

Sow, Now It's Lent!

A Gardener's Guide
to the Season
for Teens & Young Adults



— Ash Wednesday —

Out of the Dust Bowl

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

— 1 Peter 2:21

Lent is about commitment. Jesus certainly made one—a commitment to carry out his mission ... to endure the cross and the grave. As Lent begins ... as we consider the ashes of Ash Wednesday ... I ask you to make a commitment. Not to this booklet ... not even to Lent ... but to your Lord. Commit yourself to following Jesus all the way to the cross and beyond. If that involves the use of this booklet, great. If not ... what are other ways you can commit yourself to your Lord this Lent?

I'm starting my Lenten Gardening Guide on the _____ day of _____, in the year _____.

But I know that I'm not alone. Another Gardener planted in me what is now beginning to bloom. And so I pray this simple prayer:

Guide me, O Gardener. Guide me.

Signed, _____



— Thursday —

The Waiting Game

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

—James 5:7

You're just going to have to trust me when I say that, although it doesn't seem to have anything to do with it, gardening is at the very heart and center of Lent.

In fact, if we were to play a word association game and I said the word *LENT*, the first word to pop into your brain would probably not be *gardening ...* or *garden*, or *gardener*, or *seeds*, or *vineyard*, or *vintner*, or *farm*, for that matter.

But, perhaps, by the time you've finished reading (and writing and drawing in) this book, I'm guessing you'll feel differently. In fact, I think you'll have trouble hearing the word *Lent* without thoughts of gardens, gardeners and farmers plowing through your mind.

For now, like a patient farmer waiting to see what springs up, you're just going to have to trust me.

— Friday —

Soil Analysis

Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil.

—Ezekiel 17:5

Let's do a baseline assessment, just to see where you're starting from. Play a little word association game. What do you think of when you encounter the word *Lent*? Are there memories? Anecdotes? Colors? Feelings? Moods? Songs? Write, doodle or draw your Lenten associations.

— Saturday —

The First Gardeners?

Of course, you've got to admit that it all started in a garden.

And when I say started, I mean STARTED! I'm talking the BEGINNING here. Way back when "God created the heavens and earth," from "Let there be light" to "the earth bring forth" to "it was very good!"

Back there, in the very, very, VERY beginning, I'm told, "God planted a garden."

It says so right there in Genesis.

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

—Genesis 2:8-9

And that's not all. God planted Adam too ... and then Eve ... into this garden.

They were to be the gardeners. Not a bad gig, all thing considered. Especially since the garden God planted seemed to run itself. I mean, it was planted already. And it watered itself, thanks to a prime location by no less than four rivers.

Oh, I'm sure Adam and Eve had jobs to do—harvesting and such. And, as it turns out, there was a rather pesky pest problem ...

But I'm jumping ahead of myself. For now, simply consider this: Adam and Eve were gardeners—it was their job. That, it seems, is what we as humans were built for. And the garden we were meant to inhabit had a name. It was called "PARADISE"!

— First Sunday in Lent —

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

—Genesis 2:3

The Sundays in Lent (like all Sundays, in every season of the year) are celebrations—tiny Easters that begin each week. Celebrate creation today. How can you do that? By planting something (like our creating God did) ... by eating something that came from the garden (like a super salad ... or a brussels sprout ... or even a pickle) ... by walking in a park or flying a kite in a field or mowing a lawn or doing something else out in nature?

Whatever it is you find to do, CELEBRATE!

