

Daily Practices

3rd Week of Lent

DAY 1 // WEDNESDAY

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God. When a distracting thought comes into your mind, write it down and then recenter your mind.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 55:1-3

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.”

DEVOTIONAL: This passage was written to the Hebrew people as they were approaching the end of their 70-year exile in Babylon. The words contain a happy urgency, telling the Hebrew people to align themselves with God to experience his steadfast love and his everlasting promises. Much like us today, the author knows the Hebrew people have been tempted to align their lives with things that do not have any importance in light of eternity. We have a tendency to desire and prioritize things of this world — like approval of others and material possessions — instead of fully living in the steadfast love of Christ. The author is calling the Hebrew people (and us) to labor for things of the everlasting kingdom and to be satisfied in Christ. In this season of Lent, as we are intentionally fasting from something that takes our time or focus, let us turn our focus toward eternity.

REFLECTION: Take a look at your calendar: what does it say you prioritize? What are some ways you can better align your life by prioritizing things that matter more in light of eternity?

PRAYER: “Lord, thank you for your steadfast love and your promises. Help me to turn my heart away from things of this world and toward your eternal kingdom. I want to be in alignment with you.”

DAY 2 // THURSDAY

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 63:1-4

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

DEVOTIONAL: Today, we again see another example of someone praising God's steadfast love. This Psalm was written by King David as he was in the desert, hiding from his son who was trying to kill him (talk about dysfunctional family dynamics!). King David is using the desert setting he is in to reflect on how he feels when he is distant from God. By equating his need for God to his soul thirsting, King David is saying his soul needs God — it's not an optional thing. We can see King David pull himself closer to God by remembering when he had seen God's power and love revealed. King David is choosing to worship God in spite of his circumstances and feeling far from God's presence. As we approach resurrection Sunday, let us focus on how we have seen the resurrection power of Jesus at work in our lives.

RESPONSE: When is a time you have felt close to God? How were you able to connect with him during that time? How do you typically respond when you feel distant from God?

PRAYER: "God, thank you for your presence in my life. My soul longs for you. Help me to remember where I have seen your steadfast love in action. I want to be close to you. Help me continue to praise you even when my circumstances feel out of control or desolate."

DAY 3 // FRIDAY

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the different ways you have seen God at work in your life this week.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

DEVOTIONAL: Tomorrow we will be looking at the idea of repentance, but first, we have to acknowledge that we need to repent because we have given in to temptation. The writers of scripture have a great understanding of human nature and recognize our tendency to justify why we gave into temptation. We often want to excuse our particular tempting circumstances as “unique” or a “special exception,” but God reminds us that our temptation is not unique. Many other men and women of God have faced the same or similar circumstances, and have found strength in God to overcome it. We can have hope that God will not allow anything to be presented to us that we cannot overcome by relying on Him. As we continue to fast, let us draw strength from God to continue to deny ourselves and focus on Him.

RESPONSE: How have you been tempted to justify your sin? How have you seen God remove or help you overcome temptation?

PRAYER: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

DAY 4 // SATURDAY

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 13:1-5

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. **2** And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? **3** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. **4** Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? **5** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

DEVOTIONAL: In today's world, we see tragic events on TV, Instagram and You Tube all the time. In this passage, the crowd seems to be telling Jesus about two recent events that had occurred recently in the region: a freak accident of a tower falling on people and Pilate murdering a group of Galileans. We are unsure why Jesus is told about these events, but Jesus used his response to teach the crowd (and us) about repentance. Jesus seems to be telling us life is fragile and we should not mistake our good fortune as evidence of a special blessing, but rather recognize that the need for repentance is universal. As we turn our sights toward Jesus's crucifixion on Good Friday, we recognize we are responsible for his death. While this is not a pleasant thought, it is the reality — we are sinners and needed someone to pay the debt we owe. But, there is hope: Sunday is coming!

RESPONSE: Spend two minutes reflecting on areas of your life you need to repent. Journal and/or pray about areas of your life you need to turn away from.

PRAYER: “Father, you are a gracious God. Please forgive me for ways I have sinned and gone against your will for my life. Please give me strength to resist temptation. I love you Lord.”

DAY 5 // MONDAY

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to how you have seen your relationship with God grow over the last 3 weeks of fasting.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 13:6-9

And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. **7** And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ **8** And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. **9** Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

DEVOTIONAL: This parable immediately follows the passage we looked at yesterday. Jesus is continuing to teach his audience about repentance. We can see that Jesus is comparing his followers to the fig tree and the lack of fruit as a lack of repentance. Jesus is saying that in order to produce fruit in our lives, we need to repent. And while we know that we cannot earn our faith through works, we also know that faith without works is dead. There is not a precise formula for how much faith and how many works are “just right,” but Jesus seems to be saying repentance has moral implications. When we repent, there should be evidence of that in our lives.

RESPONSE: How have you seen evidence of repentance in your life? How does your life look different than someone who is not in relationship with Jesus?

PRAYER: “Lord, I humbly pray you give me the strength to fully change my actions when I repent. Help me to rely on you. I pray my faith is shown through my works, without getting into the mindset that I can earn salvation, because you are the only one that can save me.”

DAY 6 // TUESDAY

SILENCE: Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God.

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

DEVOTIONAL: Yesterday, we talked about how repentance has moral implications and there should be evidence of our faith in our lives. Here, Paul lists out the fruit we should see in our lives if we are an apprentice of Jesus. This tends to be a familiar passage to us, and one that is taught in song form to children in Sunday school. Yet the familiarity with this passage can cause us to overlook the importance and significance of these attributes that should come with being in relationship with Jesus. We need to look for and act out these characteristics as we attend class, sit in traffic, parent unruly toddlers, and sit in meetings at work — in the places we live, work, study and play.

RESPONSE: Which fruit of the Spirit is most unnatural for you? Which characteristic is most natural?

Take two minutes to reflect on how you have seen these natural tendencies play out in your life.

Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating, or by talking with God.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to represent you well to my family, my friends and my city. I pray my relationship with you will be evident to all those who meet me. I pray those who know me will be able to see the fruit of the Spirit in all areas of my life.”