

## DAY ONE - FEBRUARY 22

*I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.*

*Psalm 38:18*

Attention has become an elusive pursuit. So many things now demand our attention that there is less of it to go around. We live in a time when the concept of being “starved for attention” is a real thing. Maybe that’s why the season of Lent is important – it calls our attention back to the cross – back to the work of Christ on our behalf – and paves the way for the celebration of His Resurrection. Starting with Ash Wednesday means we start looking our sin squarely in the face – attending to it - and taking the first step of repentance. Specifically, the biblical practice of sprinkling oneself with ashes symbolizes deep sorrow for sin. See Mordecai (Esther 4:1), Job (Job 42:6), the inhabitants of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-6), or Daniel (Daniel 9:3-4). Forgiveness for sin, purchased by Jesus on the cross, is available in this moment. The opportunity to repent lays before us.

As you pray, start by thanking God for the precious chance to repent and then “clear your accounts” with him. Bring your sin before him, apologize and ask for his cleansing work to be complete in your life.

## DAY TWO - FEBRUARY 23

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*

*Matthew 16:24*

We understand the call to take up our cross, don’t we? Because we know Bible verses such as 1 Peter 4:13 “But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”. But there are two commands in Matthew 16:24 – The first: “Take up your cross”. And the second: “Follow him”. In this season of Lent, we grasp the nature of accepting, even welcoming the kind of suffering a cross symbolizes. It’s really what Lent is all about. But that cross carrying isn’t to be done in isolation. “Take up (your) cross,” he says, “AND follow me.” We are not carrying our crosses alone, left to struggle and bleed in an aimless endless pursuit. We are carrying our crosses and following him, right behind, safe within his shadow, going where he is going, led by his hand.

As you pray, ask Jesus to help you see the crosses that he desires you to carry and accept them as the demonstration of his purposes and will for your life. Ask him to help you identify crosses that you picked up but that were not assigned to you by him. Then, rededicate yourself to following him, staying close to him, strengthened for the journey with celebration ahead.

## DAY THREE - FEBRUARY 24

*Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."*

*Luke 9:23*

Daily. There is a cross for you today, Friday, February 24, 2023. Do we consider what it means to take up a cross daily? In the Luke text, this daily cross carrying is a condition of being a disciple. So, if one wants to be his disciple (do you?), this cross carrying is part of the deal – daily. And, since we know Jesus isn't talking about a literal cross – 175 pounds of splintering wood – we know that this cross carrying happens in our hearts. It means the act of crucifixion is part of a disciple's life every day. We crucify temptation, faithless thoughts, our desire for control, our lack of compassion for others, our fear, etc. Every day, something else gets nailed to the cross we carry. And there, Jesus accepts it and cleanses us. But there is no discipleship without a personal cross.

As you pray, do some nailing. Nail those sins, those self-centered thoughts, those attitudes of disobedience and doubt, right on that cross. Ask the Lord to accept them in his Name and in the shadow of His cross. Pray with the cross on your mind.

## DAY FOUR - FEBRUARY 25

*Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

*Matthew 10:38*

"I am worthy of Jesus." Those might not be words we utter often. It seems haughty and arrogant to make that declaration. Yet to consider the implication of Matthew 10:38 is to acknowledge that possibility. It is not improper theology or interpretation to read from Matthew 10:38 – Whoever takes up their cross is worthy of me. So, yes, worthiness is a possible, if lofty, goal. As scary as it is to think of not being worthy of Him, it is equally hopeful to think of the opposite. But the cost is steep – it requires the taking up of our cross. And, as we learned in yesterday's writing, that taking up must happen daily. If we refuse the level of daily self-sacrifice required by our cross, we will not and cannot be worthy to be called His disciple – His friend.

As you pray, as difficult as it may be, tell the Lord you are willing to take up your cross as he determines it. That, by his empowering grace, you will receive the strength to welcome today's cross and follow him. And ask that he would, by his power, make you somehow worthy of him.

## FEBRUARY 26 - SABBATH

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

## DAY FIVE - FEBRUARY 27

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

*James 5:16*

The Greek word for “healed” in James 5:16 is a wonderful word – *iaomai*. It is used very carefully in the New Testament because it is such a powerful promise. It means “cured” in a specific sense, but it’s bigger than that. It means whole, settled, complete, at peace with a sense of finality. That grand and glorious promise lies on the other side of a conversation or conversations. Simply, we are to confess our sins “to each other”. If you’ve ever wondered why such conversations can be so difficult, now you understand – great breakthroughs happen when we confess our sins to each other and pray for each other – powerful things. We must not allow forces, as gripping as they may be, to keep those confession conversations from happening in our lives.

As you pray, imagine those words applying to you – whole, settled, complete, at peace – and spend time pondering that idea. Then, decide today to choose a fellow believer whom you love and trust and determine to have a conversation of confession with them. Tell the Lord going in that you are doing so in honor of and obedience to James 5:16. He will honor that.

