

# LENT 2021 GUIDE



**SANCTUARY**  
COLUMBUS CHURCH

# WELCOME TO LENT 2021

Each year at Sanctuary we pause from our normal routine for a period of time to focus our attention on the life of Jesus and consider his impact on our daily lives. Christians over the centuries have celebrated this time together, called LENT, which is the 40 days leading up to Easter.

This year, we are practicing LENT by developing our heart for prayer as one church body. Each week will focus on an aspect of being joined together, which particularly special since we are celebrating 10 years of gospel ministry.

This guide is intended for weekly use individually, with an accountability partner or in a group setting. The purpose is to help you develop a rhythm of spiritual practices that connect you with God and one another.

As we begin this journey of 40 Days leading up to Easter, our staff and elders are praying for you to receive afresh the majesty and weight of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. We anticipate there will be challenges to rearranging your schedule, blocking time for reflection or simply getting online for Sunday service or SCC group. We are praying for your perseverance and an indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Grace and Peace be yours in abundance,

Pastor Rich  
Dr. Hinds, *Spiritual Formation Director*  
Rini George, *Prayer Ministry Director*

# PREPARE FOR LENT

Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord,  
and He will exalt you. - James 4:10

Jesus described two men who went to the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). One was an impressive, religious Pharisee and the other a sinful tax collector. The Pharisee stood and expressed thanks for what a great guy he was, unlike the wicked sinners around him. He boasted about the good things he had done and self-righteously assumed he didn't need to repent of anything. But the tax collector stood off by himself, recognized his need for God and forgiveness, lowered his head in repentance, and begged the Lord for mercy in light of his sins.

Jesus ended the story by saying the tax collector walked away justified and right with God, but the prideful Pharisee did not. This parable was likely shocking to Jesus' audience because they esteemed Pharisees as being holy before God, but viewed tax collectors as the sinful scum of the earth.

Here's how Jesus drew the bottom line: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (v. 14).

Which attitude best describes how you approach God in prayer: humbly or pridefully? Pride says, "I'm a good person. I haven't done anything that's bad. I don't really need to repent of anything." Pride also proclaims, "This is my life. I'm in control. Humility is a fundamental attitude of the heart for maintaining intimacy with God and a vibrant prayer life. By repenting of our sins and humbling ourselves daily before God, we will please the Lord and pray much more frequently and much more powerfully.

*(Adapted from The Battle Plan For Prayer)*

# LENT 2021

## WHAT IS LENT?

The Season of Lent originated in the early centuries of church history as a time of preparation for Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts until Holy Saturday, the Saturday before Easter. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week, which includes both Maundy Thursday (commemorating the institution of the Lord's Supper) and Good Friday (commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus).

Reminiscent of Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness, the Lenten season, not counting Sundays, lasts forty days. Sundays are not included because the Lord's Day, according to church tradition, is never a fast day but always a feast day, a celebration of the resurrection.

Lent is traditionally observed by penitence, sacrificial giving, self-denial, and prayer. We come before God in humility, confessing our sin and total inadequacy, stripping ourselves bare of all pretense. We place our needs, fears, failures, hopes and lives into the hands of God. We confess that our only hope is in Christ, who lived, died, and rose on our behalf.

## WHAT DO WE DO?

Lent is a time when participants can carry out a three-fold mission, with the key pillars being fasting, generosity, and prayer. These components are more commonly held teachings in the Catholic tradition, but they are not reserved only for that Christian movement. All believers are encouraged to practice these expressions during this season of LENT and regularly throughout the year. We focus on each of them during LENT to foster growth and appreciation within our collective faith and respective spiritual journeys.

# Prayer of Beginning

Lord, too often and in too many ways I've put myself first, above my loyalty to You, above my recognition of sin, above my need for repentance, and above my humble reliance on You for everything.

But where I've worked so hard to build myself up, I see now I've actually been tearing away at what my relationship with You can be.

Today, Lord, I come to You with nothing but gratitude, asking you to purge pride and help me see things as they really are.

