

# LENT IS A-MAZE-ING



DEVOTIONS  
FOR TEENS AND  
YOUNG ADULTS



## Ash Wednesday This Way Or That

The term “Lenten journey” is so overused that I fear using it now. I know it is overused? Of course I do. I’ve heard it or read it dozens of times ... in everything from church services to Lenten devotions. I’ve overused it myself ... a lot!

My fear is that, if I use the term “Lenten journey,” your mind will go numb. That’s what happens to me, I know, when certain overused statements crop up in something I read or something I hear. “Absolutely free!” for example. I’ve been suckered by that line one time too many. I used to hear the term and get suspicious. “They can’t really mean FREE, can they?” But now my mind just goes numb—in one ear and out the other, you might say.

So, no, I won’t use that phrase. Hey, you ... wake up ... I’m not using it!

Because this booklet is about so much MORE than a Len ... um ... you know. This booklet is about YOUR journey ... your WHOLE journey (or at least as much as we can fit into these thirty-two pages). This journal is about the a-MAZE-ing journey that you make ... about the journey that God calls you to make ... and about the choices you have about the journey too.

## Thursday after Ash Wednesday

# Interwoven Journey

It's time for some truth in advertising. This book isn't ONLY about your own life's journey. It's really about two journeys ... two separate and distinct journeys that are curiously interwoven, one with the other.

You see, this book is also about the journey that one very special person made on your behalf. I have a feeling you know who that person is, the journey, too.

But, I'm jumping ahead of myself. For now, this book is about your journey. This booklet is about YOU. And it is BY you, too. I hope you will take the opportunity to make it your own and to really USE it this Lent. It's yours, so doodle in it, draw, write, scribble. And pray about it. You don't write alone. God is guiding your pen, life and journey ....

## Friday after Ash Wednesday

# Life Is a Highway!

"Life is a highway. I wanna ride it all night long." That pop lyric is, of course, a metaphor, and a metaphor is a comparison between two things—one of the two is easy to envision, the other is tough to grasp. By comparing them, the difficult concept becomes easier to "get."

Life is a tough nut to crack (hey, that's a metaphor too). And because life can be so difficult to grasp, a lot of people come up with metaphors to try to "get it." "Life's just a game," a favorite teacher used to say to me. "All the world's a stage," Shakespeare wrote. "Life is pain," Buddha said.

Yet one metaphor that is used over and over again is the one that this book is fashioned around: Life is a journey.

## Saturday after Ash Wednesday

# The Road Not Taken

The poet Robert Frost did about as good a job as anyone with the metaphor “Life is a journey.” His poem, “The Road Not Taken,” is the favorite poem of many people. I guess they identify with the “two roads” he mentions:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

## First Sunday in Lent

# Choices, Choices, Choices ...

Did you notice that Frost's poem is not only about life but about choices? The narrator is remembering a significant choice once made. The choice made "has made all the difference." The decision made that morning changed life forever!

And what is that "sigh" all about? At some point, the narrator will be telling the tale of that morning's fateful decision "with a sigh." Do I sense some regret hiding in the undergrowth? Why else would the poem be entitled *The Road NOT Taken* rather than *The Road I'm So Glad I Took*?

Life is full of choices—roads taken and roads not taken. Some of the decisions we make are important, life-altering ones (like where to seek an education or whom to marry). Others are tiny, insignificant ones (like whether to order bologna or salami for lunch ... although, if the whole peppercorns in the salami cause a choking incident, who is to say that was an insignificant decision?).

Think about some choices you've made that remind you of Frost's two roads. Do any have the undergrowth of regret?

## First Monday

# Detour to a Dead End!

I promised you that we'd be covering two interwoven journeys this Lent. Well, folks, here we go. Time to leave your journey and follow Christ's.

But ... you may not have realized it begins as far back as it does. It starts in a garden, all the way back ... "in the beginning." Read Genesis 2 and 3 to learn more ...

