

# LENT: 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

## Week #2: March 6-11

Monday, March 6

Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Terry Foester

**Theme: The Last Supper**

**Scripture: Mark 12:12-26**

<sup>12</sup>On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?"

<sup>13</sup>So Jesus sent two of them into Jerusalem with these instructions: "As you go into the city, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup>At the house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?' <sup>15</sup>He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal." <sup>16</sup>So the two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there.

<sup>17</sup>In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup>As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me."

<sup>19</sup>Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one?"

<sup>20</sup>He replied, "It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!"

<sup>22</sup>As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take it, for this is my body."

<sup>23</sup>And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup>And he said to them, "This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many. <sup>25</sup>I tell you the truth, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God."

<sup>26</sup>Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

**Reflection:** Jesus does so much of his teaching in the midst of everyday life, using a meal as an opportunity to go in a deeper direction.

This meal, in particular, had great significance in their faith. It was the Passover dinner! A time they would call to mind the early days of their faith, celebrating how the Lord rescued the people of Israel out of slavery using a "pass-over" lamb. In the midst of Pharos' hard-heartedness, the Lord literally passed over the homes marked with the blood of a lamb. It was the blood that served as a sign of protection, and as a result the family avoided the death of their firstborn son.

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Jesus uses this occasion to introduce the idea of a new covenant. Interestingly, here at this table there is still a hard heart. And Jesus puts them all on notice, there is someone sitting among them that will be the betrayer. Each of the disciples begins to question, "Am I the one?"

Even Jesus' own disciples were not unified at the first communion table. Peter would go on to deny Jesus three times, Thomas would bring up major doubts after the resurrection, and Judas would be the one who betrays Jesus in the garden.

But let us not be divided! Let our communion table be marked, not by division but by unity and our love for one another. Jesus continues to be in our midst, at our communion table and at our everyday dinner tables. He can continue to be the centerpiece of our meals together.

As we eat, as we fellowship - let's remember the cost and celebrate the beauty of this communion. Let's remind one another about what he has given us (salvation & freedom), what he has called us away from (sin), and what he has invited us into (becoming a church on the move reaching out to our community).

The new covenant calls us into a relationship with God and into unity with one another. And it's over everyday meals that we have countless opportunities to grow deeper together

**Prompt:** Who can you reach out to today, to strengthen the bond of brotherhood or sisterhood? Say a prayer and ask God to bring someone to mind. Follow through with a gesture of unity and solidarity in the Lord.

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**Tuesday, March 7**

**Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Terry Foester**

**Theme: Confession**

**Scripture: Psalm 51**

*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.*

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!
- 3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.
- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- 15 O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;  
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

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- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- <sup>18</sup> Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- <sup>19</sup> then will you delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

**Reflection:** Confession is hard. It's uncomfortable...it can be awkward...confession even makes us nauseous at times. In some circumstances...it takes time to gain clarity on what exactly needs to be confessed.

On more than one occasion...I've been totally confused by confession. Like, what exactly is it? How do I get my heart, my words, and my actions to align in confession? Who do I say it to? What words do I use? Is this between me and God, or do I need to get others involved? It's so difficult that it can become the thing we avoid most.

One way to gain clarity on confession is to contrast it with forgiveness. Confession is simply stating the truth about all the ways you are guilty (easier said than done). Forgiveness, on the other hand, is what is offered by the one who was wounded. Both have to do with the process of restoring a relationship.

When it comes to our relationship with others, at times we are in the position of confessor, and at times we are the one offering forgiveness. But when it comes to our relationship with God, we are the confessor and he is the forgiver.

When things get messy, confession feels more like a process than an event.

That's what makes Psalm 51 especially informative. We know the messy backdrop. King David, while his countrymen were off at war, remained a safe distance from the battlefield, in his cozy palace. A series of events take place that result in David committing adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrating the death of her husband, Uriah. David, often characterized as a man after God's own heart, is a murderer and adulterer. (See 2 Samuel 11-12 for the full story.)

A confrontation with the Prophet Nathan, brings David to a place of true confession, voiced in the prayer of Psalm 51, some of the deepest words spoken on confession and forgiveness.

His confession culminates in the request for a clean heart (Psalm 51:10). God, give me a clean heart!

David's request for a clean heart reminds me of a song I heard back in the '80s: "Create in Me A Clean Heart," by Keith Green. While the style of the song is definitely stuck in its era...to this day it humbles me every time I listen. It brings me to a place of confession,

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reminding me of the many ways I've wounded others and sinned against God. And gives me a desire to be more like Jesus, to seek forgiveness and request a renewed heart.

This prayer is still true for me today. I pray it is for you as well.

God does his best work when we finally confess our need for his help.

