



# SEASONS

ENTER THE STORY OF JESUS







# **S E A S O N S**

**ENTER THE STORY OF JESUS**

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**2018 - 2019**

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## THE ONE TRUE STORY

We're people drawn to stories and shaped by stories. Whether a book, podcast, movie, TV show or song, it's hard to find a human being who isn't moved or captivated by a good story. This is because we are created to live in a story—the Christian story.

But given our bent toward sin, away from the one true story, we often find ourselves caught up in the false stories of our culture. Amid the chaos and busyness of everyday life, we buy into narratives like consumerism, secularism, nationalism, progressivism and cynicism. Though we may not confess these stories to be true with our mouths, we act as if they are true with our lives. They sink deep into our bones, shaping and forming our longings and desires, disorienting and distracting us from the gospel.

The Church Calendar—also called the Liturgical Year—seeks to redeem our time and space through the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. Through readings, prayers, songs, fasts and other practices, these seasons help to reorient our hearts and minds away from the false stories of the world and back toward the one true story of the Bible—**the Christian story**.

# WHAT IS THE CHURCH CALENDAR?

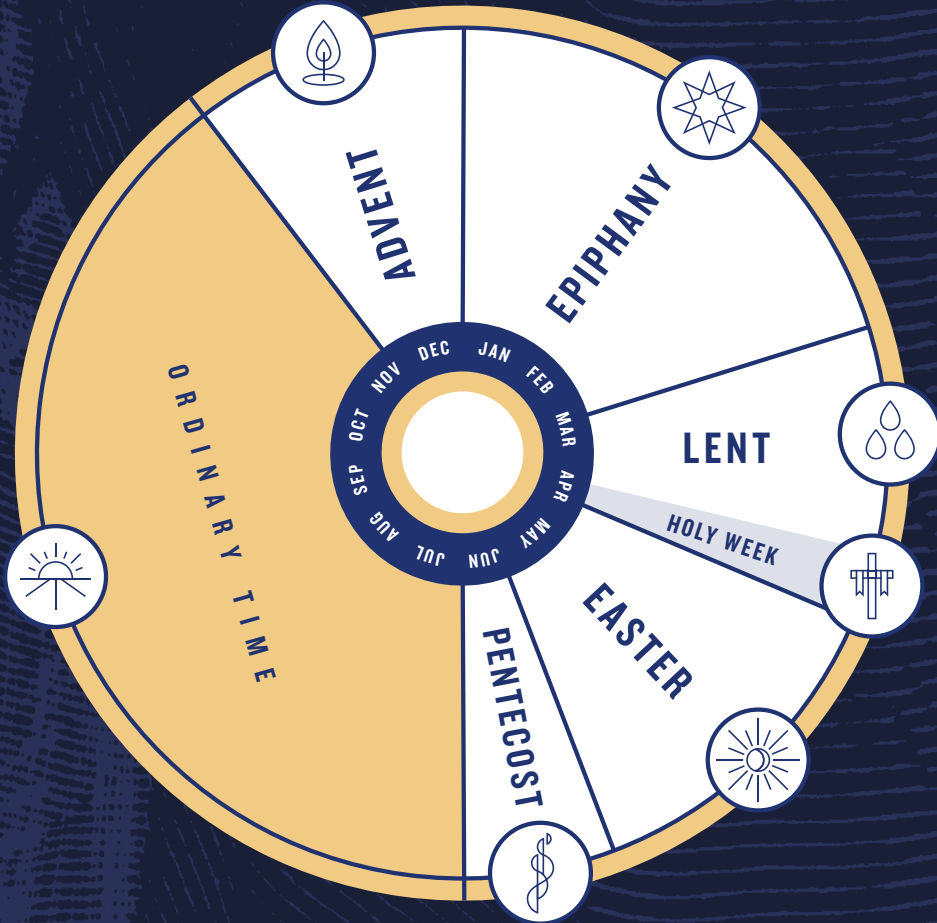
Practiced for over 1,500 years, the Church Calendar serves as a way to order our lives around the Christian story. Inspired by the annual feasts and celebrations of God's people throughout the Old Testament, the calendar can be traced all the way back to the early Church, when Christians began establishing rhythms and rituals based on the one story of Scripture.

Despite its details and approaches changing over time and looking different across traditions, the Church Calendar has almost always hit the same plot points and themes with the seasons: **Advent** (the birth of Christ), **Epiphany** (the manifestation of Christ), **Lent** (the temptation and death of Christ), **Easter** (the resurrection of Christ) and **Pentecost** (the Spirit of Christ).

The Church Calendar can come across to many as legalistic or as empty ritual, given some of the abuses we've seen throughout Church history. It can also feel strange and foreign to those who are new to church or who grew up in churches that didn't follow this calendar. But the seasons of the Church are really just a way to center our lives around the gospel by entering the story of Jesus each year. It's a practical way to follow the words of Paul in Romans 13:14: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." While we should always make sure we're not falling into meaningless routines and simply going through the motions, it's hard to think of a better way we can spend our time each and every year.

The gatherings, the practices and the traditions of the seasons help us remember the one true story of the Bible—who God is and what He has done in Jesus Christ—and help us to live in that story every day as the people of God.

# THE SEASONS







## ADVENT

*Advent is about the coming of Jesus Christ.*

It begins with a time of waiting and longing and ends with celebrating the birth of our Savior, the Messiah, on Christmas. This season progresses from dark to light.



## EPIPHANY

*Epiphany is about the manifestation of Jesus Christ.*

The season focuses on Christ revealing His divinity and His saving plan for the nations. It establishes a time of renewal for the believer to recommit a life of faithfulness to Christ.



## LENT

*Lent is about the temptation and death of Jesus Christ.*

The season begins with 40 days of prayer and fasting and ends with Holy Week, which includes Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and His death on the cross on Good Friday. It is a time of examining and repenting of sin.



## EASTER

*Easter is about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

As the culmination of the Christian story, this season marks a time of ongoing celebration and consideration of the future hope we have in Christ.



## PENTECOST

*Pentecost is about the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*

This season ends the official Church Calendar by reflecting on the sending of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church. It reminds us of our unity with Christ and our call to share Christ by the power of the Spirit.



# ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is not an exhaustive study of the Church Calendar. It does not even come close to covering all the history and theology behind the seasons. Plus, depending on what denomination or tradition you look at, those things will likely vary anyway. Think of it more as “Church Calendar 101” for those who are new to this idea and a helpful reminder of the “why” behind the calendar to those who grew up in settings that practiced these seasons.

Though we think it’s helpful to get a grasp of the history and details of the seasons, this book is less about information and more about formation—providing a framework for actually following the seasons and entering the story of Christ through annual traditions and rhythms. From a Bible reading plan to devotionals, reflections, songs and prayers, we want to give individuals, families and churches ideas for how to center our heads and hearts around the one true story of the Bible each year.

## **Bible Reading Plan**

There is no substitute for spending regular time reading and reflecting on God’s Word, so we’re providing a reading plan that follows the high points of the seasons. If you don’t do anything else with this book, we encourage you to at least follow the Bible reading plan. That’s the most important thing you could do to participate in the Church Calendar. After all, the calendar is first and foremost about remembering the story of Scripture.

This specific Bible reading plan lasts one year and includes a reading from the New Testament, the Old Testament and the Psalms each day. Over the span of the year, those who follow the plan will read the New Testament three times, each of the Psalms and half of the Old Testament. (The other half of the Old Testament will be read in the next year’s plan.) There are also make-up days each week in case you get behind or want to dig deeper into a particular passage of Scripture. Each week’s readings are found at the beginning of the weekly sessions (see below), and a checklist of the full Bible reading plan for the year can be found in Appendix A.

## *An Invitation to Pray*

As a part of the Bible reading plan, we’re inviting everyone to spend time praying together each day. We encourage you to pray for your time in the Scriptures, that God would use His Word to center your heart and mind around Him and His story. We also

encourage you to pray through the Scriptures, using one of the texts you're reading that day as a framework for prayer.

### **Weekly Sessions**

From Advent to Pentecost, there are weekly sessions that include a devotional, a set of questions for reflection, a song and a prayer. During Lent, there will also be recommended fasts for each week.

The devotionals focus on either a passage from the Bible reading plan or on the season itself, hitting the major plot points and themes of the story. The reflection questions will help you consider your heart and mind, as well as your actions, in a given season. They can be used on your own or with your family, Home Group or other form of gospel-centered community. The song and prayer are meant to be read and sung throughout the week. We've also created seasonal playlists on Spotify for you to use throughout the year ([vll.ge/tvcspotify](http://vll.ge/tvcspotify)). As you read, sing, pray and sometimes fast week to week, day to day, throughout the day, we believe the Lord will use these rhythms to shape and form you more into the image of the Son.

### **Ideas for Family Discipleship**

For each season, the book includes a section of ideas for family discipleship so that your family can participate in the Church Calendar together. Each season looks a bit different, but there are ideas for stories to read, games and activities, decorations for your home and more. These sections are built around our framework for family discipleship: time, moments and milestones. Most of the ideas will emphasize time and moments, not milestones.

*Family Discipleship Time* – Creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about and living out the gospel.

*Family Discipleship Moments* – Capturing and leveraging opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations.

*Family Discipleship Milestones* – Marking and making occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones of God's work in the life of the family and child.

### **Articles for Digging Deeper**

Though we want this book to be more about formation than information, we still think it's helpful to learn and grow in your understanding of the history and theology behind the Church Calendar and the story it tells. For every season, there will be a few

articles, written by ministers, pastors and friends of The Village Church, to dig deeper into the seasons.

### **Appendices**

In the back of the book, we've included the full Bible reading plan for the year and a list of resources for each season, some put together by The Village Church and some by others. From playlists to books to articles, the appendices will point you to a number of outside resources that will help you practice the seasons in the ways that make the most sense for you and your family.





# ADVENT

*The  
Coming of  
Jesus Christ*



## INTRODUCTION

Of all the seasons, Advent probably feels the most familiar. Many people, regardless of faith, have used an Advent calendar—the ones with little windows to help you count down the days until Christmas. Yet, even though Advent is certainly about anticipating the coming of the Messiah, we don't seem to be very good at it, and what we generally call "Advent" looks pretty different than what the Church historically has called "Advent."

Formed from a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival," Advent is the traditional celebration of the first advent of Jesus in humility and the anxious awaiting of His second advent in glory. The season is a time for remembering and rejoicing, watching and waiting. In American Christianity, we've got that first part down. As soon as Thanksgiving is over (and sometimes even before), we start putting up the tree and listening to our favorite Christmas songs. There's nothing wrong with doing these things, of course, but the whole point of Advent is to spend several weeks—four weeks, to be exact—*preparing* for Christmas instead of *celebrating* Christmas. It's about stepping into the shoes of the Israelites, longing and crying out for the Messiah to come. It's about reflecting on our sin and shortcomings and our need for a Savior. It's about looking around at our broken world and hoping for the second coming of Jesus. And, once we get to Christmas Day, the celebration of Jesus' birth becomes that much more spectacular and meaningful.

As we remember and enter this story, the coming of Jesus Christ, we deconstruct and deny the false stories that we find ourselves caught up in, especially those connected to our culture's concept of Christmas—individualism and consumerism. Instead, we reconstruct and embrace the true story of the gospel in our lives, specifically the focuses and themes of Advent. We recognize the weight of sin personally, corporately and cosmically and why we need Jesus Christ, Immanuel, to dwell among us, restoring and reconciling creation back to the Father by the Spirit. Celebrating the Son of God coming as a gift, not to be served but to serve, we respond out of praise and gratitude, using this season to serve and to give to others.





## HISTORY & TRADITIONS

The Advent season begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues up to Christmas Day, or Christmas Eve in some contexts. There are a variety of ways to celebrate the season, depending on tradition and background. Many people use an Advent calendar, typically made up of 24 “windows” containing Scriptures, stories, poems or gifts, to count down the days until Christmas. As each window is opened and the final day draws closer, our expectation increases. This reminds us of the hopeful yet anxious waiting God’s people experienced as they longed for the promised Savior to come.

Another popular tradition is marking the progression of the season through an Advent wreath made up of five candles. This symbol is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus Christ being the Light of the World (Matt. 4:16; John 1:4-9; 8:12). Each week, a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The last candle, called the Christ Candle, is lit on Christmas Eve to represent Jesus’ first advent. Through this theme of ever-increasing light penetrating the darkness, we see a picture of the gospel.

Regardless of the tradition, Advent is a significant time in the life of the Church. It’s an opportunity for believers to remember God’s promise to send One who would overcome sin and death forever. God promised a Savior, and He kept that promise perfectly.

**Posture:** yearning, expectant, hopeful, celebratory

**Colors:** blue, gold, white

**Symbols:** wreath, candles, trees

**Flowers and Greenery:** red and white poinsettias, evergreens, holly



# WEEK 1

## DECEMBER 2 - 8

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Amos 1-3; Psalm 1-2; Mark 1-3

**Monday:** Amos 4-6; Psalm 3; Mark 1-3

**Tuesday:** Amos 5-6; Psalm 4; Mark 4-6

**Wednesday:** Amos 7-9; Psalm 5:1-4; Mark 4-6

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 1; Psalm 5:5-12; Mark 4-6

**Friday:** Jeremiah 2-4:4; Psalm 6; Mark 7-9

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: ISAIAH 2:2-5

It shall come to pass in the latter days  
that the mountain of the house of the LORD  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be lifted up above the hills;  
and all the nations shall flow to it,  
and many peoples shall come, and say:  
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.”  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore.

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the LORD.



## **DEVOTIONAL**

The brokenness of our world is inescapable. Watching a newscast or quickly scrolling through your social media timeline reveals atrocity upon atrocity. Whether it's acts of terror or nations warring or genocide or injustice or senseless acts of murder, we remain a people bombarded with this reality: Things are not as they should be.

The season of Advent breaks into our broken world and reorients our hearts around a better reality—the present darkness which shrouds creation has been defeated in Jesus Christ and will one day be fully realized. Advent is a turning away from despair and toward hope.

The prophet Isaiah heralded this hope to Israel, and like him we can look ahead in hope when the instruments of war, destruction and death of our day are hammered into plowshares and pruning hooks. The Light of the World shines into the darkness. Let us join with the prophet Isaiah in his exhortation, “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.”

## **REFLECTION**

Think of an event in your life where you waited with a longing expectation. What were you waiting for? How did you feel in the waiting? What was it like when the event finally happened?

What are some evidences of the brokenness of this world that you've seen this week? How does the return of Christ help reframe the way you see them?

Think about someone you know who might be feeling overcome by darkness. What are some ways you can point them to the hope of Christ's advent this week?

## **SONG: “O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL”**

O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, oh Israel



O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, oh Israel  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, oh Israel

O come, desire of nations bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind  
Bid thou our sad divisions cease  
And be Thyself our King of Peace  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, oh Israel  
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, oh Israel

## **PRAYER**

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*-The Book of Common Prayer*



## WEEK 2

DECEMBER 9 - 15

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Jeremiah 4:5-5:13; Psalm 6; Mark 7-9

**Monday:** Jeremiah 5:14-6:30; Psalm 7:1-7; Mark 7-9

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 7:1-29; Psalm 7:8-17; Mark 10-12

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 7:30-9:26; Psalm 8; Mark 10-12

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 10; Psalm 9:1-7; Mark 10-12

**Friday:** Jeremiah 11-12; Psalm 9:8-20; Mark 13-14

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: MARK 13:32-37

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

### DEVOTIONAL

It happens every year—what we expect to be a slower-paced summer whirs by, and before we know it, it’s Labor Day weekend. Autumn comes and goes faster than a withered leaf falling to the ground from a lofty branch. Fireworks give way to football, then pumpkins to pilgrims. Now, it’s all we can do to finish our Christmas shopping and get our yuletide greetings in the mail before the “guaranteed delivery by Christmas” date. And the reality is, if left unchecked, we’ll be right here again this time next year wondering, “Where did the time go?”

The Advent season calls us out of our slumber. It bursts into our passive experience of time and calls us to “stay awake.” Jesus’ words from Mark 13:32-37 are a stunning reminder that Jesus is coming again. Our Master has departed on a journey, but He’s



left us with work to do while He's away. And the work we're called into cannot be put off until later because Jesus' second advent will come at a day and hour that only the Father knows.

It's so easy to get lulled into slumber by the turning of time, buzzing by at what seems to be an ever-increasing pace. But this sleepy apathy toward time's passing is not the life we've been called to live. Advent reminds us that we are a commissioned people, granted a stewardship of the gospel message. We have the privilege of heralding this message day by day, season by season, year by year, eagerly anticipating the return of Christ. Our Master is away, but He's coming again. May we be a people about His work, hastening His return.

## REFLECTION

Think about the past year. What seasons did you experience? Were they slow or fast-paced? What did you learn about God through them? About yourself?

How does the immanence of Christ's return impact how you view what you're doing in the here and now? How does the way you structure your life reflect a belief that Jesus really is coming back?

Jesus calls His disciples to "be on guard" and "stay awake." Is there a conversation with a friend or loved one about the gospel that you've been putting off? What steps could you take to make that conversation happen this week?

## SONG: "COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS"

Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free  
From our fears and sins release us  
Let us find our rest in Thee  
Israel's strength and consolation  
Hope of all the earth Thou art  
Dear desire of every nation  
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver  
Born a child and yet a King



Born to reign in us forever  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring  
By Thine own eternal spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone  
By Thine all sufficient merit  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

## **PRAYER**

O SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN,

Thou wast incarnate, didst suffer, rise, ascend  
for my sake;

Thy departure was not a token of separation  
but a pledge of return;

Thy Word, promises, sacraments, show thy death  
until thou come again.

That day is no horror to me,  
for thy death has redeemed me,  
thy Spirit fills me,  
thy love animates me,  
thy Word governs me.

I have trusted thee and thou hast not betrayed  
my trust;  
waited for thee, and not waited in vain.

Thou wilt come to raise my body from the dust,  
and re-unite it to my soul,  
by a wonderful work of infinite power and love,  
greater than that which bounds the oceans' waters,  
ebbs and flows the tides,  
keeps the stars in their courses,  
and gives life to all creatures.