## DAY SIX - FEBRUARY 28

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*1 John 1:9*

If. Has ever a word so tiny ever loomed so large as a biblical promise? As we walk through this Lenten season together considering the act of confession and its power, we are faced today with John’s dramatic conditional declaration. One thing is conditioned upon another. If we confess our sins, he will then act because he is so faithful and just. He will forgive us. Just let that sink in. And he will purify us from all unrighteousness. That little word, *if*, packs a punch that echoes across eternity. The implication, of course, is that if we haven’t been forgiven and if we haven’t been purified from all unrighteousness, it may be because we haven’t fulfilled our part of the promise. We haven’t confessed.

Today, with the promise of 1 John 1:9 right in front of you and with a heart of faith, pray David's prayer from Psalm 139: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God promises to honor your sincere confession.

## DAY SEVEN - MARCH 1

*Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper,  
but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

*Proverbs 28:13*

Ever thought, "I'm just spinning my wheels." It's a term we use to describe what it feels like when we think we're doing all that we know to do yet going absolutely nowhere, like running on a treadmill that never shuts off but never gets us anywhere. Or we might refer to it as "just treading water." That's what Proverbs 28:13a is trying to communicate about what life is like when we conceal our sins. The Hebrew phrasing for "not prosper" here doesn't imply that we're not doing anything. The implication is that nothing we do works. Nothing we do matters – our faith isn't fueled, our prayers seem empty. A hamster on a wheel, perhaps. But something happens when we turn from concealment and to confession. We find mercy!

Today, ask the Lord to reveal to you any sins you are trying to conceal, whether consciously or not. Invite him to explore the deepest places in your heart and find those things you like to hide. Confess them and renounce them. And don't let your prayer end too quickly. Linger in his presence with this prayer on your mind.

## DAY EIGHT - MARCH 2

*Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away from me. Each time he said,  
"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."*

*2 Corinthians 12: 8-9a*

We read these words from Paul and are faced with this immediate reality that no one is exempt from the pain that life can bring. Here, a man that we often look to for truth and guidance, a man that was so close to the heart of God, admitted that there were challenges in his life that he didn't want to face. We read the word "begged" and are led to believe that Paul was weary. He was desperate for the Lord to intervene on his behalf and to provide him relief. Can you relate to that feeling of weariness today? To that desperate need for relief?

Exhale.

Really, take a moment wherever you are to breathe out the stress, the tension, the heaviness of today. We get to take God at his word in this very moment. We get to believe this truth that his grace is all that we need. In the midst of our darkest storm, his power works for our good.

As you pray, consider asking the Lord to reveal the areas of your life where you may be neglecting the power of his grace. And then, in a posture of exhale, allow his grace to be exactly what you need today, knowing that his Word is true for us no matter our circumstance.

## DAY NINE - MARCH 3

*God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this;  
it is a gift from God.  
Ephesians 2:8*

The beauty of grace is found in the simplicity of the word “gift.” We are so often tempted to believe that we are not enough to be offered true grace – that we haven’t done enough, changed enough, or grown enough. Because of this, we continue striving to earn this grace, when the truth is, it’s already been given to us in full. Maybe we aren’t comfortable admitting that to be true, but our lives might tell a different story. Our lives may show us working so hard to become worthy of God’s grace. But these words in Ephesians paint a picture of truth for us. Just like we can’t take credit for the gift of grace, there’s nothing we can do to earn more or less of it. The gift of grace is simply that, a gift for those who believe in Him. Let us live in the freedom that this gift offers us today.

As you pray, think about those ways that you may be working too hard to earn the grace that you’ve already received. Consider offering those areas of your life back to the Lord in complete surrender today. Thank the Lord for the gift of his boundless grace that is offered to us.

## DAY TEN - MARCH 4

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people.  
Revelation 22:21*

This declarative, final statement from the author of Revelation carries weight as the final Word of God for the people of God. These are the words that God ordained to be the ending to this beautiful, heart breaking, redemptive book that we know as truth. And don’t we understand the significance found in an ending? A final goodbye carries a heavy weight as we hold on to the last few words exchanged in such a meaningful moment. So we understand that these final words found in Revelation must be significant.

And yet the message is quite simple. We, the people of God, are not without the grace found in Jesus. These are the words that we're to hang on to. When it's all said and done, grace has the final word.

As you pray, speak the truth of grace over every area of your life. Really, declare in this moment that grace has the final word over every good and every bad thing you might be facing today. And then, in an attitude of gratefulness, offer God prayers of praise for the ways that his grace has saved you and will continue to be everything you need.

## SABBATH - MARCH 5

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

## DAY ELEVEN - MARCH 6

*I will give them one heart and one purpose: to worship me forever, for their own good and for the good of all their descendants. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them:*

*I will never stop doing good for them. I will put a desire in their hearts to worship me, and they will never leave me.*

*Jeremiah 32:39-40*

I love efficiency. When grocery shopping with my family, I often default to "let's split the list, meet in the middle and we'll be out of here in half the time". Divide and conquer, right? It annoys my family, and I usually drop the idea (and sulk). The phrase "divide and conquer" has an entirely different meaning though. According to Oxford, it is; "the policy of maintaining control over one's opponents by encouraging dissent between them, preventing them from uniting."

