about, something you hadn’t told anyone else, and all they did was ask you for something dumb, like “Cool, can I play with your Xbox now?” How would that make you feel? It would make me feel pretty bad! I would feel like they didn’t even care for me at all.

James and John still hadn’t learned Jesus’ lesson about the most important people being the ones who help others. It’s a hard lesson for all

of us to learn! Do you think they'll learn it eventually?

Do you think you and I will? I think we can! It takes time and work and patience. But the really cool thing is, just like with James and John, Jesus will *never* get so frustrated with us that he gives up on us. He will *always* forgive us when we make mistakes. And he will *always, always* love us.

RESPONSE PRAYER:

*Let's pray and thank Jesus for always being there for us and ask him to help us learn to think of other people's needs before our own... like he did.*

# LENT WEEK SIX

## Our Scripture Focus: Mark 10:46-52

A blind man sees while seeing men are blind! That seems all backwards, but it really happened. Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho and heading for Jerusalem. They were surrounded by a large crowd of people who wanted to be near the exciting, famous Jesus! Jesus had been trying to teach his disciples that if you want to be great for God you must learn to care for others more than yourself.

But it seems that they still hadn't learned that lesson because when the poor, shabby, unimportant beggar named Bartimaeus cries out for Jesus' help, they tried to shush him. They still haven't "seen" what Jesus has been trying to teach them. But that didn't stop Bartimaeus!

He kept calling out as loud as he could and he did something surprising; he kept calling Jesus the Son of David. In those days that was a way of saying Jesus was the Messiah, the person God would send whom everybody was waiting for. Even though he was blind and had never met Jesus before, Bartimaeus could "see" who Jesus really was and that is why he knew Jesus would be able to help him.

Most of the crowd and the men who read their Bibles all the time still didn't realize just who Jesus really was. They were still "blind" and only thinking about themselves. We can learn from their mistakes and do better than that. We can pay attention to the things Jesus taught that are in our Bibles and we can remember to treat others the way we would want them to treat us!

### RESPONSE PRAYER:

*Dear Jesus, don't let us be blind like the people who tried to shush Bartimeus because they didn't think he mattered. Help us to see everyone the way you see them and treat them like they are just as important to you as we are.*



# HOLY WEEK

# LENT, PALM SUNDAY

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 11:1-25

What a great day! Everything seemed to just go right! First, some people Jesus didn't even know loaned him a brand new, never been ridden on, donkey. Some other people made a saddle for Jesus using their own shirts and cloaks. I'm glad it was a warm day! Then more people even laid their own cloaks on the dirty ground so Jesus could ride into Jerusalem on his own road! Lots of people added to it using palm branches and other plants with big leaves.

Everybody was shouting and laughing and talking about how this was it; the start of a great new time when Jesus would be king and bad people would be kicked out and life would be better than ever! The only people who weren't excited were the Pharisees. But they're always grouchy unless they were bossing someone around.

But then it all kind of fizzled. Everybody thought Jesus would just ride up to Herod's palace and kick him out with all of his mean soldiers. Instead, he went to the temple and just sort of looked around and then he left quietly with his disciples. They spent the night in a little town a couple of miles away.

But the next morning was pretty exciting! Jesus came back and went into the temple again, but this time he had a whip! And he began shouting at those lying money changers about how they were making his Father's house of prayer into a den of robbers. He even knocked over their tables with all the coins that scattered all over. Then he let loose all the animals, including the birds. You never saw such a wild frenzy in your life! So much for meek and mild!

All the regular people loved it! It was about time somebody did something about those cheaters. But the Pharisees were so mad they

all turned purple and started talking to each other about killing Jesus. They hated him that much.

Why do you think that Jesus did what he did? I mean, he could have walked right in and become king. All the regular people would have supported him. Instead he took on the most powerful leaders that none of us could do anything about. And instead of becoming king, he started a chain of events that eventually got him killed within a week. He had been talking a lot about how, if you want to be the leader you have to act like the servant and take care of the people around you. Maybe this is what he was talking about.

RESPONSE PRAYER:

*Jesus, you could have taken the easy way and become a regular king. Instead you took the hard way and did what was best for us and became our savior and lord. Help us to do what is best for others the way you did so we can be the worthwhile people you created us to be.*



# LENT, MAUNDY THURSDAY

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 14:1-72

We all want to be strong and good and do what is right. Yet we all fail at times. Peter, in his strength, swore to Jesus, whom he loved more than anyone else on earth, that he would never, ever desert Jesus, that he would die first rather than abandon this man he loved. Peter knew Jesus was the holy Son of God. He had seen Jesus heal the sick and crippled and blind. He had seen Jesus control the weather, cast out evil spirits, and raise people from the dead. He had seen Jesus shining with power like a bolt of lightning!

But now, in this dark, deserted garden, Peter saw his hero in distress and sorrow, being crushed by the dread of what lay ahead and the unseen weight of all the sin of all mankind forever. And when the mob seized his lord and best friend, he ran. Later, he would even swear that he never knew this man.