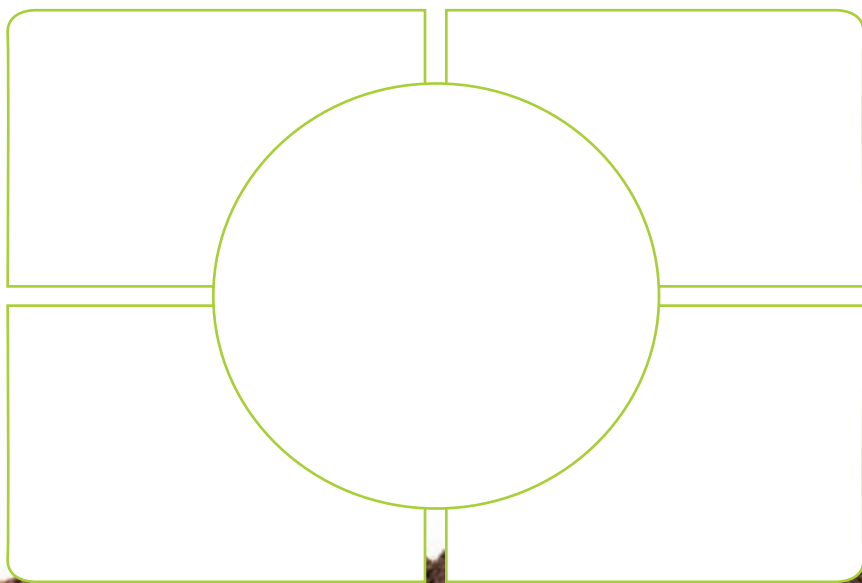
— Monday —

Creation, Cartooned

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

—Genesis 2:15

Climb into God's garden. Take off your shoes, and wriggle your toes deep into the lush green turf. Read Genesis 2:4-25. Then illustrate the story in the cartoon strip below:



— Tuesday —

Fire Ants

“Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.
—Genesis 3:22-23

If you're from the South you'll be able to relate to what I'm talking about in this little devotion.

What I'm talking about is FIRE ANTS.

Allow me to explain for our Northern friends: You're enjoying a sunny summer day in your lush green yard ... sipping on a fresh glass of sweet tea when suddenly your happy little world is invaded by an uninvited visitor—PAIN! Your entire right leg feels like a vise (conveniently covered with razor blades) was slammed shut on it. You look down, expecting to see a pack of ravenous hyenas gnawing on your leg.

You see nothing.

Well, almost nothing. You can make out some tiny ... and I mean TINY specks. Hold it! They're moving! They're ANTS!

You do the ant dance. You frantically brush at your leg. Mistake. Now they're on your hands! They send out their signal and all chomp down at the same exact moment (how do they know how to do that!?). You jump into the pool. You expect steam to rise from the water.

Fire ants were introduced to the North American continent not too long ago when a single load of uninspected lumber was unloaded in the port of New Orleans. From there they have spread throughout the entire South. They're nearly impossible to kill—absolutely impossible to eradicate. And they're moving north.

“Toto ... I don't think we're in PARADISE anymore.”



— Wednesday —

In From the Fields

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.”

—Genesis 4:9-10

What happened to paradise ... to GARDENING?! Well, I think you know. There was a snake ... and a piece of fruit ... and a woman ... and a man (gardeners, both) ... and pair of echoed “crunches.”

What happened? SIN happened. And it spread like fire ants.

Want proof? Look no further than a field outside of Eden. There's a gardener there. His name is Cain. What's that? A look of disappointment on his face? What's that? A rock in his hand? What's that? BLOOD on the rock?! He runs home ... alone, for once. His brother is nowhere to be seen. He throws his few belongings into a sack and bolts out the door.

His mother sits in the corner weeping ... repeating one phrase like a mantra. “It’s spreading,” she sobs. “It’s spreading. It’s spreading ... “

Sin happened. And it spread like fire ants through the south land ... like thistles through a garden.

The garden paradise was lost—the very ground is crying.



Thursday

Can't the Farmer (Cain) and the Rancher (Abel) Be Friends?