This corruptible shall put on incorruption,  
this mortal, immortality,  
this natural body, a spiritual body,  
this dishonoured body, a glorious body,  
this weak body, a body of power.

I triumph now in thy promises as I shall do  
in their performance,



for the head cannot live if the members are dead;  
Beyond the grave is resurrection, judgment,  
acquittal, dominion.  
Every event and circumstance of my life will be  
dealt with —  
the sins of my youth, my secret sins,  
the sins of abusing thee, of disobeying thy Word,  
the sins of neglecting ministers' admonitions,  
the sins of violating my conscience —  
all will be judged;  
And after judgment, peace and rest, life and service,  
employment and enjoyment, for thine elect.  
O God, keep me in this faith,  
and ever looking for Christ's return.

—"The Second Coming," from *The Valley of Vision*





## WEEK 3

DECEMBER 16 - 22

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Jeremiah 13; Psalm 10:1-8; Mark 13-14

**Monday:** Jeremiah 14-15; Psalm 10:9-18; Mark 13-14

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 16-18; Psalm 11; Mark 15-16

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 19-20; Psalm 12; Mark 15-16

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 21-22; Psalm 13; Mark 15-16

**Friday:** Jeremiah 23; Psalm 14; 1 Thessalonians 1-3

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.



## DEVOTIONAL

As incomprehensible as an angelic visitation and pronouncement that she would carry the Son of God in her womb were for Mary, that event was just the beginning. The angel left, and the reality of the news began to settle in. The incredible promise spoken by Gabriel faded into the reality of being a young, not-yet-married woman who had to answer to her future husband, her family and all those she encountered about the nature of her pregnancy.

Luke tells us that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, but we aren't told much else about what her pregnancy was like. As with any pregnancy, there were likely difficult days, happy days and all kinds of days in between. Regardless, her pregnancy must have been marked by a sense of expectancy. Not just because she was anticipating the arrival of the Son of God, but because she was...expecting.

We are between the two advents of Christ, and we can relate to the expectancy Mary must have felt. Mary received the good news that she would be carrying in her womb the King who would sit on David's throne. Those who put their faith in Christ, too, have received the good news that a King has come. Now, we wait longingly, through sometimes difficult and trying circumstances, for the return of the Son of God to fully establish His kingdom on earth.

## REFLECTION

Think of a time when you or someone close to you was pregnant. How did a sense of expectancy mark the pregnancy? Did attitudes and expectations change throughout? How does this inform the way you think about expecting Christ's return?

When Mary was approached by Gabriel with the news of her child, she exhibited an incredible openness to God. In what areas might God be calling you to a deeper faith and openness toward His will?

Is there a brother or sister in Christ around you that is struggling to believe that God will fulfill all He has promised? How can you minister to them in light of the hope of Jesus' return?



## **SONG: “LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O YE GATES” FROM HANDEL’S *MESSIAH***

Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors  
And the King of Glory shall come in  
Who is this King of Glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle  
Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And be lift up, ye everlasting doors  
And the King of Glory shall come in  
Who is this King of Glory?  
The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory

## **PRAYER**

Lord, Blessed Trinity, to You alone be the glory this day.  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank You.  
I thank You for the grace and mercy of Your wondrous salvation.  
I have done nothing to deserve such a tremendous gift.  
Even calling salvation a “tremendous gift” does not encompass  
The fullness of its beauty and wonder.

God, You have sent Jesus, Your only beloved Son,  
To die on the cross and rise three days later  
To obtain the salvation that may only be found in Him.  
All who receive Jesus, You have given the right  
To become Your children, O mighty God.  
You have saved me.  
Thank You, Lord.

But how easily I forget this salvation in my current daily life.  
How easily I take it for granted and stop at its face value.  
But Spirit, You have been, and continue to be,  
Faithful in helping me to see more of this wondrous salvation.  
You are saving me.  
Thank You, Lord.

Yet this salvation is also my future guarantee.  
What I experience right now in part, I will experience later in full.



This salvation gives me a living, breathing, active hope  
That is certain as it moves me forward to the life that is to come.  
You will save me.  
Thank You, Lord.

-*Book of Prayers (Vol. 2)*, from The Village Church



## WEEK 4

DECEMBER 23 - 29

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Jeremiah 24-26; Psalm 15; 1 Thessalonians 1-3

**Monday (Christmas Eve):** Jeremiah 27-28; Psalm 16; 1 Thessalonians 1-3

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 29; Psalm 17:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4-5

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 30-31; Psalm 17:6-15; 1 Thessalonians 4-5

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 32; Psalm 18:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4-5

**Friday:** Jeremiah 33; Psalm 18:7-13; 2 Thessalonians 1-3

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: ISAIAH 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone.  
You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.  
For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.  
For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

## DEVOTIONAL

There's a feeling common to most of us; it usually comes on in late afternoon or early evening Christmas Day. After all the presents have been opened and most of the food has been eaten (at least the first round of it), you look around at the remnants of Christmas morning and a sense of sadness begins to creep in. All the buildup over the last month (or half of the year for your favorite craft store)—the decorations, the music, the parties, the shopping—has led to this moment, and now it's over. Christmas melodies fade into post-Christmas melancholy.

It's because there is more. We're conditioned to think that Christmas is an end in and of itself—that the gifts and the lights are the real stuff. And so, when the day has passed, we're left with 365 days to wait until we do it all over again. But here's the truth—Christmas does not signify an end, but a beginning. As Jesus begins His earthly ministry in Mark's Gospel, He proclaims, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." The good news is that Jesus has come to reign as our King and is coming again soon to fully realize His kingship.

## REFLECTION

What was Christmas typically like when you were growing up? What event signaled the end of Christmas for you? How did you feel as the season came to a close?

What are some practical ways you can continue to live in the joy of the Savior's reign, even after the Christmas activities are all finished?

Isaiah reminds us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and of His government and peace there will be no end. Where might God be leading you to be a messenger of His peace this season? What steps can you take this week to speak words of Jesus' peace?



## **SONG: "JOY TO THE WORLD"**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And heav'n and nature sing  
And heav'n and nature sing  
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns  
Let men their songs employ  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders, wonders of His love

## **PRAYER**

Dear Heavenly Father, we sing with great enthusiasm, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King." Yet as we review the true desires of our hearts we would confess that we are more prone to seek the gifts and benefits that Christ can grant than actually receive him deep within our lives. There are times when we are frightened by what might happen if we truly took Jesus seriously and resolved to invite him into all the diverse dimensions of our lives. Lord, have mercy upon us and cleanse us. Forgive the distorted images we hold of Christ which prevent us from living with him with the same trust and obedience as Joseph and Mary. Renew your sustaining Spirit within us that we might truly know and live in your joy through Jesus' redeeming name. Amen!

*—The Services of the Christian Year (Vol. 5) by Robert Webber*



## IDEAS FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Advent is a season of celebrating the truth that God kept His promise to send a Savior to rescue us from sin. That Savior is Jesus! The Son of God, the King of heaven, left His perfect home to be born as a baby on earth. He became fragile and helpless. He was born in a stable among dirty animals. But on that night, everything changed. God's plan to save sinners was coming true! As we celebrate Advent with our families, we get to remember how God made a way, through this baby that was born in Bethlehem, for sinners to be reconciled to God and adopted into His family. And we continue to wait, with eager anticipation, for Jesus to come again.

### SONGS

Jesus Came to Save Sinners  
Away in a Manger  
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
God With Us

### DECORATIONS

To help your family remember the birth narrative, place nativity sets in prominent places in your home. Consider how many of your Christmas decorations point to Jesus and how many don't. What can you include in your decorations that remind you of Jesus' birth? Easy and fun ideas include stars, angels and sheep. Stores like Hobby Lobby typically have lots of cheap, fun decorations for children that you can place in their rooms or bathrooms (like rubber duck nativity sets!). Write Scripture from the Advent stories you read on chalkboards, mirrors or banners in your home.

It's also helpful to consider how you might build anticipation for Christmas Day, moving from darkness to light, through the decorations in your home. Maybe you can add lights to the tree or around the house as Christmas approaches.





## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME**

### **The Birth of Jesus**

The story of Jesus' birth is one that many people know and tell. Even though it's a familiar story, take time to read the account in Luke 2:1-7 of this miraculous moment in history with your family. If you have preschoolers, read the story "He's Here" in *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (p. 176). If you have older children, reading the account directly from the Bible can be a sweet time to grow together as family. Help your kids find the story in their Bibles using the table of contents and the chapter and verse numbers.

After reading the account of Jesus' birth, talk about where Jesus was born. Was He born in a hospital? Were there doctors and nurses there to help take care of Mary and baby Jesus? Was it warm and clean? Was it quiet and calm? Jesus is God. He left heaven to be born a helpless baby. This was part of God's good plan to save sinners! Sing the first verse of "Away in a Manger" together as a family. Then make a list of how you think the stable and manger looked, smelled and felt. Praise God for being generous and humbling Himself to be born as a baby.

### **The Shepherds and Angels Share the Good News of Jesus**

On the night Jesus was born, God began to share the good news of His birth. But He didn't tell the leaders or important people. Instead, He told a group of shepherds whom no one really liked. Read about the shepherds and the angels in Luke 2:8-20 or in "The Light of the Whole World" from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (p. 184). Who did God send to tell the shepherds the good news that Jesus had been born? What did the angels say? What did the shepherds do when they heard the good news?

Spend time reenacting the story of the shepherds and angels together as a family. Use flashlights and sleeping bags to add to the fun. Sing songs together to celebrate the good news that Jesus came to save sinners and wants everyone to know His story.

### **Christmas Eve Service**

Attend one of our Christmas Eve services together as a family. Make sure your child gets a candle and is able to see the screens so they can read along as we sing and read Scripture. After the service, ask your child what they thought about the service and if they have any questions.

### **Jesus Will Come Again**

Jesus came to earth once to rescue us from sin. He was born as a baby and lived a perfect life. He died on the cross for our sin, but He did not stay dead. He rose from the grave! And before He went back to heaven, Jesus promised to return so we could be with God



forever. Read Luke 21:27-28 and “A Dream of Heaven” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (p. 342). When Jesus comes back, will He come as a baby again? Who will bow down and worship Him? Who and what will be defeated? Jesus is coming again!

What do you think it will look like when Jesus returns? The Bible tells us He will come down out of the clouds. Make an art project of what you think the sky might look like. Pray and ask God to help you wait patiently and tell others about Jesus until He returns. Parents, pray for your child’s salvation out loud over them.

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS**

### **Christmas Caroling**

During Advent, you will hopefully either see Christmas carolers or get to go Christmas caroling yourselves. Many of the Christmas carols we sing and hear are about the birth of Jesus. Capture the moment to remind your children that one of the ways we celebrate the birth of Jesus is by sharing the good news with others that Jesus came to save sinners. We can share this good news in many ways, including singing, speaking, writing, art or in how we treat people. Encourage each other to share the good news of Jesus’ birth with another person this week.

### **Hints and Clues**

God gave His people many hints and clues about the birth of Jesus all through the Old Testament. God was helping His people wait for their Savior. At Christmastime, we have lots of opportunities to give hints and clues—about gifts, fun activities, food and more. Capture opportunities to give hints and clues to your family about things you will be doing this Advent season. Help build anticipation and joy. When those hints and clues are fulfilled, remind your family that God gave hints and clues about Jesus. And every hint, clue and promise He made came true!

### **Sky Watching**

During this Advent season, capture moments to watch the sky both during the day and night. At night, look at the stars. Imagine what it might look like with a big, new star in it, like the one God put in the sky the night Jesus was born. Or what it might look like filled with angels singing about how great God is. During the day, watch the clouds. Imagine what it might look like for Jesus to come down from the clouds to take those who love and trust Him to be with God forever. Praise God for using all of creation, like the sky, to remind us of His greatness.



# SUBSTANCE OVER SHADOWS

MATT CHANDLER

It's the Friday after Thanksgiving, and we're already full throttle into the holiday season. The lights are already up, Christmas music is playing, people are talking about gift ideas, and the commercials have started. It's on. And some of us didn't even have the decency to wait for Thanksgiving to be over before we coated every surface in tinsel and fake snow. The "Christmas season" seems to start a little earlier every year.

As a culture, we're drawn to the whole holiday thing, and I'm no exception to that. I'm not full-on Clark Griswold, but we'll decorate our house, put up a tree and hang stockings. The Chandlers love all the trappings of Christmas.

But despite all the decorations and parties, not everyone enjoys the season. People get the "Christmas blues," finding the holidays to be a time when they're particularly vulnerable to depression. And then there's the "Christmas hangover." It's not the one caused by too much eggnog; it's the one that hits after the presents are opened, the stockings are empty, and the meal is over. We find ourselves thinking, "That's it?"

The Christmas blues and the Christmas hangover both happen when unbridled expectations slam into reality. They happen any time we build up an expectation for something that it can't possibly meet. We have plenty of help building these expectations—radio, television, Pinterest and people's perfectly filtered Instagram posts all feed our inflated idea of what the Christmas holiday can deliver. They paint the picture that our loneliness will be turned into joy and that the gift we want so badly will ultimately satisfy.

These expectations can't possibly be met. Sometimes the holidays don't bring families together. Or, they bring families together just to let a grenade go off among them. Sometimes you get everything you want, and still that nagging, empty feeling is there. Sometimes the season is terribly lonely because you have lost a loved one. Unbridled expectations slam into reality.

## **Separating Substance from Shadow**

In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul says, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Paul is saying to the churches in Colossae that feasts and festivals are good, but they're just a shadow of the



greater truth of Christ. They're not the substance; He is. You can't get your arms around a shadow. You can't be comforted by a shadow. It takes the substance to do that.

This doesn't mean that we are not allowed to enjoy the shadow. We don't need to rail against stockings and lights. We just need to recognize that those things are a shadow. By all means, have fun with the shadow, but ultimately, go after the substance.

If we go through this holiday season and aren't made more aware of Jesus, then we have failed our own hearts, we've failed our own families, and ultimately there's nothing left except to be disappointed.

This is why, as a church, we take time each year to illuminate the substance of the Christmas season by observing Advent. Advent gives us the chance to press hard into the fact that God has made promises, God has kept those promises, and Christ has put on flesh and dwelt among us. We want to get our minds, our hearts and our arms around the substance, not at the expense of the shadow, but so that we learn to find our joy in what's casting the shadow in the first place.

### **Change Your Focus**

Set your heart and mind on the substance, not the shadow. By turning your attention onto the Word Made Flesh, you'll be able to handle the weight of this season. By fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, all of a sudden the stress of the holidays lessens because our focus is where it should be.

You won't go into the kind of debt that you normally do because you'll realize everything you're buying is of temporal significance. You won't feel the pressure to buy affection from your kids because you'll feel the weight of imparting to them what's actually glorious.

You'll begin to understand that our longing and our eager anticipation for Christmas morning is what we should feel—but do not feel—for Christ and His return. You'll begin to get drawn into the substance that will never disappoint like the shadow does.

When we focus our hearts on the fulfilled expectation of Christ's first coming and the glorious expectation of His second coming, the "Christmas blues" and the "Christmas hangover" begin to lose their power over us. This holiday season, ask the Holy Spirit to help you learn to keep your eyes fixed on Christ. By all means, put up the tree, play the carols, and eat the big meal. But don't set your hope on those things. Enjoy the shadow, but find satisfaction in the substance.



# FEAR AND TREMBLING AT ADVENT

MASON KING

Scripture tells us that, as shepherds were watching their flock at night, an angel of the Lord came and told them of Christ's birth. The stillness of the desert air and the calm of the darkness was interrupted by an angel of the Lord, fierce and mighty—God's glory shining brightly. Surprised, terrified, in awe—the shepherds stared at the angel who said to them, "Fear not."

You and I typically jump ahead to the next part of the story—that they made their way to see the baby boy. But stay a minute. Study this scene.

Think about that night—the sky opened up and the glory of the Lord shone around these shepherds. Their hearts trembled at the fierce angel who then said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

As if the presence of the one warrior angel was not enough to make the point for these shepherds, a multitude of hosts appeared and the night burned brightly with their praise: "Glory to God in the highest—and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

We see Mary and Joseph not too far away in the stable. Young Mary, trembling and preparing to give birth to the Hope of the ages, without midwife or doctor, let alone drugs to numb the imminent pain. She is held by her betrothed, Joseph, a man who months earlier was trying to arrange a quiet divorce. No doubt, he trembled then. But an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in the darkness and said, "Fear not."

And so the Lord speaks to you and to me, saying, "Be not afraid, it is I." Light has exposed the darkness of our own hearts and has overcome it by the cross. Our hearts indeed tremble now, not with fear at His appearing, but with gratitude because He has come to save us. In Him we have a Rescuer. Without Him we are, at most, thin veneers of who we wish to be. He has come to restore our humanity.

As we approach the day on which we remember His birth, we enter into a starlit night where the still air felt like velvet on the shoulders of shepherds. Stars burned with the brightness of childlike wonder. This night, the Hope of all the ages drew His first



breath. A young mother gazed at her child's face. In her heart and in her hands she held the weight of the boy who had come to set His people free.

Our hearts tremble with love for that we have yet to see—as we long for the day when we see Him face to face.

Come, Lord Jesus.









# EPIPHANY

*The  
Manifestation of  
Jesus Christ*



## INTRODUCTION

If you're not very familiar with the Church Calendar, you've probably never heard of this particular season. It's often overlooked, and aspects of it, for better or worse, tend to get lumped into the traditional celebration of Christmas. But, even though it might seem obscure and confusing on the surface, Epiphany proves an essential part of the gospel—the story of Jesus.

Epiphany, which literally means “to show” or “make known,” is about Jesus Christ being revealed as both the divine Son of God and as Savior to the whole world. There are three specific stories within the Scriptures that mark the season of Epiphany. First, though typically connected to the Christmas narrative, the journey of the Magi reminds us that Christ came not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles, showing God's heart for the nations and the continued fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. The two other events that mark Epiphany are the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and the miracle at the wedding feast in Cana. Both events, in their own way, reveal the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Focused on the coming of Jesus as the Son of God and the hope of the nations, Epiphany marks a time of celebration, rededication and declaration. It is a season for us to affirm the truth that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, who was sent from the Father by the Spirit to reconcile people of all tribes, tongues and nations back to the Father by the Spirit. And, as we affirm the manifestation of Jesus Christ, we are called to renew our faith in Him and to proclaim the good news that Jesus came to save sinners—both Jews and Gentiles. Some even say Epiphany serves as a sort of break between the coming of Christ and the passion of Christ, a season to rest in the promises of God fulfilled.