It's no surprise that Satan would often use worship to divide God's children. If I worship only through music that recently released, then I am neglecting the songs that equally glorify God and minister to others. If I only appreciate the songs I'm comfortable with and grew up worshipping with, then I'm forgetting that Psalm 96 really does instruct us to "sing to the Lord a new song".

Let us all join in this prayer today: "Lord, may my worship be only about your glory. Let what was created to glorify you unite your people. May the receiver of worship be you, and not my preferences."

## DAY TWELVE - MARCH 7

*Do not worship the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods.  
Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship he himself will choose  
from among all the tribes – the place where his name will be honored.*

*Deuteronomy 12:4-5*

How and where I worship God matters... because it matters to Him. In the same way that God is willing to always be present wherever I am, it's important that I don't confuse "me-time" with His time. Yes, I can worship in so many different ways and places, but it's more crucial that I'm willing and available to worship God on His terms.

Jesus established His church for many reasons, I believe... and 99.9% of those reasons have nothing to do with my preferences. Jesus chose 12 disciples to have close connection with people (and to reach even more!). He did this for them, but mostly for Himself. He wanted and needed intimacy, connection, relationship, and people to pour into (and them into Him).

Today, let us pray: "Lord Jesus, keep me accountable and convicted when I confuse 'me-time' and 'we-time'. When I am leaning away from your glory and towards my own preferences, stop me in my tracks. I have always needed you and your church and I need both now more than ever. Keep me close to Your flock. I often thank you for your presence, but convict me when I fail to be thankful."

## DAY THIRTEEN - MARCH 8

*The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease.  
Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.*

*Lamentations 3:22-23*

Jeremiah, often called the "weeping prophet", shares this promise of the unending mercies of God. Inserted in Lamentations -- this book of lament, we find this incredible hope tucked right in the middle. In the context of the world this was written in, God's people had gone their own way giving a deaf ear to the prophet as he warned them to repent. The Israelites had been exiled to Babylon because they had looked other places for their hope, yet here we find God breaking through this darkness to extend faithful love and never ceasing mercy to his wayward children. Yes, there were consequences for their disobedience but there was also this incredible hope if they would put their trust in him. He would remind them of this mercy in a way they would be reminded daily – with the dawn of each new day. As we journey through this season of Lent towards Easter, we can name that "hope" as Jesus Christ who broke through the darkness and gave his life so that we could be made right with God.

As you pray, perhaps there is some darkness in your past or present, something that seems unforgivable, maybe someone that seems unforgivable. God wants to break through the darkness and extend this same incredible hope to you – just as the sun comes up each morning, his steadfast love and his faithfulness is for you and his mercies arrive with the dawn of each new day. Reflect, repent, and respond to this hope and receive his mercy in exchange for the darkness that you have been carrying.

## DAY FOURTEEN - MARCH 9

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.*

*Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

*Psalms 51:1-2*

I'm reminded of the pain of David's reality when he had gotten caught up in his own desires over what God desired for him. It took him to a place of brokenness, lament, and bitter tears. Akin to the prodigal son who wanted his inheritance and spent it on wild living and found himself eating what the pigs he was hired to care for would not eat. His selfish desires took him to the end of himself – looking poverty and death in the face. On this journey of faith, we too at times can find ourselves off track, at a painful place in our relationships – caused by others or at our own demise. We can allow this pain to make us bitter or better. Just as he did with David and in the parable of the prodigal son, the Father in his great mercy meets us where we are.

As you pray, assess your relationship with God. Is there anything that you need to ask forgiveness for? David and prodigal son both repented and returned – beautiful examples of the mercy of God – meeting his children at their point of need. Today you can pray the prayer that David prayed. “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” The Father longs to embrace you and in his mercy, he will meet you right where you are.

## DAY FIFTEEN - MARCH 10

*Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.*

*But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.*

*Mathew 8:8*

A military man of high rank, a centurion meets Jesus. And from his own quest for healing, today we can model the way this man approached Jesus. First, he asked for help simply telling his situation: “Lord, my servant is bedridden at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” This commander of the Roman army did not make an official request or royal protocol for anything from Jesus. He simply cried out to Jesus in his need. When our prayers are that simple or just a cry of pain, trust that Jesus hears those prayers too (Romans 8:26).



Second, the centurion trusted in the power of Jesus to respond. Although Jesus offered to come in person and heal the servant, the centurion replied, “Just say the word, and my servant will be healed.” The centurion knew that Jesus was so powerful that he could heal people, even though he was not physically present. We too can trust that Jesus will answer our prayers according to his will. Jesus wants to heal you physically, Jesus wants to heal you emotionally, Jesus wants to heal you spiritually, He even wants to heal you financially. Jesus promises us to heal in all areas of our lives and asks us to wait until the right time. No matter what, the words of Jesus are powerful enough to heal.

