

LENTEN SEASON 2026

Week1 | Return to God

Scripture: Joel 2:12-13 KJV

[12] Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:
[13] and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Devotion: Lent is a historic Christian practice. It's a 40-day period leading up to Easter spent reflecting on Jesus' journey to the cross and preparing our hearts for the celebration of his resurrection. Ultimately, Lent begins with an invitation from God: Return to me.

It's not a call to perform religious duties, but to offer our hearts to God. The people of Israel had a habit of going through the motions. They would fast and make sacrifices, but these things were all performative. Despite doing all the right things on the outside, their hearts weren't in it. God wasn't impressed by their actions – he longed for their hearts.

This season is an opportunity to do the same. Pause, reflect, and turn your heart fully toward God. It's common for people to spend Lent fasting – or giving something up – in order to focus more on self-reflection and prayer. But the goal isn't to do whatever looks best like the Israelites. Take inventory of the current state of your heart: where have you drifted? What distractions have pulled you away?

Over the next 40 days, commit to removing these distractions and bringing your focus (and your heart) back to God. He's already waiting for you with open arms!

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Prayer: God, help me return to you with my whole heart. Help me get rid of distractions, and let this season be one of renewal. Thank you for your mercy and love. Amen.

Week 2 | A Clean Heart

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-12 KJV

[1] Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. [2] Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. [3] For I acknowledge my transgressions: And my sin is ever before me. [4] Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. [5] Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me. [6] Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. [7] Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. [8] Make me to hear joy and gladness; That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. [9] Hide thy face from my sins, And blot out all mine iniquities. [10] Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me. [11] Cast me not away from thy presence; And take not thy holy spirit from me. [12] Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; And uphold me with thy free spirit.

Devotion: Psalm 51 is a raw and honest prayer from David after he had gotten tangled up in sinful behavior. He didn't make excuses, and he didn't try to cover it up. He simply turned to God and asked for forgiveness and mercy. He understood that sin wasn't just about breaking rules, but about damaging his relationship with God.

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Lent invites you to pray this same prayer: "Create in me a clean heart." It's a time to bring your brokenness to God. God doesn't want you to confess your sins and mistakes so he can condemn you and make you feel guilty, but so he can free you and heal you. His forgiveness has no conditions. No matter how far we've wandered, he is always willing to make us new.

Prayer: God, I know I've fallen short. I need your mercy and grace. Create in me a clean heart and renew my spirit. Amen.

Week 3 | What God Really Wants

Scripture Isaiah 58:6-12 KJV

[6] Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? [7] Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? [8] Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. [9] Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; [10] and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: [11] and the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. [12] And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou

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shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Devotion: Sometimes we treat spiritual disciplines like a checklist. Read the Bible – check. Fast from something – check. Pray today – check. But in Isaiah 58, God reminds us that fasting means nothing if it doesn't really change how we live. God isn't about empty religious rituals – he's in the business of life change.

True fasting is about more than just giving something up; it's about making room for God's heart in our lives. It's about showing kindness, seeking justice, and caring for those in need. As we journey through Lent, let's ask: How is my faith leading me to love others?

Prayer: God, help me focus less on religious duty and more on living out your love. Open my eyes to the needs around me, and let my faith be active and real. Amen.

Week 4 | When You Feel Distant

Scripture: Luke 15:11-24 KJV

[11] And he said, A certain man had two sons: [12] and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. [13] And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. [14] And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. [15] And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. [16] And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. [17] And when he came

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to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! [18] I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, [19] and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. [20] And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. [21] And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. [22] But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: [23] and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: [24] for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Devotion: We're conditioned to believe that everyone's love comes with strings attached – and it's possible to make one too many mistakes for someone to ever forgive us again. We also apply this idea of love to God – but the reality couldn't be more opposite.

The story of the prodigal son shows us what God's love is really like. The son in this story made every mistake possible: he ran away from home, wasted everything, and hit rock bottom. When he finally decided to return, he was convinced his father would never take him back in – and the only way was to offer to be a servant, not a son.

Instead, the unexpected (and unthinkable happened): his father ran toward him with open arms, cried tears of joy at his return, and threw a huge party to celebrate his homecoming. Imagine that!

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Lent is a season of returning. It challenges us to realize that no matter how far we've gone, God's love is still bigger. He doesn't hold your past against you. He isn't waiting for you to pull yourself up by your bootstraps and clean yourself up first. He just wants you to come home. In fact, he's already running toward you.

Prayer: God, I don't want to stay distant from you. Help me trust your love and take a step closer today. Amen

Week 5 | More Than a Checklist

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-6 KJV

[1] Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. [2] Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [3] But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: [4] that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. [5] And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [6] But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

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Devotion: It's easy to make faith about appearances. Go to church, say your prayers, read your Bible, don't cuss, rinse, and repeat. But there's a difference between doing the right things and doing them for the right reasons. Living like a follower of Christ can quickly turn into a performance. And the audience? Other people.

Jesus warned his followers not to practice their faith for the attention of others. Whether it was giving, praying, or fasting, Jesus didn't care about what his followers did as much as he cared about why they did it. He wasn't saying that these practices didn't matter, but that why we do them matters even more.

Lent isn't about proving how "Christian" you are. It's not about checking a box or showing others how disciplined you can be. It's about nurturing a real connection with God. So as you read, pray, or fast during this season, don't focus on getting it "right. Instead, focus on getting closer to God.

Prayer : God, help me focus on you, not on looking the part. I want to know you more. Amen.

Week 6 | A Different Kind of Strength

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 KJV

[9] And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

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Devotion: “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!” “Tough it out!” “Only the strong survive!” With phrases like these in our vernacular, it's no wonder we feel like we need to be strong all the time.

We don't want to admit when we're struggling – but going too long trying to compensate for our weaknesses (or ignore them altogether) is a fast track to burnout. But here's the good news: Paul reminds us that God's power shows up the most in our lives when we feel the weakest.

Lent is a season that challenges our self-sufficiency. When we fast or give something up, it makes us painfully aware of our limitations. When we take time to reflect, we're forced to confront how badly we need grace. You don't have to be strong on your own. God created you to depend on him and experience the goodness of his grace and provision in your life.

Prayer : God, I'm tired of trying to be strong on my own. Help me rely on your power today. Amen.

Week 7 | Preparing for What's Ahead

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 KJV

[1] Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. [2] And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. [3] And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. [4] But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. [5] Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, [6] and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his

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angels charge concerning thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, Lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. [7] Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. [8] Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; [9] and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. [10] Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. [11] Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Devotion: Before the miracles, before the teachings, before the cross, Jesus spent forty days alone in the wilderness. It was kind of like his own season of Lent. He fasted and prayed, and through it all he faced temptation. For Jesus, this wasn't just a test – it was preparation.

You could be walking through a tough season right now. Maybe you're facing struggles that feel overwhelming – and forcing yourself to give something up, shake up your routine, or spend more time doing just one more thing feels like too much.

What if, instead of seeing this Lent journey as an obstacle, you looked at it like Jesus did – as preparation? God often uses challenging seasons to strengthen us for what's ahead. Lent is a time to lean in, trust God, and remember that he is preparing you for something greater.

Prayer: God, help me see this season as preparation. Strengthen me for what's ahead. Amen.