



40 DAYS FOR LENT

We are in a season of preparation for Easter, so we are offering a 40 Day Journey to prepare our hearts. It's something called Lent. Maybe you have heard of this before, or it has been a spiritual practice in your past. Some traditions have turned this practice into abstinence (like what are you giving up for Lent?) This is not the focus. The real question is, how are you focusing your life around Jesus? We want to take the next 40 days focusing our lives around Christ and identifying with His sufferings. There will be a weekly rhythm for this journey with Bible Readings on Monday, Prayer on Tuesdays, and Fasting on Fridays.

Insight for Bible, Prayer, and Fasting Practices

BIBLE

On Mondays, we will bring our attention to Jesus by reading His word. Set aside some time and space that isn't rushed. Remove distractions. Before you read, ask God to reveal Himself to you. Read the passage and pause to reflect on it. Read it again if you need to digest it more. Think about how God is described in this passage. What does it say about His character, traits, or what He has done? Think about your response to God. In this passage, how are you called to follow Him, or what does this mean for our relationship with Him? The goal as we read His word is to know God so He can guide us.

PRAYER

On Wednesdays, we will bring our attention to Jesus through prayer. Praying isn't about having the right words. It's about the relationship. It's about seeking God, speaking to God, keeping our focus on God, and even listening to God. It's good to have a set time to pray and maybe have a list or journal to stay focused. But you can also pray short prayers as you go through your day. Remember, the goal is the relationship and keeping our focus on Jesus.

FASTING

On Fridays, we will fast to identify with the sufferings of Jesus. Fasting is an ancient practice of denying ourselves to follow after Jesus. Less of me and more of Him. It's shifting our focus and dependency from ourselves to Jesus. During Lent, it's typical to give up or abstain from something. It has morphed from fasting to abstaining. That idea is good because it can help us to deny ourselves. But for this time of Lent, I want to encourage you to fast on Fridays. Have a good dinner on Thursdays, then fast from food until dinner on Friday. Drink water or coffee or whatever, but avoid food. Take the time you would normally prepare and eat food and spend that time focused on Christ. It's a shift of focus and dependency. This might seem hard, but that is the point. When it gets hard, remember the sacrifice of Jesus and then ask God to sustain you. For more insight on fasting as a spiritual practice, check out the blog on our website.

WEEK 1

February 18 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER

Jesus, give me a deeper connection with You over these 40 days. May I have a better understanding of what it means to follow You. I dedicate these next 40 days to You. Amen.

February 20 // FRIDAY FASTING

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. Take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus. See the guide for more insights. In the moments of hunger, remind yourself that you are identifying with the sufferings of Jesus. Bring your mind to the cross. Repeat the prayer for this week.

WEEK 2

February 23 // MONDAY BIBLE READING: Read Psalm 51.

What verses did you highlight? What verse grabbed your attention?

Review verses 10-12. How do you relate to David's prayer?

February 25 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER: Review Psalm 51:10-12

Jesus, thank you for your great compassion, mercy, and unfailing love. Renew your spirit in me. Restore me. Draw me into your presence.

February 27 // FRIDAY FASTING: Review Psalms 51:16-17.

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. Take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus. When it gets hard, remember and identify with the cross and ask God to sustain you, just like David prayed in Psalm 51:

Read it from the Message Bible: "Going through the motions doesn't please you, a flawless performance is nothing to you. I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives ready for love don't for a moment escape God's notice."

Psalms 51:16-17 MSG

Let this be your focus as you fast today. When the struggle sets in, humble yourself and remember Jesus' sacrifice for us.



WEEK 3

March 2 // MONDAY BIBLE READING: Isaiah 53:3-9.

Let this passage center your attention on the cost of redemption and God's deep love.

March 4 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER

Review Isaiah 53:5....Read it. Re-read and make it personal. Read it with "me" and "my". Reflect on Jesus' sacrifice for you. Pray and give thanks.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Isaiah 53:5 NIV

March 6 // FRIDAY FASTING

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. Take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus. Read Isaiah 53:3-9 again. When the fasting gets hard, remind yourself that he was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

WEEK 4

March 9 // MONDAY BIBLE READING: Philippians 2:1-18 & 3:7-21

What key thoughts stood out to you?

Philippians 2: What example do we have of Jesus in this passage?

Philippians 3: How would you describe Paul's focus?

Let this journey during Lent bring your attention to Jesus and remove distractions from our lives.

March 11 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER

Repeat Paul's thoughts in Philippians 3 as your prayer:

“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

Philippians 3:8-11 NIV

March 13 // FRIDAY FASTING

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. Take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus.

Review Philippians 2:5-11. When it's hard, remember the attitude of Jesus. Ask God to shift your appetite in life so you might find satisfaction in Him.

