

40 DAYS OF PRAYER
LENT DEVOTIONAL

Week #1: February 14-17

Wednesday, February 14 | Day 1

Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Nate Keeler

Scripture: *John 17:1a* After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed...

An Invitation to Enter Lent Together

While some of us come from Christian traditions that observe Lent, this may be a newer practice for many of us. In light of our diverse backgrounds as a church family, I would like to give you a brief overview of Lent and how we will observe Lent as a church.

Starting today, Ash Wednesday, we are calling the church to 40 days of decrease and increase that may include fasting, focused prayer and reflection to draw you into communion with Jesus during his last days leading up to Easter. Traditionally this is called the season of Lent that Christians and Catholics alike have practiced in a variety of ways for over 1800 years across cultures, continents, and languages. It is a time when we focus our attention on the descent of Jesus into the darkness of his suffering and death, and into his ascent of triumph in his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Just as Jesus voluntarily decreased himself, this season we join Jesus as his body by voluntarily decreasing (fasting) in our lives, sharing in the sufferings of Christ as an act of worship and increasing (feasting) through our communion with Jesus through reflection and focused prayer.

I would like to invite you to join your church family in experiencing Lent this year. Here are two ways you can participate.

1. Focused Prayer and Reflection. Set aside a specific time(s) morning, midday and/or evening. You can use our **Daily Lent Devotional** as your guide for your time of communion with Jesus. This year, we will be praying alongside Jesus, using his farewell prayer in John 17. This powerful prayer took place in the upper room with the disciples during Passion Week. John thought this prayer was so important he put the entire prayer in his gospel. It reveals so clearly Jesus' heart, mission, intention for His work on the cross, His hope for the church on Earth, and His goal for us to share in the love and unity with the Trinity forever.

Tonight, we invite you to begin Lent by setting aside distractions and entering into a unique evening of prayer and reflection. The sanctuary will be set with five self-guided stations designed to cultivate a sensory experience of communion with Jesus. Pastors will also be available to pray with you in the alcoves. The experience will take around 30 minutes to complete and will be open between 5:45-8:45 p.m. This is a great event for all ages; kids 5th grade and under should be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

2. Fasting. Fasting is a way of exercising the fruit of the Spirit, self-discipline, by voluntarily giving up something (food/beverage, entertainment, social media, habit, etc.) as an act of sacrificial worship and dependence on God. Fasting (with the right heart posture) reveals our

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weakness, humbles us and purifies our walk with Jesus. It draws us into both our desperate need for a Savior and the staggering reality that Jesus entered into the ultimate fast, the ultimate decrease for us!

May these days of Lent draw you not only into the Gospel story, but into the communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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Thursday, February 15 | Day 2

Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Bo Matthews

Scripture: [John 17](#) Overview

John 17 preserves Jesus' prayer for the Church, the whole Church, across 2000 years and across the diversity of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues on earth. He prayed four times that his Church be one. He said what it means to be one this way: "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21). We don't understand that, because we don't talk like that.

John offers help in understanding that unusual language. In John 13:23, the Apostle presents the following scene at mealtime in an upper room. The King James Version translates the Greek text literally. "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." The word "bosom" distracts us. We also wonder if the disciple's head was resting on Jesus' chest, or if it was just close enough to be in Jesus' space. They were eating a meal, and either location of his head would have been disruptive.

The Apostle uses the word "bosom" one other time in this Gospel. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18 KJV). The same language here has nothing to do with anatomy or social propriety. Instead, it expresses an intimate communion between the Son and the Father that made it possible for Jesus to say, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The scene at the meal expresses close friendship between Jesus and the disciple he loved. Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us" expresses an intimate communion of the Father and the Son with each other, and of the Church with the Father and the Son. The outcome of the Church's communion with God brings Jesus' prayer to fruition: "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that He may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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Friday, February 16 | Day 3

Today's Devotional comes from Pastor Terry Foester

Scripture: *John 17:1: When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you..."*

In John 17:1, as Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven, he says, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...'

Reflecting on Jesus' red-letter teachings in chapters 14-16, we find profound statements, such as 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6), 'I am the true vine' (John 15:1), and the promise of the coming Holy Spirit (John 16:13).

After this precious teaching, Jesus demonstrates the power of prayer. Despite speaking extensively, he gracefully shifts from words to prayer.

Recently, in a challenging conversation, the temptation to secure the last word surfaced, as it often feels like a win.

Jesus doesn't end this conversation with words, but with prayer. He lifts his eyes to heaven, shifting from "talking about" to "praying to." He adopts a posture of prayer, reminding us to lift our eyes during Lent, not just reading about his prayer but engaging in daily lifting of our eyes to heaven.

He prays, "Father, the hour has come..." In contrast to an earlier reluctance that now was not the time (John 2:1-12), Jesus now embraces the moment, stepping onto the visible cross to restore humanity's broken relationship with God and bear our sins once and for all.

The ensuing prayer offers a unique glimpse into Jesus' prayer life and his perfectly knit relationship with the Father. This reveals the glory they share with one another.

As you read Jesus's prayer and the reflections in this devotional series, will you say, "that's quite a nice prayer" or will you pray?

After saying these things, Jesus looked to heaven, and he prayed. This Lenten Season, let's do likewise.

Conclude this time in prayer using a simple "PRAY" acronym: Pause, Rejoice, Ask, Yield. I challenge you to integrate a time of responsive prayer and journaling as we journey through the prayer of Jesus over the next 40 days.

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Saturday, February 17 | Day 4

Today's Devotional comes from Maria Ash

Scripture: *John 17:2 (NLT): For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him.*

In his prayer to his Father, Jesus proclaims his authority and power over all. He states that the Father has given Him the power to give eternal life to all that God has given Him.

Throughout the Gospel of John we read so many episodes of Jesus' teachings and performances of miracles. One example is when Jesus proclaims that His Father sent Him. And then he explains why; John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

I often wonder, if I was present with Jesus, how long it would have taken me to accept his gift of eternal life. Many of those who personally heard the word and witnessed His miracles did not accept His gift. Many mocked and accused Him of blasphemy when He spoke of his Father and why his Father sent him. I did not accept Jesus as my Savior until I was 30 years old. It took dedicated prayer from a dear friend, as well as the prayers of her church and the faithful visits of her pastor over the course of a year before I gave my life to Jesus. Even then (similar to the Galatians, who fell into the false teachings of the Judaizers), I believed a person needed to follow the law and do works to be saved: I spent over a year going back and forth between my old church and the rituals they believed in and going to my new church where I heard the Word of God.

Why did it take me so long to realize it is not Jesus plus works, rituals, and whatever else' to receive salvation? It is Christ alone. God the father made it quite easy to receive the greatest gift. He sent His son and gave Him the power and authority to give eternal life to those who believe.

If you have never accepted Christ as your Savior, don't wait! Make today the day! If you do know Christ as your Savior, thank God every day for sending His Son and giving Him the power and authority to give you eternal life.

I've included my favorite song with this devotional. I use this song as a prayer and a special way of saying thank you to God for sending his Son. Please read the words or better yet listen to the song and rejoice that "In Christ Alone (My Hope is Found)." Watch/Listen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16KYvflc2bE>