We have all failed, at times, to do the good we meant to do. Jesus, by whom all things were created and for whom all things were created, understands the weakness in us all. He himself was in an agony facing what lay ahead. He felt the crushing darkness of all the sin being laid on him. He knew the physical and spiritual pain he was entering into. He could have run. He could have said “No!”.

But Jesus never wavered, never hesitated, would not run away. The God of all chose to be the servant of all. In strength, he chose weakness, in goodness, he chose to become sin for us. He would not yield to the darkness or temptation, but did what was right because he loves us.

RESPONSE PRAYER:

*Our Lord Jesus, forgive us when we aren't as faithful to you as you are to us. By the power of Your Holy Spirit in us, help us to be the servant people you want us to be.*

# LENT, GOOD FRIDAY

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 15:1-39

Have you ever done “Worst and Best” with your family? Lots of families do it. Everyone takes turns saying what the worst thing that happened that day was and also the best thing. What if Jesus could have done Worst and Best at the end of Good Friday?

“Jesus, what was Your worst and best today?”

“Well, it started pretty bad because the night before all my closest friends ran away and left me. Then some angry men took me to a big house where they shouted at me and hit me. Then this morning they all took me to the Governor and shouted that I should be killed. The Governor didn’t really want to do that, but they kept shouting so much that he finally gave in. But first he had me whipped over and over again and then he gave me to some soldiers who made fun of me and punched me a lot. It was really really bad!”

“Then a worse part came when they made me walk out of the city and up a hill where they actually hammered nails through my wrists and feet to hang me on a huge cross. It was horrible because every part of my body hurt more than ever and I was thirsty and those same angry men were there laughing at me. One good thing though was that my mom and some of her friends were there; that made me feel better.”

“Then the final, worst thing happened. Right before I died I felt all the wrong and bad things that have ever been done piled on top of me and it was crushing me and then God left me all alone. That was the worst thing ever. It was worse than actually dying.”

“But all that made it so the best thing ever happened! It was like I heard a loud ripping sound and all that horrible stuff piled on top of

me just disappeared and God was back, hugging me, and I knew that I had won the greatest battle ever and made it so every person could be back with God again, just like always.”

REPONSE PRAYER:

*Lord Jesus, thank You for going through the worst things ever so we could have the best things ever, so we could have your forgiveness and your never ending love!*

# EASTER

## Our Scripture focus: Mark 16:1-8

It's early Sunday morning. The sun is just coming up and the three women who had followed Jesus to watch him die on the cross, who wept for him and followed Joseph of Arimathea to see where he was buried; these women are now sadly going to the tomb where Jesus's body was laid.

In those days, when someone you loved died, you would spread special oils and ointments on their body to prepare them to be buried. There hadn't been time on Friday because, according to Jewish law, you couldn't do *any* kind of work between sundown on Friday and sundown on Saturday.

So now Mary, Mary and Salome have brought their ointments to do this last loving act for the teacher they had loved. One of them asks, "Who will roll the big stone away that they put in front of the tomb?" The others shake their heads but keep on walking. They are determined to show their love for Jesus in this way.

When they get to the tomb, they look at the entrance and the stone has already been moved! Wondering what could be going on, they look in the entrance and there's a guy dressed all in white sitting in there. What is going on!?

While they are still in shock, he says, "Oh, you're looking for Jesus, aren't you? He's not here because *he's alive!* Look over here where they laid his body. He's gone! So go now and tell his friends that he'll meet them in Galilee, just like he said he would."

The Bible says, "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb." Today we would more likely say: "AAAHHH!!!!"

The women ran out of the tomb scared to death. They didn't tell anyone because they were so scared!

That's where the Gospel of Mark ends the Easter story. At first read, that seems really weird, doesn't it? We know from the other gospels that the women did eventually get enough nerve to go deliver their message. We know that the disciples did go to Galilee and see Jesus alive. So why didn't Mark tell us about that really wonderful stuff?

Mark wrote his gospel knowing people like you and me would be reading it. Yes, the disciples did get to see the risen Jesus with their own eyes...and it was beyond cool! But you and I, we have to trust their word that Jesus is alive again. We have to trust and obey. So Mark shows us that the women had to trust the angel (the guy with the white clothes) and follow his directions before they could really *know* Jesus was alive. The disciples had to believe the women and obey their directions before they could really understand that Jesus was alive and that he wanted them to tell the whole world about God's love.

Now it's our turn. Jesus really died and really came back to life. If we follow him, allowing him to live in our hearts and teach us to serve others *before* taking care of ourselves, to be kind to *everyone*, even that weird kid at school that no one likes, then we will really truly know with our whole being that...

# JESUS IS ALIVE!!!

and living in our hearts today. And that is absolutely, beyond the shadow of a doubt **the BEST news in the whole wide world!!**





  
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