

# THE 40

## WHAT IS IT?

A calendar for families to connect with one another and grow in faith during the 40 days of Lent. *(Just in case you are wondering, Sundays are traditionally not included in the 40.)*

## WHEN DOES OUR FAMILY USE IT?

February 14 - March 29

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

The 40 is divided into 6 sections. Each section has a different focus with a related set of activities to be completed as a family.

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO USE THE 40

*(choose one, two, or all of the options):*

Use the focus and Scripture for each week as a family devotion.  
Complete as many of the daily activities as your schedule allows.  
Choose something to give up or do without individually or as a family.

**FOCUS:** God should be most important in my life.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 6:31-33

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WEEK OF  
FEBRUARY  
14-21

Okay. So you're probably wondering a couple of things. First, what is Lent? What does it mean to fast? And why would anyone want anything to do with either?

Lent is the 40 days leading up to Easter—the day we celebrate the sacrifice Jesus made by giving His life on the cross so that we could be in God's family forever and His resurrection from the dead.

During these 40 days, some Jesus followers choose to make a sacrifice, too—by giving up something they enjoy to honor and remember what Jesus did for us. Another word for this is *fasting*.

But Lent isn't just about taking something away. It's about adding, too. You *add* extra focus on your relationship with God by praying, reading the Bible, or serving others—anything that grows your faith.

Whether you celebrate Lent or not, the 40 days leading up to Easter is the perfect time to reflect on what Jesus has done for us and bring an intentionality to this important season.

Before your family begins The 40, sit down together and consider doing without something like a food item or technology time. Talk about it now as a family and decide if you'd like to replace the time you would have spent (related to that item) with the daily activities below.

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## ACTIVITIES

**THURSDAY, 2/15**

Make a plan for what you will do with the extra time you have from giving something up. That plan should include ways to grow your faith.

**FRIDAY, 2/16**

Write down 10-20 names on strips of paper and put them in a jar. Each remaining evening of Lent, take turns drawing a name and praying for that person before bed. Return the name each night, knowing you'll pray for some people more than once.

**SATURDAY, 2/17**

Make today a screen-free day. During the time your family would typically use technology, challenge one another to memorize this Scripture: *"Love the Lord your God with all your soul. Love Him with all your mind and all your strength"* (Mark 12:30 NIRV).

**MONDAY, 2/19**

Any time you wait in line, let one person behind you pass ahead of you.

**TUESDAY, 2/20**

Thank God for your clothes and shoes and put them away neatly before you go to bed. If your closet or drawers are a mess, spend some time organizing them.

**WEDNESDAY, 2/21**

Tell God thanks every time you eat or drink—even if it's a snack or a sip of water.

**FOCUS:** I am better when I don't put my needs first.  
**SCRIPTURE:** John 3:30; Philippians 2:5-7

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WEEK OF  
FEBRUARY  
22-28

The word *sacrifice* means to give up something we want for the sake of something or someone else. It doesn't sound really fun, does it? But sacrifice is important. God wants us to be people who love others more than we love ourselves. And one way we do that is through sacrifice—through putting other people's needs before our own needs.

Did you know that sacrificing can actually feel good? That's because God created us to be people who serve and give. And when we do that, when we sacrifice, it makes us happier, more satisfied people.

It's easy to only concentrate on ourselves—on what we think we need or what we want. But this week, make an effort to think about others, first.

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## ACTIVITIES

**THURSDAY, 2/22**

Fill a bag with things to donate to a charity or second-hand store.

**FRIDAY, 2/23**

Buy someone's meal or share a snack with a friend.

**SATURDAY, 2/24**

Declare today "No Complaining Day." Decide what each of you has to do each time you complain. (For example: 10 jumping jacks, pay \$1.00 to the family vacation fund, or add a chore to their to-do list.)

**MONDAY, 2/26**

Make a list of 3 things you can do to put others first (at home, in your neighborhood, at work, at school, in your family) and share it at the dinner table.

