

# LIVING



## THE GOSPEL LIFE

daily devotions for christians on a mission



▪ The Season of Lent ▪

*Ash Wednesday*

## The Last Sacrifice

*But he was  
pierced for  
our trans-  
gressions; he  
was crushed  
for our iniq-  
uities; upon  
him was the  
chastisement  
that brought  
us peace,  
and with his  
wounds we  
are healed.*

*Isaiah 53:5*

*Challenge:  
Today and  
every day,  
share the  
story of  
Christ with  
someone  
new.*

*Read:  
Isaiah 52:13–53:12*

Lent is a time of reflection on Christ's suffering and death on the cross for our sins. As we embark on this six-week journey, we should remember and meditate on the great sacrifice that was made on our behalf. Invite others to gather with you in midweek Lenten services that yearly repeat the story of Christ's sacrifice. This may be the first time they hear about our Lord and Savior's love for them.

Read your Bible. Retrace the sorrow, the pain and agony, the betrayal that Christ endured. Remember and share his great love for you

*Savior, provide me with the strength to endure trials I encounter because of my belief in you.*

*—Darla Panabaker  
Breezy Point, MN*

*Thursday After Ash Wednesday*

## “Giving Up” or “Adding To?”

*For I desire  
steadfast  
love and not  
sacrifice, the  
knowledge of  
God rather  
than burnt  
offerings.*

*Hosea 6:6*

*Challenge:  
Add an act  
of kindness  
to your daily  
routine*

*Read:*

*Isaiah 1:11-17  
Matthew 9:9-13*

Some people like to “give up” things for Lent. The idea is like fasting—when you miss those items you are to think of Jesus.

I feel more convicted by the words, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” Sometimes my sacrifices are more about me than about God or others, like my sacrifice of free time in order to attend Lenten worship services, or giving up sweets. Today I am challenged to show mercy during these weeks of Lent. How can I daily show God’s merciful love to a neighbor, friend, or even a stranger?

What if I get so used to looking for opportunities to act in mercy because of Jesus’ love for me that it becomes part of my daily routine beyond Lent? That might be what following Jesus is supposed to look like.

*Jesus, help me show love and mercy to others as you did.*

—Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX

*Friday after Ash Wednesday*

## Broken to Made Whole

*I am forgotten by them  
as though I  
were dead: I  
have become  
like broken  
pottery.*

*Psalm 31:12*

*Challenge:  
Look around  
you today  
and bring  
wholeness  
in Jesus to  
someone who  
continues to  
be broken by  
words and  
deeds.*

*Read:*

*Mark 15:21-24*

We know we are on the right path on our road to the cross and the empty tomb when we see and sense the brokenness all around us and even in our own lives. Worry, woes, and wars surround us as we search for God's grace and forgiveness.

Imagine this scene on your journey today: in Bethlehem, Palestine, where Jesus was born, there also continues to be much brokenness and barriers. Naila, an Arab Christian, began her Lenten journey this year by collecting all of the broken glass in her street from previous wars and began to make glass crosses from this debris. Instead of focusing on the brokenness all around her, she is transforming it into a sign of new life and hope, as she points others to Jesus' death and resurrection.

*We pray for more Nailas in our life who  
continue to take their brokenness and point  
others to you, beginning with me, Lord.*

—Rich Bimler  
Bloomingdale, IL

## Saturday after Ash Wednesday

# Passing The Exam

*Test me,  
O LORD, and  
try me, examine  
my heart  
and my mind.*  
Psalm 26:2

*Challenge:  
Spend the  
next 24 hours  
forgiving,  
in honor of  
Christ's sacrifice  
for you.*

*Read:  
Psalm 51:1-12  
1 Corinthians 10:13  
James 1:2-12*

Several years ago I made a big mistake. The way I acted, I should have had my head examined—in-  
stead it caused me to examine my heart. As I realized what I'd done, I felt ashamed and remorseful. With time, I noticed who stood by me as I sunk to the bottom. To this day, those people are in my life. And, my trials deepened my relationship with God in a way I never thought possible. My life was forever changed.

Lent offers us an annual opportunity to take a new test—and remember our old ones. Tests are painful but blessedly, the risen Christ awaits us. (You've passed the exam.)

*Lord Jesus, I am a sinner: undeserving, but ever thankful for your grace.*

—K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO

## First Sunday in Lent

# Lead Me, Lord

*He calls his  
own sheep  
by name  
and leads  
them out.*

*John 10:3*

*Challenge:  
Recall God's  
leading  
through the  
twists and  
turns of  
your life's  
journey.*

*Read:*

*Proverbs 16:9*

*Psalms 25:5*

Traveling to a new place is a great adventure, but it can be a bit scary if you have to find the way by yourself. Detours, construction and traffic can be formidable obstacles. Even a GPS has to “recalculate” occasionally. I’d rather travel with a companion who knows the way and personally leads me to the destination.

