

Family Devotions for the Days of Lent

With GOD, All Things Are Possible

Kris Berggren



Ash Wednesday

Getting Right with God

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within
me. Psalm 51:10



Lent is a time to “get right” with God. Each individual has personal ways he or she needs to do that. Maybe I need to complain less and help more around the house. Could I try even harder to be kind to my younger brother or sister or to a classmate who doesn’t seem to have many friends? Perhaps I could set aside more time with Scripture or in prayer. Lent is also a time when Christians focus on ways to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others. As a Christian community, we share signs of our intention to spend six weeks preparing for Easter in prayer, fasting (giving up some pleasures) and almsgiving (giving as well as giving up). Today’s anointing with ashes on the forehead in many churches is a symbol of the intention to seek a “right spirit” and let go of things that distract us from our baptismal calling to follow Jesus, who made time for others when they were hurting or afraid.

Lord, we promise to pay attention to your word these six weeks, and we pray to be open to your Word.


Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Choose Life

Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

God reminded Moses and his people on their difficult journey out of Egypt that they would reach the Promised Land, where they would have freedom and abundant life. But, he said, that would happen only if they chose to obey the rules that their one God had



given them. Those rules include not worshipping false gods, even though they were tempted to do that as they passed through other lands and met other people with very different beliefs. Today, we don't bow down to gold statues—but we can still be tempted by “false gods.” Anything that takes us away from what we truly believe in could be a false god. For some that might be working too many hours. For others it could be friends who always want you to play video games instead of doing homework. Maybe it is “vegging out” in front of the TV instead of spending time with the family. This week, choose to live life according to the values of family and faith, not workplace demands, the entertainment industry or even your friends.

When I follow you, Lord, and choose life, I trust that you lead me to good.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

A Different Kind of Fast

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6

These words, written by the prophet Isaiah, are from the Old Testament, but they sound like something Jesus would say. Traditionally, a fast from food is a way to dedicate ourselves to God. In ancient times, people sacrificed goods or animals, hoping to please God. But according to Isaiah, the Lord is calling for a different kind of fast or sacrifice, a sacrifice that helps the world to become a more just place for people who suffer. How about this for a sacrifice: what if we skip dessert or special coffee drinks for a week and donate the money we would have spent on those extras to a food pantry that helps feed the needy?

Lord, we ask you to accept our small sacrifices and draw us closer to you.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Light in the Darkness

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. Isaiah 58:9-10



The prophet Isaiah told the people about the Lord's promises to those who reject wrongdoing and instead choose life-giving actions. Even finger-pointing is mentioned as something to be avoided! Have you ever said, "It's his (or her) fault!" pointing at your brother or sister? It's no good to blame our own mistakes or wrong choices on others, says the Lord. God provides us with a bright side, even when we make mistakes: God makes the light shine like the noonday sun in a time of darkness and becomes a never-ending spring of water to people who live in a dry, parched place. When we act in the ways of the Lord, we become powerful and strong in the Lord.

May we choose life-giving actions and experience their power for good.

First Sunday of Lent

Beloved by God

[Jesus] was baptized by John in the Jordan. And... he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:9-11

Jesus' baptism was unusual compared with the baptisms of babies or children that we usually witness. Can you imagine the sky "torn apart" and a dove-like Spirit descending, then hearing a voice from heaven? Afterwards, Jesus went into the desert for 40 days. That was like his Lent, his time of preparation and prayer at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus' baptism was a sign of the

new life that comes through God's own Beloved Son bringing light and hope to a troubled world. Through our baptism, we share that mission to bring that light and hope to our small corner of the world by using our gifts and talents. We, too, are beloved by God. During Lent we renew our own baptismal promises to live guided by the light of faith.

Lord, help me to reject laziness, envy and greed, and choose kindness, compassion and generosity in every way, every day.

Monday, First Week of Lent

Love Your Neighbor

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Leviticus 19:18

Does this verse sound familiar? Jesus also taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves. As a young Jewish boy, Jesus probably grew up hearing this very same verse at the temple and maybe from his parents or the local rabbi. The idea of treating one's neighbor as we want to be treated is an important part of almost every religion. It's sometimes called "The Golden Rule." Probably you want others to show you respect, to listen to you and to include you. Today, try to treat each classmate, teacher, coworker, the people on your bus or in the lunch line, just as you want to be treated. Here's a tip to help you remember the Golden Rule: put a gold sticker in a place where you will see it all day long.

Help me, Jesus, to remember that treating others with kindness is the best way to love God.

Tuesday, First Week of Lent

Thy Will Be Done

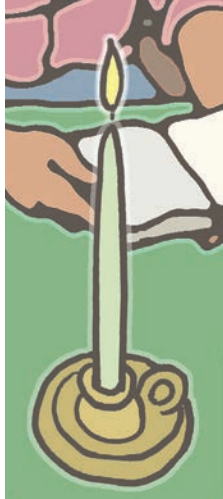
Give us this day our daily bread. Matthew 6:11

Do these simple words sound familiar? Of course, they are part of the *Lord's Prayer*. These lines are especially right for Lent. During

With GOD, All Things Are Possible

Throughout the Bible, many seemingly impossible things happen: Noah builds a boat to carry his family and pairs of creatures to safety during a terrible flood. Abram and Sarai, a very old couple without children, are given new hope and new names when God promises they will have a child and descendants as numerous as the stars. Peter, James and John witness their friend and teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, become transfigured in dazzling light on a mountaintop.

Through these stories, we begin to see ourselves in that long line of believers who trust in God's promise of mercy in times of trouble. Just like the ancient Israelites, the disciples of Jesus and the faithful throughout the ages, we experience seemingly impossible things: finding a heart to forgive, to hope in tough times, to grow in faith. Praying each day of Lent, we ask the Lord to renew our hearts and strengthen us to act from our faith. May our family Lenten journey deepen our love for God and for one another.



— Kris Berggren

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