



lent

DEVOTIONAL

If you say
“The Lord
my refuge
and you
make the
Most High
your
dwelling
harm will
overtake
no disaster
will come
near you
tent

Yet the Lord
longs to
gracious
you;

why lent matters

The Old Testament prophet, Joel, proclaimed to the people, “Yet even now, says the Lord, repent and return to me with all your heart” (Joel 2:13). The season of Lent creates an opportunity to do just that. It invites us to enter more intentionally into the disciplines of prayer, self-examination, and repentance. These disciplines—as significant as they are—are not ends in themselves. Rather, they can serve as the means by which we return to God and devote our whole lives to him.

This Lent devotional is designed as a tool to help you be more attentive to what God is saying to you during this season and give you the courage to respond as God directs. People will often “give up something for Lent.” And abstaining from something that’s destructive or sinful or that’s just cluttering up life can be a meaningful discipline to help us reconnect with God. But regardless of what you eliminate, initiate the practice of entering into God’s presence daily through the use of this devotional guide (guide does not include Sundays). Meditate on the words and create some prayerful, quiet space for Jesus to speak. And as you unclutter your soul, may you become more finely attuned to what’s going on in your own life, spiritually, and to the ways God is inviting you to live in his presence and for his purpose.

Luke Erickson
Executive Pastor

Day 1

March 2, 2022

SCRIPTURE

“Even now,” declares the Lord,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and
mourning.”

JOEL 2:12 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The prophet, Joel, describes in the first two chapters the disasters he sees taking place in the Land of Israel as a result of God’s people worshipping other gods and violating their covenant with him.

In chapter 2, verse 12, we find incredible hope through the loving invitation from God to return to him. The type of returning God describes invites us to give him our hearts, our emotions and even our bodies through fasting. God sees our own sin, rebellion, and all that we desperately try to keep hidden which draws us away from him. Yet, he still says to each of us, “even now, return to me.” These words also remind us of the grace and forgiveness God offers us in Christ, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

How will you respond to God’s loving invitation to return to him?

Day 2

March 3, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

JOEL 2:13 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

As we repent, or turn to God, we are to do so through not only our outward appearance, but through our heart. We are reminded of God's character as we turn our heart toward him. God is not quick to judge or give up on us. God is not angry or frustrated when we turn to him. Instead, we are reminded that God "is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love." This description of God's character is found throughout scripture (Ex. 34:6, Psalm 86:5, and Jonah 4:2). It is a beautiful reminder to us that God is ready to receive us when we turn to him. He is patiently waiting for us to return to him and when we do so, he is merciful and gracious.

In what ways do you need to 'turn your heart' toward God today and let his mercy and grace into your life?

For more information on God's character, check out [this video](#) from the Bible Project.

Day 3

March 4, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.

JOEL 2:14 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The prophet Joel is writing to a people who are enduring a swarm of locusts. Joel calls the people to repent and turn to God who is gracious and merciful. God acts according to his will and ultimately God does remove the locusts and restores the land.

While we are not guaranteed that God will take away the chaos or struggles in our lives, we are guaranteed of the hope found through Jesus' death on the cross. It's during Lent that we can prepare our heart for Jesus' death, the ultimate act of sacrifice for us.

In what ways do you need to prepare your heart today?

Day 4

March 5, 2022

SCRIPTURE

I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong."

DANIEL 9:4-5 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Confession time. I'm not really great at confession. Maybe you're like me and it's hard to admit when we are wrong. Sometimes it can be helpful to think of confession as telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This verse shows us how to be honest about who we are and who God is. The whole truth is that as hard as I might try, I am a sinful person. I make mistakes, even worse I sometimes deliberately choose my own way and not God's way.

God is a promise keeper, he extends love to people like you and me. Love that urges and compels us to follow God's commandments, to not stay content in our sin, offering half-truths that make us look righteous.

Do I need to bring my laundry list of sins to God every time I pray? Well, I know that when I try to hide things from God, I am holding those things between us. I want to be near to God, and far from sin, so I ask God for help and forgiveness. God never fails.