**TUESDAY, 2/27**

Draw a picture or write an encouraging note and leave it in a public place for someone to find.

**WEDNESDAY, 2/28**

Help one of your parents or siblings with their chores.

**FOCUS:** God is always ready to forgive me.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 John 1:5-10; Psalm 51

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WEEK OF  
MARCH

1-7

Everybody messes up. We do things we know we're not supposed to, or we don't do things we know we *are* supposed to. There's another word for these mess-ups—*sin*. Romans 3:23 says: *"Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory"* (NIRV). In other words, everyone is going to mess up. Everyone is going to sin.

Knowing this, God made a way for us to get forgiveness—He sent His son, Jesus. Jesus died on the cross so that we could have forgiveness for our sins. He exchanged His perfect life for our sin, so that we could be in God's family forever.

All we have to do is ask—to *repent*. We ask God to forgive us *and* we change our actions. And God will forgive us over and over and over again.

Spend this week thanking God for His forgiveness.

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## ACTIVITIES

**THURSDAY, 3/1**

Start your prayers off this week with repentance—asking God for forgiveness and committing to changing your actions.

**FRIDAY, 3/2**

Is there anyone you're angry with? Someone you need to forgive? Write their name down on paper. Then, as a sign of your forgiveness to them, rip up the paper and throw it away.

**SATURDAY, 3/3**

Do you need to tell someone you're sorry? Take time today to ask for their forgiveness.

**MONDAY, 3/5**

Is there something you feel guilty about or something you did that you wish you could go back and do differently? Choose one person to confess to. Ask them to pray with you as you ask God for forgiveness.

**TUESDAY, 3/6**

Think of someone you have a hard time getting along with and write down three things you like about them.

**WEDNESDAY, 3/7**

Find a cross, a picture of a cross, or draw a cross. Spend a few minutes thinking about how Jesus suffered for our sins. Thank Him for His sacrifice.

**FOCUS:** I can have courage and strength because of what Jesus did for me.

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 11:1-18; John 12:12-50;  
John 13

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WEEK OF  
MARCH  
8-14

The week of Jesus' crucifixion started with a street party. Okay, maybe not an actual party—but definitely a lot of excitement.

After being away with His friends, Jesus returned to the city of Jerusalem. When the people heard He was coming, they flooded the streets. They took off their coats and spread them on the road in front of Jesus. Others cut branches from trees and spread them on the road, too. They were shouting Jesus' name and proclaiming Him as their king.

But not everyone loved Jesus. In fact, there were some religious leaders who didn't like Him at all. Some were jealous of Him. Some were worried that Jesus would become too important. Others simply didn't believe Jesus was God's Son.

Eventually, these would be the very people who had Jesus killed.

The night before Jesus was arrested, He went to a garden to pray. He knew what was coming . . . and He wanted to talk to God about it. "Father," Jesus prayed, "If you are willing, take this cup of suffering away from me. But do what you want, not what I want" (Luke 22:42 NIRV).

Jesus was *suffering*. But He also knew God's way was best.

This week, take some time to think about how Jesus must have felt His last week of life on Earth. He knew the pain—physical and emotional—that was to come, but His trust in God was bigger than His fear, and He gave His life for you and for me.

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## ACTIVITIES

### THURSDAY, 3/8

As a family, talk about what it means to suffer. Who are some people in our world today who are suffering? Spend time praying for them before bed.

### FRIDAY, 3/9

Have everyone share one thing they need courage to do. As a family, pray and ask God to give you the same courage He gave Jesus.

### SATURDAY, 3/10

Do one thing today that requires courage. Thank God for being with you.

### MONDAY, 3/12

Has your fear ever been bigger than your courage? Talk to your family about it, and share some ways you could focus on your courage instead of giving in to fear.

### TUESDAY, 3/13

Any time you're in a car or on the bus today, spend that time in prayer, thanking Jesus for His sacrifice for us.