Use the words of Psalm 51 to give voice to your personal confession.

Take time to confess your need for a clean heart.

And receive His forgiveness anew.

As the Lord leads you, reach out to someone you've wronged and continue the process of reconciliation.

**Prayer:** Create in me a clean heart, Oh God. And renew a right spirit within me. Amen.

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**Wednesday, March 8**

**Today's Devotional comes from Rev. Kyle Benson**

**Theme: Forgiveness**

**Scripture: Luke 23:34**

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

**Reflection:** Actions have consequences. Some acts are deliberate and others are accidental. Jesus was being executed in a very deliberate manner but His mission was in plain focus. The sacrifice He was making was necessary in order to save the world from itself. Upon being nailed to an old rugged cross Jesus began the healing process by uttering the words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." And if I may take a little license, they did not understand both the full extent of what they were doing, and to whom they were doing it.

Forgiveness is a powerful action and hatred is a powerful emotion. Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson is quoted as saying "hatred corrodes the container it's carried in." To hold hatred in one's heart does not damage the offender, it corrodes the offended.

I remember vividly when I was working in the school district and the entire administrative team that I worked alongside was against me and were actively attempting to get me into trouble that would have cost me my livelihood. After a tumultuous year I made it to the summer recess relieved that it was over and hoping for another assignment where I could start over and have a better experience. That didn't happen. I got a letter in the mail stating that I was going back to the same building with that same team. Surprisingly, I did not become depressed, I became empowered. I began to prepare myself to go back into the lion's den when suddenly another letter came informing me that I had been reassigned to another building where I could get my fresh start. I was so grateful to God for making it possible for me to get out of that awful situation. I was ready to put it all behind me and declare it over. It wasn't. God determined that while the situation was corrected, I was still corroded. In September of that year, I attended my church revival and the preacher challenged the congregation. He said for us to think of all the people who have wronged you in some way. He said to think of them by name. After a brief silence he then said, "Now pray for them." The moans and groans (including my own) were palatable. Those were the groans of the corroded that had not yet forgiven. My lack of forgiveness for those that hurt me, didn't damage them, it damaged me and I didn't realize it. I prayed for them and my healing began.

Jesus, while on that cross, did not need to unburden Himself for He bore no such hatred that corroded His heart. He uttered those words in order to provide us a model that would direct our path to wellness and peace.

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for your Son's sacrifice, therefore, equipping us with the ability to forgive our brothers and our sisters. Create within us the will and strength to choose forgiveness the way You forgave us. In Jesus name, Amen.

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**Thursday, March 9**

**Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Hayes Parnell**

**Theme: Freedom**

**Scripture: Galatians 5:13**

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

**Reflection:** When Paul wrote these words to believers in the Galatian church they were struggling through a crisis of hope. A portion of the church was wrapped up in the belief that in order to be full members of the family of God, followers of Christ needed to uphold the Levitical law - specifically circumcision. In Galatians 5 Paul uses some of the strongest language in the New Testament to make it clear that the source of our hope must not be divided. He sums it up in verses 5-6:

“For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

The Galatians were placing their hope in things that had no value in comparison to faith in Christ, and Paul knew that the subject of their false hope would not lead to freedom but slavery (5:1). What false sources of hope do you find yourself gravitating toward in difficult moments? It could be financial security, success in your career, the approval of people you consider important, or a certain dream for what your life or family could look like. You might hope for temporary relief through substance abuse, sexual gratification, or another disordered desire. Any source of hope outside of the finished work of Christ will lead us into bondage, but Christ died to make us free!

We are free from the power of sin, death, and Satan. We are free from the burden of working to maintain our false hopes. But the real beauty of the gospel is that we are not only free from but also free to! We are free to show mercy because God has been merciful to us. We are free to be compassionate because God had compassion on us. We are free to love our neighbor because Christ first loved us. As we continue our journey through Lent, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a tangible step you can take today to love or serve someone in your life.

**Prayer:** Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, help me to live this day in the freedom you have given me! Freedom from false hopes, and freedom to love as you have loved me. Amen.

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**Friday, March 10**

**Today's Devotional comes from Kim Biasotto**

**Theme: Sharing the Light**

**Scripture: 1 John 1:5-7**

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him 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.

**Reflection:** Bedtime. This one word can evoke so many feelings depending on who you are and what is going on in your life. You may read that word and glance at your watch, counting the minutes until you can crawl under your covers. You may be thinking bedtime comes after bath time, brush your teeth time, story time, say your prayers time, and "I'm sorry you're hungry, maybe tomorrow you will eat your dinner" time.