Day 5

March 7, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him...

DANIEL 9:9 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Do you ever think about the things that you have done wrong in your life and think, “well at least I am not as bad as so and so”? Do you have a ranking of sins in your head like a little white lie isn’t as bad as physical violence or “it’s only stealing 10 cents, it’s not like it’s \$10,000”? Even those sins that we gloss over or accept culturally really are an act of rebellion against God.

In each of those instances, you say to yourself and to the world that you know better than God. That his commandments don’t really apply to you. If you have ever been betrayed, then you know how bad that feels, you know how hard it is to trust again, how hard it can be to forgive.

I’m so glad that God is God and not me, because even when we are in open rebellion God offers forgiveness. More than that, God offers it over and over again.

God forgive me and help me when I am tempted.

Day 6

March 8, 2022

SCRIPTURE

But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die.

EZEKIEL 18:21 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

We don't think of ourselves as wicked, do we? We might say that we're "just not perfect." According to scripture though, having a sin nature that makes us fall short of God's perfectly good and loving holiness makes us, well...wicked. Outside of God's grace, you and I are wicked. Not a warm and fuzzy thought, is it? Where we often make light of or minimize our sin nature, Ezekiel seeks to remind us of the gravity of it. He doesn't talk about it in terms of good or bad, or right or wrong, but in terms of something more consequential - those who turn and seek God will surely live; those that don't will die. Our wicked nature leads to death. As Romans 6:23 later claims, "the wages of sin is death."

If anyone understood that, it was Jesus as it led to his death. So before we can understand and embrace the sacrificial act of Christ's crucifixion and the hope of his resurrection, we have to soberly acknowledge the reality of our wicked ways, and our need for a Savior.

Day 7

March 9, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

PSALM 91:1-2 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

In a world full of uncertainty and danger, where evil lurks and disease threatens and death holds overwhelming power, someone wrote Psalm 91. It is a bold proclamation of trust—confidence placed squarely on the Almighty God. This may be a season where such faith is difficult for you.

News headlines and events happening close to home or even in your own life tell a troubling story. But the faithful down through history know what it's like to go through storms. More than that, they know the God who has always been faithful and has time and time again proven himself to be a refuge, a strong fortress.

These words are not cheap. They are real. Wrought out of anxiety, faith emerges because our God is stronger than the chaos we face.

May the testimony of Psalm 91 give you courage today. May you be emboldened to walk forward confidently, not because today is guaranteed to be pleasant, but because God is powerfully WITH us.

Even if you don't see your shadow today, we can never escape the shadow of the Almighty.

Day 8

March 10, 2022

SCRIPTURE

If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

PSALM 91:9-10 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Throughout history, God has proven to be with his people through all seasons. Whether on the mountain top, or in the valley, he is with us, sustains us and grants us his peace. He is our refuge and has been for God's people for all time.

When we understand the protection of God, we must also understand God's perspective. Reminiscent of the plagues that fell on Egypt, God offered protection. Was it a difficult season? Yes. Did God's people wish for a different path? An easier path? They probably did. But did God protect them even in the midst of the difficulty? Of course.

Whatever the situation, no matter how difficult, take refuge in the Lord. He deserves our trust.

What disaster are you facing? What difficulty?

Pause in prayer right now and fully give it over to the Lord.

Day 9

March 11, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

ISAIAH 53:4 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

It is amazing how easily offended our generation has become today, so much so that it is unthinkable that we would even consider allowing ourselves to be falsely accused and punished for something that we didn't do.

And yet here is where we find Christ, in his most pure and sinless posture. Taking our sins and shortcomings on himself on our behalf so that we, no matter how deserving, wouldn't have to.

This Lenten season spend more time reflecting on how God might be prompting you to extend forgiveness towards others.

Instead of choosing to be offended, let's choose to show grace and forgiveness to those who hurt us.

