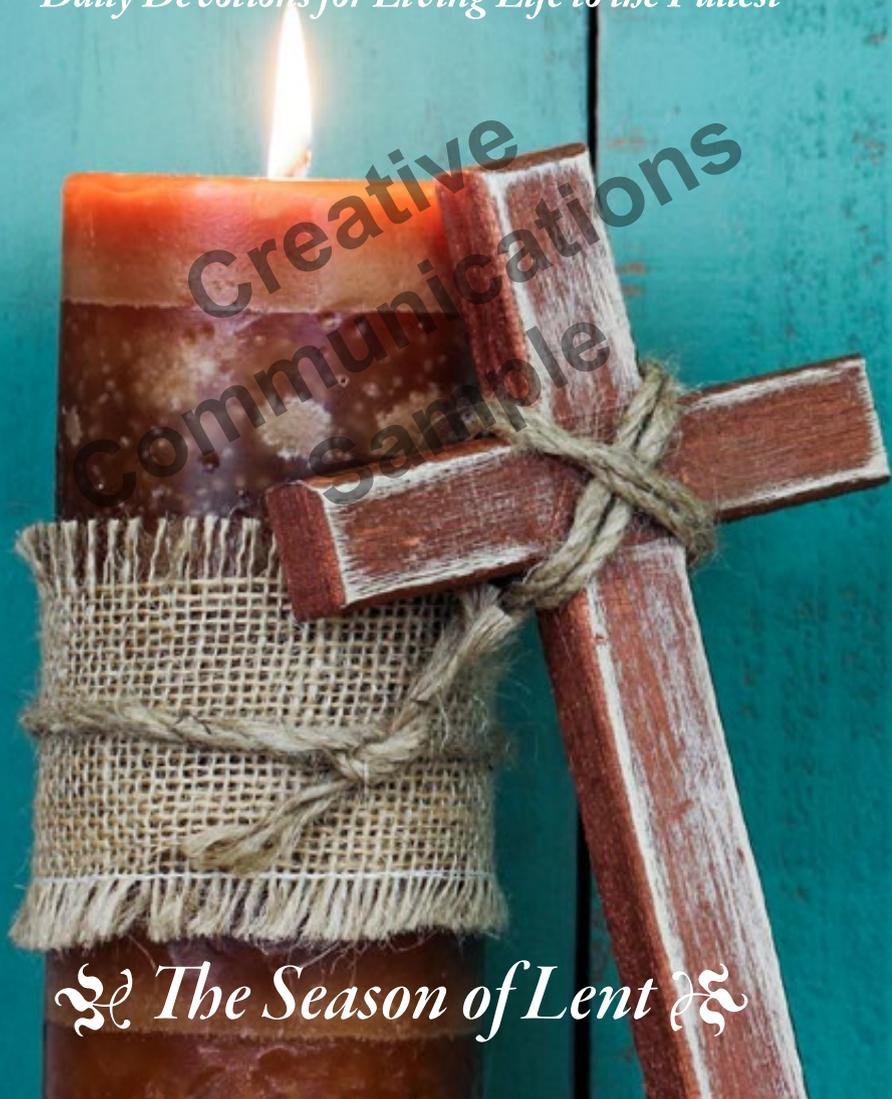


HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest* •



✥ *The Season of Lent* ✥

Ash Wednesday

Ashes

I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:6

Confronted by the awesome, creative majesty of God, Job fell silent in repentant humility. Standing before the desolate majesty of our crucified Savior, we too can only repent in dust and ashes and receive his forgiveness.

Lord, have mercy on me. Amen.

Look: Where do you see crosses today?

Read: Job 42:1-6

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Paid

The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

2 Samuel 12:13

David committed adultery and murder, and unknowingly pronounced sentence on himself: “The man who has done this deserves to die.” David repented and the penalty was lifted. “The wages of sin is death,” but on the cross Jesus paid that debt for us all.

Lord Jesus, we give thanks to you. Amen.

Remember: The price is paid. Forgiveness and life are yours.

Read: 2 Samuel 12:1-15

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Give It Up for Lent

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret.

Matthew 6:17-18

What are you giving up for Lent? While some Christians still follow the ancient tradition of foregoing a particular food or activity in observance of Jesus' suffering and death, this practice today has been mostly forgotten. While fasting was intended to increase our focus on spiritual matters instead of our physical wants and needs, the practice was susceptible to religious hypocrisy in Jesus' day, as well as in ours. He did not command his disciples to discontinue fasting, but rather to make sure that fasting and everything else they did was done to God's glory.

What are you giving up for Lent? Instead of giving up desserts, help to stock a food pantry. In place of giving up television dramas, tell someone the story of our Savior, who gave up his life for us.

Help us, Lord, to glorify you in all we say and do this Lenten season. Amen.

Offer: Instead of "giving up" something for Lent, what can you give for God's glory?

Read: Acts 2:42-47

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Shelter in Place

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

2 Corinthians 1:5

Heavy rain and fog make roads impossible to see and impassable. So we stay home and shelter in place. Lent: it's also a time to shelter in place—to reflect. Can we see where we're going?

The path to God is narrow, and sometimes a down-pour of everyday events throws us off course. We reject God's plan for us and try to do things our own way. We forget God's law of love, and our sins cause us trouble. Walking alone, we keep too busy to feel God's presence or worry so loudly we can't hear God's comforting voice. Sure, we keep moving, but in the wrong direction, and we're exhausted. Lent is a time to get off the road and focus on Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, accepting God's love and letting him guide us.

