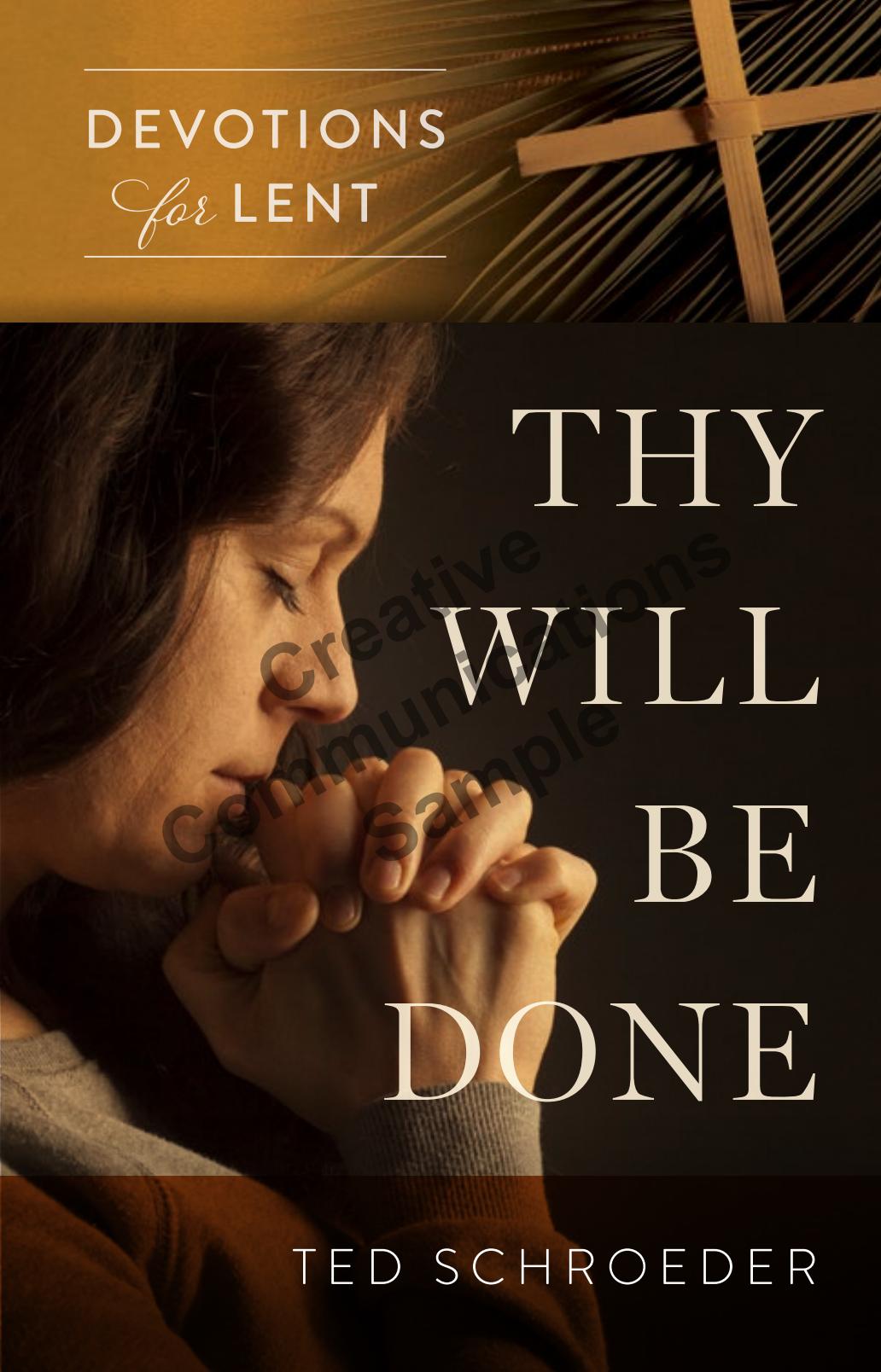

DEVOTIONS
for LENT



THY
WILL
BE
DONE

Creative
Communications
Sample

TED SCHROEDER

God's Will and God's Promise: Abraham

ASH WEDNESDAY

AN ETERNAL PROMISE

"Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them ... So shall your offspring be." GENESIS 15:5

For many God is a God of No. They understand God's will as a series of difficult boundaries to their life and actions. Perhaps that is the way Abraham saw God before the promise. God had chosen him, moved him to a new place and seemed to care for him. But then God did nothing. Did God really care? Was God reliable?