Amen

# FASTING

Prayer and fasting is practiced regularly throughout the Bible. God's people in both the Old Testament and New Testament pray and fast in order to strengthen their relationship with God and seek guidance personally and corporately.

Here are a few examples of fasting in the Bible:

In Nehemiah, the people of Israel came together to fast and pray. During this time, they humbled themselves, confessed their sins, and thanked and worshipped God for all He had done for them. (Nehemiah 9)

Before facing a possibly deadly encounter with the king, Esther and her people spent time praying and fasting so that she may have favor from God when she went before him. (Esther 4)

Jesus fasted 40 days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry. (Matt. 4)

## **PRAYER AND FASTING**

Fasting is empty without the main component of prayer. When we pray during a fast, we set aside our earthly concerns, more diligently seek the heart of God, and dedicate ourselves to a time of life-changing prayer. As you plan, think of a couple prayers to be the focus of your fast.

All Sanctuary attenders and regular supporters are encouraged to join together in a corporate fast, during LENT. This could be fasting from one meal a day or fasting from food during daylight hours.

If you are unable to fast from food then consider implementing spiritual practices that would change your normal routine or rhythms to create more space for prayer and scripture reading.

Choosing to abstain from these things will allow you to use this time more effectively to have a meaningful connection with God.

We have several ways to practice God's command for us to fast. Pray about which one He is challenging you to do.

**Option #1:** Juice fast: while on this fast, you drink juice made from fresh fruits and vegetables rather than eating solid foods. (Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning)

**Option #2:** Daniel fast: based on Daniel's desire to fast seen in the Bible, this fast consists of consuming mainly fruits, vegetables, and water.

**Option #3:** Media or Tech fast: with our growing dependency on media and technology, we often times do not allow for a time of disconnection or silence.

<p><b>YOUR FASTING COMMITMENT:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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**UNITE  
US**



## United in Prayer as One Body

### READ

Matthew 18:19-20 (TPT)

Jesus said to them: “Again, I give you an eternal truth: If two of you agree to ask God for something in a symphony of prayer, My heavenly Father will do it for you. 20) For wherever two or three come together in honor of My name, I am right there with them!”

### DEVO

During His ministry, Jesus taught His disciples how to turn me into we. Jesus came to this World not only to reconcile us to God, but to reconcile us to each other. Christ created a Kingdom culture of unity through prayer based in and on Immanuel, God with us, as the center of our Kingdom family. The saving grace of Christ brought us, a rag-tag bunch of people from all walks, races and cultures, together, to form a powerful family on this side of Heaven. We are a family that agrees together in prayer and submits our requests in the Hands of a Father who does it for us! Praying together deepens our intimacy with God and our intimacy with each other in the body of Christ.

### PRAY

Holy Spirit, lead me to pray for others as I pray for myself. Lead our church to be united as one body in prayer together in these 40 days.

DAY 1

# DAY 2

## United in One Heart and One Mind

### READ

Acts 1:13-14 (TPT)

Arriving in Jerusalem, they went into a large second-floor room to pray. Those present were Peter, John, Jacob, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, Jacob (the son of Alpheus), Simon (the zealot), Judas (the son of Jacob), and a number of women, including Mary, Jesus' mother. His brothers were there as well. All of them (120 believers) were united in prayer, gripped with one passion, interceding night and day.

### DEVO

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told his followers to stay together and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. 120 followers waited and prayed together for 10 days in an upper room of Jerusalem. They were in one accord, "gripped with one passion," praying continually, until they experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit, together.

The filling of the Holy Spirit was uniquely experienced along with the evidence of that gift, speaking in tongues, which they received individually in varying languages. The catalyst of their Holy Spirit encounter was their persistent prayer of one mind and one heart.

### PRAY

Father, search me and show me any areas of stubbornness, selfishness or apathy in me. Are there parts of me that are so guarded where I haven't let Christ in? Are there areas those I trust can't reach me?