Day 10

March 12, 2022

SCRIPTURE

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

NOTES

DEVO

When I was a kid, we used to play a game called, Wanna Swap? You would approach a friend with your hand in either pocket of your pants concealing some trinket and ask your friend if they wanted to swap items they had in their pocket. Not knowing what you might get in return was part of the intrigue. Most often, the fun was in agreeing to the swap and exchanging the worthless trinkets.

I think of that game when I read this verse. Shy of actually reading the account of Jesus' last days on his way to the cross, these verses describe a most brutal way to die on our behalf. The piercing, crushing and punishment were endured to give us peace.

There is no greater love than laying down one's life for a friend; it is the ultimate expression of sacrifice and commitment to the relationship.

Imagine Jesus coming to you now and asking, "Wanna Swap?"

He wants to give you his peace while taking your punishment. Are you up for that?

Day 11

March 14, 2022

SCRIPTURE

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

ISAIAH 53:6 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Sheep, often misrepresented as being stupid animals, are quite intelligent. They are known to experience many of the same emotions we humans face...fear, joy, boredom, anger and happiness. Isaiah likens us to sheep who have gone astray which, if sheep were stupid animals, might serve to explain our wandering away. But since they are smart animals the comparison is more striking. This would mean that we have chosen, of our own volition and desire, to turn our backs on Jesus.

Jesus, in turn becomes the perfect sacrifice for us as the spotless Lamb of God. The weight of our iniquity is unfathomable, way too much for us to carry alone. So, He bears it on the cross. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" because he took ALL the weight of our iniquity upon himself.

Be a smart "sheep" and turn back to Jesus. Let him lift the burden of guilt and sin from your shoulders and walk the easy and light life yoked together WITH Jesus. It is a life that is abundant and free!

Day 12

March 15, 2022

SCRIPTURE

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

ISAIAH 53:9 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

This verse is a verse of juxtapositions, defined as, “two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect.” Jesus was holy yet had a grave with the wicked. He was poor yet buried with the rich. He was dealt with violently and died a most cruel death yet had done no violence. He was falsely accused with lies and slander yet no deceit was in his mouth.

Jesus offers us a similar path today; in order to live, we must die; in order to walk in light, we must leave the darkness; in order to win (salvation), we must lose (self-righteousness). It boils down to a battle of wills, God’s will against mine. This is the ultimate juxtaposition. Jesus knew this all too well when he said in Luke 22:42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Knowing what was ahead, Jesus chose to be obedient to death on a cross over his own will.

This Lenten season submit your will to the Father’s will and be obedient too.

Day 13

March 16, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

ISAIAH 58:11 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

In chapter 58 of Isaiah, God is challenging the people of God into true and authentic worship of him through fasting. Rather than just going through the motion to check off the box, God urges us to come near to him in true worship with a pure heart and full trust in him. It is then that he will fulfill his promises to set the oppressed free and break our chains. It is then that he will be our guide and satisfy our needs.

So, on this day (and every day), examine your heart, invite God to search your heart for any obstacle that keeps you from true worship.

Do this and experience God's blessing that your soul will be a well-watered garden whose waters never fail.

Day 14

March 17, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

1 PETER 5:6 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Time and time again throughout the pages of scripture, we see an invitation from God to take a step towards him in obedience with a promise of how he will care for us. God's hand is always extended to us, and it's up to us if we are going to take the step that's required to draw closer.

In 1 Peter 5, our invitation from God is to humble ourselves – to surrender the control we think we have on our lives, to put our trust in God's plans over our own, to release our stubbornness and submit to the way of God. When we humble ourselves and entrust ourselves to his care and direction, we see that with God's strength and power, he will lift us up.

What is it that you need to lay at the feet of Jesus in order to humble yourself? Is it your pride, your greed, your stubbornness, your control?

Surrender it to the Lord, humble yourself – and trust the God that fulfills his promise to lift us up.

Day 15

March 18, 2022

SCRIPTURE

“They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

MARK 7:7-8 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The Pharisees had a habit of adding their own rules to God’s law and then enforcing them on God’s people. Rather than calling for obedience that comes from love, the Pharisees tacked on more rules to aid in their appearance of being holy.

