

Lent-stagram



**Lenten
Stories
for Teens
& Young
Adults**

**Take up
your cross and
follow.**





ASH WEDNESDAY

Think of This as a Scrapbook

This booklet is your very own Lent-stagram story—a sort of Lenten scrapbook. In it, I hope you find images and vignettes of Jesus, our Lord, as he suffered and died and rose again

for you. And I hope you find yourself in it, too. Because what happened on Calvary that day so long ago (and what happened at the garden tomb, as well) is not just ancient history. **It's personal.** As personal as a family photo-shoot, your Instagram or Facebook account, your diary, or a scrapbook of your life. Write in this booklet—color, draw, scribble, doodle. Fold down a page corner to mark your “likes” or “favorites.” It's yours, after all. And be ready to discover just how hard God worked to make you family ... and just how wonderful that is!

This is my Lenten scrapbook,



a Lent-stagram story,

begun on the ____ day of _____,

in the year _____.

Yet even now I do not write alone.

Lord, guide my thoughts, my pen, my life.

Signed, _____



THURSDAY


Family Photo

Part 1: Family Only

At a family reunion I attended a few years ago, I got a glimpse of heaven.

Let me unpack that. You've probably been in a situation similar to this: We were setting up for the big family photo—Grandma, cousins, aunts and uncles, nieces, nephews—a regular horde of people. The camera would be set on automatic. But at this point the person behind the camera was framing up the shot and saying those annoying things that people behind the camera think are so funny—"C'mon folks, pretend you like one another ... har-dee-har-har." Do you suppose the folks who did cave drawings said stuff like that? Maybe back then it was actually funny.

Yet I digress. I suppose I should now reveal two important facts. First, one of my cousins has a girlfriend—a young woman who has captured the heart of everyone in my family. Second, the rules for this photo had been made crystal clear—FAMILY ONLY!

 *Think: Have you ever been left out? How did you feel? Does it change the way you treat others who are left out?*



FRIDAY

Family Photo

Part 2: Dragged into the Frame


So, Jen (the aforementioned girlfriend) was sitting quietly off to the side as the family was prodded into place for the picture.

And then what will go down in the history of my family as "The Great Family Photo Revolt" occurred. In the aftermath of the revolt we haven't been able to piece together who started it all. But someone yelled, "Hey, what about Jen?" The spark had been set to the wick. "Yeah," somebody else added, "What about Jen?!" "Jen, get in here," somebody

screamed in an inhuman banshee cry (I later realized it was me). Arms were waving, heads were bobbing, feet were stamping. One voice of dissent was raised—"But this is supposed to be family only." The lifeless body of that lone dissenter was found, hours later, underneath a chair.

Jen was beet red, blushing in her chair. She knew the rules—FAMILY ONLY. She didn't want to make a spectacle of herself. Stoically she sat, alone, across the room. "It's okay," she whispered, "this is for the family."

My uncle had to jump up and bodily move her into frame. A cheer went up from the crowd, the timer was set, and the picture was taken. Hoorah! Jen was dragged into the family!

 *Think: Have you ever been included in something (a team, a family event, a church event) when you weren't actually a "member"? Did that make you feel awkward? Included? Warm and fuzzy? Special?*



SATURDAY

Family Photo

Part 3: Cut to the Cross

... and I think of the thief on the cross.

"Remember me ..." he said to Jesus—as though it was too much to ask any more than that. "It's okay ... this is for the family. But when you're up there with your Father in heaven ... could you just remember me?" "Today," Jesus cried, jumping up and bodily moving that thief into frame, "Today, you will be with me in heaven! Today you are ... FAMILY!"

And Jesus bowed his head, and Jesus died, and the darkness loomed, and the thunder rolled, and the lightening flashed. And in that flash, it was as though a camera shutter snapped.