## **CALLED TO PRAY**

### **READ**

Ephesians 6:15 (NIV)

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”

### **DEVO**

The first church dealt with a great deal of external and internal problems such as oppression, violence, division, poverty, etc. Their go to response to it all was prayer. Jesus modeled constant prayer for us, and entrusted us, the followers of Christ, with a calling to pray. Although we are all created with different giftings and for various kingdom purposes, Jesus has entrusted us all with a duty of care, which starts with prayer in different seasons for all of God’s children. The Lord teaches us that in order to be vigilant, prepared and persevere in all situations, we are required to practice the presence of God by praying in the Spirit, continually.

### **PRAY**

Jesus, who are you calling me to pray for and pray with in this season? I want to see others the way you see them and have the compassion that you have for the world.

**DAY 3**

# DAY 4 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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**THIS IS OUR PRAYER - FEBRUARY 21**  
(Guest Preacher: Eugene Cho)

# SERMON NOTES

**MATURE  
US**

## BEING THE HANDS OF GOD

### READ

Colossians 3:12-14 (NASB)

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love.”

### DEVO

Dedication to God is developed by commitment to one’s spiritual practices for God’s sake. Service to others is the outgoing movement of the heart prompted by compassion. It neutralizes the deep-rooted tendency to become preoccupied with our own spiritual journey and how we are doing.

The habit of service to others is developed by trying to please God in what we do and by exercising compassion for others, beginning with those with whom we live. To accept everyone unconditionally is to fulfill the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31) and it is a practical way of bearing one another’s burdens, (Galatians 6:2).

### PRAY

Lord, help me name the ways I have been feeling alone and isolated during the past year of crisis. Jesus, help me to give it all to You in prayer.

# DAY 6

## THE JOY IN SUFFERING

### READ

James 1:2-4 ( NRSV)

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

### DEVO

The last twelve months have felt like a trial for most of us. Many of us have had our lives uprooted due to COVID-19, fears of sickness, or fears of not enough. It's times like these that really test our faith. It's the trial that reveals what we truly believe.

The trials we're facing look different for each of us. Some fear sickness, others missing school, still, others struggle with all this family time. The thing is, the trial is a test. It shows you the areas you're weak and areas you need to study God's word more. So today ask yourself: where is your foundation? Is it in yourself? Is it in others? Or do you find your foundation in God?

### PRAY

Thank you, Lord, for the eternal salvation and peace you make available to each one of us through your son, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Father, I pray each person reading this devotion has received your gifts and is trusting in You. May we all experience your peace and joy that surpasses all understanding, even in our hardest and darkest of days. Amen.



# Prayer of Maturity

O God my Father, I want to be a mature follower of Jesus. Even when I am not certain what maturity is, give me wisdom to discern my path of spiritual growth.

Help me to bring my emotions to your tender care and my ongoing awareness. Help me to check on my internal self talk,. The times when I insist on having my way, on giving in to my fears and doubts, and on lesser things which stand as evidence of my immaturity.

I do give myself anew and afresh to You. Help me to be a glory and a reflection of Your name.

Amen

DAY 7

# DAY 8

## HELP FOR OUR WEAKNESSES

### **READ** Romans 8:26-27 (NIV)

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance to God’s will.

### **DEVO**

When looking in the mirror each morning I’m certain that most, if not all of us have some kind of trouble with that person staring back at them.. This I’m certain is an honest admission of us all. What Christian has not sincerely grieved over spiritual shortcomings: over “doing those things we should not do, while not doing the things we should.” Apostle Paul was acutely aware of these sentiments. But, we shouldn't just linger in this valley of spiritual desolation. Our cry, “Who will rescue us?” can be heard by God our Father.

### **PRAY**

Lord, you know us better than we know ourselves. You see our strengths as well as our weaknesses. There are times when we are too unaware how to pray, whether from confidence or concern. Your word says that the Spirit intercedes for us and prays on our behalf, Thank you for always providing for our needs. Amen.

## BE TRANSFORMED

### READ Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

### DEVO

Conforming is so easy to do. It requires little effort or thought. Just do what everyone around you does. And, if there is any question, just follow the advice given by advertisers and you can't go wrong. In following the well traveled road, there is safety and comfort, a sense of belonging. Of being a part of the herd.