### WEDNESDAY, 3/14

Write down the following Bible verse on a notecard and put it on the fridge. Each time you walk by it, say the verse out loud: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV).

**FOCUS:** Jesus did what He did because He loves me so much.

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 15; John 19

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WEEK OF  
MARCH  
**15-21**

Jesus didn't have to die for us—He chose to. And if that's all He ever did for us, we'd have so many reasons to thank Him. But that's not all Jesus has done. Jesus continues to choose us every single day.

He loves us. He forgives us. He wants to be in a relationship with us.

On our worst day, we have so much to be thankful for!

This week, spend time in gratitude, thanking Jesus for all He's done and continues to do.

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## ACTIVITIES

**THURSDAY, 3/15**

Put a stack of index cards (or cut up paper) and colorful pencils or markers on the kitchen table. All week long, write down things you are thankful for and leave the card where everyone can see it.

**FRIDAY, 3/16**

Think of someone who has done something nice or generous for you and write them a thank you card.

**SATURDAY, 3/17**

Do one kind thing for someone today—but do it in secret!

**MONDAY, 3/19**

Call or text someone today and tell them how thankful you are for them and why—be specific!

**TUESDAY, 3/20**

Make a list of the top 10 things you are grateful for.

**WEDNESDAY, 3/21**

Go outside and find a rock or stone. Using markers or paint, decorate and draw a cross or a heart on it. Place it somewhere you will see it regularly. Every time you do, thank Jesus for His sacrifice for us.

**FOCUS:** God's power changes my life.  
**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 16; Luke 24:1-53; John 20-21

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WEEK OF  
MARCH  
22-29

After Jesus died, His body was placed in a tomb and a big rock was placed at the entrance so no one could go in or out of it. Three days after His crucifixion, one of His close friends, Mary Magdalene, went to visit this grave. Here's what the Bible says happened:

*"Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. It was still dark. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance. So she ran to Simon Peter and another disciple, the one Jesus loved. She said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb! We don't know where they have put him!'" (John 20:1-2 NIRV).*

Not only had the stone been moved from the tomb entrance, but Jesus' body was *gone*. Mary Magdalene was panicked—she thought someone had taken Jesus' body. But that's not what happened. Something incredible, amazing, almost unbelievable had taken place—*Jesus came back to life!*

This single fact separates Jesus from all other men, proving that He is God's Son.

And it's because of His resurrection that we can gain forgiveness for our sins, have courage, be thankful, and have a personal relationship with our heavenly Father.

Spend this week celebrating that Jesus is alive!

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## ACTIVITIES

**THURSDAY, 3/22**

Either as a family or by yourself, read John 20:11-18. What happened next?

**FRIDAY, 3/23**

After discovering that Jesus' body was missing, Jesus actually appeared to Mary and told her He was alive. As a family, talk about how you would have felt if you were Mary. What would you have said to Jesus?

**SATURDAY, 3/24**

Choose one person to share the story of Jesus' death and resurrection with today.

**MONDAY, 3/26**

Jesus' death and resurrection means we can serve a God who can do *anything*. What is something you'd like to be able to do better? Ask God to help you today.

**TUESDAY, 3/27**

Do one thing to take care of your body today (go for a walk, make a healthy snack choice, take a nap, etc).

**WEDNESDAY, 3/28**

Write down or share aloud 3 things you've learned during this Lent season.

**THURSDAY, 3/29**

Have a special snack or dessert to celebrate that JESUS IS ALIVE!

**DURING THE FINAL TWO DAYS OF THE 40,** think about ways as a family you can celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection on Easter Sunday. Here are some things to think about:

- Attend church together as a family! As you sing or listen to the message, close your eyes and remind yourself of all that Jesus has done for you. Talk about this as a family in the car on the way home.
- Make it fun! Have lunch or dinner together with extended family or friends. Share what your family learned as you went through The 40.
- Keep it going! Talk about one or more of the activities that you might want to add to your family rhythm.

