

Lent Daily Devotions for Families

Journey with Jesus



Elizabeth Foss

Ash Wednesday

...return to me with all your heart...

Return to the LORD your God,

for he is gracious and merciful,

slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love... **JOEL 2:12-13**

Do you wonder what Lent is truly all about? Sometimes, it seems like a self-improvement plan or a good incentive to stay on a diet. But what God really wants is for you to return to him with your whole heart. He wants you with him, living a wholehearted life of faith. Picture him, standing with his arms wide open, ready to welcome you home just the way the Forgiving Father welcomed the Prodigal Son. God wants to gather you in the warmest hug and tell you how glad he is to have you safely home.

We need directions for our journey home; the Gospel tells us how to get there. Three practices help us find God. Jesus calls us to pray, to give alms and to fast. Prayer helps us to surrender our worries and wants to the Lord and to know what he thinks so that we might also think that way. Almsgiving lifts our eyes from ourselves and softens our hearts towards our neighbors. Fasting reveals what appetites are controlling us and creates a hunger for what God wants.

To do as a family

What prayer, almsgiving and fasting commitments can you make this Lent? Every journey is more successful if we have companions to help us along the way. As a family, discuss your commitments with one another, and promise to help each other keep your Lenten promises. Nothing could be better than to be together—wholeheartedly with the Father—on Easter morning.

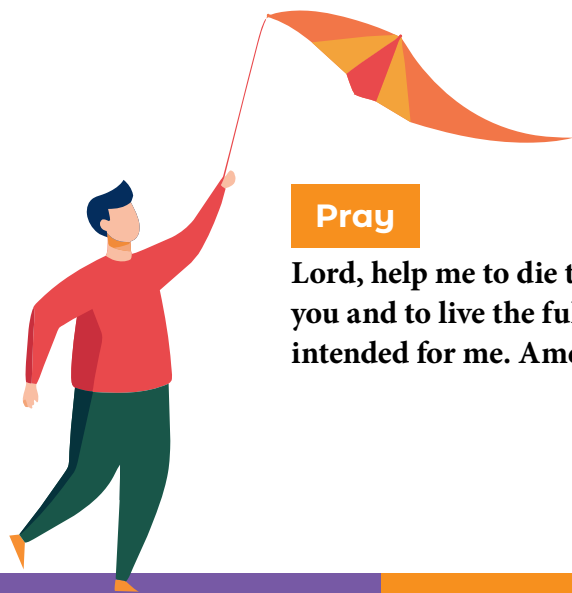
Thursday After Ash Wednesday

If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit them if they gain the whole world but lose or forfeit themselves? **LUKE 9:23-25**

These are difficult words. To save your life, you have to die to the “old you.” When Jesus says we have to lose our lives, he asks us to let go of the things that keep us from him. When we do, we are able to become the true selves he imagined when he created us.

What are those things for you? Maybe it’s a friend who influences you to say or do things God would not. Maybe it’s too much time in front of screens that tempt you to spend time, money and attention on things of little value in the Kingdom of God. Maybe it’s a bad attitude about a task that is yours alone to do. We think we can’t give these things up, that we can’t change. We think it’s too hard and we’ll be less “ourselves” if we do.

God says that we will be more. You and I can become the person he created us to be, a person who is better than anything we can imagine.



Pray

Lord, help me to die to whatever is not of you and to live the fullness of the life you intended for me. Amen.

Friday After Ash Wednesday

“Why do we fast, but you do not see?”

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day... **ISAIAH 58:3**

Did you give up chocolate so that you lose some weight before Easter? Did you give up video games so that you could read more books? Those are worthy goals, but reaching those goals only serves your interests.

God wants more for you. He wants you to fast so that you uncover the ways you are attached to sin and so you can become more like him. Sin is what blocks our paths on the way home to God.

When we live in sin—maybe stubbornness or deceit or envy—God isn’t asking us to give up chocolate. Instead, Isaiah tells us that God has a different kind of fast in mind.