We might experience God in a similar way. We may see a path before us that has great possibility to make us successful and happy. But as we make choices, we find trouble, conflict and regret lie in our way. God does not fix it for us, even when we persistently ask.

The promise to Abraham was sure. In spite of his doubt and his wife's laughter of disbelief, Abraham had a son, an heir, a legacy. God kept the promise. God makes a promise to us as well. We are God's children, redeemed by Jesus Christ.

God, help us to banish doubts and focus on your promises. Amen.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

"And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide." GENESIS 22:13-14

"How strong is your faith, Abraham?" That was the question facing Abraham. And the question came wrapped in an impossible requirement. Certainly child sacrifice was not unknown in Abraham's world. But such a command from the God who kept his promises? How could that be? Yet Abraham went ahead and prepared to sacrifice his son. He had incredible faith that God would provide. The promise of God shone more clearly for Abraham than the demand. And God provided.

I remember as a child hearing the command: “You should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.” I thought: “That is impossible. I love my parents more, my family more, my grandparents more—how can I love God like that?” And the answer is that I cannot, at least not of my own strength of faith or spiritual power. Yet we stand as God’s chosen, loved, helped, saved and sent children. How can that be? Of course, my childhood response is still true. That’s impossible. But with God all things are possible.

Our giving God, thank you for the many times you provided what we needed and not what we thought we wanted. Amen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

WAITING FOR THE LORD

And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” GENESIS 16:2

Abram (soon to be Abraham) and his wife knew God’s promise, even though Sarai thought the promise of a child laughable. They simply tired of waiting for God to fulfill his promise. “We can do it ourselves,” they thought. And the solution (a child by Hagar) turned out to be a disaster. (Read about it in Genesis 16.)

As children, we thought all good things were slow in coming—summer vacation, Christmas, our birthday and more. As adults, we learn that instant gratification is not always available. But one would expect God to do better. He is, after all, God. Why is he so slow to answer? Maybe we should do it ourselves. When we do, the result is often disastrous. With Peter, we affirm: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). We are short of patience when God’s answer is “No” or “Wait.” God may not give us the stuff we pray for, especially the selfish stuff. But he does give, as promised, life and salvation in Jesus Christ. We are renewed every morning by his forgiving love in Jesus Christ. We go forth with strength and the purpose of God’s will.

Wise and loving God, we often are impatient when we don’t quickly get what we want. Forgive us and help us to depend more fully on you. Amen.

GO!

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” GENESIS 12:1

Amazingly, Abram went. He left the comfort and security of his father’s house and went where God was leading. That’s called faith—faith expressed in trust. And that trust was a gift from God—undeserved, unearned, an act of pure grace.

Amazingly, God chose us—not because of anything in us, any qualification or accomplishment. Freely, by grace, he chose us. And remarkably, he tells us the same thing he told Abram: Go! Our response to God’s promise of life and salvation in Jesus Christ is to go. Jesus said to the disciples and to us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). His invitation to respond by going for the sake of others is also accompanied by a promise. He will be with us. He has chosen us. He will not abandon us. Secure in that promise, we go.

Lord of all blessing, help us go as we are commanded to reach others with your gracious love. Amen.

God’s Will and My Inadequacy: Moses

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

BASKET BABY WITH A FUTURE

When [Moses’ mother] could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes. EXODUS 2:3

To control the Hebrew slaves, the Egyptian pharaoh gave orders to kill all of the Israelite baby boys. Moses’ mother hid her baby son in a basket among the reeds in the river. The pharaoh’s own daughter found and rescued him, claiming the

baby boy as her own. Moses had no part in the rescue. It was the hand of God that reached down and saved him.

Moses' story is impossible. Moses' story is our story. In the river of baptism we are touched by the saving hand of God. His rescue, secured for us by Jesus, claims us and saves us. In spite of the evil that may seek to engulf us, in spite of the claim that Satan may seek to put on us, God's plan wins. We are made his own. It is a miracle as remarkable as the baby in the basket in the river. God's impossible rescue of his lost child is our story. In Christ we are God's beloved children. What a remarkable story. What can we do but rejoice?

Saving Lord, seized by your eternal love in Jesus Christ, we glory in the water and Word that saved us. Help us rejoice as your very own. Amen.