Christ followers are guilty of much of the same. We can fall into the trap of spouting off a bunch of rules (some of which are of our own making) about what it means to follow Jesus, and miss the point of truly following. Jesus boldly points out in Mark 7 that God isn’t interested in people following a bunch of rules for the sake of appearances. Above all else, God wants our hearts.

When we surrender our hearts to the Lord, obedience that comes from love will follow. Perhaps you are participating in various traditions this Lent season or all year long.

May these traditions not merely be done out of habit. Instead, lay yourself before the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart.

Day 16

March 19, 2022

SCRIPTURE

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

PSALM 42:2 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Often, we misalign our true need for God and instead “thirst” for something, or someone else to fill that longing. The temptation to convince ourselves that we just need more work, more rest, more travel, or more money is incredibly easy to fall into.

However, on the other side of our deviant priorities we eventually find ourselves running on empty fumes. When our soul, or body “thirsts” is often when we fully realize the depth of our need for our loving God. Where can I go to quench this thirst, our verse asks? We find our answer at the cross of Jesus Christ.

May this Lenten season be a time to meet God where he meets us. With arms stretched open on a brutal cross, we find our God meeting our need for a Savior and quenching the thirst that only God can fulfill.

The living God is with you, providing all that you need. Meet with God, thirst for God, and find rest, friend.

Day 17

March 21, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him...

LAMENTATIONS 3:25 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The “weeping prophet” Jeremiah reminds us of God’s faithfulness to his people. Even in the midst of brokenness, exile, and disbelief God promises future restoration and blessing.

Every day we have the opportunity to “seek” God by trusting in his promises. The covenant he upholds gives us confident hope in the future and a firm foundation in our daily lives. Lent affords us a glimpse into this confident hope as we reflect on the ultimate promise God fulfilled. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection we know that God delights in his people and desires good for those who place their trust in him.

Jeremiah also teaches us that the Lord is good to those whose HOPE is in him. This reminds us that life will not always go as planned, but hope is our anchor. In the same breath, the God of Jeremiah is the same God who restores us, who offers us hope that no one or no thing can give us.

Like the exiled Israelites, let us remember the extravagant hope and faithful promises God fulfills to those who seek him.

Day 18

March 22, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

ISAIAH 30:18 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Take a second to think of the things for which you truly long. Not a private jet, or high paying job, but the deepest longings of your heart and soul.

For some, this could be a reunion with a loved one or friend, a desire to adopt or have children, or maybe relief from crippling anxiety. You know how desperately you've longed for these to come to fruition, the peace and fulfillment these hopes can bring, and the heartache of patiently waiting for them to happen. Our compassionate God, the same God who put the planets into motion LONGS to be gracious to YOU.

Since God is good, and good at being God, he faithfully rises up to display unconditional compassion on you day by day. The truest, deepest, and most authentic longing of God is YOU.

During Lent, take time to reflect on how God displayed this longing on the cross, and how you can share in God's missional desire. We have hopeful anticipation of the fulfillment of God's deepest longing. After all, blessed are all who wait for him!

Day 19

March 23, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

PSALM 27:14 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

WAIT??? So much of our lives are spent waiting. Sometimes we are waiting for happy things like birthdays or promotions, but sometimes we are waiting for difficult medical news or peace that doesn't even seem reachable.

Waiting is hard—it requires us to stop and admit that we aren't in control. But, if we are honest, we can admit that waiting is often the time when God gets our attention. When we learn to patiently wait on the Lord, he provides clarity. He is at work to transform us to look more like Jesus. Only God can bring peace, joy and love in our chaos.

Waiting is our invitation to trust, and it creates space for us to learn more about who God is and provides the grace necessary for the Spirit of God to bolster us and to build the strength of character we need for the next part of our journey with him.

Lord, help us wait patiently with you through this Lenten season—draw us near to you as we desire to trust you with our whole hearts.