Instead we are called to *be transformed*. Extreme makeovers are popular today, whether it be a house, a business, or a wardrobe. But Paul's call for transformation is a call to experience an extreme makeover in who you are, your desires, priorities and commitments. Dare to break free of the herd and instead follow the Good Shepherd to a more abundant life.

### PRAY

Lord, you desire that we are changed completely in our thoughts and deeds and not to be conformed to the way of the world. Wake us up to your transforming power so that we may fully embrace our new life in Christ.

Amen.

# DAY 9

# DAY 10 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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**THIS IS OUR PRAYER - FEBRUARY 28**  
(Guest Preacher: Rini George)

**SERMON NOTES**

**FILL  
US**

## **NOTHING SEPARATES US FROM GOD**

**READ** Romans 8:38-39 (NASB)

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **DEVO**

The chief thing that separates us from God is the thought that we are separated from Him. We struggle to believe that we are always with God and that He is part of every reality. The present moment, every object we see, our inmost nature are all rooted in Him. But we hesitate to believe this until personal experience gives us the confidence to believe in it. This involves the gradual development of intimacy with God. God constantly speaks to us through each other as well as from within. The interior experience of God’s presence activates our capacity to perceive Him in everything else; people, in events and in nature. When or where are you most likely to be aware of God’s presence? Least likely, or least aware?

### **PRAY**

God, You are for us, who can be against us? You did not spare Your own son, but gave Him for us. No one can condemn us because we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Thank You Lord for that truth. Help me to remember that truth and speak aloud that truth when I feel like the world is condemning me or even my own heart. Help me to fix my eyes on You so that I know without a doubt Your love reaches us. Amen

# DAY 12

## WITH THE HEART

### READ Luke 13:34 (NRSV)

The Prayer of the Heart is the prayer of intimacy. It is the prayer of love and tenderness of a child to Father God. Like a mother hen, who gathers her chicks under her wings, we, through the Prayer of the Heart, allow God to gather us to himself, to hold us, to cuddle us to love us.

### DEVO

Richard Foster tells a story of visiting a local church and his request to God, prior to the start of the service; “What, Lord, do you have for this congregation this morning?”

God’s response was quite specific: “Tell them that I want to warm their hearts.” God did act upon his request. Foster, later thought to relay this story to underscore the longing God has to commune with each of us, Heart to heart. It is to the voice of the heart that God listens and it is the heart that he answers.” In this prayer of the heart we experience “friendship and love..; To some degree we are being directed by the Spirit into the profound intimacy with God.

(adapted from: Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home).

### PRAY

Lord, help me to grow in prayer and practicing the presence of God in my ordinary, daily routines of work, family, friends, and recreation.



# Welcome Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we know that You are the Counselor of Truth, our help in need, and the One who fills us with the Spirit of God. Holy Spirit, we pray this very day to come into greater communion with You. You so graciously work to intercede for us to the Father, but also to comfort us with Your peace that goes beyond all understanding. Holy Spirit, please come.

Holy Spirit, we ask for godly counsel and direction, for we know God's plans are best for us and, in the end, glorify His kingdom. Holy Spirit, please lead us by Your wisdom, discernment, and kindness. We praise and thank You for The Lord's love lavished upon us. Holy Spirit, we want more of You and welcome You this very day to have your way in us.

Amen

DAY 13

# DAY 14

## YOU WILL NEVER THIRST AGAIN

**READ** John 4:13-14

Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

**DEVO**

The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well must have been pretty confused by what Jesus said to her. Who wouldn’t want water that could quench thirst forever! Water always quenches thirst and refreshes the spirits for a while, but in time, thirst returns and more water is needed. But Jesus promises something different; the Spirit and the gift of his grace in abundant proportions flowing into the hearts of believers for eternity.

**PRAY**

Lord, I am thirsty for the living water that only you can provide. Lead me to the well of eternal life and to peace in you. I ask that you allow the river of living water to flow through me in your name. Amen.

## Filled by the Holy Spirit

**READ** Ephesians 5: 18-20

“Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### DEVO

Ephesians 5 teaches us that The Helper, The Holy Spirit, our God-given priceless constant Companion has us! Practicing the presence of God involves continual prayer, which is so much more than just bringing our worded petitions to the Creator.