Jesus healed the centurion's servant and commended the centurion's faith. You and I are invited to come to Jesus, to cry out to him, and to trust him, just like this Roman centurion did. Jesus will listen to our prayers with love and according to his will, he will answer them with power. How much do you want this healing?

As you pray, begin by crying out to Jehovah Rofah, God the Healer. Ask him to heal our bodies, souls, relationships, and past wounds. And when we have no words to express ourselves in prayer to Him, may we trust that He hears our cries and that He desires complete healing for us.

## DAY SIXTEEN - MARCH 11

*He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”*

*Mark 5:34*

No one could help her. No one could heal her. For twelve years, she dealt with her issue of bleeding, and it had only gotten worse. Now, in the midst of a crowd, she had the faith to believe if she could just touch Jesus, even just the hem of his robe, it would be enough. And it was! What a beautiful picture of healing as the power of God instantly heals her! But Jesus stops. He knows the healing has happened. He sensed God's power at work. But he stops, and in the midst of the crowd, chooses to look her in the eye. He wants her to know that she matters – her name, her story, her needs – they matter to Jesus. And even more, he wants her to know the power that her faith has had in this moment.

Today, know that Jesus sees you in your suffering. You are not just one in the crowd, lost in the chaos of all the needs surrounding you. He sees you today. And your faith, the faith to believe that just a touch from Jesus is all you need, is enough!

As you pray, thank your Heavenly Father for seeing you today right where you are. He sees your need and He knows. Ask Him to increase your faith in these days. Ask for a touch from Him. No matter what you are facing, a touch from Him is still enough!

## SABBATH - MARCH 12

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

## DAY SEVENTEEN - MARCH 13

*Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

*And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

*Luke 23:34*

Even as he was enduring the greatest suffering, Jesus prayed for God to forgive his offenders. "For they do not know what they are doing." We often struggle with forgiveness; so much so, in fact, that Jesus has to remind us in Matthew 18:22 when Peter inquired about the limits of forgiveness: "Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." We often take our time to forgive others; we take time to heal, to process, to grieve and to be angry. But Jesus? Jesus forgives immediately. Jesus forgives even before he has been wronged.

Jesus teaches us about living with a spirit of forgiveness. This spirit of forgiveness means we recognize any wrongs against us a sign that our offender needs a touch from Jesus. This spirit of forgiveness means we don't dwell on hurts, but we use them as an opportunity to immediately call on the Lord. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

As you pray, think of all the ways you have been forgiven, or not forgiven, by others. Think about how that forgiveness or unforgiveness impacted your relationship. Ask Jesus to help you live and love with a spirit of forgiveness. Ask him to help you to point your offender to Jesus. As Christ has forgiven you, pray that you, too, will be able to forgive without limits.

## DAY EIGHTEEN - MARCH 14

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;*

*as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

*Psalms 103:11-12*

God's forgiveness is endless. Do you believe that today? When we are forgiven, it's not a half-hearted sort of forgiveness. It's not the little brother muttering under his breath "I forgive you" after his big sister broke his favorite toy, all the while huffing and puffing and continuing in his anger. When we receive God's forgiveness, He removes our transgressions "as far as the east is from the west." Not only does He move on as if it never

happened, but He also invites us to move forward in forgiveness and in the newness of life. Our slate is wiped clean, and our past is so far out of sight that it no longer has a hold on us. That's good news!

As you pray, consider any part of your past that you are holding onto. Allow God to remove that not only from His sight but from yours as well. Remember that God has made you new and has called you to walk forward in the gift of New Life that Jesus has freely given.

## DAY NINETEEN - MARCH 15

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

*Colossians 4:2*

What is prayer? Simply put, prayer is the avenue of communication with God. Prayer is a simple, yet powerful spiritual practice. Sometimes we make prayer something complicated, something beyond us, or sometimes we don't value its importance. Yet, prayer is simply a conversation that we are invited to partake in as we grow closer to God. Without prayer, we can't grow in our faith. In this Scripture, Paul invites us to be devoted to prayer in watchfulness and thankfulness. Consider what it might look like for you to form a habit of being in constant conversation with God – in other words, to be devoted to prayer. For some, it may look like spoken prayers, and for others, it may look like written prayers.

As you pray, let your prayer be one of watchfulness and thankfulness. Ask God to help you stay alert, to remain on the way of Christ as we journey toward the cross this season. Thank God for the ways you have seen the goodness of the Lord in your life, asking God to continue to pour blessings in your life as you bless those around you.

## DAY TWENTY - MARCH 16

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.*

*Psalms 150:6*

As you read this, you are breathing in and out. There's something powerful about acknowledging that God is the source of the breath coming in and out of our lungs. The invitation of the psalmist is for everything that has breath – the breath of God – flowing through them to praise God. What does it look like for you to praise God with your breath?

