

LIVING

Creative
Communication
Sample

THE GOSPEL LIFE

daily devotions for christians on a mission

■ The Season of Lent ■



Ash Wednesday

Is It Easter Yet?

*So then,
death is at
work in us,
but life is at
work in you.*
2 Corinthians 4:12

*Challenge:
Reflect on
your death
and dying.
Who do you
want near?
What's your
legacy? How
is your faith
deepened,
your soul
comforted,
or your life
changed
by looking
death in the
eye?*

*Read:
Luke 22:7-24:31
Romans 8:5-11*

As Ash Wednesday reminds us and Good Friday reinforces, death is at work in us—always near.

Death means questioning. “How to prepare?” “What will happen?” “What will we do without you?” We grieve. There will be time apart. These are the things surrounding death.

But...life is at work in us. So we cherish our time here, remembering miracles happen. We know love transcends death, because Jesus overcame the cross. We look forward to being at peace, freed from earthly cares. Jesus put life to work in us so death became a transition—not a destination. Now, we know Easter will come—for us all.

*Jesus, through joy and trials, I live
because of you!*

—K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

God's Good Work

...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...

Philippians 1:6

Challenge: Ask God to show you those in your life for whom you can be a Saint Paul.

Read:

Philippians 1:3-6

Is there someone in your life who is your spiritual encourager, your Saint Paul? My mother has been that person for me. Today's reading brings me great comfort as I realize that God's work in my life is "good" simply because it is his work and not accomplished by my own striving.

I can have peace in the assurance that my spiritual security does not depend upon my imperfect efforts but on the power of God, the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross. When life becomes difficult I can sometimes feel less than confident in this truth. These are the times I feel especially blessed to have those saints in my life who can be confident for me and encourage me in my faith.

God of all comfort, help me to comfort others with the comfort I have received from you.

—Laurie Bowan
Ft. Collins, CO

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Time for Prayer

Now Jesus was praying...and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."
Luke 11:1

Challenge: Take time to search Scripture. Discover what Jesus teaches on prayer. Invite a prayer partner to join the quest.

Read: Matthew 6:5-15

How do Christians observe these 40 days before Easter? Traditions abound at Christmas, but Lent is often overlooked, easy to forget. How can Lent be a time for spiritual renewal?

In early days, pretzels (of all things!) became meaningful Lenten fare, a way to observe the season. Made of flour, water and salt, they were rolled in ropes, shaped and twisted to resemble arms crossed on the chest in prayer. The humble pretzel reminded all to follow Jesus' example of frequent and earnest prayer.

Jesus taught his followers how and when to pray. He coupled prayer with his promises. He prayed in private. He prayed with others—at mealtime, in Gethsemane and from the cross. Lent can be a time to deepen our relationship with our Savior by learning his lessons on prayer. Will we?

Lord Jesus, teach me to pray.

—Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Modify Your Message

The important thing is that...Christ is preached.
Philippians 1:18

Challenge: Ask the Lord to reveal a person in your life who needs the loving presence of Christ, then get going.

Read: Philippians 1:15-18

Paul knew the most important thing was to reach people with the life-saving Gospel. He adapted his message depending on his audience. He used logic with the Greeks, talked about idols to the Athenians and quoted scripture to the Jews. No matter the culture, Paul's focus remained the same. In 1 Corinthians Paul writes, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."

We can fine tune our message of God's love according to people's needs. We can serve others in times of sorrow or grief. We can provide a meal to an isolated neighbor or shovel a driveway after a snowstorm. Each day offers opportunities for us to adapt our message and preach Christ with actions and words.

Help me to tune in to the needs of others and respond to them with encouragement, kindness, sympathy, a helping hand, patience or a hug.

—Elizabeth Alexander
Ft. Collins, CO

First Sunday in Lent

Ashes in the Wind

*...the dust
returns to
the ground
it came from
and the spir-
it returns
to God who
gave it.*
Ecclesiastes 12:7

*Challenge:
Invite some-
one outside
your church
to a Lenten
service.
Discuss
how Lenten
practices
help your
spiritual
growth.*

*Read:
John 12:23-26
Ephesians 5:14*

In my Iowa home church, pre-dawn Ash Wednesday service began by candlelight. As I knelt before Father Keyes, he took my head firmly in his hands. "Remember, O Man, thou art but dust and to dust thou shalt return." Then he placed an ash cross on my forehead with his thumb. "Our bodies help us do God's work, but they are of the earth. Our souls have Easter morning." He said this every year. I wore the ash cross proudly, because I knew I was marked as Christ's own.

On the day our ashes fly in the wind, rejoice! Jesus' sacrifice gave us life. Our spirits have returned home!

In you I am knit together—body and soul. I was saved at Easter's dawn. Praise to Father and Son!

—K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO

Monday, Week One

Eternal Hope

*If in Christ we
have hope in
this life only,
we are of all
people most to
be pitied.*

1 Corinthians 15:19

*Challenge:
Even now, at
the start of
Lent, invite
someone to
share the joy
of Easter with
you.*

*Read:
1 Corinthians
15:19-22*

People have varied opinions about Jesus. Many think that he was a great teacher with insightful wisdom. Others think that his compassionate life provides a good example to follow, but not much more than that. Still others believe that he died as a rebel opposed to Roman overlords and religious leaders of his day. To believe such things about the Savior is to live without hope or, at the most, to have hope “in this life only.”

Jesus is a wise teacher and a good example, but he is much more than that. Jesus is the promised Messiah and the Son of God. He died on the cross, not as a rebel, but as the perfect Lamb of sacrifice. On the third day he rose from the dead, the guarantee that we too will rise and live in his presence forever!

Jesus, fill us with the joy of your resurrection!

—Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO

Easter Sunday

Repeated Witness

*“This is the
disciple who
is bearing
witness
about these
things...”
John 21:24*

*Challenge:
Reach out to
someone this
week with
the Easter
message.
Bear wit-
ness to your
Christian life
every day.*

*Read:
John 21:1-14*

John writes at the end of his Gospel, “This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things.” For the first time, I considered John’s repeated interactions with Peter—at the foot washing when Peter asked him, reclining next to Jesus, who would betray the Master (John 13); helping Peter gain access to the courtyard where he would deny his Lord (John 18); running with Peter to the empty tomb (John 20); telling Peter in the boat with the miraculous catch: “It is the Lord!” (John 21). Repeated witness on the journey!

*Lord, use my repeated witness today
and every Easter day!*

—Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO