



HOPE-FULL LIVING

SPECIAL EDITION



Celebrate the
season of

Lent

• Daily Devotions for This Holy Season •

ASH WEDNESDAY

Dust

You are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3:19

Today, we remember that we are dust, doomed to die. But the ashen cross reminds us that there is life beyond this dust because of the cross of Christ.

Let the dust of this earth be renewed by the message of your cross, O Lord. Amen.

Look: Look for the sign of the cross around you.

Read: Matthew 3:2

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Return

Return to the LORD your God ...

Joel 2:13

Why do we return to the Lord? The Scripture makes it clear: because he is gracious and merciful, our Lord takes us back, no matter where we have strayed.

Thank you for taking us back to you, O Lord. Amen.

Return: Make a U-turn back to God each day from your sin.

Read: Joel 2:12-14

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

A Place to Stand

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ...

Galatians 6:14 (KJV)

Does the ground around you seem shaky in a world full of chaos and confusion, harsh hate-filled voices, violence and threats of war, and many competing religions and philosophies? Where can you find a firm place to stand?

Just in time comes Holy Week! Women filled with grief and fear stand beneath the cross of Jesus. Mary, his mother, stands there also with John, the beloved disciple. Everything about the experience seems shaky with loud raucous voices and grim soldiers. But Jesus on solid ground looks at his mother with love and assigns John to care for her as son. No wonder, Paul in Galatians exposes false teaching and identifies the only place to stand: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ...”

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your saving cross as the only firm place to stand. Amen.

Stand: Stand firm this week on Christ, your solid Rock.

Read: John 19:25-27



SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Serve Like Jesus

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:14

Have you ever performed a task you felt was beneath you? Jesus washed his disciples' feet the night before he died. Though this was normally a job for the lowest of servants, it wasn't beneath Jesus, the King of kings.

Jesus directed the disciples to serve one another even in the smallest ways. He promised blessings to those who serve in this manner. Though he stooped low enough to wash the feet of Judas, who betrayed him, he did not look back with regret.

Our small acts of service, especially the ones we'd rather avoid, will grow humility in our hearts. These acts of service will help us see others with compassion. By serving others with humility, we become more like Jesus. We won't feel like we are stooping low with small tasks when Jesus is our example.

*Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO*

Lord, help me to perform a small task for someone else with humility and joy today. Amen.

Learn: Read the Gospels while looking for signs of Jesus' humility, and imitate him.

Read: Proverbs 22:4; Philippians 2:3

SUNDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Coming into Focus

They were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Matthew 27:54

Years ago, I watched the “Jesus Painter” in action. While someone read an account of Jesus, the artist painted various elements as the story unfolded. Those elements revealed Jesus’ face (www.jesuspainter.com).

Throughout Scripture, every story brings the saving work of Jesus into focus. From the fall of sin to his death on the cross on our behalf, our hearts are pierced with guilt. Each rescue points to our ultimate rescue from eternal punishment, and every miracle paints a clearer picture of our loving Father’s mercy.

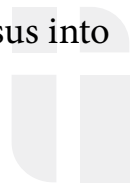
As it all comes together in the Passion story, why God sent his Son into the world comes into focus as we join those who stood at the foot of the cross, realizing that truly this was the only begotten Son of God.

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Dear Jesus, let us never lose focus of the depth of love that sent you to the cross in our place. Amen.

Consider: Which Bible story best brings Jesus into focus for you?

Read: Matthew 26:1—27:66; John 3:16



MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Why Did He Have to Die?

We have now been justified by his blood ...

Romans 5:9

Sometimes I ask, “Why did Jesus have to die?” I know the answer: “To take our sins away, of course.” But the child’s voice in me wonders, “Why didn’t God do what my mama used to do and say, ‘I’ll just forget it. You did something bad, but I’ll let it go.’” My mama wasn’t always consistent, but God is and says, “Whoever sins will die.” Mother overlooked my sins out of love and wasn’t always just. God loves me and is always just. How could God forgive me and be just?

God found a way. On Good Friday, God loaded all sins of all times on Jesus; he died to atone for my sins and the sins of all others. We are forgiven; the price has been paid!

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Loving God, we praise you for forgiving us and giving us the gift of Life, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Do: When you bathe or shower, think of how Jesus has cleansed you from sin.

Read: Romans 5:6-11

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Fear Not

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

Do you remember those moments as a child when something in the dark scared you awake from a sound sleep? In the night when all is dark and you are alone, it's easy to feel afraid. That's when it's time to call for someone to come and shine a light on your fear and remind you that you are safe, that there's nothing to be afraid of.

But think now of Jesus in the last hours before the soldiers came to take him away to suffer and die. Think of how, in the dark of that night, he knew there was good reason to be afraid. He even prayed that perhaps his Father in heaven might provide a way out of the torment waiting for him.

Think now how, because Jesus went and faced the horrors of that dark night, we can trust him when he tells us, "Don't be afraid. Only believe."

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Lord, when I am afraid, help me to remember you are never far away. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage others to trust Jesus in difficult times.

Read: Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:31



WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Sacrifice

He offered up himself.

Hebrews 7:27

Sacrifice, according to one dictionary, is “the act of giving up something highly valued for the sake of something else considered to have a greater value.” When you give up something you value in order to receive something of greater value, you are making a sacrifice.

Our heavenly Father so loved the world—all of us—that he sacrificed his only Son’s life in order to save our lives. Jesus loved us so much that he obeyed his Father’s will and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. The hymn writer encourages us to meditate on God’s saving act: “Calv’ry’s mournful mountain climb; there, adoring at his feet, mark that miracle of time, God’s own sacrifice complete” (“Go to Dark Gethsemane,” stanza 3).

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Thank you, Father, for giving us your Son as the perfect sacrifice. Help us always to thank you for saving our lives by accepting his death as full payment for our sin. Amen.

Adore: Give thanks and praise to God for giving us his Son as sacrifice for our sin.

Read: Psalm 54; Hebrews 7:26-28

THURSDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

The Jesus Road

I will follow you wherever you go.

Luke 9:57

The man meant what he said to Jesus—then. Jesus said to him, "... the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). Translation: "Following me is not a 'glory road'—yet."

God's people have learned that lesson time and again. Freed from slavery, God's people thought the Land of Promise road would be level and straight. When it wasn't, many looked back to the better life "back there."

Jesus walked a hard road to Golgotha. Once there, he did a hard thing—dying in our place.

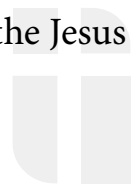
You'd think having gone forward many years, it would be easier for us to follow Jesus. It doesn't often work that way. We become tempted to look back at the better life we had. Then we hear his voice again: "You're almost there, stay close—follow me all the way."

*David A. Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Jesus, thank you for walking the hard road to the cross. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage someone who's on the Jesus Road!

Read: Luke 9:57-62

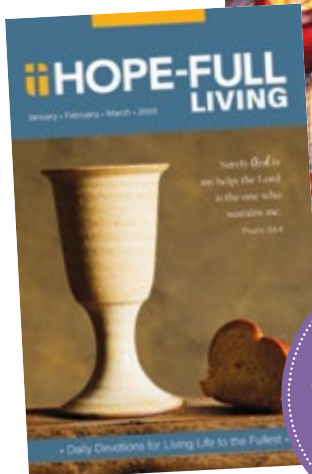


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