One unique way to pray is breathe prayers. This kind of prayer invites us to be intentional with the posture of our body while using the natural inhale and exhale of our breathing as a form of prayer. Breath prayers are two-line prayers, where we say one line as inhale, another as we exhale, and are repeated multiple times.

As you pray, slow down, take deep breaths, and select one of the following prayers to repeat at least six times:

Inhale: More of you, God.	Exhale: Less of me.
Inhale: God, you are faithful.	Exhale: I trust in you.
Inhale: You are God.	Exhale: I will be still.
Inhale: God, you are with me.	Exhale: In the mountains and valleys.

## DAY TWENTY-ONE - MARCH 17

*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*  
2 Corinthians 12:9

One of the most difficult, and least understood Christian disciplines is fasting. If your motivation to fast is to lose weight, you've got it all wrong. Fasting is not about you doing something, but God accomplishing something in you. It's counterintuitive because in fasting, we learn that our greatest strength lies in our weakness.

Fasting teaches us many things and perhaps the greatest is that when we are weak, we are strong. When Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert and was tempted by the devil, certainly he was physically weak and hungry, but he showed incredible strength to overcome temptation. If you are struggling with sin and wonder how you can overcome, I encourage you to follow the example of Jesus. His fasting prepared him for everything the Devil threw at him.

As you fast and pray, may your physical weakness become spiritual strength. Ask God to take your weakness and help you to lean on the strength of God and acknowledge that on your own, you are helpless to live a holy life. As you fast, may your weakness turn into utter dependence on God.

## DAY TWENTY-TWO - MARCH 18

*Then David got up from the ground... he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped.*  
2 Samuel 12:20

We may struggle with fasting because we are unsure what we're not supposed to do. Do we abstain from food, drink, or from whatever distracts us from God? The purpose of fasting is to focus on prayer, scripture, and worship.

First, fasting is a time to pray. Jesus said that some things (i.e., demons cast out) are accomplished only through prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). Perhaps our prayers are unanswered because we don't pray and

fast. Secondly, it is a time to read the Bible. When Jesus fasted 40 days, he overcame the devil's temptation by quoting scripture. There is no better defense or offense to be used against the Evil One. Finally, fasting is a prelude to worship. In 2 Samuel 12, King David fasted and prayed for 7 days that his sick newborn child would not die. The child did die, but then David got up and went to the house of the Lord and worshiped.

As you fast and pray, humble yourself, ask God to meet your need, then bow down in worship. Fasting isn't primarily about getting the answer from God that you desire, but becoming the worshiper that He desires.

## SABBATH - MARCH 19

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

## DAY TWENTY-THREE - MARCH 20

*But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

*Psalms 19:12-14*

When we consider the words of Jesus that his followers are to be perfect as their father in heaven, we must allow the Father to search our hearts. David recognizes his own inability to discern the condition of his heart before the Father. We must too be cautious of our own assessments of our progress on the journey of holiness. Though we desire to live in perfect obedience, we may not discern all areas of our hearts.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to search your heart, to discern any error in your way. Pray that he would keep you from intentional sin, that we may be blameless in Christ. "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, My Rock and my Redeemer."

## DAY TWENTY-FOUR - MARCH 21

*Therefore, since we have these promises dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

*2 Corinthians 7:1*

These promises are the promises of God's presence in those who are willing to separate themselves unto Christ. There is work in us that only the Lord can do, but there is also work that he desires that we partner with him in separating ourselves to him. Oswald Chambers writes, "I have to cleanse myself from all filthiness

of the flesh and the spirit until both are in accord with the nature of God". Chambers continues "I have the responsibility of keeping my spirit in agreement with His Spirit, and by degrees Jesus lifts me up to where He lived- in perfect consecration to his Father's will, paying no attention to any other thing." – My Utmost for His Highest

As you pray today, ask the Lord to search your heart, to purify, and do the gracious work that he can do. But let's also ask him what areas he would have us partner with him in setting ourselves apart for Him. Living a holy life, claiming the promise of his presence!

## DAY TWENTY-FIVE - MARCH 22

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*1 John 1:9*

As we approach the Easter season we are reminded of the great sacrifice of Christ, in whom we can experience forgiveness. In confession, we recognize and agree with the Lord that apart from Christ, we are a mess. We have made mistakes, hurt others, hurt ourselves, and especially, we have sinned against the Lord and we need forgiveness. At Easter, we celebrate Jesus meeting us in our great need with an invitation of Grace, Mercy, and Forgiveness.

Do we also remember the sanctifying work Christ desires to do within us? John reminds us of a two-fold work of grace in forgiveness and purification. Through Christ, God has made a way that we can not only be forgiven, but we can experience heart purity. Jesus said, "For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come..." Let us be encouraged not to stop short of experiencing heart purity in our lives. May we know the blessedness of life with a pure heart.