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP

[Moses] struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ... When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. EXODUS 2:12, 15

Moses lived in a palace as a prince of Egypt. But he knew he was a Hebrew. He cared about the suffering of his people. When an Egyptian was beating a Hebrew slave, Moses thought he had the right to kill the Egyptian. Things did not turn out well. The Hebrews turned against him. Pharaoh turned against him. The prince of Egypt ended up as a fugitive, fleeing for his life and hiding in a foreign land. What went wrong?

Even when we have the best of intentions, when we seem to be making our best choices for the best of reasons, it goes all wrong. As St. Paul said: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing" (Romans 7:19). Trying harder just does not do it. Facing our failings, we daily remember our baptism, when we were claimed and cleansed by God for Jesus' sake, to drown the old self in repentance and rejoice when the new self is brought out, renewed for a life of love and service. We can't do it ourselves. Yet the victory is ours. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25).

Gracious Lord, teach us to depend on your love and forgiveness. Help us to choose the way you would have us go. Amen.

SEEN ANY BURNING BUSHES LATELY?

Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” [God] said, “But I will be with you.” EXODUS 3:11-12

The suffering of his people weighed on Moses. He had tried to help and failed. What could a fugitive, wanted for murder, do to help his people? Then Moses heard the voice of God calling from a burning bush. God chose Moses to go and confront Pharaoh and free the Hebrew slaves. Surely God had the wrong man!

How many times haven’t we been there? We face the call. It may not come from a burning bush, but it is there nevertheless. We know how we should act. We see the problem at home, in our circle of friends, at work. The injured lives and hearts are before us. We know we are called to make things right. But we have this sense of being completely unequipped and unable to move. Make things change? Is it beyond us? Perhaps. But we cradle ourselves in God’s promises in Jesus Christ and allow God to act through us, and God’s will is done.

Remind us, loving Lord, that we are your chosen people—chosen to carry out your will in our lives. Amen.

BUT THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” EXODUS 3:14

Moses was to return to Egypt and tell the Israelite slaves that God was going to set them free. The people would surely ask, “Which God?” They were surrounded by Egyptian gods. Would they want to hear about the God of their forefathers? They were just trying to survive. Why would they care about Moses’ God? But God equipped Moses for his mission. He told Moses his name: I AM. The great I AM promised to be with Moses.

God has not sent us into a hostile world unequipped. We have his name—his presence. “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). We are sent to change the world, to bring all into God’s family, to reach all with God’s gracious love and forgiveness. Impossible? Most certainly. But we are not alone. Our named and loving God is with us in Jesus Christ. We cannot fail.

Living Lord, help us remember that we are marked with your name and your cross. Help us act in that confidence. Amen.

THURSDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

RESCUE AT THE RED SEA

[God said,] “Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.” EXODUS 14:16

The Israelites were trapped against the sea. There was no way out. The sea was before them and Pharaoh and his soldiers were behind them. The people were terrified and complained to Moses. What could he do? “Stand firm,” he told the people. There was nowhere to go but to the God who had brought them out of Egypt, and God acted to save them. God had his terrified, struggling servant Moses lift his staff over the sea, and the people crossed on dry land.

Isn’t it always that way? How many times have we found ourselves up against it (whatever it is)? We come to the end of our ability to save ourselves or our loved ones. We tremble. We struggle. We cry out, and the God who has been leading us all of our lives continues to lead, to help, to save. God’s acts are not always the way we might plan it. But we have this confidence: wherever we are, whatever we are against, whatever we face—Jesus has faced it and defeated it. At the cross he defeated death itself, and now the risen Lord stands with us. This precious promise never fades: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). And we are confident because: “I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). And a dramatic rescue happens again.

Saving Lord, thank you for rescuing us when we were at the end of our ability to act. Help us depend more fully on your saving grace in Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE

Moses’ anger burned hot. EXODUS 32:19

Even though God had chosen Moses to lead his people, Moses still became angry. The Israelites were so fickle and foolish. After all that God had done to



THY WILL BE DONE

DEVOTIONS *for LENT*

Drawing from Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, "Thy will be done," these devotions reflect on the idea of seeking God's will in all aspects of our lives, especially during Lent, in terms of our identity, our dreams for the future, our worldview and our response to Christ the Crucified. Reflections use the biblical characters of Abraham, Moses, David, Mary, Paul and Lydia as insightful reference points for our own lives.

This book, along with many other Creative Communications for the Parish products, is available on [amazon](#) kindle and [nook](#)

by Dennis O'Neil

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