I remember those nights. The often-lengthy process of tucking in each kid and praying they would fall asleep quickly and stay asleep all night. Often, one of my kids would ask me to leave a light on in their room or the hallway. Instead of doing that, I would tell them to shut their eyes tight and I would count out loud to 15 fairly slowly. Once I got to 15 I would tell them to open their eyes. In that short amount of time that their eyes had been closed, they had adjusted to the darkness so when they opened them, the room did not look as dark as it had.

It is frustrating how quickly we can adjust to the darkness, physically and spiritually. With just a little practice and eye-closing, I can adapt and acclimate myself so that my life doesn't seem as dark as it did a short time ago. I look around and compare myself to someone who is much "worse" than I am and - oh look, it just got lighter in here. I watch a show that I probably shouldn't have, but hey, it was better than most of them out there, and wow - it's actually not too dark around me at all.

That is until the light shines on it. Then I see the drab, dingy shadows that surround me. Jesus is the light. There is no darkness in him. And when I am close to him, I can't help but see the darkness in and around me. This leaves me with a choice. I can stay in the darkness and stumble around, or I can choose to step into his light and let it reveal my sin and shame so I can confess it and be made whole.

On paper, this may sound like an easy choice. In reality, it can be difficult. The light will reveal my sins to me, which is hard; but sometimes it also reveals them to others which is super hard. But God allows this for our healing. For our benefit. So, others can come alongside and help us, thus building up a strong, light-filled fellowship of believers.

In this season of Lent, I encourage you to draw close to Jesus and let his light shine on you. Step out of the darkness, confess your sins, and make a change. Let others come alongside



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you to help you stay in the light. And then, let your light shine before others so they will see it and want to step out of the darkness and into the light as well.

**Prayer:** Holy God, forgive my sins. Search my heart and show me everything that is in me that offends you. I chose to draw near to you and step into the light. Thank you for loving me and helping me to do this. In your son's precious name I pray. Amen

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**Saturday, March 11**

**Today's Devotional comes from Danielle Vota**

**Theme: Resting in Him**

**Scripture: Psalm 4:8**

In peace I will both lie down and sleep;  
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

**Personal Reflection:** Before I came to Christ, I spent my adult life living as an atheist indulging in sin. After I became a Christian, I started being plagued by unwanted nightmares. Although I had turned away from those sins, I was being taunted by them in my sleep about once a month. My husband compassionately listened to me lament my nightmares and prayed for me. I asked God many times over the years to please make the nightmares stop, and yet the thorn remained. I didn't talk to anyone else about it because deep down I believed the nightmares must be my penance for the ways I dishonored God. As I got to know Jesus and learned about the price he paid for our salvation and forgiveness of sins, I knew God wasn't sending these nightmares to punish me. So, there must be another reason why they persisted.

About a month ago, I got a new job working in ministry for the first time. Suddenly, the nightmares started getting worse and more frequent. I was being tormented almost every night. I finally humbled myself and told my closest friends. They encouraged me to reach out to one of our pastors. I prayed about whom I should ask to meet with. I hardly knew Pastor Terry, yet he kept coming to my mind. He coordinated a prayer meeting with me, him, and two other women from our church. I can't convey to you the level of peace and deliverance I felt after meeting with them. They listened to me, mentored me, and showed me the love of Christ. I left wondering why in the world I waited so many years to ask for help. Was it my pride or my lack of faith in the power of prayer? I asked God that day to please reveal to me his full purpose for delaying my deliverance from these nightmares.

So here I am, two weeks later, sitting down to write this devotional and I am thunderstruck by the verse I have been assigned. Mind you, Pastor Terry assigned me Psalm 4:8 weeks before he knew I was struggling to sleep in peace. When I was an atheist, I used to say, "If God is real why doesn't he just show himself and prove to me undeniably that he exists?". I had no idea what I was really asking for. If God had shown himself to me at that time, I would have been horrified to discover there truly is an almighty God who exists outside of time and space, holds my life in his hands, and sees everything I think and do. It is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that we grow to know God and trust him. We learn about his character, his goodness, and love. Knowing his unfathomable love for us is what makes the presence of God and the reality of his existence not only bearable but peaceful and joyous.

The longer I walk with Christ, the clearer I can read the love letters the Holy Spirit delivers personally just for me from our Father God in Heaven. Had he removed the nightmares right away, then I wouldn't have asked for help and experienced the fellowship I needed. I also would have missed out on this love letter prepared for me before time. This Lenten season, I

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encourage you to learn to trust the Father and his Holy Spirit, by first learning to trust his Son. The more we learn to trust in Him, the more we experience rest in Him.

**Prayer:** Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 23 over you. Close your eyes. Allow God's word to wash over you as a soothing balm. Listen to his promise. There is nowhere you can go where God is not with you.