At the beginning of every year, our culture becomes obsessed with New Year's resolutions and aspirations for the future—if we only looked a certain way or did a certain thing. And as Christians, we often find ourselves caught up in this false story—a story of narcissism, materialism and romanticism—that says we can be better and feel better if we just try harder. But Epiphany offers a counter-story, a different way of starting the new year: By entering the story of Jesus, remembering and rejoicing in the manifestation of Christ as Lord and Savior of the world, we are then compelled to renew our union with Christ and to manifest Christ through the way we live our lives.



## HISTORY & TRADITIONS

Originally, Epiphany served a different purpose in the Church Calendar—it was the celebration of Jesus’ birth. But when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, December 25 was chosen as the official date to remember the birth of Christ, replacing the pagan feast of the birth of the sun. At this point, the season of Epiphany took on a new role: In the East, it became a specific time to celebrate the baptism of Jesus, and in the West, it became a broader time to celebrate the manifestation of Jesus through three major events: 1) the Magi’s visit to Jesus as a child, 2) Jesus’ baptism and 3) the miracle at the marriage feast in Cana.

Closely following the season of Advent and the Christmas holiday, the season of Epiphany begins with the Day or Feast of Epiphany and lasts until the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. While Epiphany is centered around these three big events, the last week focuses on the Transfiguration, an event that dramatically affirms the divinity of Christ as the Son of God.

When it comes to historic practices around Epiphany, the major symbol is usually related to the Magi. This often looks like a crown, three crowns, three gifts, a star and sometimes a globe to show how Christ came for the nations. In some traditions, Christians will mark the lintels of their doorways with an Epiphany prayer or blessing to establish their home as a holy place, where God has manifested His presence.

**Posture:** celebratory, joyful, restful, evangelistic

**Colors:** gold, white, green

**Symbols:** candles, star, three crowns

**Flowers and Greenery:** white poinsettias, evergreens, philodendron



## WEEK 5

DECEMBER 30 - JANUARY 5

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Jeremiah 34-35; Psalm 18:14-22; 2 Thessalonians 1-3

**Monday:** Jeremiah 36; Psalm 18:23-30; 2 Thessalonians 1-3

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 37-38; Psalm 18:31-39; John 1-3

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 39-40; Psalm 18:40-50; John 1-3

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 41-42; Psalm 19:1-5; John 1-3

**Friday:** Jeremiah 43-44; Psalm 19:6-14; John 4-5

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: JOHN 1:9-14

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### DEVOTIONAL

Israel had been longing for the Messiah—for a Savior. And in the opening of the Gospel of John, we are met with quite possibly the greatest depiction of Epiphany in the course of the New Testament: John’s retelling of the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus Christ.

Our God is a missionary God, and as we embark on this season of Epiphany, we are asked to consider how we can renew our commitment to Jesus and announce the “good news” to the world. And what is this good news? That even in the face of man’s rejection of God, God the Father sends God the Son to take up “dwelling” among us. The good news is that God delights to be with His people, going as far as coming down into the brokenness of our world to heal, bring light and welcome us into His family.



## REFLECTION

Why did God the Father send God the Son? What attributes of God does this reveal?

How is your life with the Lord in need of renewed commitment? Where do you need to let the light of God shine and chase away darkness?

What is one way that you could follow in the epiphany of Jesus by living a life that unveils the glory of Christ to the world around you?

## SONG: "COME BEHOLD THE WONDROUS MYSTERY"

Come behold the wondrous mystery  
In the dawning of the King  
He the theme of heaven's praises  
Robed in frail humanity

In our longing, in our darkness  
Now the light of life has come  
Look to Christ, who condescended  
Took on flesh to ransom us

Come behold the wondrous mystery  
He the perfect Son of Man  
In His living, in His suffering  
Never trace nor stain of sin

See the true and better Adam  
Come to save the hell-bound man  
Christ the great and sure fulfillment  
Of the law; in Him we stand

Come behold the wondrous mystery  
Christ the Lord upon the tree  
In the stead of ruined sinners  
Hangs the Lamb in victory

See the price of our redemption  
See the Father's plan unfold



Bringing many sons to glory  
Grace unmeasured, love untold

Come behold the wondrous mystery  
Slain by death the God of life  
But no grave could e'er restrain Him  
Praise the Lord; He is alive!

What a foretaste of deliverance  
How unwavering our hope  
Christ in power resurrected  
As we will be when He comes

## **PRAYER**

Gracious Father, before You sent Your Son, You spoke through the prophet Isaiah and assured Your people, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” And yet, just as Israel forgot this promise, so too do we often forget and have regularly forgotten that You have chosen to draw near to Your people. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to break through the darkness of our sin and the brokenness of the world so that we might be drawn into Your presence.



## WEEK 6

JANUARY 6 - 12

### READING PLAN

**Sunday (Epiphany):** Jeremiah 45-47; Psalm 20; John 4-5

**Monday:** Jeremiah 48; Psalm 21:1-5; John 4-5

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 49:1-22; Psalm 21:6-13; John 6-8

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 49:23-39; Psalm 22:1-5; John 6-8

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 50; Psalm 22:6-13; John 6-8

**Friday:** Jeremiah 51; Psalm 22:14-20; John 9-10

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: ISAIAH 45:21-23

“Declare and present your case;  
let them take counsel together!

Who told this long ago?  
Who declared it of old?

Was it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no other god besides me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none besides me.

“Turn to me and be saved,  
all the ends of the earth!  
For I am God, and there is no other.  
By myself I have sworn;  
from my mouth has gone out in righteousness  
a word that shall not return:  
“To me every knee shall bow,  
every tongue shall swear allegiance.”



## DEVOTIONAL

One of the beautiful things about Scripture is the way that every part of Scripture is seen more clearly in light of the whole of Scripture. So when we read in Psalm 23 that “the LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want,” and then we turn to John 10 and hear Jesus say, “I am the good shepherd,” our ears perk up. When Jesus Christ enters the world, He begins to unveil with greater fullness the mystery of God’s plan for all time. He is the proper fulfillment of all the promises and expectations we find in the Old Testament.

But Christ does not simply fulfill these promises and expectations; He invites us to follow Him in announcing these promises to our hearts, our homes and the world around us. The call to follow in the way of Christ is a call to proclaim and perform that which we have seen in the life of the Son. In Isaiah 45, God announces, “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!” Throughout the ministry of Jesus, particularly in the Gospel of John, Jesus is constantly harassed by the Jewish religious leaders regarding His free offer of the kingdom of God to the whole world. And yet, this aspect of Jesus’ ministry is not novel; it has been God’s plan from the very beginning, as we see in the prophet’s words, to save people from every tribe, tongue and nation.

## REFLECTION

Where do you struggle to follow our Good Shepherd? Where do you find yourself fearful?

How are you involved daily, weekly, monthly and annually in bringing the message of God’s salvation to your neighbors and the nations?

Why does the ministry of Jesus to the Gentiles offend the Jewish religious leaders?

## SONG: “PSALM 23 (SURELY GOODNESS, SURELY MERCY)”

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want  
In green pastures He makes me lie down  
He restores my soul and leads me on for His Name  
For His great Name





Surely goodness surely mercy  
Right beside me all my days  
And I will dwell in Your house forever  
And bless Your Holy Name

You prepare a table right before me  
In the presence of my enemies  
Though the arrow flies and the terror of night  
Is at my door I'll trust you Lord

Surely goodness surely mercy  
Right beside me all my days  
And I will dwell in Your house forever  
And bless Your Holy Name

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I will fear no evil  
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
You are on my side

## **PRAYER**

God, You are the one true God; apart from You there is no salvation. Turn my eyes to see the glory of the Son of God, whose life was a revelation of the character of the Father, and who has invited us to follow in the way of the good shepherd. Lord, direct us to find our rest and joy in You.



## WEEK 7

JANUARY 13 - 19

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Jeremiah 52; Psalm 22:21-31; John 9-10

**Monday:** Genesis 1; Psalm 23; John 9-10

**Tuesday:** Genesis 2-3; Psalm 24:1-3; John 11-12

**Wednesday:** Genesis 4; Psalm 24:4-10; John 11-12

**Thursday:** Genesis 5:1-6:8; Psalm 25:1-9; John 11-12

**Friday:** Genesis 6:9-7:24; Psalm 25:10-22; John 13-15

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: PSALM 24:1-2

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein,  
for he has founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers.

### DEVOTIONAL

Everything belongs to God. He is in charge of everything. And that is a good thing. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, as He is unveiling the glory of God, we see Him enter into the dark and dead places in the world. In John 11, He calls Himself the “resurrection and the life,” and then He performs the resurrection of Lazarus. Yet, we find the One to whom the whole world belongs kneeling and washing the feet of His disciples in John 13. As Isaiah 52-60 points out, this Son of God was a suffering, servant Savior. Everything was under His rule, yet nothing was beneath Him in His ministry. Truly, there is no Lord like the Lord Jesus—the Son of God, who not only comes down from heaven to be near His people but delights in serving them.

As we remember the manifestation of Christ as the Son of God this Epiphany, we are reminded that the God-man came and lived in the most unexpected of ways. Jesus came not to rule over servants but to be a servant. And just as He came not to “be



served but to serve,” as we read in Matthew 20, the people of God live as co-heirs with Christ, as servants of the Father.

## **REFLECTION**

How are you currently following the example of Christ’s service? How could you better serve your family, your church and your community?

If all the earth belongs to the Lord, then why does the Son of God take the form of a servant? Shouldn’t we have served Him?

In the ministry of Jesus, we see Him demonstrate His authority over spiritual forces, death, nature, the law of God and countless other things. Where do you struggle to believe that Christ has complete authority? Where are you trying to be the authority instead of Christ?

## **SONG: “A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD”**

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe  
His craft and pow’r are great and armed with cruel hate  
On earth is not his equal

Did we in our own strength confide our striving would be losing  
Were not the right Man on our side the Man of God’s own choosing  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He  
Lord Sabaoth His name from age to age the same  
And He must win the battle

And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us  
We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us  
The Prince of Darkness grim we tremble not for him  
His rage we can endure for lo his doom is sure  
One little word shall fell him



That word above all earthly pow'rs no thanks to them abideth  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth  
Let goods and kindred go this mortal life also  
The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still  
His kingdom is forever

## **PRAYER**

Lord, You are sovereign over all things. Everything that is, belongs to You. My life is Yours, my possessions are Yours; everything I have ever known, touched, seen or heard of belongs to You. And yet, I often act like an owner. I act like I am in charge. Sometimes I even assume that since I am in charge of everything, people should serve me and I shouldn't bother with serving them. And yet, You, the true owner and Lord of everything that exists, humbled Yourself to the form of a servant. Forgive my pride and selfishness, O God, and lead me to follow in the example of You, our servant Savior.



## WEEK 8

JANUARY 20 - 26

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 8:1-9:17; Psalm 26:1-4; John 13-15

**Monday:** Genesis 9:18-10:32; Psalm 26:5-12; John 13-15

**Tuesday:** Genesis 11; Psalm 27:1-6; John 16-17

**Wednesday:** Genesis 12; Psalm 27:7-14; John 16-17

**Thursday:** Genesis 13; Psalm 28; John 16-17

**Friday:** Genesis 14; Psalm 29:1-4; John 18-19

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: JOHN 17:18

“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

### DEVOTIONAL

The season of Epiphany reminds us that the Son of God has come to save sinners. Sinners from every tribe, tongue and nation—from the whole world. As we have seen in our Scripture reading, our God is a missionary God, and in John we find Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, praying to God the Father. In John 17:18, Jesus says something incredibly profound: “Father, you sent me to make known the glory and salvation of God, and now, I am sending my disciples.” The coming of Christ was Epiphany; it was light and glory crashing into the darkness and unveiling the beauty of God’s salvation. But, as followers of Christ, particularly in this season each year, we remember that we carry the light of this Epiphany with us. Because as the Father sent the Son, so the Son has sent us out into the world, as light in darkness.

### REFLECTION

Do you see yourself as a sent person? In what ways are you living a “sent” life?

Why does God invite us into His mission to bring the light of His salvation to the world?



What's one way that you and your family or community are looking to bring the light of Epiphany to shine on your neighborhood?

**SONG: "O CHURCH ARISE"**

O church, arise and put your armor on  
Hear the call of Christ our captain  
For now the weak can say that they are strong  
In the strength that God has given  
With shield of faith and belt of truth  
We'll stand against the devil's lies  
An army bold whose battle cry is love  
Reaching out to those in darkness

Our call to war to love the captive soul  
But to rage against the captor  
And with the sword that makes the wounded whole  
We will fight with faith and valor  
When faced with trials on every side  
We know the outcome is secure  
And Christ will have the prize for which He died  
An inheritance of nations

Arise shine for your light has come  
Arise shine for the Risen Son  
Lift your eyes, we are His radiant bride  
Arise O church arise

Come see the cross where love and mercy meet  
As the Son of God is stricken  
Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet  
For the Conqueror has risen  
And as the stone is rolled away  
And Christ emerges from the grave  
This victory march continues till the day  
Ev'ry eye and heart shall see Him

So Spirit come put strength in every stride  
Give grace for every hurdle



That we may run with faith to win the prize  
Of a servant good and faithful  
As saints of old still line the way  
Retelling triumphs of His grace  
We hear their calls and hunger for the day  
When with Christ we stand in glory

## **PRAYER**

Father, You sent the Son to bear witness concerning Your glorious salvation. And this Light has shone in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls, around the world throughout history. We praise Your name for the Son of God and the light that the darkness can't quench. Empower us as You sent people to bring the light we have experienced in the Son to bear on the world around us. Give us boldness to confront the darkness, both in our hearts and in our world.



## WEEK 9

JANUARY 27 - FEBRUARY 2

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 15; Psalm 29:5-11; John 18-19

**Monday:** Genesis 16-18; Psalm 30; John 18-19

**Tuesday:** Genesis 19; Psalm 31:1-6; John 20-21

**Wednesday:** Genesis 20-22; Psalm 31:7-15; John 20-21

**Thursday:** Genesis 23; Psalm 31:16-24; John 20-21

**Friday:** Genesis 24; Psalm 32; Jude; 1 John 1-2

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: GENESIS 1:1-5

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### DEVOTIONAL

From the very beginning, we see that God is about bringing order out of chaos, darkness to light. Our God is about the work of clarity, illumination and ultimately love. This gives new meaning to Jesus Christ being “the Light of the World” and “a Light for the Nations.” The Son of God, through whom all things were created and all things are sustained, came from heaven and stepped into our mess to recreate this world.

If this is the story of Epiphany, God’s light and glory on full display, then it should be our story, too. As disciples of Christ, we are called to walk in the light, following in obedience and bringing order out of chaos. It is our role to step into the dark and difficult places. It is our mission to let the light of Christ shine near and far, from the crevices of our hearts to the ends of the earth.





## REFLECTION

What are the implications of Christ being a light, specifically “the Light of the World” and “a Light for the Nations”?

How does this idea of light and glory relate to the season of Epiphany?

What is the relationship between the light and glory of God in the creation of the world and the light and glory of God in the recreation of the world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

In what ways are you shining the light of Christ and bringing order out of chaos in your life? What are some ways you can begin to step more into dark and difficult spaces more often and be a beckon of God’s glory and light?

## SONG: “THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS”

The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
Like sunshine at noonday, His glory shone in;  
The Light of the world is Jesus!

Come to the light, ’tis shining for thee;  
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me;  
Once I was blind, but now I can see:  
The Light of the world is Jesus!

No darkness have we who in Jesus abide;  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
We walk in the light when we follow our Guide!  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
Ye dwellers in darkness with sin-blinded eyes,  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
Go, wash at His bidding, and light will arise;  
The Light of the world is Jesus!

No need of the sunlight in Heaven we’re told;  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
The Lamb is the Light in the city of gold,  
The Light of the world is Jesus!



## PRAYER

You are so good to us—so kind and so true,  
To write Your story over and over,  
That we, in our stumbling, might come to know You.

We see Your abundance, Your power, Your might,  
In the way clouds of gas burst into light;  
O God, they tell of Your glory, Your truth and Your love,  
The earth is all Yours and the fullness thereof.

From the colors, the shades—Your endless decree  
Is spoken and whispered past the edge of the sea;  
On the tips of our fingers are lines so unique,  
How great is this story You continually speak.

Atoms and molecules all bound in their place—perfect, precise—  
All displaying Your grace,  
In the way a small seed sprouts from dry ground,  
After months of cold air and no life to be found.

But then comes the beauty, the glory, the light,  
Up from brown soil comes a hint of green life.  
You redeem, You expand, You make dead things alive;  
O God, You're so good in all that You write.

For the work of Your hands is put up on display,

And You gently remind us at the start of each day,  
That this story is Yours, and we're called to take part,  
With each breath and each pulse and each beat of the heart.

So God, in Your kindness—give us eyes like a child,  
That we, in our blindness might be reconciled  
To the wonder and glory that is hidden in You;  
O God, You're so good—so kind and so true.

—*Book of Prayers (Vol. 3)*, from The Village Church



## WEEK 10

FEBRUARY 3 - 9

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 25; Psalm 33:1-6; Jude; 1 John 1-2

**Monday:** Genesis 26; Psalm 33:7-13; Jude; 1 John 1-2

**Tuesday:** Genesis 27; Psalm 33:14-22; 1 John 3-5

**Wednesday:** Genesis 28; Psalm 34:1-5; 1 John 3-5

**Thursday:** Genesis 29; Psalm 34:6-13; 1 John 3-5

**Friday:** Genesis 30; Psalm 34:14-22; Hebrews 1-3

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: 1 JOHN 1:5-10

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

### DEVOTIONAL

When Christ brings the light of God into the world, it doesn't just impact the darkness in our world, but the darkness in our hearts. Often, we find it easier to identify, name and attempt to deal with the darkness and sin "out there" in the world than we do dealing with the sin "which clings so closely" to our hearts. It's easy to look out and see all that is wrong with our culture but to ignore what is wrong with us and how we might be contributing to the evil and brokenness that we find all around us.

