

Daily Practices

4th 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.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-9

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

DEVOTIONAL: Throughout the Bible, Paul makes a very clear emphasis on the difference between living according to the flesh and living according to the Spirit. In our devotional last week, we learned about the fruits of the Spirit as Paul described them in Galatians chapter 5, and that when we receive the Spirit as a result of belonging to Jesus, our fleshly passions and desires are crucified. Similarly in Romans, Paul explains the stark difference between living according to the flesh and living by the Spirit. He states in verse 6 that setting your mind on the flesh is death, while setting your mind on the Spirit will bring life and peace.

REFLECTION: You have received Jesus’ Spirit and you are free because of what Jesus has done for you. How does that knowledge impact your life?

PRAYER: “Lord, thank you for the imprint of your Spirit in my life. Guide me today as I do my best to set my mind on the things of the Spirit. I ask you Lord for your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in all of my interactions today. Thank you for your sacrifice, and your redeeming love.”

DAY 2 // THURSDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

DEVOTIONAL: When we accept Jesus as Lord and believe that he died for our sins and was raised three days later, our heart posture shifts. We change from a mindset of living for love, to one of living from love — the love of God. Paul is saying exactly that in this passage: as a result of receiving Christ’s sacrifice for us, we are a new creation and have the choice to no longer live for ourselves, but live for Jesus. And as a result of living for him, we no longer see someone according to the flesh, but rather through the lens that God looks at them; looking to their heart. Like Paul, we are transformed, and know that the Christian walk is living by the Spirit and combatting the flesh — a war that is being waged daily in our hearts and minds.

RESPONSE: How will your day change if you shift your mindset from living for love, to one of living from the love of God and what he has already done for you?

PRAYER: “Lord, thank you for who you are. Thank you for the change that you have made in our hearts. We ask that you guide our steps today and that we can see your goodness in all the small details of the day.”

DAY 3 // FRIDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

DEVOTIONAL: Think of a relationship that has been fractured as a result of either you or another person driving a wedge between the two of you. Now, think of what would have to happen in order to heal that relationship. That is reconciliation. Reconciliation can be defined as the restoration of relations. It is in this text that we realize reconciliation, like all things, is from God. He is the source and initiator of reconciliation. By God sending Jesus to die for our sins, he initiated the act of reconciliation by desiring to mend a previously fractured relationship so that we could experience eternal life in communion with him.

RESPONSE: Take two minutes and think about how, while we sinned against God, it was still his will to be in relationship with us. He chose to initiate the reconciliation between himself and the world.

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: 2 Corinthians 5:19-20

“That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”

DEVOTIONAL: Paul’s primary concern throughout this entire passage is that we should be ambassadors for Christ through his reconciliation. The act of reconciliation should compel us to be set forth as a representative of Christ to share the good news of what he has done for all who might believe. In this passage, the term “ambassadors” is one that does not show authority, but rather means that you are representing something bigger than yourself — in this case, God himself. As an ambassador, you have been entrusted with, and are representing, that God of the Universe to share the message of reconciliation with all who may listen. At New City, that is our hope for you: that we can go and make disciples who take the message of Jesus (and his reconciliation) to the places that we live, work, study, and play.

RESPONSE: Take some time to think about how you have represented Christ in relationships around you. And think about how you can refocus your heart’s desire to share the good news of Jesus to the people in your life where you live, work, study, and play.

PRAYER: “Father, you are so good. We thank you that it is because of you that we have been reconciled. And Lord what an honor it is to then be used by you, for your kingdom's glory. May we not take this responsibility lightly, and truly reflect on the ways that we have represented you, and changes that may need to be made in order to honor you.”

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 three weeks of fasting.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 22: 44; 2 Corinthians 5:21

“And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

DEVOTIONAL: The night Jesus was betrayed, he prayed and asked God if he was willing to remove the cup from him. If there was another way for the reconciliation of humanity to be done, he asked God to do so. However, the prayer was not answered because only Jesus — the perfect and sinless Son of God — was worthy to mend that relationship. The text says that his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground. Christ knew all that was going to happen to him from the severe beating and the eventual crucifixion, but what caused even more anguish was that of the wrath of God for all sins in the world, which would be poured out onto him while on the cross. Ultimately, we are responsible for the blood dripped from our Lord and Savior, and it was our sin that caused this immense anguish in him.

RESPONSE: How does remembering the pain and anguish that Jesus experienced, shift your perspective for how we ought to live as a result of being gifted with the righteousness of God?

PRAYER: “Lord, we don’t deserve your gift of righteousness that you so freely give. You sent your perfect Son to die in our place, and experience the wrath that we do rightly deserve. Lord let us remember the details of this to shape our perspective, not to a place of guilt but one that should commission us to share the good news of who you are and the hope we have in you.”

DAY 6 // TUESDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 32: A Maskil of David

“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”

DEVOTIONAL: In this Psalm of David, he clearly outlines the great blessing it is to know the forgiveness of God. It means that sin is no longer exposed, but is covered. In the first two verses, David describes sin as transgression and iniquity; which lend themselves to crossing a line, defying God’s intent, and falling short. He also explains how God — and God alone — puts away sin by forgiving us and covering our sins. In this Psalm, David is so anguished by covering his sin for so long and keeping quiet that he uses the metaphor of “his bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.” But, when he acknowledged his sin, he felt the liberating feeling that can only be found in repentance, which leads to David’s rejoicing joy.

RESPONSE: Take two minutes to reflect on your life: Is there anything that you have felt weighing on you to the point of feeling like your bones are wasting away? Take those things to God. He has already forgiven you, even if you haven’t forgiven yourself.

Psalm 32:11 “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy all you upright in heart.”

PRAYER: “Lord, search our hearts. We know that you can do some of your best work in the times of our life where we feel the furthest from you. Lord it is your kindness that leads us to repentance, and we ask for your forgiveness from our transgressions like David does in this Psalm. Humbly, we ask for the joy that can only come from you and communion with you. We love you and thank you for how you love us.”