

Daily Practices

Fifth 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 with you right now.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

DEVOTIONAL: One of the great truths about the gospel is that anyone can receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. You don’t need to be smart, rich, powerful, or famous to be loved by Jesus. Paul reminds us here that according to worldly values, people who trust in Jesus would be considered foolish, weak, and low. We were saved, not by some great attribute we possess, but by the grace of God demonstrated in the cross. Knowing this helps us to remain humble before the Lord. The only thing we can boast about is how great the Lord is!

REFLECTION: How does the “foolishness” of the cross shame the “wisdom” of the world?

PRAYER: Take a few minutes in silence and “boast in the Lord,” listing some of the amazing things you believe to be true about him.

DAY 2 // THURSDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 13:44–46

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

DEVOTIONAL: We all prioritize what really matters to us most in this life. In this short parable, Jesus teaches us what is truly valuable and should be given the highest priority. The collector of fine pearls finds one pearl so valuable he gives up everything to possess it. In the same way, we are told that giving up all we have in order to receive Jesus is more than worth it. There is nothing in this world that remotely compares with the beauty and joy of knowing the Lord.

REFLECTION: Why is knowing Jesus worth more than anything in the world? Are there things in your life that are hard to give up in order to follow Jesus?

PRAYER: “Lord, you are worth more than anything I have or ever will have. I want you to be the top priority in my life. Help me see when I am not valuing you like I should. I am sorry I have not always put you first in my life. Please give me the power and strength I need to follow you well.”

DAY 3 // FRIDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:15–18

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

DEVOTIONAL: Sometimes people wonder what makes Jesus so special. Why should he be worshipped every Sunday in churches? Why is he better than other religions' deities? Paul outlines just a few of Jesus' attributes that certify he is the preeminent being in the universe. No one else has done or can do anything that Paul lists here. These qualifications alone make Jesus worthy of our highest devotion.

RESPONSE: What comes to mind when you think about the verses above? What do these truths make you think about Jesus?

PRAYER: "Lord, you are the one true God. You have done things that nobody else can do. You have authority over everything in the world. I submit myself to you today. I want to follow your will because you are worthy of it. Remind me throughout this day just how incredible you are. Please give me glimpses of your glory. Amen"

DAY 4 // SATURDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 4:12–19

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

DEVOTIONAL: Following Jesus is the single greatest decision we can make in this life. But it doesn't come without a cost. Indeed, the Bible makes it clear that all Christians will experience suffering—it is inevitable. For us, the question isn't *if* we will suffer, it is *how*. Peter encourages anyone who suffers as a Christian to rejoice in the fact that we are participating in a similar experience as Jesus. We are imitating our savior when we suffer for doing good. And just like Jesus, we are to entrust our lives to our faithful Heavenly Father, who will see us through any difficult time.

RESPONSE: How does knowing we are following the example of Jesus change your perspective on suffering?

PRAYER: "Lord Jesus, thank you for enduring the suffering you experienced on the cross. Your sacrifice was able to accomplish what I could not do for myself. You deserved none of the pain and humiliation, but you did it out of your love for this world."

DAY 5 // MONDAY

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

SCRIPTURE: Luke 9:57-62

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” ⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” ⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

DEVOTIONAL: Saying that Jesus is our top priority has implications. In this passage, Jesus wants to make sure anyone wanting to follow him understands what that might mean. Jesus may lead us into places we don't really want to go, or that aren't comfortable, or that cause us to miss out on other things. And it's also true that he may not. But putting conditions on following Jesus means he really isn't our top priority. Jesus calls us to be “all in” when it comes to trusting him. When we have this attitude of complete surrender to Jesus, we can press on in our faith and live the life God has intended for us.

RESPONSE: What are you tempted to look back on? What holds you back from being “all in” for Jesus?

PRAYER: “Lord Jesus, I thank you for calling me into a relationship with you. My desire is to follow you no matter where you lead me. I confess my own fears, insecurities, and weakness that prevent me from fully trusting you. I ask you now to give me the courage, faith, and strength I need to trust you this week.”

DAY 6 // TUESDAY

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

SCRIPTURE:

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:66-69)

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:25-26)

DEVOTIONAL: Sometimes things don't go our way. Sometimes the outlook is bleak. We may be tempted to pursue ways of life other than Jesus' way. In these passages, both Peter and the psalmist (Asaph) ask a profound question that brings a healthy perspective when faced with the decision of whether to continue following Jesus. Their response is simple: “Where else would we go?” They recognize that only Jesus' words bring eternal life. Only Jesus is on the throne in heaven. Only Jesus is the holy one of God. These truths confirm that there is no better option in life than to follow Jesus.

RESPONSE: How would you answer Jesus' question about wanting to go away? What reasons would you give for continuing to follow him?

PRAYER: “Lord Jesus. You alone are the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way to God and salvation but through you. Turning to anyone or anything else would be fruitless. I confess my unbelief at times. Strengthen my faith, Lord. Help me to see you as you truly are. I want to glorify you in all I do.”