We practice the presence of God by giving thanks, glorifying, singing, reciting scripture, reciting new prayers or older ones already etched in our hearts. We may pray in tongues, or in silent contemplation on our knees, or lamenting with our tears and groaning. We may meditate in prayer, journal, paint, sway, walk, or playing an instrument of worship. May we give the Holy Spirit free reign in and through us, according to the will of God who knows our hearts.

### PRAY

Lord, teach me to pray in a way that is unique to who you made me to be and also glorifies you. But also stretch me, challenge me, and grow me in prayer.

DAY 15

# DAY 16 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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**THE PRODIGALS - MARCH 08**  
(Preacher: Rich Johnson)

# SERMON NOTES

**SEARCH  
US**

## **RUNNING FROM GOD**

### **READ** Luke 15:11–13 (NIV)

A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.” ... And not many days later, [he] went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

### **DEVO**

To drive home the truth that God loves lost people, Jesus tells a third, climactic parable in Luke 15. It is the story of a lost son. This parable is told in four acts. Act one deals with the rebellion against the father.

You know, it’s ironic that this son left his father in search for freedom only to end up in bondage to the lust of his flesh. Have you ever run away from God? I know I have, too many times to count. Yet God is patient and waiting for our return.

Where have you turned from the Father? Is it time to come back to him?

### **PRAY**

Father, we have wasted ourselves chasing frivolous things. At times we discover our pursuit is fruitless and other times we aren’t aware of the trap of it’s success. Help us to see our rebellion and sin the way you see it and return to you.

**DAY 17**

# DAY 18

## RETURNING HOME

**READ** Luke 15:21–24 (ESV)

And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’”

### DEVO

The life-changing core of the gospel is that when we feel far from God, he is never far from us. The moment we turn back toward him, he runs out to meet us. The moment we lower ourselves in response to our sin, he exalts us, calls us his child, and throws a party in our honor. Sometimes the most important truths are the simple ones. Sometimes the very word we need most is the truth we’ve heard thousands of times.

### PRAY

Meditate on the profound truth of the gospel that you are fully loved only through the grace of your heavenly Father. Acknowledge your total need of his grace and receive the abundant mercy he is waiting to pour over you. Rest in the love of your heavenly Father. Allow his presence and his love to change you from the inside out today.



# Prayer of Return

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name.

Amen

DAY 19

# DAY 20

## NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU

**READ** John 8:10-11

Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.

### DEVO

A woman had sinned. In response, her community was ready not only to punish her, but to kill her by stoning. Some religious leaders asked Jesus if this was indeed the right thing to do. Jesus responded that, if any one of them was without sin, he could throw the first stone at the woman. The room cleared out pretty quickly as each person had to acknowledge his or her own imperfections.

The truth is that we all need the grace that Jesus offers. He forgives this woman -and all of us - before we have even had a chance to change our ways. Jesus does want us to be transformed: not to sin again. That’s a tall order. But we take a step in the right direction every time we acknowledge our own shortcomings and bear gracefully the failures of others.

### PRAY

Jesus, you choose to forgive when you have the right to punish. Help me to practice forgiveness toward myself and others. Guide me to see the world and everyone I encounter in the light of your grace.

## HOME AGAIN

**READ** Luke 15:20, NKJV

"But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."

### DEVO

The younger son wanted provision. The father wanted nothing less than full relationship, both with the younger son as well as the older. We might be coming to God because we want a problem solved, a healing need met or because we need provision. God runs to us with open arms and says: "I don't want to give you just these things. I want to have full relationship with you. I want you in my home as my child"!

Whether we are like the younger son (rebellious, law-breaking sinners) or whether we are like the older son (self-righteous, 'law-keeping' sinners), God wants us home with Him, close to His own heart, living as His precious child.