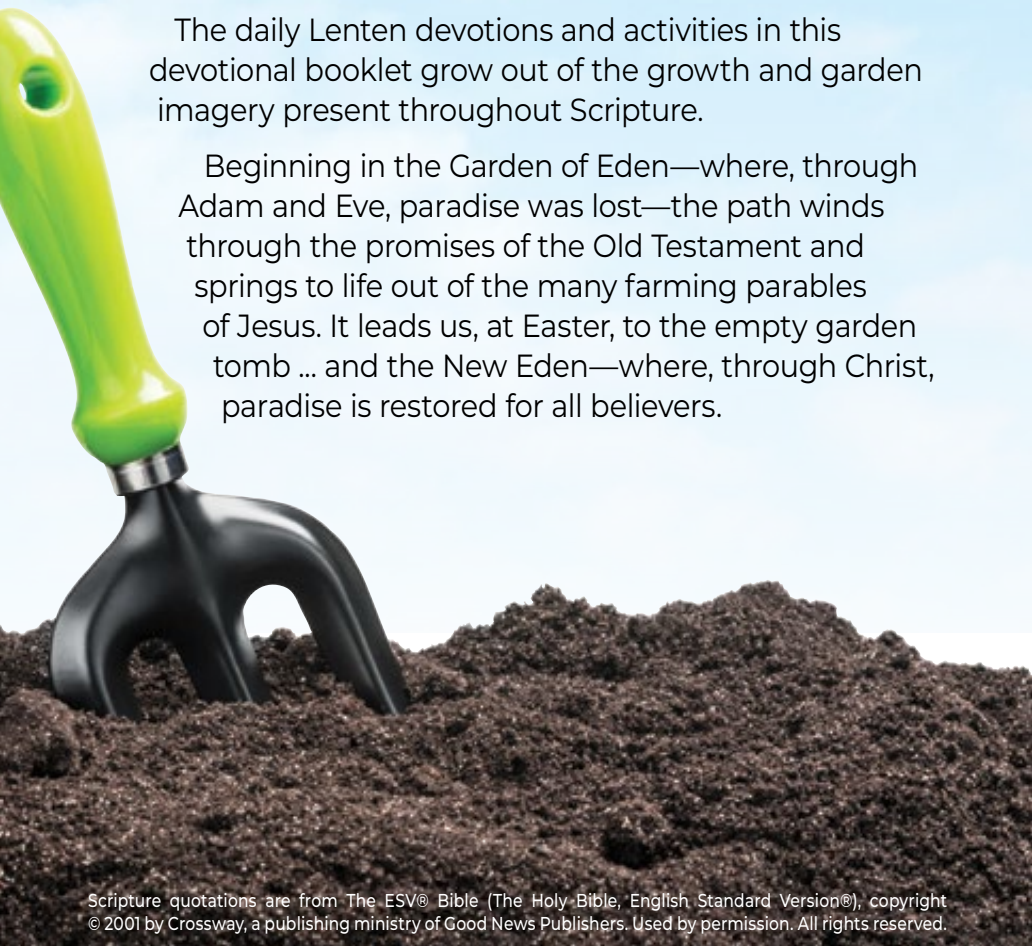
Read Genesis 3:1–4:16. Sin enters the world and spreads like so many fire ant hills. This *sin* isn't just annoying ... it's deadly!

Do: On a large sheet of paper or poster board make a mural of the action thus far. Include the snake ... the sin ... the expulsion ... the sword ... the siblings ... the sorrow ...

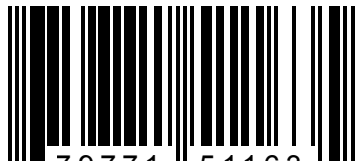
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The daily Lenten devotions and activities in this devotional booklet grow out of the growth and garden imagery present throughout Scripture.

Beginning in the Garden of Eden—where, through Adam and Eve, paradise was lost—the path winds through the promises of the Old Testament and springs to life out of the many farming parables of Jesus. It leads us, at Easter, to the empty garden tomb ... and the New Eden—where, through Christ, paradise is restored for all believers.



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