As you pray today, let us pray with David "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

## DAY TWENTY-SIX - MARCH 23

*Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

*Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

*Psalms 32:1-2*

The word blessed means "very happy" or "exceedingly happy". This is because the one forgiven of their sins understands the gravity of it and the joy of being released from it. Wrongdoing presupposes a standard of

right and wrong, and the Bible says that God's Law is that standard. This passage calls the breaking of this standard as transgression, which indicates a stepping over a known boundary. It also calls it sin, which refers to missing the mark. And it calls it iniquity which carries the idea of twisting something. In each case it is a failure to live up to God's standard. There is a boundary, a target, something that is straight and true – but sin causes us to cross the boundary, to miss the target, and to twist what is straight and true. Because the grace of God extended to us through Christ is ever sufficient to forgive and cover our sin, we are blessed and hold forgiveness in such high esteem.

As you pray, thank God for forgiving and covering your sins. Let him know how it feels to know that your sins are no longer held against you.

## DAY TWENTY-SEVEN - MARCH 24

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,  
who gave himself as a ransom for all people.*

*1 Timothy 2:5-6a*

This passage reveals to us the three fundamental truths. (1) There is one God. (2) There is only one way we can approach Him – through the incarnate Christ. (3) That Jesus gave Himself to die on the cross as a ransom for all humanity. A ransom is a payment, a means of release from bondage, captivity, slavery, or sin. Jesus is the ransom that releases us from our enslavement to sin. Jesus the innocent gave Himself for us the sinners. Through His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb, we are set free from the dominion of sin and from servitude to sin. And through His death we are reconciled to God and brought into a right relationship with Him.

As you pray, open your heart to these truths and ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and free you from its dominion. Tell Him that you want to be in right relationship with God.

## DAY TWENTY-EIGHT - MARCH 25

*If we claim to have fellowship with him [God] and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*1 John 1:6-9*

Scripture never confuses SIN with sins. Sins (acts of disobedience to the known law of God) must be forgiven. SIN (our inherent bent toward self, those desires of mind and character that are turned towards self-gratification, our sinful nature (often pictured as an oppressive ruler) must be cleansed/purified. The

Bible never uses the word "forgiveness" in connection with SIN. John is writing to a group of Christians to deal with their misunderstanding about relationship with God and with one another. In this he addresses their wrong belief about not having a "disposition of sin" within them. In the passage above, we see there is one thing we can do with this disposition/inclination/nature. You and I must enter into the light through the death of Jesus. We must have the "old man or old woman" ruled by SIN crucified with Christ. We confess our need and by His grace and power he forgives our sins AND can purify us from all unrighteousness (SIN). This is the foundation to holy living.

As you pray, ask Jesus to not only forgive you of your sins (this is repentance) but also confess your desperate need for him to purify you from all unrighteousness. Ask him to sanctify you by His grace and deal with the disposition of your sinful/selfish nature. Recognize that it is only by His great grace through faith that we can be forgiven from sins and freed from the dominion of sin ruling in our lives.

## SABBATH - MARCH 26

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

## DAY TWENTY-NINE - MARCH 27

*How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God? She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and RAN out of the house.*

*Genesis 39:9b, 12*

To really get the full picture of the story above, read Genesis 39:6-12. This is a scene in which we see Joseph, the son of Jacob/Israel who has been sold into slavery in Egypt, recognizing the weight of sin and the temptation that is seizing him. He makes a determined decision that he will not put himself in the place of this temptation from Potiphar's wife. She seizes him and instead of hesitating, he runs or flees from the sin that seeks to entangle him. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Flee from the sin that seeks to entangle you! Remember, "Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay."

As you pray, remember what the writer of Hebrews urged in Hebrews 12:1-3. Ask God to give you divine awareness – being totally aware that you are His child and He is certainly always with you. Confess the area to Him where you know you should be fleeing and have instead been flirting with temptation/sin or even



trying to stand and fight it by your own determination. Surrender to the Lord and take intentional action by putting God honoring boundaries in place and seeking spiritual accountability.

## DAY THIRTY - MARCH 28

*He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden.'?" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

*Genesis 3:1, 4-6*

We know this story, or we at least have some familiarity with it. The serpent deceives Eve with a lie. He twists the words of God, as he is keen in doing, in such a way as to position God as withholding the best from His children. Take note the Devil is a liar! When we choose sin, we ultimately try to shortcut God's good purposes and plans for us, His children, and creation. Sin = my will over God's will be done. I once read, "Sin would have fewer takers if its consequences occurred immediately." I urge you to obey God, not your feelings!

David Benner notes, "St Ignatius of Loyola said, 'Sin is unwillingness to trust that what God wants is our deepest happiness'. Until I am absolutely convinced of this, I will do everything I can to keep my hands on the controls of my life because I think I know better than God what I need for my fulfillment."