Yet the Epiphany of Christ—the reality that Jesus was indeed the Son of God—is not just good news for the brokenness out in the world but the brokenness in our hearts: lust, fear, anxiety, bitterness, pride and anger. In 1 John, we come to see that to live in



fellowship with God means that our lives will need to be purified and drawn out of the darkness. This results in fellowship with God and fellowship with the family of God. Praise God that He is merciful! What His light exposes is not counted against those in Christ Jesus.

## **REFLECTION**

What darkness “out there” do you tend to focus on rather than darkness in your own heart? What are the areas of your life where darkness has crept in? Confess these to the Lord; repent and ask Him to shine light on those parts of your heart.

Why do we often believe living in the darkness will be better than fellowship in the light of Christ? What draws you toward darkness?

How do you remain faithful in the light? What are the habits, communities and practices that help you remain in the light?

## **SONG: “SOFTLY AND TENDERLY”**

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling  
Calling for you and for me  
See on the portals He’s waiting and watching  
Watching for you and for me

Come home, come home  
Ye who are weary come home  
Earnestly tenderly Jesus is calling  
Calling O children come home

Why should we tarry when Jesus is waiting  
Waiting for you and for me  
O for the wonderful love and the mercy  
Mercy for you and for me



## **PRAYER**

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

*—The Book of Common Prayer*



## WEEK II

FEBRUARY 10 - 16

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 31; Psalm 35:1-5; Hebrews 1-3

**Monday:** Genesis 32; Psalm 35:6-14; Hebrews 1-3

**Tuesday:** Genesis 33; Psalm 35:15-20; Hebrews 4-6

**Wednesday:** Genesis 34; Psalm 35:21-28; Hebrews 4-6

**Thursday:** Genesis 35; Psalm 36; Hebrews 4-6

**Friday:** Genesis 36-37; Psalm 37:1-5; Hebrews 7-9

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: HEBREWS 1:1-4

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

### DEVOTIONAL

This passage in Hebrews once again calls our attention to the glorious majesty of the Son of God. The Old Testament poets and prophets can barely contain their longing for this light from God, and the New Testament authors can barely contain their praise that the Son of God has broken through the darkness of the world. Here in Hebrews, we hear that Jesus Christ, whom all the fathers and prophets looked forward to, has now appeared, and He is “the radiance of the glory of God...the exact imprint of his nature...upholding the universe by the word of his power.” Radiance. Splendor. The shining forth of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.



This is the spirit of Epiphany: a light has shone in the darkness, and by faith we are united to its source, Jesus Christ. The invitation is for us to dance in the radiance of God's glory in Christ as the Son of the most high God.

## **REFLECTION**

What have you learned during this season of Epiphany so far? Be specific.

How has considering the unveiling of the light of Christ impacted your worship, devotion and mission?

What is one core truth from this season that you are bringing with you? What have you rejoiced in that you might reflect on in the coming weeks?

## **SONG: "DOXOLOGY"**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him, all creatures here below  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost

## **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, I am blind, be thou my light  
Ignorant, be thou my wisdom,  
Self-willed, be thou my mind.

Open my ear to grasp quickly thy Spirit's voice,  
And delightfully run after his beckoning hand;  
Melt my conscience that no hardness remain,  
Make it alive to evil's slightest touch;  
When Satan approaches may I flee to thy wounds,  
And there cease to tremble at all alarms.

Be my good shepherd to lead me into  
The green pastures of thy Word,  
And cause me to lie down beside the rivers of its comforts.



Fill me with peace, that no disquieting worldly gales  
May ruffle the calm surface of my soul.

Thy cross was upraised to be my refuge,  
Thy blood streamed forth to wash me clean,  
Thy death occurred to give me a surety,  
Thy name is my property to save me,  
By thee all heaven is poured into my heart,  
But it is too narrow to comprehend thy love.

I was a stranger, an outcast, a slave, a rebel,  
But thy cross has brought me near,  
Has softened my heart,  
Has made me thy Father's child,  
Has admitted me to thy family,  
Has made me joint-heir with thyself.

O that I may love thee as thou lovest me,  
That I may walk worthy of thee, my Lord,  
That I may reflect the image of heaven's first-born.

May I always see thy beauty with the clear eye of faith,  
And feel the power of thy Spirit in my heart,  
For unless he move mightily in me  
No inward fire will be kindled.

—"Need of Jesus," from *The Valley of Vision*





## WEEK 12

FEBRUARY 17 - 23

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 38; Psalm 37:6-13; Hebrews 7-9

**Monday:** Genesis 39; Psalm 37:14-19; Hebrews 7-9

**Tuesday:** Genesis 40; Psalm 37:20-28; Hebrews 10-11

**Wednesday:** Genesis 41; Psalm 37:29-40; Hebrews 10-11

**Thursday:** Genesis 42; Psalm 38:1-4; Hebrews 10-11

**Friday:** Genesis 43; Psalm 38:5-12; Hebrews 12-13

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: JOHN 2:1-10

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

### DEVOTIONAL

Odds are that most of us haven't put much thought into Jesus' first miracle, what John calls a “sign,” where the Son of God shows up at a wedding and turns water into wine. Read in a vacuum, this miracle can often feel obscure, random and irrelevant to the Christian life, unless you're having a conversation about Christianity and alcohol. But this story means much more than that and plays a pivotal part in the gospel narrative.



An essential story within the bigger story of Epiphany, this miracle speaks to the divinity and manifestation of Christ, revealing Him as not a mere man or prophet but as the Son of God. It also speaks to what He came to do, that He would turn water or old wine into new wine. Christ would be about change, transformation, turning the ordinary into the extraordinary. In the spirit of Epiphany, the miracle at Cana in Galilee shows us that our glorious God came to us, to our time and space, to be with us and to meet our needs. It ultimately points to what Christ would eventually do for us on the cross, spilling His blood and establishing a new covenant, when He would write His law upon our hearts.

## REFLECTION

In what ways do you see the spirit of Epiphany, the manifestation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the hope of nations, come alive in the story of Jesus turning water to wine?

Why is the symbol of wine significant in this passage? What does it communicate about the glory, love and redemption of our Lord?

Consider the ways that God has turned old wine into new wine in your life. What places in your heart and life are still in need of transformation?

## SONG: "CHRIST, WHOSE GLORY FILLS THE SKIES"

Christ, Whose glory fills the skies,  
Christ, the true, the only Light,  
Sun of Righteousness, arise,  
Triumph o'er the shades of night;  
Dayspring from on high be near;  
Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn  
Unaccompanied by Thee;  
Joyless is the day's return  
Till Thy mercy's beams I see;  
Till they inward light impart,  
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.



Visit then this soul of mine,  
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;  
Fill me, Radiancy divine,  
Scatter all my unbelief;  
More and more Thyself display,  
Shining to the perfect day.

## **PRAYER**

What is it that the angels see  
That they should cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy”?  
They see You arrayed in splendor and majesty,  
They recognize You as the Lord God Almighty.  
Matchless are You in Your glory and worth;  
Perfect in unity, faultless in action  
You are He who was and is and is to come!  
Stirred unto exaltation.

*—Book of Prayers (Vol. 1), from The Village Church*



## WEEK 13

FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 2

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 44; Psalm 38:13-16; Hebrews 12-13

**Monday:** Genesis 45; Psalm 38:17-22; Hebrews 12-13

**Tuesday:** Genesis 46; Psalm 39; Matthew 1-3

**Wednesday:** Genesis 47; Psalm 40:1-7; Matthew 1-3

**Thursday:** Genesis 48; Psalm 40:8-17; Matthew 1-3

**Friday:** Genesis 49:1-27; Matthew 4-6

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: MATTHEW 2:1-2

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

### DEVOTIONAL

One of the central stories of Epiphany is that of the three wise men or magi. This story tends to be associated with Christmas and the birth of Jesus, but it's less about the coming of Christ and more about the manifestation and glory of Christ. The visiting of the magi is all about Jesus revealing Himself as the Son of God and, even more, as the hope of the nations. In the book of Matthew, this popular narrative marks the first moment where we learn that the gospel is not just good news for the Jews but also good news for the Gentiles. As prophesied in the Old Testament, specifically Isaiah 60, the magi bring distinct gifts from their different nations as an offering to King Jesus. It's a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic vision of people groups and individuals bringing the best parts of their cultures and casting their crowns upon the throne of Jesus. It confirms the fulfillment of God's great plan of redemption to reconcile people of all tribes, tongues and nations back to Himself through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout His ministry and the Gospel of Matthew, Christ tells us what He is doing is much bigger than when we could ever imagine. Over and over again, He makes clear



that His life and mission is not centered just around the Jew but also the Gentle. As He much as He offers grace and forgiveness to us, He reminds us that the story of Jesus is ultimately not about us; it's not merely personal but it's global. It's about His glory and the glory of the nations.

## **REFLECTION**

How does seeing the three wise men or magi as being a part of Epiphany and not Advent or Christmas change your understanding of the story?

In what ways do you minimize the gospel? Do you have too small of a view of God's grace and redemption? Do you make it too personal and not global?

Does your heart reflect God's heart for the nations? How does your life back that up? Where can you grow?

## **SONG: "WE THREE KINGS"**

We three kings of Orient are  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain  
Following yonder star

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy Perfect Light

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain  
Gold I bring to crown Him again  
King forever, ceasing never  
Over us all to rein

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light



Frankincense to offer have I  
Incense owns a Deity nigh  
Pray'r and praising, all men raising  
Worship Him, God most high

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
Breathes of life of gathering gloom  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and Sacrifice  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
Earth to heav'n replies

O Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to Thy perfect light.

## **PRAYER**

Oh God above all  
May we approach the throne of grace  
In the name of the Father  
Through the life and ministry of Jesus  
And by the grace and presence of Your Spirit



Purify our hearts  
Captivate our minds  
Awaken our souls  
To the riches of Your love and grace

Make us, mold us, shape us  
Enable us to do the will of the Father  
In the power of Your Holy Name

You are the faithful God unchanging in all Your ways  
You establish our boundaries and Your purposes are true  
Be praised among all the nations

*—Book of Prayers (Vol. 1), from The Village Church*



## IDEAS FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Epiphany is a beautiful season of celebrating the truth that God the Son, Jesus, came and lived among us! He walked this earth. He breathed our air. He lived among the people He created. And in everything He did, He never sinned! Everything He did, He did to rescue us from sin and death so that we could have a relationship with God the Father. Along the way, Jesus taught people about who God was, showed us how to interact with sinners and performed many miracles to prove He really was God's Son.

### SONGS

Jesus Came to Save Sinners  
Jesus Is the Light  
To All Who Did Receive Him  
Trinity

### DECORATIONS

The goal of Epiphany is to remember the ways Jesus showed us He was God the Son while here on earth. Make a banner with the words "Jesus is God!" to hang in your home. Hang artwork your family creates based on the miracles Jesus performed (see "The Miracles of Jesus" activity below). Write Scripture that Jesus spoke when teaching on a chalkboard or mirror.

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

#### **The Miracles of Jesus**

While on earth, Jesus performed many miracles that helped hurting and needy people. These miracles showed the people that Jesus was not just a good man or teacher, but the Son of God. Take time to read the accounts of these miracles with your family. If you have preschoolers, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* is a great resource to read together, specifically, "A Little Girl and a Poor Frail Lady" (p. 214), "The Captain of the Storm" (p. 236) and "Filled Full!" (p. 244). If you have older children, reading these accounts directly from the Bible can be a sweet time to grow together as family. Help your kids





find the stories in their Bible using the table of contents and the chapter and verse numbers. Some miracle narratives we suggest are: “Jesus Heals Many” in Matthew 8:14-17, “Jesus Feeds the 5,000” in Mark 6:30-44, “Jesus Calms a Storm” in Luke 8:22-25 and “Jesus Raises Lazarus” in John 11:38-44.

After reading the accounts of Jesus’ miracles, talk about the power and authority Jesus showed when He performed these miracles. Can we make food multiply? Can we stop the rain? Can we make dead people come back to life? No! Only God can do those things! When Jesus performed miracles, He was helping the people understand that He is God. Many people believed and followed Jesus. Create pieces of art based on the miracle narratives that you read to display during the Epiphany season.

### **Jesus, the Teacher**

While on earth, Jesus also spent time teaching the people about God. Jesus wanted everyone to know who God was and what He was like. Jesus traveled all over to teach about God. Many people had questions about God. Read about the Great Commandment in Mark 12:28-34, when someone asked Jesus what commandment of God’s was most important. How did Jesus respond? Why is it so important to love God most? This is a great opportunity to think of God’s attributes that we teach in our Elementary ministry. God is good—He is what is best! He deserves all of our love and trust.

What did Jesus say was the second most important commandment? Why should we love others? How did Jesus show His love for us? Spend time praying together as a family. Confess where it is hard to love God most and to love others like yourself. Thank God for showing us His love by sending Jesus to die to take the punishment for our sins. Parents, pray for your child’s salvation out loud over them.

### **Jesus Shows Love to Sinners**

While on earth, Jesus did not spend all of His time with people who loved and followed Him. Jesus spent lots of time with sinners, people whom everyone else hated. Read the account of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 and “The Man Who Didn’t Have Any Friends (None)” in *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (p. 264). The people did not like Zacchaeus because he took money from them. In fact, they hated him. But Jesus showed Zacchaeus kindness, and Zacchaeus turned from his sin to follow Jesus. Zacchaeus repaid the money he had stolen and changed how he treated people. Reenact the story of Zacchaeus as a family.

We can show love to others like Jesus. We can walk as Jesus did. Whom do you know who needs a friend? Maybe a new kid at school; a smaller, weaker or quiet kid who spends their time alone; a kid who is going through something hard and might be acting out



because they are hurt, angry or scared. How can you show kindness to that person this week? How can you pray for them right now? Talk about these things together as a family. Pray together. Make a plan. Then revisit your plans and hold one another accountable next week and the week after.

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS**

### **Family Meal – Multiplying Food**

During meal time, if anyone ask for seconds, capture the moment to remember the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000. Jesus fed people several times in the Bible and consistently met their physical needs. Instead of giving more food, encourage the person to just make more food like Jesus made enough food for 5,000 people from five loaves of bread and two fish. Of course, we can't just make food multiply like Jesus! Jesus is God and has the authority to do whatever He pleases. Thank God for His power and generosity toward us.

### **Stormy Weather Commands**

If there is stormy weather during the Epiphany season, capture the moment to remember Jesus' authority over creation. Stand at the window or on your porch and encourage your child to command the wind or rain to stop. Can we yell loud enough or jump up and down or say the right thing to make the weather change? No! But Jesus can! Jesus is God, and He showed His power and authority over the weather when He calmed the storm. Praise God for being powerful and our protector.

### **Love Your Neighbor**

During Epiphany, if you see someone in need, stop to help and pray for them. This could be a homeless person begging on the street, someone with a flat tire in the parking lot or a neighbor who is unloading groceries. Capturing a moment to love your neighbor will require you to be mindful of the needs of people around you and willing to sacrifice your time to help—just like Jesus. Make sure you ask the person you offer help to if you can pray for them. Parents, you will probably need to model loving your neighbor before asking your children to participate.



# AN UNFADING BRIGHTNESS

KYLE WORLEY

Have you ever been struck by a light so bright that you simply couldn't open your eyes? On the rare occasion I get out to see a movie in the middle of a day, I walk out of the dark theatre into that bright Texas sun and can hardly lift my eyelids. The sun appears to be brighter than anything I have encountered before. But in reality, the brightness of the sun hasn't changed—it's simply that I have been sitting in darkness for long enough that darkness has become normal to me.

When we embark upon the story of the New Testament, we must remember that God's people had been waiting in silence for 400 years. They had adjusted to the darkness for long enough that it had become normal. So when the Son of God enters the story, His light overwhelms the darkness. We read in John 1:4-5 regarding Christ, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Epiphany is the season wherein the Church remembers and retells this story. The light of God in Jesus Christ cracks through the darkness of a broken world, the darkness of silent years and the darkness of unfulfilled longings. And while the Incarnation event is itself the first manifestation of this light, Jesus' entire public ministry is a demonstration of the light of God in a dark world.

Jesus steps into the darkest places of the world and demonstrates that He is the proper Lord of all things. He enters the darkness of disease and brings healing. He enters the darkness of natural disaster and chaos and brings peace. He enters the darkness of shame and brings forgiveness.

In the very beginning, God showed Himself to be the only Lord of light and darkness (Gen. 1:3-4). Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord says, "I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things" (Isa. 45:7). He speaks to Job, asking the suffering and confused man, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this" (Job 38:16-18). Job hadn't, but God has.



In the mind and history of Israel, there was no question of who had the keys to control light and darkness: It was Yahweh. So when Christ shows up, He is revealed as the Son of God by the ways light overcomes darkness around Him. The wise men find Jesus through the light of a star (Matt. 2:10-12), and the shepherds hear the good news of Christ from a host of angels breaking through the darkness (Luke 2:8-21).

If you're thinking, "Wow, I wish I could see this glorious light," know that you have seen its glimmer and you will see its fullness. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." These glimmers of God's light in Jesus Christ are what break through the darkness of sin in our hearts to rescue us. When God saves us, the spirit of darkness that covered our hearts and minds begins to roll back as the light of God in Jesus works within us.

And yet, we long for a deeper vision. We long to be caught up in the radiance of the light of God in Jesus. And we will. When we read of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21-22, we find out that when God makes His dwelling place with man on earth, the heavenly city "has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there" (Rev. 21:23-25).

So, in this season of Epiphany, we remember and retell the story of the light of God breaking into the world through Jesus Christ. We celebrate the defeat of darkness and proclaim a day when the very presence of that which is dark will be overcome by the glorious light of God.

We look back and we look forward. For the light of God is in our midst, and yet, even the brightest moments are but glimmers of the coming glory. The light of God in our world may seem to fade, when darkness rears its head in death, disease and sin, but a day of "unfading brightness" is coming.