### PRAY

Father, You love me so much that You want to settle for nothing less than the fullest of relationships with your children. I know that many times I've come to You because I wanted You to do something for me. Thank You that You want so much more! Help me to also want and pursue that depth of relationship that You long for. Amen

DAY 21

# DAY 22 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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**THE PRODIGALS - MARCH 15**  
(Preacher: Rich Johnson)

# SERMON NOTES

**SEE  
US**

## WHAT'S ALL THAT NOISE?

**READ** Luke 15:25-27 (NIV)

**25** “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

### DEVO

The older son in this parable of Jesus was the one who remained at home with the father, yet his heart was just as distant from him as his younger brother who left for a far away country. There are times when we are so filled with envy and jealousy that we can't hear the noise in our own souls, building up resentment and anger. Moments that offer the opportunity for gratitude, joy and celebration are robbed by self loathing, regret and fear of being left out.

We've likely had an elder brother moment or two in our lives. We've taken our hurt out on a co-worker, a family member, maybe even ourselves. As we mature in our faith, we realize that our hurt is between us and God, our Father.

### PRAY

How does this focus on the older brother speak to where you are with God? Ask the Spirit to search your heart and reveal any thoughts or emotions hidden in the dark so they can come to light.

# DAY 24

## TOO HURT TO HANDLE

**READ** Luke 15:28-30

**28** “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

### DEVO

If you hold on to a hurt, it can easily become a hate, and solidify into full-blown resentment. And resentment is the great destroyer of relationships.

Proverbs 10:12 says, “Hatred stirs up trouble; love overlooks the wrongs that others do”. The only way to let go of resentment is to replace it with love. And God can help you do that—not in your own strength, but in the divine grace he gives you if you ask.

Has resentment put a strain on any of your relationships?

### PRAY

Lord, I thank you for being close enough to hear my prayers and really listen to my heart. Your words and love is the only thing we can know is true. I know that I need to face my anger and resentment, but I can’t do it alone. God please help me to see that you’ve always been with me, so I can start a new cycle of hope with those important relationships.



# Prayer of Release

Father, life seems so unjust, so unfair. The pain of rejection is almost more than I can bear. My past relationships have ended in strife, anger, rejection, and separation. Lord, help me to let go of all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passion, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger and animosity).

In the name of Jesus, I choose to forgive those who have wronged me. I purpose to live a life of forgiveness because You have forgiven me. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, and slander, along with every form of malice. I desire to be kind and compassionate to others, forgiving them, just as in Christ You forgave me.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, for I know that without holiness no one will see You, Lord. I purpose to see to it that I do not miss Your grace and that no bitter root grows up within me to cause trouble and defile me or others.

Amen

DAY 25

# DAY 26

## JUST ASK

**READ** James 4:2-3

"You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

**DEVO**

Sometimes we look at God as being the big Santa in the sky. We have our wish list all ready to present to him. And we think if we are just good enough we might receive blessings from him and get what we always wanted.

Oswald Chambers brings up an interesting point when he says, "Whenever we insist that God should give us an answer to prayer we are off track. The purpose of prayer is that we get a hold of God, not of the answer." Our first motive should be to seek God. We should want to get up next to him so that we can see his will and his ways. After all, God has already richly supplied us with everything we need

**PRAY**

Lord, Please forgive me for making this relationship based on what you can provide and do for me. I want to seek you, follow you, and do your will. Help me to humble myself. Thanks for the blessings you bring to my life and especially for eternal life through your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen

## GOD SEES YOU

### READ Psalm 34:15

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry;

### DEVO

You already have God's attention. His eyes are set on you. Most exciting is how God is looking to strengthen you. **2 Chronicles 16:9** explains how the eyes of the Lord search throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.

God is not just watching and observing your ways and habits, God is actively looking to see how, when, and where He can help you where you need it most. God is seeking ways to strengthen and uplift you where you are weak or fearful or anxious. God sees you and has not forgotten about you.

### PRAY

Lord, you see us. We confess that there are times when we doubt that you see us. We compare ourselves to others and feel left out. But none of your children are unseen by you. May we live with this confidence, that we are seen and heard by you.

Amen

DAY 27

# DAY 28 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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**THE PRODIGALS - MARCH 21**  
(Pastor Rich Johnson)

# SERMON NOTES

**GOOD  
FATHER**

## PRODIGAL GOD

### READ Luke 15:20

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

### DEVO

Though we often refer to this story as “The Parable of the Prodigal Son,” it could be called “The Parable of the Prodigal Father.” We may think that “prodigal” refers to sinful, rebellious, or wayward behavior. But it actually means “wasteful in a reckless way; extremely generous, lavish.”