Day 20

March 24, 2022

SCRIPTURE

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

ISAIAH 40:31 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

There is something beautiful in watching an eagle soar gracefully in the sky. It stops us in our tracks and forces us to look up and marvel at the majestic flight. Did you know that an eagle can soar for hundreds of miles without losing strength and can rise to heights of over a mile?

Isaiah reminds us that even the youth grow weary and that we cannot rely on our own strength, we need something more – Jesus!

Think of a really hard time in your life when, looking back, you can say “I don’t know how I got through it.” God’s strength never diminishes and he is never too tired or too busy to help us.

We just need to seek him as our supplier. We can RISE up above our difficulties. If you feel like you can’t take another step, call upon God and he will renew your strength.

When life gets you down, God spreads his wings and invites you on a majestic ride that can take you soaring to distances you never imagined. Are you ready?

Day 21

March 25, 2022

SCRIPTURE

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 3:10-11 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Participating in suffering and experiencing death don't sound so great, does it? Paul, the writer of Philippians, often says things like this, and, if we don't pay attention to a very important word, we can easily miss the whole point. So what's the word? *Resurrection*.

When Paul says he wants to become like Christ in suffering and death, he's saying, "I want resurrection life! I want to leave behind the old ways – pride, greed, petty divisions – and embrace the new ways made possible in Christ!" We can't live into the new without sacrificing the old – we can't experience life in Christ without putting to death the old ideas of achieving success and power.

What might the Spirit be prompting you to put to death so that you can experience resurrection life in Christ?

Day 22

March 26, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

JOHN 17:17 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

We live in a time where truth is up for debate. This prayer from Jesus in John 17, in which he recounts the story of God and prays for believers to be united, prompts us to ask: How will we respond to that debate? Will we follow our culture's lead by arguing and striving to acquire more power than those we disagree with so we can rule over them? Or will we follow Christ's example, valuing God's love above all else and remembering the way of Christ? Will we choose to live humbly, to strive for unity, and remain focused on our mission to serve the world?

Lent challenges us to reflect upon what idea of truth we've been following and invites us to reorient ourselves toward what is most true – God's love and our call as believers to embody that love in our lives.

What truth is guiding your life? God's truth or someone else's?

Day 23

March 28, 2022

SCRIPTURE

We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

PSALM 33:20-22 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

All of Psalm 33 is a beautiful hymn of praise for the wonderful ways in which the creative power of God expresses itself in the world. And today's passage specifically reminds us that God's power is always available to us as the Lord of our being, and no other source will solve any of our challenges.

We understand *the Lord* to be Jesus, who is the creative power of God that is the true identity of each of us. This Lent season, turn to Jesus alone, and not to any other outside forces. This is the only way to be triumphant in all of life's challenges.

Wait patiently on the Lord. He knows what you need and he will deliver you.

Trust in the Lord. He is faithful and will not forsake you.

Place all your hope on his promises, which he will never break.

Day 24

March 29, 2022

SCRIPTURE

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning.

PSALM 130:5-6 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

How much of our lives are spent waiting? Waiting in traffic, waiting for spring, waiting for a text, waiting for answers, waiting on medical results, waiting for an answer to prayer. To wait in the sense mentioned here is to live expectantly, with an awareness of how God has acted in the past and with anticipation of what God is about to do.

Waiting is thus the opposite of despair and hopelessness. Waiting for the Lord is like the work of the anxious watchman on the city wall who, fearing the attack of an enemy, finds relief in the arrival of dawn. The certainty of the coming light makes clear that the waiting is not delusional or unrealistic.

If you feel like God will never show up, read this Psalm each morning. Let it become familiar, like an old friend. Slowly, hope and trust in God will gradually return.

Life is full of waiting, but God does not disappoint. God's love and presence in our lives is deeper than we can imagine.

Learn to wait with longing, anticipation, expectation, and yes, hope.

Day 25

March 30, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

JOHN 10:10 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

What does abundant living mean? More wealth and possessions? Living in utopia? Sometimes we think being a Christian means we should not experience any pain or sorrow in life. In other words, abundant living should be filled with happiness and joy.

God gave his son that we may have life. We cannot comprehend the depth of his love until we remember Jesus' suffering and dying on the cross. This gift of love is the forgiveness of sins and Jesus' resurrection is the promise of eternal salvation. Through this gift, we have the freedom to live life abundantly.

Jesus modeled how to live abundantly in this world. It is by sharing God's love and compassion as we work and support each other. We are to love one another as he has loved us and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

All of us have been given unique strengths and talents and we often discover our talents in serving others. By using your God-given gifts, you participate in Jesus' ministry to bring God's love to the world. That is the abundant life.

Day 26

March 31, 2022

SCRIPTURE

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

JOHN 16:33 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

In this verse, we see two certain realities: 1) the followers of Jesus will suffer, and 2) Jesus has already won the victory. He didn't want his disciples to be under the delusion that their future would be full of ease and comfort, and he doesn't want us to think that either.

Following Christ is difficult and there will be opposition. Yet, Easter reminds us about the reality of Christ's victory over sin and death via his own death and resurrection that provides peace and courage in the midst of that opposition. Easter reminds us that the finished work of Christ removes the teeth from suffering. He provides us a certain future — a "living hope through the resurrection" and "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade." It is because of this reality that we can "take heart" and "be of good courage."

Day 27

April 1, 2022

SCRIPTURE

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.

PSALM 62:5 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The writer of these words had gone through many near-death experiences because of his enemies. He could have been overwhelmed with thoughts of fear and anxiety from his very difficult surroundings. But his words show us that he had cultivated a deep ability to find rest in God.

You and I can have this because of who Jesus is and what he has done. God became human, as Jesus, and is the bridge that connects us with God. He is relatable by prayer and by studying his scripture. He has characteristics that are better and stronger than us. The more we talk with him, the better we know him and can rely on him in times of trouble.

Jesus has power, love, and is just. That is a conviction upon which any heart can rest, and on which a stable society can be built despite all the difficulties of life.

Take time to call his name when you are in challenging situations. He hears you. You can experience peace that you didn't have before.

Day 28

April 2, 2022

SCRIPTURE

But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me.

MICAH 7:7 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Here, the prophet Micah makes a bold proclamation of confidence in the Lord God our Savior. Written in a time where wickedness was rampant and the people of Israel were discouraged and defeated, these words offered a pillar of hope, hope that stands true for us today.

When all earthly trusts and relationships fail, when there is no one or nothing to turn to or fall back on, we are invited to look to Christ, the One who hears us, who cares for us, who will never fail us.

There is a joy to be found in Jesus that cannot be touched by the troubles of this world. God's love for us is never-failing, his grace is never-ending. Though you may find yourself in a season of hopelessness or despair, take heart that God sees you and knows your pain.

Look to him for help and wait confidently and expectantly. He will make a way for you.

Day 29

April 4, 2022

SCRIPTURE

But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

HOSEA 12:6 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The invitation to return to God implies that the people of Judah, to whom this was written, had turned away from him and were walking in disobedience. The fickleness of humankind often leads us to pursue desires that are not aligned with the will of God. Even still, God is acknowledged as “their God.” He never removed his mercy from his people. His arms were wide open to receive them with love.

The beckoning to choose faith, to choose repentance and dependence on the Lord, is available for us today. His requests for us are simple: to maintain love and justice, two principals at the very heart of God’s character, and to wait for him continually. Though simple, we recognize that these commands are certainly not always easy to follow. In a world that screams self-centeredness and instant gratification, we must rely on the faithfulness of Christ to guide us in patience and obedience.

Be encouraged today to surrender yourself to a loving Father who is ready and waiting with open arms. Seek his face always, and he will give you strength.

Day 30

April 5, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

JOHN 4:25-26 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

The fact that Jesus went to the well and met the Samaritan woman was a very interesting event. Samaritan citizens were looked down upon and were considered lower class. For Jesus even to be speaking to this woman was highly controversial. Not only was he speaking to her, he was telling her something life changing.