# EPIPHANY, THE MAGI AND ME

TRAVIS CUNNINGHAM

We recently celebrated the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther sparking the Protestant Reformation with the nailing of his 95 theses to the Wittenberg door. There is much to celebrate and consider in this anniversary, yet as I reflect on where my own story of salvation fits in the scope of Church history, I oftentimes falsely source it in the Reformation.

Instead, it would be more accurate to continue drawing the line in history right through the Reformation and place it at the first Epiphany. God drew me unto Himself as a 21st-century, white male who dwells in the Southern United States because of the first Epiphany. Epiphany, which simply means the manifestation of Jesus Christ, marks the moment when the Triune God of the universe revealed Himself and His redemptive plan through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## **From Advent to Epiphany**

In the Church Calendar, Advent is celebrated for four weeks, leading up to Christmas. During this season, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah. After the Advent season, God's people begin to transition their hearts and minds to the manifestation of Christ through the Epiphany season. What is particularly stunning about Epiphany is that Christ is not only revealing Himself as the Son of God, but He is also extending His redemptive plan to those who are originally outside of God's covenant.

In the Old Testament, Israel is chosen to be the people of God. God has covenanted with this people to bless them and, through them, to bless the nations. In Isaiah's prophetic words, we see that the glory and beauty of the Lord will be revealed through God's people to all nations (Isa. 60:1-9). The psalmist also writes of the future Messiah and the deliverance that He will bring to all nations (Ps. 72). And in Matthew's Gospel, we read of the fulfillment of these prophecies in Jesus Christ.

The unfolding of the mystery of the gospel begins with the first Epiphany. The incarnate Christ is now manifesting Himself as the Son of God and His glory as the Savior not only of Israel but also of the world. We see a picture of Epiphany in the coming of the Magi, a story we often associate with the coming of Christ but that actually has more to do with the manifestation of Christ (Matt. 2:1-12).



### **The Magi and the Nations**

The Magi, or wise men, shared a significant commonality with most who are reading this—they were Gentiles. These men were not a part of the people of God. They were from the East, likely from Persia or Babylon. The Magi were people who pursued magic, dream interpretation, astrology and philosophy, among other things. Their ancestors were polytheistic and persecuted the Israelites. It is safe to say these men were formed in environments opposed to a Jewish concept of God.

Yet, because these were educated men who knew and studied sacred writings, the Magi likely encountered much of the Old Testament, specifically Numbers 24:17. So when they noticed a star unlike any other in the night sky, they would have known what it meant. This led them on a journey to Bethlehem, to see the Messiah, King Jesus.

Upon their arrival, and after a run-in with King Herod, the Magi were filled with joy as they entered the home of Jesus. Laying their eyes upon Him, they fell down, worshiped Jesus and offered up the best of their gifts to Him. They spent some time in the presence of the manifestation of God before returning back home, carrying with them the truth about Jesus: that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that He came to save not just Israel but the nations.

### **Their Story Is My Story**

The story of the Magi is our story. God has used His supernatural means to draw us unto Himself. We are His enemies, opposed to Him and happy in our rebellion. We pursue other means for fulfillment; however, God continues to woo us. On one glorious day, when we were exhausted and wearied in our sin, God led us to gaze upon Jesus just as the Magi did. We see the glory of God manifested through Jesus Christ in the internal work of the Holy Spirit. We see our utter sinfulness and God's abounding grace offered in the Messiah. We are filled with joy as this grace sinks into our hearts. We fall down on our knees and confess our need of this Messiah. We worship Him and offer up our lives as our greatest offering to Him. Then we continue on in our lives, carrying the truth about the Messiah.

For the gospel to extend from the first Epiphany in a little house in Bethlehem to me is remarkable, and the season of Epiphany reminds me of this reality year in and year out. As we consider the glory of God manifested in Jesus Christ, our faith is renewed and we are filled with joy. We are compelled to carry the truth about the Messiah to every corner of the globe, as God's redemptive plan now includes all people groups.



So as I think back to the salvation God has granted me, I can't help but be filled again with the joy of the Lord. Jesus Christ has manifested Himself to His people in such a way that 2,000 years later, I can know and love Him. Praise God for the Epiphany season, yet another reminder of God's global work of redemption.







# TEENT

*The Temptation  
and Death  
of Jesus Christ*



## INTRODUCTION

The word “Lent” can invoke a number of thoughts, questions and feelings, depending on your background with the Church. If you grew up in an evangelical church, you probably think of it as some strange Catholic tradition, where folks put ashes on their foreheads and give up different kinds of foods every year. If you grew up in a liturgical tradition, you may have had a good experience or, perhaps, you file it away in the junk drawer of legalism given some bad experiences. Whatever the case, Lent doesn’t have to be seen as either rote or mystifying. Like the rest of the seasons, it can be seen rightly and faithfully when understood through the lens of Jesus—the one true story of the Bible.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which kicks off 40 days of prayer and fasting—representing Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week, during which we remember Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), the Last Supper with His disciples (Maundy Thursday) and His death on the cross (Good Friday). The season officially ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.

A season to prepare for the joy and hope of Easter, Lent reminds us that the resurrection only occurred after the crucifixion. It is a time for the Church to symbolically follow Christ into the wilderness. It is a time for fasting and self-denial, though not for denial itself. It is a period to empty ourselves of lesser things so that we might be filled with the greater things of the gospel.

In a culture inundated by individualism and hedonism, with rhythms and practices that turn our desires toward the things we think we need, Lent turns our desires toward Jesus, the only thing we truly need, helping us trade lesser loves for His greater love. When we enter into the story of Jesus, symbolically walking with Him through the desert and to the cross, we move from self-gratification to self-denial. As we embrace the pain and sorrow of Jesus, we turn away from our sin and toward the Savior.



## HISTORY & TRADITIONS

Originally a preparation period for those desiring to be baptized, Lent lasts 46 days, including Sundays, between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. The 40 days (excluding Sundays) have obvious biblical parallels in the flood narrative (Gen. 6-8), the giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai (Exod. 24:12-18) and Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-12). But the most relevant parallel is the account of Jesus' fasting and temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:9-12; Luke 4:1-13).

Lent starts with Ash Wednesday, a day to remember our mortality and the idea that we are but dust and to dust we shall return. In many churches, individuals celebrate Ash Wednesday by placing ash on their foreheads in the shape of a cross, representing entrance into a time of denial, repentance and humility.

Unlike the Advent wreath, there is no universal symbol for the season, but many choose to use candles to create a Lent cross. This cross is typically formed by seven small tealights. Each evening, all seven candles are lit, and one is extinguished for each week of Lent that passes. During the Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday in week seven, no lights are lit as participants reflect upon the darkness of Gethsemane, Golgotha and the grave.

Whereas Advent is a season of ever-increasing light anticipating the incarnation of Christ, Lent is a season of ever-decreasing light approaching His crucifixion. Light is gradually extinguished to symbolize the journey through the wilderness and toward the cross and tomb.

**Posture:** sorrowful, contemplative, repentant, celebratory (Palm Sunday only)

**Colors:** purple, black, red

**Symbols:** ash, sackcloth, water, candles, palm branches, thorns, bread and wine, nails, cross

**Flowers and Greenery:** none, desert vegetation, palms (Palm Sunday only)



## WEEK 14

MARCH 3 - 9

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Genesis 49:28-50:26; Psalm 41:6-13; Matthew 4-6

**Monday:** Song of Solomon 1-2; Psalm 42; Matthew 4-6

**Tuesday:** Song of Solomon 3:1-5:9; Psalm 43; Matthew 7-9

**Wednesday (Ash Wednesday):** Song of Solomon 5:10-8:14; Psalm 44:1-6; Matthew 7-9

**Thursday:** Lamentations 1; Psalm 44:7-16; Matthew 7-9

**Friday:** Lamentations 2; Psalm 44:17-26; Matthew 10-12

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: FOOD

Consider fasting from lunch this week and spending that hour in prayer, reading the Word or praising the Lord through music. Or choose a specific type of food—candy, soda, meat, etc.—to fast from for the week. Or choose one day to fast from dawn until dusk, again spending the time you'd usually be eating to sit in God's presence.

### PASSAGE: GENESIS 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.



## DEVOTIONAL

In this first week of the Lent season, we enter into the recognition that things are not the way they should be. Our day-to-day experience is permeated by the agonies of a Genesis 3 world. Every day we can hear the subtle whisper of, “Did God actually say?” and it haunts us. We are drawn to false narratives and away from the true story of God’s redemption in Christ. We find ourselves pursuing lesser things, turning our gaze away from the beauty of God and toward the lesser glory of the created order and the desires of our sinful hearts. This has been the story of God’s people since the Fall. So in Lent, as a preparation for seeing the glory of the risen Lord Jesus as a promise of our redemption, we reflect on our fallen state and our ongoing need for a Savior.

This compels us to remember the two sides of the gospel. The first side is to understand that we are worse than we think we are. We have fallen short of God’s glory, and we all deserve the wages of sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). We are frail and subject to sin and suffering. We are dust, and to dust we shall return (Gen. 3:19). And while Lent helps us to focus on this reality, we should also remember the other side of the gospel. This side declares that even though we are dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ and seated us in the heavenly places with Him (Eph. 2:4-6). Christ walked our dust, overcame the temptations we could not and fulfilled all righteousness. And yet, He bore the wrath for sin that we deserved.

During the season of Lent, through fasting and denying self, we identify with Christ and recognize that He alone has secured our redemption. We acknowledge that we still live in a fallen world, awaiting our final redemption from all sin and suffering.

## REFLECTION

What do you think of when you hear the word “Lent”? What has been your experience with Lent in the past? How does this influence your thoughts and feelings toward observing this season?

How might the practice of Lent help you personally in your walk with Christ? If you’re hesitant to observe this season, ask God to reveal what is stopping you.

What is one false story that you often find yourself living in (pursuit of success, perfect family, etc.)? How might the practice of Lent help you remember the true story of the gospel?



### **SONG: "COME YE SINNERS, POOR AND NEEDY"**

Come ye sinners poor and needy  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore  
Jesus ready stands to save you  
Full of pity, love and power

I will arise and go to Jesus  
He will embrace me in His arms  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
Oh there are ten thousand charms

Come ye thirsty come and welcome  
God's free bounty glorify  
True belief and true repentance  
Every grace that brings you nigh

Come ye weary heavy-laden  
Lost and ruined by the fall  
If you tarry 'til you're better  
You will never come at all

I will arise and go to Jesus  
He will embrace me in His arms  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
Oh there are ten thousand charms

### **PRAYER:**

Father, forgive us.  
We endlessly chase the things of this world.  
We continue to buy into false promises time and time again,  
Believing they will satisfy our deepest longings,  
Only to find that they continue to leave us empty.  
So we chase after another.  
O God, help us.  
Have mercy on us, according to Your steadfast love.



Help us to keep our eyes up, fixed on You,  
And as we behold You in all of Your beauty,  
Continue to mold us into the image of the Son,  
From one degree of glory to the next.  
Father, help our hearts to believe You are our greatest treasure.  
Lord, we believe.  
Help our unbelief!

-*Book of Prayers (Vol. 2)*, from The Village Church



## WEEK 15

MARCH 10 - 16

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Lamentations 3:1-39; Psalm 45:1-7; Matthew 10-12

**Monday:** Lamentations 3:40-66; Psalm 45:8-17; Matthew 10-12

**Tuesday:** Lamentations 4; Psalm 46:1-4; Matthew 13-15

**Wednesday:** Lamentations 5; Psalm 46:5-11; Matthew 13-15

**Thursday:** Ezekiel 1:1-3:15; Psalm 47; Matthew 13-15

**Friday:** Ezekiel 3:16-5:17; Psalm 48:1-5; Matthew 16-18

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: TELEVISION AND MOVIES

This week, think about unplugging your televisions or devices and spending that time soaking in the Lord's presence. If your family typically watches a show or movie together, consider exchanging that hour or two each day to open God's Word, pray and discuss the reality of sin in our hearts and in our world.

### PASSAGE: PSALM 38:15-22

But for you, O LORD, do I wait;  
it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.  
For I said, "Only let them not rejoice over me,  
who boast against me when my foot slips!"

For I am ready to fall,  
and my pain is ever before me.  
I confess my iniquity;  
I am sorry for my sin.  
But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty,  
and many are those who hate me wrongfully.  
Those who render me evil for good  
accuse me because I follow after good.





Do not forsake me, O LORD!  
O my God, be not far from me!  
Make haste to help me,  
O Lord, my salvation!

## **DEVOTIONAL**

As the psalmist declares, though we are often waiting, God will answer us. In the waiting, our foot often slips, and the accuser, our great foe, stands ready to rejoice when we fall and accuse us of our failures. Satan is the one who wishes to render evil for good. At every point of our day, as we continue walking with Christ through the desert of His temptation this Lent season, we must affirm that God is our salvation and call upon Him in our time of need.

When Jesus was tempted in the desert, it was not by His own strength that he overcame Satan, but by the power of the Spirit and the Word of God. This is true for us today. We have the indwelling Spirit as our Helper, and the Word of God as our sword (John 14:16; Eph. 6:17). We recognize that, like Jesus in His temptation, our main battle is not with flesh or blood “but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). As we continue on this journey through Lent, let’s remember the spiritual reality of our struggles and recognize that we have a God who is not far from us and who will answer us in our time of need.

## **REFLECTION**

What do you need to confess to the Lord this week? Spend some time opening your heart to God. If there is anything you need to ask forgiveness for from another person, do that.

Think about what you struggle with most. In what areas might you be missing the spiritual nature of your struggles?

Write down one or two areas of your life in which you are waiting for the Lord. Take a moment to pray over those and remind yourself that God is good and will not forsake you.



## **SONG: "BEHOLD THY WAITING SERVANT, LORD"**

Behold Thy waiting servant, Lord  
Devoted to Thy fear  
Remember and confirm Thy Word  
For all my hopes are there

Hast Thou not writ salvation down  
And promised quickening grace  
Doth not my heart address Thy throne  
And yet Thy love delays

Mine eyes for Thy salvation fail  
O bear Thy servant up  
Nor let the scoffing lips prevail  
Who dare reproach my hope

Didst Thou not raise my faith, O Lord  
Then let Thy truth appear  
Saints shall rejoice in my reward  
And trust as well as fear

## **PRAYER**

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*-The Book of Common Prayer*



## WEEK 16

MARCH 17 - 23

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Ezekiel 6-7; Psalm 48:6-14; Matthew 16-18

**Monday:** Ezekiel 8-9; Psalm 49:1-8; Matthew 16-18

**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 10:1-11:13; Psalm 49:9-20; Matthew 19-21

**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 11:14-12:28; Psalm 50:1-6; Matthew 19-21

**Thursday:** Ezekiel 13; Psalm 50:7-13; Matthew 19-21

**Friday:** Ezekiel 14-15; Psalm 50:14-23; Matthew 22-24

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: SOCIAL NETWORKING AND INTERNET

As we continue in the season of Lent, think about exchanging the time you would normally scroll through social media or browse the internet for a time of intentional prayer, Bible reading or worship. Consider staying off certain platforms at certain points of each day or for the entire week, deleting the apps off your device or blocking those websites as you fast.

### PASSAGE: MATTHEW 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

### DEVOTIONAL

The temptation of Jesus, His 40 days in the desert, represents the Son of God identifying with Israel and her wandering in the wilderness. Whereas Israel was consistently



unfaithful in their time of wandering (as we often are in our times of temptation and doubt), Christ was faithful. This was part of Christ's mission to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). Though we mourn over sin during Lent, the reality that Christ was faithful provides the divine gleam of joy within our wandering.

We don't enter the desert without knowing that Christ entered before us. He is more than a model; He is the mode and means by which our redemption is secured. Our practice of Lent must never be divorced from this core gospel truth. As we actively participate in the work of the Spirit, forsaking something lesser to seek the greater, let us not forget that the final work has been accomplished. Our practice of Lent does not help us earn anything from God, but it affirms, reminds and shapes us into a more gospel-dependent people.

## **REFLECTION**

How does the knowledge of Christ securing our redemption shape how you are practicing Lent?

In what areas of your life are you seeking to earn favor, whether with God or with others? How does that play out in your day-to-day experience?

In what ways have you forgotten God's faithfulness in your time of wandering? Write these down and spend time in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness.

## **SONG: "PSALM 23 (SURELY GOODNESS, SURELY MERCY)"**

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want  
In green pastures He makes me lie down  
He restores my soul and leads me on for His Name  
For His great Name

Surely goodness surely mercy  
Right beside me all my days  
And I will dwell in Your house forever  
And bless Your Holy Name



You prepare a table right before me  
In the presence of my enemies  
Though the arrow flies and the terror of night  
Is at my door I'll trust you Lord

Surely goodness surely mercy  
Right beside me all my days  
And I will dwell in Your house forever  
And bless Your Holy Name

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I will fear no evil  
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
You are on my side

## **PRAYER**

Take us to Your refuge, Jesus,  
To Your Father, our shelter.  
Where we may draw life in Your house from Your abundance,  
Where we may feast at Your table of plenty without price,  
And where we may drink from Your river of unending delight.  
For with You is the fount of true life  
In Your light do we see everlasting Light.  
We find shalom; refuge; rest; You; all.  
Our eternal refuge and home.  
Save us from ourselves,  
From our weary wanderings  
Of earth-laden urgings.  
Lead us to Your rest,  
O Come, Emmanuel.

*-Book of Prayers (Vol. 1), from The Village Church*



## WEEK 17

MARCH 24 - 30

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Ezekiel 16; Psalm 51:1-8; Matthew 22-24

**Monday:** Ezekiel 17; Psalm 51:9-19; Matthew 22-24

**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 18-19; Psalm 52; Matthew 25-26

**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 20; Psalm 53:1; Matthew 25-26

**Thursday:** Ezekiel 21; Psalm 53:2-6; Matthew 25-26

**Friday:** Ezekiel 22; Psalm 54; Matthew 27-28

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: CAFFEINE AND SWEETS

Consider fasting from your favorite caffeinated beverages or candy this week. Think about placing sticky notes with Scripture or prayer requests on or near where you keep those items so you are reminded to refocus your heart and mind on the Lord throughout the day. Consider setting aside the money you would typically spend on those beverages and pray about where you could give it to help those in need.

### PASSAGE: EXODUS 14:10-14

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."



## DEVOTIONAL

The story of the Israelites in Exodus is a reminder of just how much we grumble as the people of God. Though God has redeemed us, we too quickly forget His sovereign grace to carry us through every moment of our lives. How many times have we thought that it would be better to “serve the Egyptians” rather than to continue walking with God in the wilderness? The Israelites interpreted the uncertainty of the moment as God’s absence from their lives. When it appeared that death was drawing near, a return to slavery seemed to be the better option. In moments and in seasons, they preferred their former life of bondage rather than pressing into the Lord and trusting His plan of deliverance. Fear and anxiety welled up and engulfed their hearts. But what was the Lord’s response? Through Moses, God says, “Fear not, stand firm.” The Lord promised deliverance, and He came through on that promise.

In moments of desperation, when we see something that seems more powerful than we are, we must remember that the Lord will fight for us, like He did the Israelites. As we reflect on our current circumstances, fears and anxieties may well up within us, but the call upon believers is to fear not. We see the salvation of the Lord in Jesus Christ who fought sin and Satan on our behalf. When we reflect on this sovereign grace in salvation, our only response is to sit in awe and be silent.

## REFLECTION

What uncertainties are you currently experiencing in your life? What do these reveal about where you have put your hope? Take a moment to put those before the Lord in prayer.

Reflect on where you have tangibly seen the Lord work in your life. How does this encourage you as you look at your current circumstances?

Doubts, fears and anxieties will inevitably come in our lives. Based on the Exodus 14 passage above, how does God respond?

## SONG: “WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS”

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died



My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride

Forbid it Lord that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ my God  
All the vain things that charm me most  
I sacrifice them to His blood

See from His head, His hands, His feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown

Were the whole realm of nature mine  
That were an offering far too small  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my soul, my life, my all

## **PRAYER**

God of love,  
as in Jesus Christ you gave yourself to us,  
so may we give ourselves to you,  
living according to your holy will.  
Keep our feet firmly in the way  
where Christ leads us;  
make our mouths speak the truth  
that Christ teaches us;  
fill our bodies with the life  
that is Christ within us.  
In his holy name we pray. Amen

*-Book of Common Worship*





## WEEK 18

MARCH 31 - APRIL 6

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Ezekiel 23; Psalm 55:1-8; Matthew 27-28

**Monday:** Ezekiel 24-25; Psalm 55:9-23; Matthew 27-28

**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 26; Psalm 56:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1-3

**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 27:1-28:10; Psalm 56:6-13; 1 Corinthians 1-3

**Thursday:** Ezekiel 28:11-29:11; Psalm 57; 1 Corinthians 1-3

**Friday:** Ezekiel 30-31; Psalm 58; 1 Corinthians 4-6

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: RADIO, PODCASTS AND MUSIC

This week, consider trading your favorite podcast or your daily dose of music or talk radio for silence and solitude. Instead of turning on something when you get in the car, use this time to ask God to fill your heart and mind with His presence and to hear His voice more clearly. Consider choosing a few verses to memorize and use the time you'd normally spend listening to music, the radio or a podcast in thoughtful meditation of God's Word.

### PASSAGE: MATTHEW 15:10-20

And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."



## DEVOTIONAL

In His confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus emphasizes a core gospel principle: The root of our sin is within the heart. Acts of piety are meaningless if there is not an inward change. During Lent, we are reminded that our good works are not steps to holiness; they are acts of devotion toward a loving Savior. During this season, our hearts are more exposed as we deny self. Through fasting, prayer and contemplation, we begin to see what areas of our hearts are still drawn toward lesser things. Denying self doesn't remove what's in our hearts—it simply exposes it. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit and God's Word can our hearts begin to see transformation. John tells the Church, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Place your heart before the Lord in the light, ask Him to expose any wayward part and request His grace to change. We don't want to deny self for its own sake but to reorient our hearts back toward a loving God who has secured our redemption in Christ. May the Spirit work in your heart this week as you continue on your journey with Christ in the wilderness.

## REFLECTION

Take a moment to sit in silence, asking the Lord to expose areas of your life in need of change. Write down those lesser things you find your heart drifting toward. Now pray, affirming God's grace in your life and requesting more of His grace to change.

Think about times in your life when you have trusted in acts of piety/good works. What was your motivation? What was the outcome?

How might beginning with God's grace and forgiveness, rather than works, affect your spiritual life?

## SONG: "IN CHRIST ALONE"

In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
What heights of love, what depths of peace



When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My comforter, my all in all  
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the pow'r of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand

## **PRAYER**

Oh, Lord, all the day long we pursue other loves.  
We pretend we love You, but our hearts are far from You.  
We continually reach out and grasp for other desires,  
But they turn to ashes in our hands.  
Oh, Lord, we are always eating, but are never filled.  
We are always drinking, but our thirst is never quenched.



We are a weary and desperate people.  
Have mercy on us, Lord, and rescue us from ourselves.  
Help us to see that You are our true desire, our greatest love, our one affection.  
You are the Bread of Life, the Fountain of Living Water.  
Open our eyes to the richness found in Your Word,  
To the bounty that awaits when we come to Your table.  
May we taste and see that You are good.  
May we seek You all the day long.  
For in You is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand are pleasures forever.  
We ask this in Your name, Lord—gracious Savior, Redeemer and King. Amen.

*—Book of Prayers (Vol. 2), from The Village Church*



## WEEK 19

APRIL 7 - 13

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** Ezekiel 32; Psalm 59:1-7; 1 Corinthians 4-6

**Monday:** Ezekiel 33; Psalm 59:8-17; 1 Corinthians 4-6

**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 34-35; Psalm 60:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7-9

**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 36; Psalm 60:5-12; 1 Corinthians 7-9

**Thursday:** Ezekiel 37; Psalm 61; 1 Corinthians 7-9

**Friday:** Ezekiel 38:1-39:24; Psalm 62:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10-12

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: SHOPPING FOR NON-ESSENTIALS

Consider fasting from shopping for anything that is not absolutely necessary this week. Reflect on the ways that God has provided for your every need. You could choose to start a list of God's provision in your life, spend time praying for God to help you remember that He is your ultimate sustainer and giver of life or find small ways to be generous toward others in gratitude for what the Lord has given to you.

### PASSAGE: PSALM 51:7-12

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.



## DEVOTIONAL

The picture of repentance that David lays out in Psalm 51 is a joyful return to the loving arms of his Savior. It doesn't mean everything was perfect; in fact, the consequences of his sin were plain to see. Having lustfully desired another man's wife, he takes her for himself and has her husband killed. David's heart was in need of some serious cleansing! Recognizing the drastic nature of his sin, he cries out to God for healing and restoration. He recognizes that his sin is an affront against God and His holiness and that he needs God's forgiveness and grace to change. Above all, he asks God to restore to him the joy of salvation granted by God alone. Salvation was not something earned, but something granted, and in David's repentant state, he needed to be reminded of God's gracious gift.

This needs to be our attitude in the midst of repentance. We need to be constantly reminded of the gracious salvation given by a merciful God. Our sin does not deny God's favor for those who are in Christ, but it does lead us to forget it. Within our posture of repentance, we can ask God to lift us up with a willing spirit, which is another way of asking for a renewed spirit to do God's will. We may have moments where we quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19), temporarily losing our joy for God. While this doesn't deny the reality of His indwelling Spirit, it does mean we need to ask the Lord for a restoration of joy. Like David, may we ask the Lord to renew our joy and the recognition of His presence in our life. He is faithful to forgive and to restore us!

## REFLECTION

How would you describe the relationship between repentance and joy?

When David is asking God to "purge me with hyssop" and "wash me," what theological truth is he affirming about the character of God?

Is there any area of your life that needs restoration? Take a moment to lay that before the Lord in prayer.



## **SONG: "GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS"**

Great is Thy faithfulness O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be

Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness Lord unto me

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside

## **PRAYER**

God of mercy,  
you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost.  
We confess that we have strayed from you  
and turned aside from your way.  
We are misled by pride,  
for we see ourselves pure when we are stained,  
and great when we are small.  
We have failed in love,  
neglected justice,  
and ignored your truth.  
Have mercy, O God, and forgive our sin.  
Return us to paths of righteousness  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

*—Book of Common Worship*







## WEEK 20 – HOLY WEEK

APRIL 14 – 20

### READING PLAN

**Sunday (Palm Sunday):** Ezekiel 39:25-40:27; Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Corinthians 10-12

**Monday:** Ezekiel 40:28-41:26; Psalm 63:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10-12

**Tuesday:** Ezekiel 42-43; Psalm 63:5-11; 1 Corinthians 13-16

**Wednesday:** Ezekiel 44-45; Psalm 64; 1 Corinthians 13-16

**Thursday (Maundy Thursday):** Ezekiel 46; Psalm 65:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13-16

**Friday (Good Friday):** Ezekiel 47-48; Psalm 65:6-13; 1 Peter 1-3

**Saturday (Holy Saturday):** Reflect and catch up

### SUGGESTED FAST: SLEEP

As we approach the end of Lent, think about getting up an hour earlier than usual or staying up an hour later to intentionally spend time with the Lord. Whether that be in prayer or confession, consider giving up a portion of your sleep to focus your heart and mind on God, specifically the passion of Christ.

### PASSAGE: MATTHEW 26:26-29

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

### DEVOTIONAL

As we end our journey through Lent this Holy Week, we look to the nature of our redemption in Christ. In His last meal before going to the cross, Christ redefines the Passover meal as the new covenant meal. The Passover was *the* significant event in the story of redemption for Israel. For Jesus to take the meal and direct it toward His work on the cross was blasphemous, unless of course He was truly the Savior of God’s people.



His temptation in the wilderness demonstrated that He was the true Israel who resisted Satan and adhered to God's promises. His Sermon on the Mount revealed that He was the true lawgiver for His covenant people. His ministry to the sick, poor, sinner and broken displayed that He was the true Redeemer to restore God's creation. The Passover meal was both the culmination of His ministry and the starting point of drawing all peoples to partake in God's redeeming work.

Christ was to be the one in whom humankind would find their salvation. He was to be lifted up so that all peoples would be drawn to Him (John 12:32). Our Lent journey culminates in this glorious truth: Jesus Christ is the true Redeemer. Though in Holy Week we recognize the grim reality of sin's cost—and we should not minimize the darkness of Christ's passion—we emerge with the realization that joy comes in the morning (Ps. 30:5). He is the one who went before us to take our place so that in Him we may have life and joy to the full (John 15:11). All those in Christ have life and peace and are reconciled to God. As we sit in the darkness of Golgotha, let's remember that the weight of our sin has been placed upon our Redeemer.

## **REFLECTION**

Why is it important for Christians to participate in the Lord's Supper on a regular basis? When you participate in Communion, what are you usually focused on?

As you reflect on this season of Lent, what areas of your life did you discover are still drawn to lesser things? Confess these things to the Lord and ask Him to change your heart so that He is your deepest desire.

In what areas of your life did you gain more trust in God's sovereign work this season?

## **SONG: "COME THOU FOUNT"**

Come Thou Fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
Streams of mercy never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise  
Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it  
Mount of Thy redeeming love



Here I'll raise my Ebenezer  
Here by Thy great help I'm come  
And I hope by Thy good pleasure  
Safely to arrive at home  
Jesus sought me when a stranger  
Wand'ring from the fold of God  
He to rescue me from danger  
Interposed His precious blood

Oh to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let Thy goodness like a fetter  
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee  
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, Lord take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above

## **PRAYER**

Oh, Father God,  
I praise You, for You are the Giver and Fount of life.  
From You come the very words that I use to worship You,  
They are adequate because they are the means You've given,  
but so limited, for they cannot capture Your incomprehensible glory. I praise You Father,  
for You have authored my beginning and my end, And created me to be part of Your  
eternal story.  
In Your hands am I held.

Jesus, Son of God, through whom I have been redeemed,  
I give You all glory that is yours.  
Born into death; alive, only to be destroyed.  
Died. Buried. Separated.  
But then resurrected, glorified.  
By You, Jesus, my story has been changed.  
Redeemed. Alive. Hopeful.  
My salvation is born from Your blood, where mercy met justice,  
Yet neither were compromised.  
In Your death and resurrection I am made new.



Spirit—God present.

By the Breath of God am I upheld.

Sanctified. To be formed into the likeness of the Son.

Spirit, I praise You for sustaining me.

By Your power I am delivered daily from shame and guilt,

Freed from sin, empowered to walk in righteousness.

I thank You for Your eternal patience and perseverance.

Triune God, I love You and praise You. Amen.

—*Book of Prayers (Vol. 1)*, from The Village Church



## IDEAS FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Lent is a season of turning from the lesser, temporary things of the world to remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that purchased forgiveness for our sins. During Lent, we remember the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness. Jesus resisted sin by using the Bible—God’s true Word. Jesus lived a perfect life so that His death could pay the punishment for sin that we all deserve. The temptation, pain and death that Jesus endured is the reason we have hope and joy today. Without it, we would still be slaves to sin and separated from God. Instead, those who love and trust Jesus are forgiven and enjoy a relationship with our loving Father.

### SONGS

Jesus Came to Save Sinners  
Look to the Lord

### DECORATIONS

The goal of Lent is to remember the temptation and death of Jesus. To help your family remember the temptation narrative, use a large rock and the Bible as a centerpiece on a table. As we get close to Palm Sunday, using rocks and palm leaves is a simple way to remember the praise due to our Savior. Luke 19:40 says, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” Write Scripture from these Lent readings on chalkboards or mirrors in your home.

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

#### **The Temptation of Jesus**

The temptation of Jesus is a powerful and helpful example of our Savior fighting temptation with the Bible—God’s true Word. Read the story of Jesus’ temptation in Matthew 4:1-11 with your family. If you have preschoolers, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* is a great resource to read together, specifically “Let’s Go!” (p. 208). If you have older children, reading the account directly from the Bible can be a sweet time to grow together as a



family. Help your kids find the story in their Bible using the table of contents and the chapter and verse numbers.

After reading the account of Jesus' temptation, talk through the ways you are feeling tempted in your family. What lies are you tempted to believe? Do you know how to use the Bible to fight sin? Do you trust God to care for you in the hard moments of life? Find a verse that will help you fight a current temptation to sin that you are facing. Write it down on a note card that you can keep with you. Memorize it this week. Take time to pray for courage and strength to fight temptation. When you fail, confess (tell the truth about) your sin to God and ask for forgiveness.

### **The Triumphal Entry**

Jesus was betrayed and crucified on a Friday. Just five days before crowds would shout, "Crucify Him!" they were shouting something very different. The Sunday before Jesus was killed, He entered the city of Jerusalem riding on a donkey. As He rode through the city, the people lined the streets, covering the road with their cloaks and waving palm branches at Jesus. They shouted, "Hosanna!" and "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" The people were praising Jesus. When the religious leaders became upset about Jesus being praised, He told them that if the people didn't praise Him, the rocks on the ground would cry out praises to Him. Jesus deserves our worship and praise.

Take some time to write a poem or song, draw a picture or create some artwork that tells the story of the triumphal entry. As you share what you have created with your family, praise God for being willing to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

### **The Death of Jesus**

The day that Jesus was crucified was the worst moment in all of time. The Son of God, who left heaven to live among us and reconcile us to God, was arrested, lied about, beaten, spit upon and sentenced to die. He could have stopped what was happening to Him at any moment, but He did not because of His great love for us. Read "The Sun Stops Shining" from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (p. 302).

As a family, remember the stories we read about during the season of Epiphany about the miracles Jesus performed. He had the power to do anything. Why did He stay on the cross? What happened to the sky when Jesus died? What did Jesus take from us on the cross? Did Jesus deserve to die? Spend time in prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus to die on the cross. Parents, pray for your child's salvation out loud over them.



### **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday Service**

Attend Ash Wednesday and Good Friday services together as a family. After the service, ask your child what they thought about the service and if they have any questions.

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS**

### **Discipline Conversations**

Discipline conversations are one of the hardest aspects of parenting, but they are one of our greatest opportunities to have gospel conversations with our children. During the season of Lent, capture opportunities to point your children to their need for a Savior when disciplining them. Ask questions about their behavior instead of making accusations (like God did with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3). When they sin, give them the opportunity to confess. Encourage them to not only seek forgiveness from you or the person they sinned against, but also from God. When there are consequences for their behavior, remind them that Jesus paid the consequence for our sin—He died the death we deserved so we could be reconciled to God. Help them look for verses in the Bible to help them fight their sin the next time they are tempted.

### **Rocks**

As you are outside playing or walking, take time to point out the rocks that you see. How crazy would it be if the rocks started singing and shouting out praises to God? Imagine together what the rocks might say. Remind your child that Jesus once said that if the people didn't praise Him, the rocks would. Jesus deserves all of our love and praise. Take a moment to praise God out loud with your family.

### **Remembering Jesus Is Better (Fasting)**

Jesus is better than everything! He's better than our favorite foods and activities. He's better than anything we have or could ever have. But often, everything else distracts us from Jesus. As a family, choose something to "give up" for the season of Lent. It could be an activity or type of food. It could be something related to physical comfort. But don't just give up something; every time you would do or consume or use whatever you have given up, capture the opportunity to remember that Jesus is better than anything we might give up temporarily. Say a quick prayer, thanking God for how good He is.



# GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTIONS ON ISAIAH 53

ANNE LINCOLN HOLIBAUGH

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.  
After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.

**–Isaiah 53:10-11, NIV**

It is the will of the Father to crush His children at different times. Always in love. Always for His glory and, ultimately, their good.

I felt crushed by the Lord at this time several years ago. Broken, bruised and ripped raw as a result of disappointment, doubt and disobedience, my heart felt like a long, open-ended ache, and I found myself pleading for restoration like David in Psalm 51:8: "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice." Needless to say, I was having a hard time.

So when I heard the words of Isaiah 53, they resonated with me, comforted me. They began playing over and over in my mind, serenading my soul. "Yet it was the LORD's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer. It was the LORD's will...to crush Him."

I felt sure that if it was God's will to crush the Son, then His intentions in crushing me must be kind as well. But how? I needed to understand.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crushed for my sin. He was pierced for my transgressions. He bore every failing and offense, all the moments of mistrust, doubt and disobedience. He was punished for every wicked inclination of my heart, for my bent to self-reliance and fear. He carried every one of my sorrows, every ounce of my spiritual sickness. My sin required the suffering of His soul.





Jesus took what I deserved and died in my place. He did it in love—in love for the Father and in love for me. And in being crushed, He crushed fully and forever the sin that kept me bound and far from Him.

I was in awe. And I started to see that my crushing was very different from that of Jesus.

The crushing I felt was not at all about punishment and, ironically, came because I had been forgiven for sin and adopted as a beloved child of God. Jesus' crushing purchased for me the crushing of fatherly discipline. It had been laid upon me with a heavy and loving hand and was done for my good.

The Father had crushed me to keep me close, to remind me that moving apart from Him would always end badly. He was not punishing me and He was not mad at me. He was teaching me to trust Him even when I couldn't see and did not agree or understand. It was an extravagant and excruciating mercy.

My crushing was about correction and conformity. But I needed help to see it rightly. I had to see my crushing through the lens of His in order to understand that it was love—not wrath.

As we remember the death of Christ this Good Friday, let us receive the consolation of the gospel. He crushed Jesus on our behalf. And at times He will crush us too, in love, that we might be conformed to the likeness of the Son, to the image of the One crushed.



# THE SEASONAL NATURE OF LENT

JONATHAN WOODLIEF

It has been said that suffering will either drive you like a nail into the love of God or away from the love of God. You will become bitter or better. This is the invitation of the Christian life and specifically the season of Lent. Be driven into the love of God. Be driven into the reminder that Jesus shares in our sufferings and we get to share in His. And in doing so, become more like Him.

“Lent” actually comes from an Old English word meaning “spring.” And spring both communicates a pattern and a picture of Lent that portray this invitation to meet Jesus in suffering.

## **The Pattern of Lent**

The season of Lent takes place in the spring, from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday, and the season centers around 40 days of sharing in the sufferings of Christ in light of Jesus’ 40 days of temptation in the wilderness. Like the season of spring itself, Lent follows a pattern of time and movement. There is a pattern of fasting, prayer and giving.

There’s been a popular meme that says something like, “This year for Lent, I’m just giving up.” This is actually a helpful posture. I can’t. But Christ can. This is the desperate posture that suffering actually brings. Many times when we participate in Christ’s suffering, it’s in the unexpected moment of grief. But the invitation is also to proactively enter into Christ’s suffering through spiritual discipline. Sometimes the wilderness comes to you, and sometimes you intentionally enter the wilderness.

During Lent, we purposefully join brothers and sisters throughout history and around the world entering the wilderness through rhythms and disciplines. Fasting in order to feast upon Him. Taking away that we might get more of Jesus. Less of us. More of Him. Giving of myself to others because He has freely given so much for me. Christ identified with my suffering, and now I get to identify with His. This is all from a place of acceptance. We aren’t practicing Lent to gain acceptance from Jesus because we already have that acceptance and love. Jesus entered the great wilderness of death for us so that we might know that He is for us (Rom. 8:31-32).

Practically, this means we meditate upon our sin and sadness, but only in a way that cracks open our hearts to the great love of God (Rom. 5:8). We find our life not in the



practicing of Lent but in putting our gaze on our Savior (John 5:39). It means we don't naively turn a blind eye to systemic injustice and corporate evil. If we only meditate on personal brokenness and miss the brokenness around us, we aren't carrying the heart of Christ (Matt. 9:12-13). If we claim to meet Jesus in Lent, but it only ends with us, we've traded the Righteous One for a dead ritual. We also reflect upon the brokenness in such a way that it drives us to a day where brokenness will be no more (1 Thess. 4:13). And all of this is done starting with the model of Jesus and the gospel. We practice not to proclaim our own righteousness (Matt. 6:1-4), but to proclaim His. That's what we do in this season.

### **The Picture of Lent**

For most people, spring is the time when the light and and brightness of days begin to lengthen, as winter passes and new life bursts forth! And like the season of spring, Lent marries both a sense of brokenness and hope. In fact, many Christians, especially in Eastern traditions, have historically called Lent a "Bright Sadness." This paradox conveys the idea that on one hand we feel the sorrow, weight and sadness of Christ's suffering, death and burial, and on the other hand we feel the great hope, light and brightness of Christ's victory.

If the 40 days of fasting and feasting are the pattern we take to be driven into the love of Jesus, then Bright Sadness is the picture we carry throughout Lent to be riveted by His love. This is because the picture isn't just of Lent but also the good news of the gospel and the Christian life. For the Christian, our sufferings and sorrows can't be detached from the resurrection of Jesus, even as we wait to celebrate Easter. As it's been said before, the opposite of sadness isn't joy—it's hope. Like Paul wrote, as believers we are "sorrowful, yet rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10).

In our "lenting," the tension of both the sadness and the brightness has to be upheld. And as we do this, we are tapping into the mystery of seeing Christ step into our suffering so that we might step into His. To think that God—in Jesus—enters our suffering and can identify with our suffering is a staggering and deeply comforting reality. As Beth Moore says, "He knows that it's scary to be us." And at the same time, when you read ancient Christian literature, you begin to realize Christians have been staggered not just that Christ shares our sufferings but seemingly just as much that we get to share in His. Jesus steps into our stories and our suffering so that we might step into His.

As some of our African-American brothers and sisters sang during slavery, "My brother, want to get religion? Go down in the lonesome valley. Go down in the lonesome valley. Go down in the lonesome valley. And meet Jesus there."



Or the apostle Peter said it like this, “But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings...” (1 Pet. 4:13).

And then the apostle Paul, “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10).

In our sufferings, we get to meet Jesus. And in our lenting, we get to intentionally meet Jesus, whether we are in the valley or on the mountaintop. To meet Jesus there. To know Him. To know His power and glory. Now this is one of the beautiful pictures of Lent. Not only that Christ is identifying with us in temptation and suffering but that we are invited to participate with Him. That’s both the pattern and picture of the season.







# EASTER

*The  
Resurrection of  
Jesus Christ*



# INTRODUCTION

Easter has been and always will be significant in the life of the Church, regardless of tradition or denomination. Most who grew up in the faith probably hold memories of buying a new outfit, hunting eggs and eating a home-cooked meal with families and friends. It's always been a big deal, as it should be. Easter is the climax of the Christian story, the assurance of eternal life with God. Yet for many of us, all the joy and celebrations come to an end on Sunday, and by the time Monday rolls around, life goes back to how we left it.

But Easter is more than just a Sunday. While it centers around one specific event—Christ being raised from the dead—the Church has historically practiced Easter not as a day but as a season. It is a time to celebrate the glorious Resurrection and to consider the implications of that Resurrection, both for how we understand God and our faith and how we live our lives.

Beginning with Easter Sunday, this season lasts seven weeks. It is marked by two main events: first and foremost the resurrection of Christ and then the ascension of Christ. A season of joy and hope, it is a time to celebrate these events and their implications for the Christian life, from being dead in our sin and raised with Jesus to our future hope of resurrected bodies and a new heaven and a new earth. As we remember and rejoice in the Resurrection, our eternal hope in Jesus is made anew.

Easter, a story of hope and victory, runs contrary to the false stories of our world that would make us believe that there is no hope, that there is nothing more than this life. The stories of secularism and cynicism that run rampant in our culture shape us and jade us, robbing us of joy and belief in the miraculous. Easter, though, weaves back into our lives the one true story of the Bible—that Jesus was crucified, dead and buried but, on the third day, rose again. As we enter this story, remembering our future hope in Christ and our miracle-filled, supernatural faith, we are reshaped and reformed to be the hopeful, joyful, spiritual people that God has called us to be as His sons and daughters.





## HISTORY & TRADITIONS

The history of Easter goes back to the very beginning of the Early Church. We see that in the book of Acts, Christians were gathering together the first day of the week, in honor of Easter Sunday (Acts 20:7). In AD 321, after Rome became a Christian nation, Sunday was officially named the day of Christian worship. Easter was originally a part of Passover, but as the Church began putting a greater emphasis on Holy Week, early Christians started celebrating Easter as a separate, annual feast sometime in the fourth century, and it's remained an annual celebration since that time.

Easter is a moveable season, not set on a particular date but based around a system established by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. In this system, Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox, which means the date of Easter can range between March 22 and April 25, depending on the lunar cycle.

Christians have celebrated Easter in a number of ways over the centuries, but the most notable is the Easter Vigil, a service between sundown on Saturday and Easter Sunday. Historically an event to baptize new converts, this service features a progression of light, starting with complete darkness, to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the victory of light over darkness. When practiced indoors, churches will often time the service to take place as the sun rises and begins to shine through the windows of the building, or the lights will be turned completely up at the climax of the service.

While the Easter Vigil tends to be practiced in more traditional, liturgical churches, many other churches make music a focal point of Easter, specifically on Easter Sunday. In these settings, there will be special musical arrangements and songs focused on the resurrection of Christ. Some churches also display an empty tomb or flowering cross in the entrances of their buildings as prominent symbols.

**Posture:** celebratory, courageous, joyful, hopeful

**Colors:** white, purple, gold

**Symbols:** empty tomb, sunrise, lilies, flowering cross

**Flowers and Greenery:** white lilies, hydrangeas



## WEEK 21

APRIL 21 - 27

### READING PLAN

**Sunday (Easter Sunday):** 1 Kings 1; Psalm 66:1-8; 1 Peter 1-3

**Monday:** 1 Kings 2; Psalm 66:9-20; 1 Peter 1-3

**Tuesday:** 1 Kings 3; Psalm 67; 1 Peter 4-5

**Wednesday:** 1 Kings 4-5; Psalm 68:1-6; 1 Peter 4-5

**Thursday:** 1 Kings 6; Psalm 68:7-16; 1 Peter 4-5

**Friday:** 1 Kings 7; Psalm 68:17-24; 2 Peter 1-3

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: PSALM 57:1-11

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,  
for in you my soul takes refuge;  
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,  
till the storms of destruction pass by.  
I cry out to God Most High,  
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.  
He will send from heaven and save me;  
he will put to shame him who tramples on me. *Selah*  
God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!

My soul is in the midst of lions;  
I lie down amid fiery beasts—  
the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
whose tongues are sharp swords.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!

They set a net for my steps;  
my soul was bowed down.  
They dug a pit in my way,  
but they have fallen into it themselves. *Selah*



My heart is steadfast, O God,  
my heart is steadfast!  
I will sing and make melody!  
Awake, my glory!  
Awake, O harp and lyre!  
I will awake the dawn!  
I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples;  
I will sing praises to you among the nations.  
For your steadfast love is great to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!

## **DEVOTIONAL**

Does your praise pierce the morning? Could your worship awaken the dawn? David can't contain the gratitude in his heart; it ripples out to awaken everything around him. He is determined not to let an opportunity for worship pass him by. He is steadfastly resolved to praise God for what He has done, despite his own sluggishness. When we are struggling to praise, we must be determined to remember.

So, what did God do? Why is He worthy of praise? The Most High descended low. God has sent His Son from heaven to save you. In steadfast love, the immortal God took on mortality in Christ and was crucified and buried. But that's not the end of the story. The cross does not have the final word. Because Christ humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross, God has exalted Him in the heavens (Phil. 2:8-9). David's worship is passionate because his recollection of God's mercy is fresh. On a day like this, we remember—with exploding thankfulness—that we have been rescued! The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed! Let your praise pierce the morning!

## **REFLECTION**

What is your background regarding Easter? How was it celebrated in your family growing up? How has that influenced your view of it today? Is there anything you hope to do with your family now to make this season memorable?



Have you ever felt that your soul was in the midst of lions? What were the circumstances?  
How did the Lord deliver you?

What does it look like for your heart to be “steadfast”? What causes you to falter?

**SONG: “THE LOVE OF GOD”**

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell  
It goes beyond the highest star  
And reaches to the lowest hell  
The guilty pair bowed down with care  
God gave His Son to win  
His erring child He reconciled  
And pardoned from his sin

Oh love of God how rich and pure  
How measureless and strong  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints’ and angels’ song

When ancient time shall pass away  
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall  
When men who here refuse to pray  
On rocks and hills and mountains call  
God’s love so sure shall still endure  
All measureless and strong  
Redeeming grace to Adam’s race  
The saints’ and angels’ song

Could we with ink the ocean fill  
And were the skies of parchment made  
Were every stalk on earth a quill  
And every man a scribe by trade  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky



## PRAYER

Almighty and forgiving God,  
we your unworthy servants give you most humble thanks  
for all your goodness and loving kindness,  
to us and to all whom you have made.  
We bless you for our creation, preservation,  
and all the blessings of this life;  
but above all for your immeasurable love  
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.  
Give us such an awareness of your mercies,  
that our hearts may be thankful,  
and that we may show forth your praise,  
not only with our lips, but in our lives,  
by giving up ourselves to your service  
and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*—The Book of Common Prayer*



## WEEK 22

APRIL 28 - MAY 4

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** 1 Kings 8; Psalm 68:25-35; 2 Peter 1-3

**Monday:** 1 Kings 9; Psalm 69:1-12; 2 Peter 1-3

**Tuesday:** 1 Kings 10; Psalm 69:13-2; 2 Peter 1-3

**Wednesday:** 1 Kings 11; Psalm 69:23-28; Luke 1-3

**Thursday:** 1 Kings 12; Psalm 69:29-36; Luke 1-3

**Friday:** 1 Kings 13; Psalm 70; Luke 1-3

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: MICAH 4:1-5

It shall come to pass in the latter days  
that the mountain of the house of the LORD  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;  
and peoples shall flow to it,  
and many nations shall come, and say:  
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.”  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore;  
but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,  
and no one shall make them afraid,  
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.



For all the peoples walk  
each in the name of its god,  
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God  
forever and ever.

## **DEVOTIONAL**

Swords still outnumber plowshares. We cry out for the nations to stream to Zion. Wasn't the Messiah supposed to bring about the "latter days"? What gives, Micah? We feel the tension in our bones; we live in the already-but-not-yet. Our future is already secured, but we are not yet in security. We are homesick, and like children on a cross-country roadtrip, we cry out: "Are we there yet?" We are barraged by waves of violence and injustice, and we doubt that the Lord shall decide disputes between nations. Proud men walk in the name of their own gods, while our brothers and sisters are held in prison for walking in the name of the Lord our God. Sometimes we doubt that we will make it home, but notice Micah's surety: "For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken." What more proof do we want? He has spoken it.

Do we forget the character of God? He didn't spare His own Son, and this truth gives us confidence that He will graciously give us all things. Or do we distrust the power of God? Dead men stay dead, but not our Lord. He proved that He was greater than sin and death by rising from the dead. Our hope is guaranteed by the risen Savior. He has begun a good work in you, and He will see it through to completion. Christian, this is your reality: Your future is secure. While we wait, let us join together and cry out, "Come quickly, Lord!"

## **REFLECTION**

What attributes of God do you see in this week's Bible passage? How does knowing who God is help you to know who He has made you to be?

How do you feel the already-secure and not-yet-complete tension in your heart? What events or circumstances exacerbate this tension?

What are your doubts or concerns about the future? When do you feel these the most? How does the resurrection of Jesus give you confidence that your future is secure?



## **SONG: "NEW AGAIN"**

When death shows his face and bares his teeth  
May we with faith run to Calvary  
Not one shed tear, no strand of grief  
Falls to the ground and goes unseen

Death is defeated and Jesus reigns  
Tell the world there is hope in His name  
He pushed back the darkness, He conquered our sin  
And Christ will make all things new again  
And Christ will make all things new again

We're blinded by trials, our lives marked with pain  
Shadows surround us but there is hope today  
When sorrows run deep and the night is long  
May we find peace in the Savior's song

The sun it is dawning, it pierces the night  
It cuts through the shadow with redemption's light  
The fallen will rise, the weak will be strong  
As death turns to life in our Savior's arms

## **PRAYER**

Almighty God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*-The Book of Common Prayer*





## WEEK 23

MAY 5 - 11

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** 1 Kings 14:1-15:8; Psalm 71:1-11; Luke 4-6

**Monday:** 1 Kings 15:9-16:20; Psalm 71:12-24; Luke 4-6

**Tuesday:** 1 Kings 16:21-17:24; Psalm 72:1-8; Luke 4-6

**Wednesday:** 1 Kings 18:1-40; Psalm 72:9-20; Luke 7-9

**Thursday:** 1 Kings 18:41-19:21; Psalm 73:1-4; Luke 7-9

**Friday:** 1 Kings 20; Psalm 73:5-10; Luke 7-9

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-20

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

### DEVOTIONAL

The picture of salvation that the Bible gives is not one of disembodiment, worshipping God forever in heaven. In fact, it is almost the opposite. The picture of salvation that the Bible presents is the bodily resurrection as we worship the triune God forever in the new earth. This picture of salvation is most clear in Jesus' resurrection. In other words, what's unique about Jesus' resurrection is that He got to go first. One day, our graves will be empty, as well. This is what Paul means by referring to Christ as the firstfruits of the



resurrection. Our hope is that one day we, like Christ, will burst forth gloriously from the grave, finally defeating Satan, sin and death.

This is the good news of the gospel. “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14). But Christ has been raised, and one day we will, too. The physical resurrection of Christ is essential for our hope; that extends far beyond this life!

## **REFLECTION**

Where does your idea of heaven come from? In what ways do your own views about heaven need to be corrected based on 1 Corinthians 15?

If an unbeliever raised an objection that Jesus has not been raised from the dead, how would you answer them? What proofs would you give?

How does the resurrection of Christ give you future hope about your resurrection?