The term may describe the rebellious son’s wild living, but it also describes the father’s lavish love. This parable is about our Father’s character and how his generous love operates in a world full of wayward children; the ones that leave home as well as the ones who stay physically but their hearts are distant.

Jesus wants us to know without a doubt that his Father’s love is abundantly prodigal, and that when we repent and return home, our Father, with all of heaven, is ready to celebrate!

### PRAY

Lord, thank you for the radical and lavish love that you give to your children. You are full of forgiveness and grace beyond measure. Wherever we have wandered from your love spiritually or emotionally, we know that you long for our return. You are a good, good Father.

Amen

DAY 29

# DAY 30

## JOIN THE CELEBRATION

**READ** Luke 15:22-24

**22** “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

### DEVO

Can you imagine this scene? The wandering son, who rejected his father comes back home after wasting his wealth. In return, the father gives him a robe (covering for his sin and shame), a ring (restored identity and belonging), and sandals (renewed purpose and meaning). Certainly we can feel the joy in being found.

But take for a moment to consider the servants. They joined this celebration as well because the one the father lost has now been found. He’s not dead. He’s alive! Do we have that same sense of compassion, joy and longing for God’s lost sons and daughters to return to him and be fully restored?

### PRAY

Lord, we are your servants waiting with you for the return of your sons and daughters. We pray for them to “come to their senses” and find their way into your loving care. Send us out to go find the lost and send us out prepare the celebration for new life!

Amen



# Prayer of Love

Thank you that you are a loving, gracious God. Thank you that you've offered us forgiveness and the gift of new life in you. Thank you that your love is perfect, it never fails, and that nothing can separate us from your love.

We pray that our lives would be filled and overflowing with the power of your love so we can make a difference in this world and bring honor to you. We ask for your help in reminding us that the most important things are not what we do outwardly, it's not based on any talent or gift, but the most significant thing we can do in this life is simply to love you and to choose to love others.

Help us to love as you love. Fill us with your Spirit so that we can choose what is best. We are weak Lord, but we know also, that even when we are weak, you are strong within us. Thank you that it's not all up to us. Thank you that you equip us to face each day with the power of your love, your forgiveness, and your grace.

Amen

DAY 31

# DAY 32

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

**READ** John 10:14-15 (NLT)

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

### DEVO

Jesus knows us. He knows our hearts. He knows our fears. He knows our temptations. He knows us inside and out. Any attempts to pretend would be in vain. We do not have to be afraid in his presence. We know he wants what is best for us. He demonstrated it by allowing himself to be born into our world and placed in a feed trough in a stable at Bethlehem. He made it clear by allowing himself to be arrested, mistreated, falsely tried, and then crucified on the cross at Golgotha.

### PRAY

Father, because of your love and because of Jesus, who is interceding for me now, I pour out to you my deepest concerns: ... I know you will hear my cries and minister to my needs. I do not mean to be selfish today, O God, but I do want to be honest in your presence knowing that I can come to you sincerely and receive your grace. Thank you for your immeasurable love, understanding, and assurance which were given to me at such a high price. In Jesus' name, I pray.

Amen

## WAITING ON GOD

### READ 1 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

### DEVO

How does transformation occur in our lives? Any approach to transformation that puts self at the center is doomed to failure. Self-improvement cannot produce lasting personal transformation. Divine empowerment is the only sure method to change. We are empowered from the inside out as God gives us spiritual birth and causes us to grow in stature and grace.

A huge man stepped on the scale, not knowing it was defective. A tiny boy watched closely to see how much this person weighed. The needle rose quickly, but to the boy's astonishment it stopped at 50 pounds, close to what the boy himself weighed. The boy looked at the man, then at the scale, then at the man again, and said to his mother, "Mom, that guy must be hollow inside."

A lot of us are hollow inside. Without the power of Christ's resurrection, we are empty. But if we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have received imperishable treasure. And that treasure is freely given by grace. It is the life of Jesus Christ living within us.