Jesus, help me see where I'm going. Amen.

Seek: Find a quiet place for Lenten reflections, maybe a chair by a window or a bench in the park.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Sunday, the First Week of Lent

The Opportune Temptation

He departed from him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:13

Jesus totally resists Satan's three temptations in the wilderness using God's powerful Word. Does Satan give up? No, he simply waits for an opportune time, probably in Gethsemane when the weight of the world's sin rests on Jesus' shoulders. In fervent prayer, Jesus resists Satan again: "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Thank God for Jesus' willing death on the cross to defeat Satan forever!

Have you ever resisted Satan's temptations only to discover him waiting for an opportune temptation when you least expect it? Jesus tells his disciples, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40, 46). Jesus' forgiveness and strength await you in that opportune moment through his saving Word. Beware! Resist! Turn the tables on Satan with a Gospel Word!

Father, lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from the evil one. Amen.

Watch: Prepare for Satan's opportune time by reading God's Word every day this week.

Read: Luke 4:1-13; Luke 22:39-46

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Monday, the First Week of Lent

Let Me Live

Let me live that I may praise you.

Psalm 119:175

Lent is about life, the life of Jesus, and so Lent is about our life in Jesus. Long before there was a season of Lent, the psalmist expressed a quintessential Lenten prayer: “Let me live that I may praise you.” Let this be your Lenten prayer, every day.

Sometimes as we age, we can feel like there isn’t much to live for anymore. The psalmist would say, “Wrong!” We live to praise the Lord every day. Here’s a thought: Is that hip aching again today? Let it be a reminder that you are alive in God’s grace, to praise the Lord! It works for other aches and pains, by the way. I speak from experience!

Let me live, O Lord God, that I may praise you. Amen.

Shine: Be the light of Christ for someone today.

Read: Isaiah 55:1-6

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Tuesday, the First Week of Lent

Even If It Is Lent

Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.

Isaiah 12:5

The road through Lent is much like driving a coastal highway on a dull, foggy day. Not much in the way of exciting scenery. Dreary, somber—until the sun evaporates the gloom!

Lent rightfully takes us on a solemn and often somber journey. No “Alleluias” within hearing, and with music befitting the mood, Lent’s road is enshrouded with the fog of focus on a sinful life and what it cost Jesus to fix it—until the Son vaporizes the fog! Christ’s victory, and now yours, too, always hovers above the clouds. And if you care to be a bit liturgically daring, you too can sing praises to the Lord, even if the music isn’t in season. How else could you ever express your joy of salvation? (You might even slip in a soft alleluia!)

Thank you, Jesus, for giving me something to sing about, especially during Lent. Amen.

Rejoice: Hum or sing your favorite hymn.

Read: Psalm 147:1-6; Matthew 26:29-32

*Ed Grube
Addison, IL*

Wednesday, the First Week of Lent

I Have Been Redeemed

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Galatians 3:13

What things do you redeem? Do you redeem grocery store coupons? According to God's Law, we are cursed because we are sinners before God's eyes and deserve his punishment. According to God's grace, we are not cursed because Jesus bought us through his death on the cross. Jesus bought us out of defeat, out of slavery, out of a death sentence by his redemption on the cross. Jesus stood in our place and took the curse that we deserved. Jesus made himself the target of the curse; he set us as believers outside the target. The heart of the Gospel is that Christ was made sin for us so that we would become the righteousness of God.

Lord, thank you for your death on the cross so that I can have a place in heaven. Amen.

Feel: Be aware of your own heartbeat today to remind you of God's love for you.

Read: Isaiah 53:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Thursday, the First Week of Lent

Lord, Have Mercy!

Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.

Psalm 28:6

When our children were young, we brought our first puppy home during the Lenten season. They unanimously chose to name the small, black Labrador Retriever “Kyrie,” from the prayer “Lord, have mercy.” Their dad, initially reluctant to bring a dog into our already busy household, thought the name fitting. Why the choice? Our congregation, and our children, had been singing the Kyrie throughout the six weeks of Lent. The word made an impression!

“Lord, have mercy!” continues to be our cry and the cry of Christians around the world, especially during this time of reflection and repentance. The sacrificial love of Jesus has brought us from the brink of darkness and despair to the light and joy of salvation in him. God’s merciful love and forgiveness in Jesus is ours to claim. A gift of grace freely given and gratefully received.

Lord, you hear my cries for mercy, responding with your love and forgiveness in Jesus. Thank you for your amazing, saving grace. Amen.

Pray: Throughout Lent, conclude prayers with the words from Psalm 28:6-7.

Read: Psalm 28:6-9; Mark 10:46-52

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

HOPE-FULL LIVING

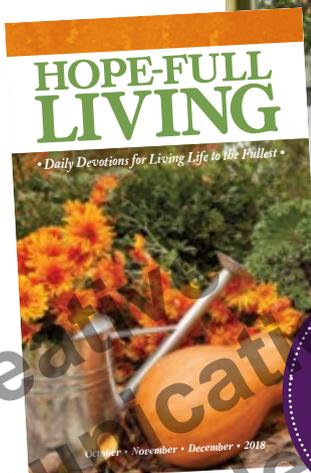
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