As humans, we all thirst for living water which is what Jesus offered the Samaritan woman that day. It is only through Jesus that we are brought into a loving relationship with God and in this relationship, we find forgiveness, healing and purpose. It seems that the Samaritan woman was someone who was in need of the Messiah. When Jesus spoke to her, he told her that he IS the Messiah she had been looking for. She was thirsty, and not just for water, but for salvation and having her sin taken from her. She knew that he was not a prophet but her living hope.

Day 31

April 6, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

MARK 11:9-10 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, a crowd celebrates by laying down palm branches and shouting Hosanna! With this cheer, the crowd alludes back to Psalm 118:25-26 and celebrates the arrival of a Savior. With the word hosanna, they cry out for Jesus to save them while at the same time saying with gratitude “thank you for saving us.” The crowd was so sure that Jesus was coming to save them.

As we read those words today, Jesus is inviting you to say hosanna, too. We know that one short week later Jesus would offer himself as a sacrifice on a cross to save the world in a way the crowd did not expect.

Which meaning of hosanna applies more to you right now? Are you crying out for Jesus to save you? He’s ready and waiting for you. He would love for you to open that door and cry “Jesus, save me.” Or maybe you’re saying “thank you for saving me!” Regardless of which one resonates with you, let’s all say “Hosanna” to the One who saves us and gives us abundant life.

Day 32

April 7, 2022

SCRIPTURE

And he said to them, "This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many."

MARK 14:24 NLT

NOTES

DEVO

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the day it was required to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus shared a meal with his disciples. During the meal, Jesus took bread and told his disciples to eat it and that it was his body. Then Jesus took a cup, and gave it to his disciples and they drank. Jesus said to them "This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many" (Mark 14:24).

The beauty of this meal is that Jesus offers it freely to anyone. Whoever simply believes can partake in this cup – this cup of forgiveness by the new covenant that God has made through Jesus taking our place on the cross. Jesus, the Lamb without blemish, was sacrificed once for all mankind. Because he made this atoning sacrifice, it is no longer a requirement to make sacrifices as a way to cleanse ourselves of sin.

Because Jesus poured out his blood for us, we are forgiven if we put our faith in him.

Day 33

April 8, 2022

SCRIPTURE

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

MARK 15:33-34 NLT

NOTES

DEVO

Though the question Jesus cries out fulfills part of the prophecy about him in Psalm 22, his question is puzzling. Surely Jesus knew why he had to suffer and die! Many times, throughout the gospels, he spoke about his fate and why the Father sent him. Moreover, Jesus told us that he only spoke what the Father told him to speak. So why would God intend Jesus to ask this question which Jesus already knew the answer to?

These words, wailed amidst this scene of gruesome anguish etch in our minds the question, why? Jesus reserved some of his last breaths to ask this question because the answer is so important. Why would God allow Jesus to endure this suffering? Because God so loved you. He so loved all of creation that he made a way for us to be restored to him!

Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the ways God's restoration has been present in your life, and with a grateful heart, be reminded that you are a part of God's redeeming story.

Day 34

April 9, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

MARK 15:37-39 NLT

NOTES

DEVO

When we think of a veil today, we often envision a sheer wedding veil. However, the temple veil was anything but! It was thick and heavy and woven of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen, with cherubim worked into it. Tearing it was beyond human strength. It hung in the temple to mark off the place where God's presence dwelled on earth, the holy of holies. Only one priest once a year could enter the holy of holies, and to do so otherwise meant death.

The veil was a physical representation of our separation from the presence of God. Yet throughout scripture, God promises that he'll restore creation to himself. As our God parted the Red Sea to make a way for his people to get to the place he had promised, so he did when, through the death of Jesus, he tore the veil from top to bottom and made a way for us to be restored to his presence, where we were created to dwell.

With expectancy, ask God to draw you more deeply into his presence today.

Day 35

April 11, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before.

And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

JOHN 19:41-42 NLT

NOTES

DEVO

In a garden, man fell, and in a garden, Jesus rose. In a garden we know that something must die in order to give life to something else. The seed must die in order for the plant to have life. Leaves die and their decay enriches the soil.