Jesus is that ever-present companion for life’s journey to heaven. The Good Shepherd calls us by name, gives crucial directions in his Word and reassures us when there are bumps in the road. Jesus guides us through heavy family traffic, financial recalculations and health detours. He even rescues us when we “run out of gas.” Trust him to lead you all the way home.

*Loving God, give me the wisdom to follow where you lead.*

—Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE

Monday, Week One

## Deep and Wide

*And I pray  
that you, being  
rooted and  
established  
in love, may  
have power ...  
to grasp how  
wide and long  
and deep is the  
love of Christ.*

*Ephesians 3:17-18*

*Challenge:  
What comes  
to mind when  
you consider  
Christ's sac-  
rifice on the  
cross?*

*Read:*

*Job 11:1-9*

*Ephesians 1:17-19*

Remember the rough-and-tumble play of childhood? My four siblings and I grew up on a farm just down the road from our nine cousins. We'd escape into the woods to play. I remember well the log we used to cross over the "ravine." I'd look down into the deep, hoping I wouldn't fall. But if I were to visit that spot today, I'd likely see that the log was probably only a few feet above the creek.

I'm reminded how deep God's love is for us. I daily face the danger of stumbling into the deep ravine of sin. But because of the death and resurrection of Christ, I know his love for me will catch me when I fall.

*Lord, as I daily struggle with sin,  
help me to see your arms stretched out  
upon the cross for me, keeping me safe.*

*—Jane P. Wilke*

*Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, Week One

## What's the Cost?

*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified.*

*1 Corinthians 1:22-23*

*Challenge: The next time you are shopping with a friend, discuss the price Jesus paid for us.*

*Read: Matthew 27:45-46  
Luke 23:44-49*

While shopping with my children, I'm almost always asked to purchase a new toy or the latest outfit. My ultimate decision to purchase or not is always preceded by the same question: "How much does it cost?"

I was reminded of that question recently when I was shopping in a clothing store that is notoriously inept at putting prices on things. I gathered several pieces, took them to the counter and asked, "How much do these cost?"

If I apply that question to my salvation, I am humbled by the answer. It cost Jesus everything, including his life. There was no sale price; no one-day bargains. He paid the ultimate sacrifice for me and you and all people. Jesus was willing to pay the full price for each of us so we can spend eternity with him in heaven.

*Jesus, Thank you for being willing to pay full price for me and all people.*

—Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN



Wednesday, Week One

## Peace!

*Live in peace  
with each  
other.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:13*

*Challenge:  
Share the peace  
of the Lord  
with every-  
one you meet  
today.*

*Read:  
2 Corinthians  
13:11-14*

It should be obvious to live in peace with each other. What else do we know? Jesus breathed upon his disciples and said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." Christ is the Prince of Peace. Through Christ we have peace with God. Are you sensing a common theme?

Today is not about peace-making. Today is about "peace-living." Live peaceably. Breathe in Christ's peace-breath. No, really, breathe in right now, deeply. Hold your breath just a moment; thank Jesus for his peace. Now breathe out and as you do, let go of any "not-at-peace" feelings you may have. Let your breathing be Christ's peace in you.

But you aren't done! Greet at least one person today with the words "The peace of Christ be with you." Live in peace today. Practice Christ's peace today.

*Jesus, Prince of Peace, thank you for your peace. May it lead me today.*

—Don Schatz  
Arcata, CA

*Easter Sunday*

## The Empty Tomb

*Because I  
live, you  
shall live  
also.  
John 14:19*

*Challenge:  
Take some-  
one's hand  
and share  
with joy the  
Easter greet-  
ing, "Christ  
is risen; he is  
risen indeed!  
Alleluia!"*

*Read:  
John 14:1-7  
John 20:1-18*

It's the third day. Hearts are heavy with sadness and apprehension. The shadows of dawn creep over the countryside as light begins to break through. Mary Magdalene, in the company of other women, approaches the tomb and sees the stone rolled away. Without hesitation, she retreats, and by God's desiring she meets Peter and John. The race is on, and what do they find? Inside the tomb, burial cloths are neatly folded and rolled together. There's no sign of haste or destruction, which would have signaled the violation of a body stolen. The angel tells it all: "He is not here; he is risen!"

Our hearts leap with joy as Christians worldwide celebrate the miracle of Christ's resurrection. The victory of the grave is turned to defeat; the sting of death is taken away. The victory is ours!

*He lives, he lives, who once was dead!  
He lives, my ever-living head.*

—Claire Kuddes  
Independence, MO