## First Tuesday

# Under Construction

Adam, Eve and the snake ... I think we'll all agree that they messed up pretty badly. Eve blamed the snake. Adam blamed GOD (imagine!). "The woman YOU gave me ... she told me to eat and I did." Yeah ... God is responsible for all this sin? NOT!

God, to his credit, refused to enter into the playing of "The Blame Game." Instead, he started working for a solution. He tossed his creation into a Construction Zone, threw up cones, sent out flagmen (an angel with a flaming sword) ...

... and started working on a plan—a plan in which the serpent's head would be crushed (nasty snake!), and humanity would be redeemed—returned to its heavenward journey.

The trip would not be a easy. It would involve voyages on the crest of a flood ... it would include interminable treks from eastern lands ... it would be diverted by a detour down to Egypt and a jog through the sea ... it would encompass wilderness walks ... it would U-turn into captivity and back again ... it would find its footing in a Bethlehem stable, glide through Galilee, jaunt through Jerusalem and find a roadblock at a cross ... before freeing itself from the bonds of death and launching out on a path toward paradise.

But for now ... for us, at least, on our journey toward that promise ... it's still under construction.

## First Wednesday

# Dead End 2

God's plan led an old shepherd on a journey that started in Ur, a city near modern-day Baghdad. Abraham was called, along with his wife Sarah, to travel halfway across the world (as it was understood at the time, at least) to God's land of promise: Canaan.

This regular gem of the ancient world had ample water, rolling hills, cattle, townships. It sat along rich trade routes—great for gathering taxes and tolls.

Yet, no sooner had they set up shop in the land of promise, than God sent them away—detoured to Egypt ... as slaves!

But God's ears were open. And his promises of promised land were as right as rain. When his enslaved people cried to him, he came to save them. With "a mighty hand and an outstretched arm," God led his people out of the land of bondage, drowning the evil Pharaoh and all of his charioteers in the chaotic waters of the Red Sea.

For Pharaoh, it was a dead end. For God's people it was their loving Lord's pure salvation. The journey to freedom begins!

## First Thursday Buried Treasure?

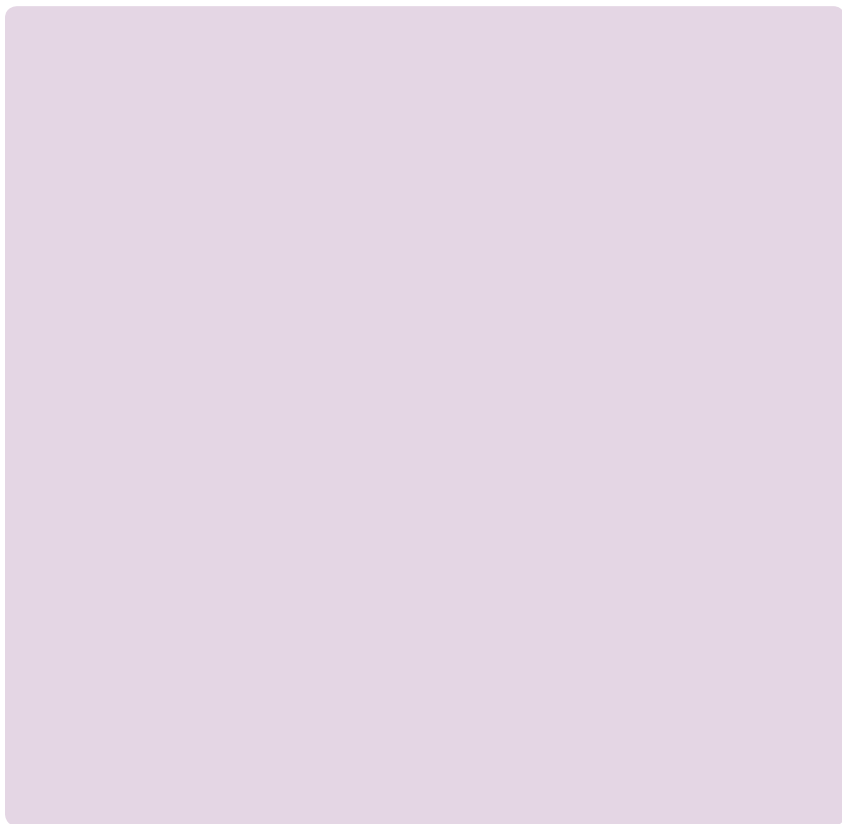
ONLY ONE ALL-OUT BIRTHDAY PARTY. That was the rule in my family. It made sense, because when my fifth birthday came around, my parents went all out: My whole class was invited. There were games and gifts. After we ate (a clown cake), we went for a tour of the firehouse. And just when I thought the party was coming to a close, my dad announced—tada!—a treasure hunt! When the map was hauled out, we had a free-for-all! We flew to look behind the shed. We scurried to peep into the mailbox. We dove to seek the promised treasure. I don't even remember what the treasure was. But I do remember the amazing hunt itself.