As you pray, ask God to reveal areas in your life where you are taking shortcuts and living disobediently to His desires for your life. Surrender your will and control to God and pray that his will would be done in your life. Ask him for the faith and courage to trust and live obediently to him and not give into your fluctuating feelings and desires to seek out your own fulfillment.

## DAY THIRTY-ONE - MARCH 29

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

*Romans 6:1-2, 6-7*

To get the full scope of what Paul is declaring to the church in Rome, read Romans 6:1-23. If you want to follow Jesus, then first you must die. If we are in Christ, if we have placed our faith in Him and received Him as our Savior, then we can count ourselves dead to sin but alive in Christ Jesus. Jesus had to die for your sin

and my sin, to defeat sin and death, and so is it really unthinkable that we too must die to self and sin to be genuine disciples of Jesus? One commentator wrote, "When the will of God crosses the will of man, somebody has to die." Christ cannot reign where sin still remains. It is dying to sin that we find real, abundant, and overflowing life in Jesus.

As you pray, confess any area you sense the Holy Spirit is touching on in your life. Confess that you recognize that in Christ you have died to sin and it is no longer your master, and surrender everything you are to Jesus. Remember that in Christ, sin has no authority in your life. Live purposefully in that freedom and thank God for the free gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus.

## DAY THIRTY-TWO - MARCH 30

*But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"*

*1 Corinthians 15:35*

Without a doubt many of us would say there are things that, if we had the ability to change, we would. Maybe we are short and we would like to be tall. Perhaps we are blind, or have a disabling physical ailment. Our human bodies are not perfect.

As believers we have the assurance that Jesus rose from the dead. If he had never risen then we would have nothing to believe in. BUT, he did and because he lives, we can believe in the resurrection of the dead. Jesus will come again and there will be a resurrection of the dead. Somehow, by the power of the Holy Spirit, our imperfect, physical bodies will be raised from the dead. The perishable will become imperishable. No more infirmities. From the grave we will rise. We will rise to live eternally with the Triune God.

As you pray, start by thanking God for his amazing love. Thank him that one day you will have a resurrected perfect body and you will live with Him forever in heaven.

## DAY THIRTY-THREE - MARCH 31

*The men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"*

*Luke 24:5*

I have had the opportunity to travel to the Holy Land. Each time I have visited the Garden of Gethsemane, I sat under an olive tree and I thought about the agony that Jesus experienced, where He cried tears of blood. Then when I walked the narrow Via Dolorosa, I could imagine hearing the soldiers screaming names at my Lord, and hearing the onlookers as they pressed in, shouting "Crucify Him".

Then on to Calvary where Jesus was crucified. I must see the Garden Tomb! Every pilgrim visits the empty tomb. Why? Jesus died for our sins. He was buried and he rose again.

The message of the empty tomb is God proclaiming over his creation that “It is good”. The empty tomb is God’s great promise that, at the end of the day, truth will not be denied and goodness will not be overcome. The message of God’s amazing grace and love is the story of Easter.

As you pray, start by thanking God that he came to die for us so that we might live. Thank him for his faithfulness. Ask God to help you live your life for him so that you may reflect his love every day.

## DAY THIRTY-FOUR - APRIL 1

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*

*John 15:13*

Selfless love is holy love. Jesus isn’t offering his disciples a new optional way to show love to others, he is commanding them to love as he has loved (John 15:12). What an incredible standard! And the truth is, according to our standard of human love, it is an impossible standard. But the “greater love” to which Jesus is referring is not a human love, one in which we conjure up in our own strength. Jesus is referring to the perfect love of the Father, only made possible in the surrendered and sanctified heart. Once we surrender to the Lordship of Jesus, then and only then can his selfless love take root in our hearts. The call to selfless love is a call to his holy love in us and through us.

As you pray today, invite the Lord to be Lord of your life. Invite him to purify your heart from selfishness. Ask for the gift of his perfect love poured out into your heart: his holy love.

## SABBATH - APRIL 2

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:28-30*

## DAY THIRTY-FIVE - APRIL 3

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

*John 15:13*

Selfless love is deliberate. While it's true that the holy love of the Father overflows from us moment by moment, the call of Jesus is to a love that is intentional. How else can we describe the action of "laying down one's life" but as a daily decision to allow his love to lead us? There will be moments every day where I am given the choice: will I respond with selfishness or selflessness? Will I choose to love others today more than I love myself? This is what it means to be a disciple: a daily decision to lay down one's life. This is how Jesus commanded that we should love. The choice is yours, each and every day.

As you pray today, choose to allow His selfless love to lead you. Today, make the choice. Ask the Lord to show you moment by moment how to choose His selfless love. Pray for his courage, his wisdom, his strength.

## DAY THIRTY-SIX - APRIL 4

*Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.*

*Matthew 10:39*

Selfless love is giving your life away. If we were honest, the majority of our lives are spent pursuing the desire to gain and not to give. When it comes to our lives, we want to gain more: more time, more money, more fun, more memories, more freedom, more accomplishments. We want more. This is life: the pursuit of more.