God says to fast by breaking the chains of injustice, giving up cheating at school or work and canceling debts. He wants you to go outside your comfort zone and share your food with the hungry, invite the homeless into your home, find clothes for people who have none and be genuinely good to the people in your family. If you trust God and follow him in this fast, then he will shine a light on you, and you will turn your life around. God will heal and strengthen you to run right into his big hug.

Pray

God, help me to see the unique ways that I can fast in the way you desire. Amen.

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” **LUKE 5:31-32**

When Jesus was alive, he called people to follow him. His friends were surprised to learn he’d called someone whom they saw as a *very big sinner*. Jesus called a tax collector who made his money by cheating his neighbors. Because of this, people shunned him. And when the neighbors, who had become followers of Jesus, saw that the tax collector was also being called, they raised their eyebrows and pointed out what a big sinner he was. But Jesus knew that they were sinners too. Even more, he knew that he came for all sinners.

Jesus saw sin as the illness that kept people from going home to the Father. He was the Great Physician who could cure the sickness of sin. The tax collector had lots of friends who were sinners just like him. When he experienced Jesus’ ability to heal, he invited his friends to a great party at his house. Many of them followed Jesus too. Just like sin can be contagious among friends, friends can also share the Good News of the cure.

Pray

Jesus, help me to recognize my own sins and to approach you for healing. Give me the courage to share with my friends the way you restore me. Amen.



First Sunday in Lent

...because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart, leading to righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, leading to salvation. **ROMANS 10:9-10**

Let's clear this up from the get-go. Satan believes that God raised Jesus from the dead, but you will not meet Satan in heaven. Satan also spoke aloud that Jesus is Lord. Again, he's not getting in.

The key to heaven is believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead in order to save you from your sins and speaking that truth fearlessly, even when it's not cool. When you believe wholeheartedly, you are confident that God is for you. You trust God to heal you, transform your life and give you eternal life with him. When you believe with your whole heart, you are certain he will keep all his promises, and that faith keeps you safe.

When you know that the real meaning of Easter is that God wants you to be happy with him forever, and he intends to give you the grace to do so, you are not afraid of worldly loss nor will you disobey him for worldly gain. You know that Satan says the words, but his heart lies.

Keep your heart true to Jesus.

Pray

Dear Jesus, keep my heart pure, and give me the strength to be all-in for you, no matter what. Amen.

To do as a family

Create a crown of thorns from salt dough. Use a basic recipe, and intertwine three sturdy ropes of dough to form a circle. Before baking, insert toothpicks all over. Every time you make a sacrifice during Lent, remove a toothpick and put it in a jar beside the crown.

A look ahead

This week, consider the treasury of God’s messages to us in the Bible and the ways he beckons our family to daily acts of service and obedience. What is that call to action for our family?

Monday, the First Week of Lent

“...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?”

MATTHEW 25:35-39

We think God is asking us to make grand gestures—to feed orphans in a jungle or to teach hardened prisoners to read, and sometimes he is. But more often, he is asking for small daily acts of service and obedience that bring him great joy and consolation. The friend who is sick but has a family to feed? You bring a casserole and feed Jesus too. The new guy at work? You take him to lunch, map out the town and welcome Jesus too. Your little brother who can’t put his shoes on by himself? You help to put them on him, and you clothe Jesus too. There are countless opportunities in our own small circles, with the people God put in our lives, to serve him well.

Pray

Jesus, open my eyes to all the ways I can serve the least among us and make your heart glad. Amen.



Journey with Jesus

Wife, mother of nine, grandmother, life coach and longtime spiritual writer Elizabeth Foss brings her wisdom and grace to the pages of this family devotional. *Journey With Jesus* is a hopeful walk through Lent with Scripture and simplicity as your guides. Beside daily prayers and reflections, each Sunday offers a practical, achievable activity to gather the family and consider the themes of the season—reconciliation and renewal with God and one another, as families journey with Jesus on the way to the cross, and ultimately, Easter Sunday.

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