If we were able to look into God's family album or on his Facebook account, would we find that picture there? Jesus, God's only Son—so loved, so good, so pure—dead upon the cross. And next to him, still in the frame, that sinful, robbing, low-life—now another precious, beloved, forgiven son of the Father. And next to him, another face. Mine. And yours, too, and with them the faces of every special child of God.



FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT


Family Photo

Part 4: You Are that Thief

Yesterday's devotion is part of the good news of Lent (and there is plenty of good news, despite the somberness of the season). It's not just the thief asking Jesus to remember him in paradise. It's each of us as well. And it is there, on the cross (of all things), that Jesus demonstrates just how much he wants to drag us into the FAMILY.

"Do you want to know how much I want you in the family album?" Jesus seems to say. "This is how far I'm willing to go to make you part of the family!" And he suffers and he dies.

And then he rises again, to put the exclamation point on the end of the sentence. "You're part of the family! FOREVER! Click! Snap! Flash!"

 *Think: Are there single moments in your life that changed your life forever? The birth of a sibling? A death? A new school?*



MONDAY, THE FIRST
WEEK OF LENT

Family Photo

Part 5: You're in the Shot!

With that flash, you were burned into the picture of salvation forever. And with that flash, Christ was burned into our memories and onto our souls forever. A Savior. A Friend. A Brother.

That day—that awful, wonderful day—the doors were opened to the house of God in the same way that the shutters open on a camera. You were adopted into the family of God that day. The waters in which you were baptized reflected the light that flashed on Calvary's darkened mountain. You are in God's family album! And posted all over his social media! You're not just invited to "follow" him—you're WITH HIM, on his account, in his photos, part of his family!

Your image is burned into God's heart!





TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Family Photo

Part 6: Drawn into the Frame

Sketch a drawing of the “family photo” mentioned earlier—Jesus on the cross, the thief ... and you, too. Who else would be with you? How would you look? Also, draw what you think might be in your heavenly scrapbook—pictures, reminders, keepsakes of your special, spiritual life. Things like pictures of your baptism ... your first day of Sunday School. What else?





WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Flashes of Scripture

Romans 8: We're Family

"All who are led by the Spirit of God are **children of God**. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a **spirit of adoption**. When we cry, '**Abba! Father!**' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**, and if children, then heirs, **heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:14-18).



Read: Read this passage three times today (morning, afternoon, night). Does it read differently as it sinks in?

THURSDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Big Snapshot in Big Shadows

Back to the Beginning

I feel we're getting ahead of ourselves. Here, we're barely halfway through the first full week of Lent and I already have us all saved and sitting around God's family dining table. That's okay, because that's where we're going to end up when this whole Lent thing is over (in fact, getting us there is the whole point of Lent).

But let's back up a bit. Okay ... a BIG bit. Let's head back to the beginning, to that first blinding flash of "LIGHT" in the shadows of chaos. And consider this: did God really say, "Let there be light"? Or maybe ... just maybe, mind you ... might God have simply coaxed chaos to "Say 'Cheese!'?"



Read Genesis 1:1—2:4





EASTER SUNDAY

Only Light!

No more shadows! And no more snapshots! Easter illuminates God's love, showing it as it is. The grace God shows us isn't just the click of a shutter or the flash of a bulb. We don't have a God who specializes in "flash in the pan" care and concern.

The light of God's grace is a steady shine—an eternal flame. God's light is the never-ending light of an Easter sunrise. This isn't a photo, or even a video that's gone viral—it's a blockbuster feature presentation, and then some! This doesn't freeze time—it encompasses it! Eternity is open for business!

"So, Jesus rose from the dead," a friend of mine once said. "That's great for him. But what does it mean for me?"

Everything! Jesus' resurrection foreshadows (oops! I guess that one shadow remains—a pretty good shadow, you must admit), YOUR OWN! If Jesus, who took upon himself the shadows of the entire world, can be found alive (in spite of death's cold grip), then we will evade death, too.

#JesusLives! Nothing ever has been—or could be—more share-worthy than THAT!

Jesus lives! And so will you! Happy Easter indeed!