To this day, when I hear about pirates or treasure, I think of that treasure hunt. I imagine my dad laboring over that map and hiding the clues. There's something mysterious and fun about treasure maps and their clues. They can make the journey ... the hunt ... more exciting than the treasure.

## First Friday

# Here's Your Map!

Here's a treasure map—a map for your life. The beginning of “the hunt” is your birth. Any trails will be the path of your life (even trails not taken). Important events can be sights along the way (how would you draw your birthday? Maybe “Birthday Gulch”?). Fill the map—your baptism, perhaps, your first bike. Special vacations? Your first date? Be sure to include events from your spiritual journey too—the day you got your first Bible. Continue the map into the future. College? Maybe. Marriage? Perhaps. Career? Sure.





## First Saturday

# “X” Marks the Spot!

What “X” marks the spot on your map? What is the GOAL ... the POINT? The point of your whole LIFE?

I know that’s a bracing, pupil-dilating question to ask a person, so I’ll give you a minute or two to recover ...

Ready? What I’m talking about is goals that you set and ideals that guide those goals. You might want to be a journalist. But you might also want to be a TRUTHFUL journalist. You might want to be a parent. But you also might want to be a LOVING parent. Journalist and parent (nouns) are goals. Truthful and loving (adjectives) are the ideals.

Make a long list of goals today. Surround those nouns with adjectives—ideals that shape your goals. It helps to consider role models—and, of course, the ultimate role model, Jesus Christ. What adjectives surrounded his living?

## Second Sunday in Lent

# Rough Road!

Back to the intertwined journey of Jesus ... which is still mired in the Old Testament (told you his journey started earlier than you imagined!). When we left God’s people, they had just traveled through the Red Sea, dry-shod.

What followed was a forty-year trek through the wilderness (that’s a lifetime!), eating manna. Sounds like a tough road.

But ... while there, they grew strong. A ragtag collection of slaves was transformed into a tough community—an army. More importantly, they learned to rely solely on God ... to trust him for the journey ahead.

# Easter Sunday Roadside Assistance

Easter's Good News can leak into every corner of our lives.

Truth be told, God cares for us even when things seem to be going horribly. I realized that on a trip I took to Nebraska. The way to Nebraska would be simple, so I thought—a straight shot west and then a pretty straight shot north. But the straight-shot journey became a bumpy one when my car started to shimmy near the tiny town of Nebraska City.

I pulled over to discover that my right front tire was shredded! Oh, that front wheel drive—it can mask serious problems! What was I going to do? I lumbered to the next gas station. “We can’t help you. It’s Sunday,” they said. I went to the next place. “We don’t have the tire you need,” they said.

By the time I reached the third gas station, I was losing hope of ever reaching my destination. But there I met a teen named Kyle. He checked through the new tires. None of them had my model number. He checked through the used tires. Still no luck! But we both looked down at a tire lying by itself on the floor. It had my model number! I was saved!

Kyle popped the tire on, and I was off ... and on time!

How much I worried that day—about my car, about the tire, about reaching my destination. What wasted worry! See, God has taken care of all my worries—Jesus saw to that. And, as icing on the cake, God continues to offer roadside assistance to me on all the pathways of my life.

I look back on that day to find God’s Easter Good News. I hope that you can look forward with that same HOPE!