But Jesus doesn't call his followers to operate according to the standards of this world. His promise is that spending your life like that, in the pursuit of more, will ultimately lead you to lose it all. The divine invitation is this: it's not about grasping for life, but rather it's about giving your life away. Selfless love compels me to live a life of radical surrender. What does this mean for your time, your treasures, your talents? What does "giving your life away" look like each and every day?

Making him Lord of our lives means we give our lives away to him. And what is the fruit of living this way, where each and every part of our lives belong to him? Selfless love.

As you pray today, take a moment to take an inventory of your life. Is the posture of our heart about gaining more and more, or about giving him all? Is there any place in your life you are holding back from him? Pray this simple prayer: "Lord, I give my life away. Show me today what that truly means."

## DAY THIRTY-SEVEN - APRIL 5

*“It is written”, he said to them, “My house will be a ‘house of prayer’ ”  
but you have made it ‘a den of robbers’ ”.*

*Luke 19:46*

As we enter into Holy Week, we remember the encounters of Jesus along the journey of those final days before he went to the cross. Of all the encounters of this final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, why this one? Why a tense encounter in the temple? Of all the things Jesus could do in these final moments, why would he focus on cleansing the temple?

The answer is clear: Jesus cares about the condition of our temple. Remember what is about to happen? Through Jesus' death, the veil in the temple is torn (Matthew 27:51). And through his resurrection and the gift of his Holy Spirit, we become his temples (1 Corinthians 6:19). Jesus was not just concerned about the physical temple in first century Palestine; as we read this encounter so many years later, it begs the question: what is the condition of my temple?

As we enter into this Passion Week, remember this: Jesus is willing to refine us, even when it's uncomfortable, so we can better glorify him.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to refine you. “Lord, refine me, purify me, heal me, restore me, cleanse me.”

## DAY THIRTY-EIGHT - APRIL 6

*Then one of the Twelve – the one called Judas Iscariot – went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.*

*Matthew 26:14-16*

Judas' betrayal marks the beginning of an important series of events. The culmination is the cross of Good Friday. As we place ourselves within this story today, consider the difference between Judas' appearance and Judas' heart. He was one of the twelve disciples. He appeared to be faithful, well versed in the Scriptures, involved and active in the ministry of Jesus. According to appearances, Judas was the epitome of a faithful disciple.

But being a disciple is not about appearances. Judas' place in this story is a startling reminder that it is possible to be doing so many of the things that appear right, but to have a heart that is divided.

What is in your heart today? Remember that being his disciple is not about behavior modification or following a check list of right actions. Being a disciple of Jesus means, first and foremost, giving him your heart.

As you pray today, commit to love the Lord with all your heart. Begin there. Ask the Lord to show you the places where you've relied on your "self-righteousness". Spend time thanking Him for the grace that is available to experience freedom from this bondage.

## DAY THIRTY-NINE - APRIL 7

*Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.*

*But if it dies, it produces many seeds."*

*John 12:23-24*

We think of Good Friday as a day of death, and of course, it is. This is the day we remember the ultimate sacrifice given for the sins of all people. Good Friday is a day to remember death.

But what makes it "good"? Death, in and of itself, doesn't seem good at all. How can we call a day remembering the unbearable anguish and suffering upon a criminal's cross "good"? In the heart and mind of the believer, this day is not just about death, but death that leads to life. When Jesus speaks to his disciples, foreshadowing his death, he also speaks of life. Do you see it? "But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Many seeds! The death of Good Friday produces life. For all those who trust in Jesus to be their Savior, this day is good indeed.

As you pray, spend time reflecting on the death of Jesus. Consider the price that was paid: the suffering, the sacrifice, the humiliation. Spend time thanking God for this sacrifice, made on your behalf. Consider what the promise of resurrection life means for you today.

## DAY FORTY - APRIL 8

*And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,*

*"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,*

*"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.*

*Luke 22:19-20*

Sunday is coming. Do you believe that? Maybe you believe it because it's a date on the calendar. "Easter Sunday" comes every year, so yes, Sunday is coming. But this day, this Sunday, represents so much more

than any other day in human history. Death is conquered. Sin is defeated. Jesus is alive. Sunday is coming. Not just that it *came* (thousands of years ago). It *is* coming. Sunday *is* coming.

What does that mean in your life right now? To believe that the resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead is still alive today (Romans 8:11)? Where in your life do you need resurrection life? Where is it in your life that you are tempted to believe that sin and brokenness have the final word? The message of the cross is that Jesus has the final word. He conquered death and there is nothing in our lives he cannot overcome. No matter where you find yourself and no matter what circumstances you are facing, believe that Sunday *is* coming. Praise the Lord!

As you pray be reminded of the hope that the promise of resurrection brings. Call to mind the promises of God. Spend time examining the places in your life that need resurrection. Together, let's join in this prayer: "Thank you, Lord, that Sunday is coming! I rest in the promise of your resurrection life. Do it again, Lord! Do it again!"