### PRAY

We praise you, God Almighty, for the indwelling power of Christ resurrection. May our joy never fade and our eternal treasure never spoil. In Jesus; name.

Amen

DAY 33

# DAY 34 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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**THE PRODIGALS - March 28**  
(Pastor Rich)

# SERMON NOTES

# **PASSION WEEK**

## HE HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD

### READ

John 16:33(NIV)

I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

### DEVO

Near the end of their last meal together, just before Jesus is handed over to be crucified, the disciples seem to finally understand who Jesus is and feel confident in their future. However, in words that sound made for our current time, Jesus warns that things won't always be easy. Their faith will be tested and they will be scattered "each to their own home." But even in times of trouble we are to "take heart" and "have courage" because Jesus has overcome the worst the world can offer. He has triumphed over death and, through him, so have we.

### PRAY

Jesus, in our times of fear and uncertainty, give us courage. Let our lives be filled with the sure and certain knowledge that you are with us and that in you we are safe from the world's troubles.

DAY 35

# DAY 36

## SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

### READ

John 17:11 NLT

Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.

### DEVO

Did you know there is an unseen battle going on right now? A battle that has two clear sides—good versus evil. Jesus spoke a little about this unseen battle when said the thief comes to kill steal and destroy, but He came to give you life to the full (John 10:10). God battles on our behalf with a full legion at His command. Every day we can wage war with God by praying against that enemy and his thievery ways. Take a look around—what is the thief taking that needs to be stopped? What would today look like if you considered your prayer as a battle cry for yourself or others?

### PRAY

Jesus, we pray for spiritual boldness to live in this world. We ask for your protection from all the traps and schemes of the evil one, the enemy of our faith. We speak this in the power of your name above all names, in Christ we pray. Amen



# Prayer of the Cross

Lord God,

The message of the cross is difficult to take. How can death give way to life? How can weakness be strength?

Yet your word says that Jesus, being God, took on human flesh and suffered the worst kind of death. How can this be?

This message is indeed difficult to take. But your foolishness is wiser than our wisdom. Your weakness is greater than our strength. Help us to know that none of us can boast before you.

It is only in Christ Jesus that we can boast. In his name, we ask you to help our unbelief. That we may love you, and walk in the way Jesus taught us.

In his name,

Amen

DAY 37

# DAY 38

## LET MY FAITH FAIL NOT

**READ** Luke 22:31-34

31 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. 32 But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.” 33 Peter said, “Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you.” 34 But Jesus said, “Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.”

### **DEVO**

I have the best intentions of following Jesus, but sometimes I overvalue my strength and resolve to withstand difficulty. Jesus isn't condemning Peter for being overconfident, he's preparing him for the internal battle that is coming. The way we grow closer to Jesus is to allow him to speak the truth in love about us. Notice that Jesus reassures Peter that his internal conflict would not result in death. Therefore we don't have to fear what we will lose by listening to Jesus. We have so much more to gain by receiving his words.

### **PRAY**

Jesus, Thank you for illuminating opportunities for growth in my life, for pointing out things that are leading me away from you, away from your way of life. Lord, help me to trust that all that you show me is for my good, to become more like you.

Amen.

## SEVEN LAST WORDS

These last words of Christ were spoken during his three hours on a cross. They are a great source for meditation on the Passion and Death of Christ.

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!  
(Luke 24:34)
2. This day thou shall be with me in Paradise.  
(Luke 24:43)
3. Woman, behold thy son.... Behold thy mother.  
(John 19:26, 27)
4. My God, My God! why have you forsaken me?  
(Matt 27:26; Mark 15:34)
5. I thirst!  
(John 19:28)
6. It is finished.  
(John 19:30)
7. Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.  
(Luke 24:46)

### PRAY

Jesus, with your last breath you spoke what was most precious to you and your kingdom. Your work on the cross has secured our relationship with you and establishes our relationships with one another. Now as we meditate on your death, we know that life in the resurrection is soon to come.

Amen.

DAY 39

# DAY 40 (reflect)

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

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**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?**

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