WEEK 5

March 16 // MONDAY BIBLE READING: John 10:1-18

Jesus shares that he is the Good Shepherd. How does he describe Himself? What does this say about God? What does it mean for you to follow Jesus?

March 18 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER

Review John 10:14

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—”

Pray that you might know God in great ways. Pray that you might know His voice. Pray that God might lead you like a good shepherd.

March 20 // FRIDAY FASTING

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. Take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus.

Review John 10:11 - “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

When the fasting is hard today, remember the Good Shepherd and how He gave up his life so freely. Ask the Good Shepherd to fill your wants and lead you to green pastures that satisfy your soul.

WEEK 6

March 23 // MONDAY BIBLE READING: Romans 5 & 6

What stands out to you in these passages? How do you see God's character in this passage? What does it say about how we should follow God?

March 25 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."
Romans 6:11 NIV

God, I want to follow You. Give me more understanding of what it means to die to sin and be alive in You. As I follow You, may the life You offer restore me and renew me.

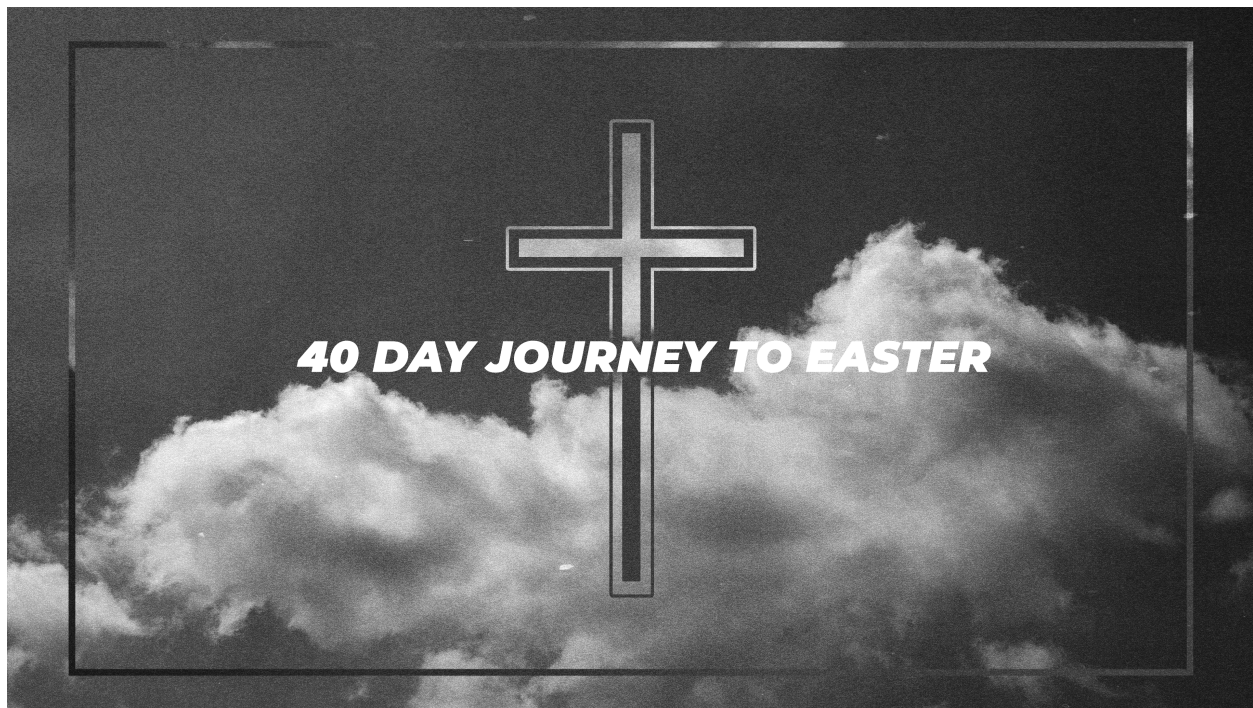
March 27 // FRIDAY FASTING

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. Take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus.

Reflect on these verses when you feel hungry and empty. Following God is denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Him. Pause and note that it is hard to fast, but you are doing it to identify with the sacrifice of Jesus and bring your focus and dependency on Him.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:6-8 NIV



WEEK 7

March 30 // MONDAY BIBLE READING: Mark 14-16

Take this week to reflect on the events of Jesus heading to the cross. Read these chapters today, or a chapter a day over the next few days. What is your response to Jesus' sacrifice?

April 1 // WEDNESDAY PRAYER

Jesus, I remember your sacrifice. Your body that was broken. Your blood that was shed; that has washed me clean. Thank you for your sacrifice for salvation.

April 3 // FRIDAY FASTING

Try to fast after Thursday dinner until Friday dinner. On this Good Friday, take the time you would normally spend preparing and eating food and spend that time focused on Jesus by reading Luke 22 & 23. Attend the Good Friday service, if possible.