In the Garden of Eden, wholeness died and gave life to sin and brokenness. In the garden of the tomb, Christ's dead body was planted to rise again and give abundant everlasting life to all who walk with Jesus as Lord and Savior. In the garden of our own lives, we get to choose whether to follow Adam and Eve to the tree or follow Jesus to the grave.

We can choose to indulge our own entitlement. Or we can choose to die to self and surrender our will and our way to the One who died for us first.

Lord, don't let me be deceived, show me how I have indulged entitlement intentionally or unintentionally. Teach me your ways that I may walk with you from the grave into abundant life.

Day 36

April 12, 2022

SCRIPTURE

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:8 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

It's easy for us to love people in our life who are kind, caring, and overall pleasant to be around. But what about the people who hurt us? It's not always as easy to extend love to people who are difficult to love.

As humans, our love sometimes comes with strings attached. If you treat me well, if you're thoughtful, if you make me happy, then I'll love you. You can have my love, but you're going to have to earn it.

The good news is, that's not the way God loves. His love is a gift freely given to us. There's nothing we can do to earn it. In fact, scripture tells us that even when we were sinners, even when we were selfish and rebellious and hard headed, Christ died for you and for me. We are his precious children, fully known and loved.

Day 37

April 13, 2022

SCRIPTURE

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

GALATIANS 2:20 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

When the crowd saw Jesus crucified on the cross, they thought it was all over. They thought that death had the final say. They didn't understand at the time that when Jesus died, he took all of our sins upon him, and our old sinful nature died with him on that cross.

That's why Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ. He is saying that his former sinful way of life died with Jesus on the cross, and now because of Jesus' resurrection, we have a new life.

For those who call Jesus Lord, we are given a fresh start and the holy spirit lives in us! Because of what Jesus did, anyone who believes in him has been made pure, holy and without blemish.

Day 38

April 14, 2022

SCRIPTURE

Then he said to them all: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

LUKE 9:23 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

These words that Jesus speaks have a lot of weight to them.

Being a disciple, someone who follows Jesus, isn't something that is always going to be easy. Choosing to follow Jesus means being willing to die to our own agenda and our need for control, so that we can be fully surrendered to God and his plan for our life. It means letting go of the things in us that are driven by sin, and choosing to be obedient to God and honor him in the ways that we live. It may not be easy, but it's always worth it.

Denying ourselves and following Jesus is the best decision we'll ever make.

Day 39

April 15, 2022

SCRIPTURE

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

MATTHEW 28:1-2 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, were deeply mourning the loss of Jesus. He was not only their teacher, but he was their friend. So it's no surprise that they decided to go visit Jesus' tomb. We often visit our loved ones at their gravesite. However, it was a big surprise to these Marys that when they arrived at the tomb, they were met by a violent earthquake and an angel of the Lord who rolled back the stone.

Even when it seemed like death had won and there was no hope, God was on the move.

Is there something in your life that seems impossible? Be encouraged that God is still working and there's nothing that he can't do.

Day 40

April 16, 2022

SCRIPTURE

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”

MATTHEW 28:5-6 NIV

NOTES

DEVO

What a wonderful day on the first Easter morning for the women that ran to see the grave of Jesus. There was an angel that greeted them and he told them they didn't need to be afraid, and that the tomb was empty because Jesus had risen. They must have been very scared but at the same time, very excited.

Christ had risen from the grave just like he said he would do, and they were the very first to see an empty tomb! Life would never ever be the same. Our sins were wiped clean. For all the followers of Jesus, our lives would change and the history of the world would change as well.

Because Jesus rose, we now have the Holy Spirit working in us and helping us to share this good news to all the world. This is a day to celebrate! Nothing will separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus.



MOUNTAIN
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

If you say
“The Lord
my refuge
and you
make the
Most High
your
dwelling
harm will
overtake
no disaster
will come
near you
tent

Yet the Lord
longs to
gracious
you;