## **SONG: “CHRIST IS RISEN, HE IS RISEN INDEED”**

How can it be, the One who died  
Has borne our sin through sacrifice  
To conquer every sting of death  
Sing, sing hallelujah

For joy awakes as dawning light  
When Christ’s disciples lift their eyes  
Alive He stands, their Friend and King  
Christ, Christ He is risen

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed  
Oh sing hallelujah  
Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed  
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed

Where doubt and darkness once had been  
They saw Him and their hearts believed  
But blessed are those who have not seen



Yet sing hallelujah

Once bound by fear now bold in faith  
They preached the truth and power of grace  
And pouring out their lives they gained  
Life, life everlasting

The power that raised Him from the grave  
Now works in us to powerfully save  
He frees our hearts to live His grace  
Go tell of His goodness

He's alive, He's alive  
Heaven's gates are opened wide  
He's alive, He's alive  
Now in heaven glorified

## **PRAYER**

O my Lord, May I arrive where means of grace cease and I need no more to fast, pray, weep, watch, be tempted, attend preaching and sacrament; where nothing defiles, where is no grief, sorrow, sin, death, separation, tears, pale face, languid body, aching joints, feeble infancy, decrepit age, peccant humours, pining sickness, gripping fears, consuming cares; where is personal completeness; where the more perfect the sight the more beautiful the object, the more perfect the appetite the sweeter the food, the more musical the ear the more pleasant the melody, the more complete the soul the more happy its joys, where is full knowledge of thee.

Here I am an ant, and as I view a nest of ants so do you view me and my fellow-creatures; but as an ant knows not me, my nature, my thoughts, so here I cannot know you clearly. But there I shall be near you, dwell with my family, stand in your presence chamber, be an heir of your kingdom, as the spouse of Christ, as a member of his body, one with him who is with thee, and exercise all my powers of body and soul in the enjoyment of you.

As praise in the mouth of your saints is comely, so teach me to exercise this divine gift, when I pray, read, hear, see, do, in the presence of people and of my enemies, as I hope to praise you eternally hereafter.

—"Heaven Desired," from *The Valley of Vision*



## WEEK 24

MAY 12 - 18

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** 1 Kings 21; Psalm 73:11-19; Luke 10-12

**Monday:** 1 Kings 22:1-28; Psalm 73:20-28; Luke 10-12

**Tuesday:** 1 Kings 22:29-53; Psalm 74:1-6; Luke 10-12

**Wednesday:** 2 Kings 1; Psalm 74:7-14; Luke 13-15

**Thursday:** 2 Kings 2; Psalm 74:15-23; Luke 13-15

**Friday:** 2 Kings 3:1-4:17; Psalm 75; Luke 13-15

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: DANIEL 10:4-10

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

### DEVOTIONAL

If Daniel wore boots, he would be shaking in them. This vision of heavenly glory is hardly imaginable, which is why Daniel's description of his experience looks more like modern abstract art than black-and-white photography. Whatever Daniel saw terrified him. The weight of glory in that place was too heavy for Daniel to keep standing. Even though those who were with him couldn't see the same vision, they still ran for the hills. There was something special about this moment because there was something special about this place: the unveiled presence of God.



Although Daniel couldn't bear the glory of God, this is the realm in which the Risen Christ is currently seated: at the right hand of God! Just as the inner circle of disciples caught a hint of the transfigured Son, so in Daniel's vision do we catch a vision of the majesty on high. None of us will be able to bear the awesome weight of this glory; there is no question if we will "stand in His presence or to our knees will we fall." Each of us, like Daniel, will fall—without bracing hands—directly onto our faces, trembling at the majesty of the King on high. The resurrected and exalted Christ is the gem of heaven, and when we see Him, we will be overwhelmed.

## REFLECTION

How do you think you would react if you saw the vision Daniel saw?

What other reactions does Scripture record when people are ushered into the presence of God? List as many as you can think of.

How does this vision change the way that you think and speak of God, specifically His presence? What attributes of God are evident in this passage of Scripture?

## SONG: "O HELP MY UNBELIEF"

How sad our state by nature is  
Our sin, how deep it stains  
And Satan binds our captive minds  
Fast in his slavish chains  
But there's a voice of sov'reign grace  
Sounds from the sacred word  
"O ye despairing sinners come  
And trust upon the Lord"

My soul obeys th' almighty call  
And runs to this relief  
I would believe thy promise Lord  
O help my unbelief  
To the dear fountain of thy blood  
Incarnate God, I fly  
Here let me wash my spotted soul  
From crimes of deepest dye



Stretch out Thine arm victorious King  
My reigning sins subdue  
Drive the old dragon from his seat  
With all his hellish crew  
A guilty, weak and helpless worm  
On Thy kind arms I fall  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness  
My Jesus and my all

## PRAYER

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of hosts!  
My soul longs, yes, faints  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
Blessed are those who dwell in your house,  
ever singing your praise! *Selah*

Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.  
As they go through the Valley of Baca  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.  
They go from strength to strength;  
each one appears before God in Zion.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;  
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*  
Behold our shield, O God;  
look on the face of your anointed!



For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.  
For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
the LORD bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does he withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.  
O LORD of hosts,  
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

-Psalm 84



## WEEK 25

MAY 19 - 25

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** 2 Kings 4:18-5:27; Psalm 76:1-4; Luke 16-18

**Monday:** 2 Kings 6; Psalm 76:5-12; Luke 16-18

**Tuesday:** 2 Kings 7; Psalm 77:1-5; Luke 16-18

**Wednesday:** 2 Kings 8; Psalm 77:6-11; Luke 19-21

**Thursday:** 2 Kings 9; Psalm 77:12-20; Luke 19-21

**Friday:** 2 Kings 10; Psalm 78:1-5; Luke 19-21

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: DEUTERONOMY 5:6-7

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

### DEVOTIONAL

Our obedience is rooted in relationship. God did not impose the Ten Commandments upon the the Israelites to oppress them. His call for obedience overflows from their covenantal relationship with the Lord who rescued them from slavery. It is in the context of redemption that the Lord provides the Law and the people respond. He gave them a national identity, a homeland, a promise and a purpose. He is not *a* God; He is *the* God of Israel. He is *your* God.

Like Israel, we live on the other side of the Nile; our chains of sin have been broken! The Lord has brought us out of Egypt in order to inherit the kingdom of God. Christ came to rescue us from our bondage to sin and provided a new identity, homeland, promise and purpose. Easter is the declaration that there is a day coming where our freedom will be completely and finally realized. The Risen Lord will return to make all things new, and we will truly have no other gods before Him. Our Risen Savior secured our liberation, so let’s worship Him above all else.





## REFLECTION

What were the sins to which you were formerly enslaved? How has the Lord liberated you? Take time to thank Him and worship Him for your salvation.

If “obedience is rooted in relationship,” what does your current obedience say about your relationship with God? In what areas is that relationship strong, and in what areas is it weak?

In what area of your relationship with Christ would you like to see more obedience? What steps can you take this week to be more obedient?

## SONG: “ON JORDAN’S STORMY BANKS I STAND”

On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand  
And cast a wishful eye  
To Canaan’s fair and happy land  
Where my possessions lie

All o’er those wide extended plains  
Shines one eternal day  
There God the Son forever reigns  
And scatters night away

I am bound  
I am bound  
I am bound for the promised land

No chilling winds nor poisonous breath  
Can reach that healthful shore  
Sickness, sorrow, pain and death  
Are felt and feared no more

When shall I reach that happy place  
And be forever blessed  
When shall I see my Father’s face  
And in His bosom rest



## PRAYER

O GOD OF MY EXODUS,

Great was the joy of Israel's sons,  
when Egypt died upon the shore,  
Far greater the joy  
when the Redeemer's foe lay crushed  
in the dust.

Jesus strides forth as the victor,  
conqueror of death, hell, and all opposing  
might;

He bursts the bands of death,  
tramples the powers of darkness down,  
and lives for ever.

He, my gracious surety,  
apprehended for payment of my debt,  
comes forth from the prison house of the grave  
free, and triumphant over sin, Satan, and death.

Show me herein the proof that his vicarious offering  
is accepted,  
that the claims of justice are satisfied,  
that the devil's sceptre is shivered,  
that his wrongful throne is levelled.

Give me the assurance that in Christ I died,  
in him I rose,  
in his life I live, in his victory I triumph,  
in his ascension I shall be glorified.

Adorable Redeemer,  
thou who wast lifted up upon a cross  
art ascended to highest heaven.

Thou, who as Man of sorrows  
wast crowned with thorns,  
art now as Lord of life wreathed with glory.

Once, no shame more deep than thine,  
no agony more bitter,  
no death more cruel.

Now, no exaltation more high,  
no life more glorious,  
no advocate more effective.



Thou art in the triumph car leading captive  
thine enemies behind thee.  
What more could be done than thou hast done!  
Thy death is my life,  
thy resurrection my peace,  
thy ascension my hope,  
thy prayers my comfort.

—“Resurrection,” from *The Valley of Vision*



## WEEK 26

MAY 26 - JUNE 1

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** 2 Kings 11-12; Psalm 78:6-14; Luke 22-24

**Monday:** 2 Kings 13; Psalm 78:15-22; Luke 22-24

**Tuesday:** 2 Kings 14; Psalm 78:23-30; Luke 22-24

**Wednesday:** 2 Kings 15; Psalm 78:31-41; Acts 1-3

**Thursday (Ascension Day):** 2 Kings 16:1-17:23; Psalm 78:42-47; Acts 1-3

**Friday:** 2 Kings 17:24-18:12; Psalm 78:48-55; Acts 1-3

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: PSALM 72:20

The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

### DEVOTIONAL

David is dead. You can pray *like* David, but you can never pray *with* David. All of the prayers that David will ever pray are already in black and white. When men die, so do their prayers. We honor the great cloud of witnesses in recognition of their devotion, but we never venerate dead men's prayers. Nor do we appeal to the dead men who prayed these prayers. No matter how loud you plead, they can't hear you. We may be able to use the language of another person's prayers after they are dead, but when we pray these prayers, they become *our* prayers, just with borrowed words.

Yet, the prayers of the resurrected and ascended Christ are unceasing! Jesus still lives and is interceding on your behalf. Robert Murray M'Cheyne wrote, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me." Jesus is praying for you right now. When you wake up tomorrow, Jesus will be praying for you. When you are tempted to sin, Jesus is praying for you. When you don't know what to pray, Jesus through the Spirit of God groans on your behalf!



## REFLECTION

What does knowing that Jesus is praying for you reveal about His character? How does the eternal intercession of the Ascended Christ change the way you live?

How can we profitably use pre-written prayers in our personal spiritual disciplines? Are there specific prayers from the Bible or other books (such as *The Valley of Vision* or *The Book of Common Prayer*) that you come back to time and time again?

Following Christ's example, we can pray for other people. Ask those you talk to this week how you can be praying for them, and then be faithful to do so. Follow up with them to see how God is working in their lives.

## SONG: "ARISE, MY SOUL, ARISE"

Arise, my soul, arise  
Shake off your guilty fears  
The bleeding sacrifice  
On my behalf appears  
Before the throne my Surety stands  
Before the throne my Surety stands  
My name is written on His hands

Arise, arise, arise  
Arise, my soul, arise  
Arise, arise, arise  
Arise, my soul, arise  
Shake off your guilty fears and rise

He ever lives above  
For me to intercede  
His all redeeming love  
His precious blood, to plead  
His blood atoned for every race  
His blood atoned for every race  
And sprinkles now the throne of grace



Five bleeding wounds He bears  
Received on Calvary  
They pour effectual prayers  
They strongly plead for me  
“Forgive him, O forgive,” they cry  
“Forgive him, O forgive,” they cry  
“Nor let that ransomed sinner die!”

The Father hears Him pray  
His dear anointed One  
He cannot turn away  
The presence of His Son  
The Spirit answers to the blood  
The Spirit answers to the blood  
And tells me I am born of God

My God is reconciled  
His pardoning voice I hear  
He owns me as His child  
I can no longer fear  
With confidence I now draw nigh  
With confidence I now draw nigh  
And “Father, Abba, Father,” cry

## **PRAYER**

O God, who by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light: Grant that we, who have been raised with him, may abide in his presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be dominion and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

*—The Book of Common Prayer*



## WEEK 27

JUNE 2 - 8

### READING PLAN

**Sunday:** 2 Kings 18:13-19:13; Psalm 78:56-62; Acts 4-6

**Monday:** 2 Kings 19:14-20:21; Psalm 78:63-72; Acts 4-6

**Tuesday:** 2 Kings 21:1-22:7; Psalm 79:1-5; Acts 4-6

**Wednesday:** 2 Kings 22:8-23:27; Psalm 79:6-13; Acts 7-9

**Thursday:** 2 Kings 23:28-24:20; Psalm 80:1-7; Acts 7-9

**Friday:** 2 Kings 25; Psalm 80:8-19; Acts 7-9

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: LUKE 18:31-34

And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

### DEVOTIONAL

We can never unsee what we’ve seen. As we transition out of this season of Easter into the season of Pentecost and then Ordinary Time (see p. 160), we must not slip back into the dark. The revelation of the resurrected Son of God has come. Although the disciples were once ignorant of the meaning of the Resurrection, once these things were revealed, they devoted their lives to the resurrected Christ. Tradition tells us that 10 of the 11 faithful apostles were eventually martyred for their faith. Something radical must have happened. How else could they persevere? The only explanation is they had met the resurrected Lord.

The resurrection of the Messiah was a seismic event in Jewish history, causing the Sabbath to transition from Saturday to Sunday. Now, for the Christian, every Sunday is Easter Sunday. We will never fully transition out of the season of Easter. Every day is a



celebration of the One who has defeated death once and for all. Once we have met the resurrected Lord, we can never go back.

## **REFLECTION**

When the disciples understood the significance of Jesus' resurrection, they devoted their lives to Him, spreading the gospel far and wide. In what ways are you holding back in your devotion to Christ and His message? What's one area where you can devote yourself more fully to Him?

Aside from Easter Sunday, how often do you think about Christ's resurrection? How can you incorporate a regular celebration of Easter into your weekly rhythm?

How has celebrating the season of Easter rather than simply Easter Sunday impacted your life? What's one thing that has stuck out to you these last few weeks?

## **SONG: "CHRIST JESUS LAY IN DEATH'S STRONG BANDS"**

Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands  
For our offenses given  
But now at God's right hand He stands  
And brings us light from heaven  
Therefore let us joyful be  
And sing to God right thankfully  
Loud songs of hallelujah  
Hallelujah

It was a strange and dreadful strife  
When life and death contended  
The victory remained with life  
The reign of death was ended  
Holy Scripture plainly saith  
That death is swallowed up by death  
His sting is lost forever  
Hallelujah





Here the true Paschal Lamb we see  
Whom God so freely gave us  
He died on the accursed tree  
So strong His love to save us  
See, His blood doth mark our door  
Faith points to it, death passes o'er  
And Satan cannot harm us  
Hallelujah

So let us keep the festival  
Whereto the Lord invites us  
Christ is Himself the joy of all  
The sun that warms and lights us  
By His grace He doth impart  
Eternal sunshine to the heart  
The night of sin is ended  
Hallelujah

## **PRAYER**

Father of glory, we praise you that you mightily raised your Son, Jesus, from the dead. We praise you that the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is your doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. Death could not hold him! Our last enemy has fallen before your power in the triumph of Jesus over death, and we have been freed from fear of this ancient enemy. And now, O God, grant us to live in the riches of all that Jesus' resurrection means. All authority belongs to him in heaven and on earth. No power and no enemy can prevail against him. Only good can come to us in the end as we trust in him. The best is always yet to come. So, Father, banish fear and fretting and discouragement and moodiness from our lives. Rivet our attention on the ultimate reality of Christ's final triumph over death. Never let us forget or fail to feel universal glory that you have given Jesus a name that is above every name. Make this practical in our daily lives as we see every person, great and small, facing someday the risen and triumphant Judge of all the nations. Give us a brokenhearted boldness in the mercy and the might of Jesus. O Father, we want our lives to count for the display of his greatness. Work in us to this end with all your might, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

*—Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ by John Piper*



## IDEAS FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Easter is a joyful season of celebrating the truth that Jesus defeated death when He rose from the grave. He defeated sin on the cross and defeated death after three days in the tomb. During the Easter season, we remember that the tomb is empty and those who love and trust Jesus have the promise of eternal life with God. This amazing news not only deserves to be celebrated, but shared.

### SONGS

Jesus Came to Save Sinners  
His Glory Is Above  
The Apostles' Creed

### DECORATIONS

The goal of Easter is to celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and death. Make a banner with the words "Jesus is alive!" to hang in your home. Using flowers to decorate reminds us of the garden where the empty tomb was. Write Scripture celebrating the resurrection on a chalkboard or mirror.

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

#### **Jesus Is Alive! (Resurrection Rolls)**

As the season of Lent ends and Easter begins, we get to move from somber reflection on the cross to joyful celebration of the empty tomb! If you have preschoolers, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* is a great resource to read together, specifically, "God's Wonderful Surprise" (p. 310). If you have older children, reading the account of the Resurrection directly from the Bible can be a time to grow together as a family. Help your kids find the story in their Bible using the table of contents and the chapter and verse numbers. The accounts of the Resurrection can be found in all four Gospels, and reading each one will add to your family's understanding of Jesus' victory over death. They can be found in: Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-18.



After reading the accounts of Jesus' resurrection, talk about what the women and the disciples might have felt as they went to the tomb to see Jesus' body. When they got to the tomb and saw the angels and the stone rolled away, did they understand immediately? Once they realized what had happened, what did they do? Jesus had risen from the dead, just like He said before He was crucified. This was a strange thing that no one fully understood. But this wonderful thing brought great joy to those who loved and trusted Jesus. It is why those of us who love and trust Jesus today also have great joy and hope.

Bake Resurrection Rolls with your family (recipe at [vll.ge/ResRolls](http://vll.ge/ResRolls)). As you follow the recipe, recall to each other what happened as Jesus' body was laid in the tomb and when Jesus rose from the dead. Enjoy your rolls and thank God for sending Jesus to save sinners!

### **Jesus Goes Back to Heaven**

After Jesus came back to life, He spent some time with His disciples and then returned to heaven to be with God the Father. Read about Jesus' ascension in Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:4-11, or in "Going Home" in *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (p. 318). Did Jesus stay here on earth? Where did He go? What did He tell His disciples to do next?

Jesus is in heaven with God the Father. And He has given us an important job to do until He returns. We get to tell others the good news that Jesus died on the cross to save sinners! Have each person in your family create some type of art, story, poem or song that shows or tells the story of the crucifixion and resurrection. Look for opportunities to share your creation with others during the Easter season.

Spend time in prayer as a family. Thank God for sending Jesus to save sinners. Pray for someone you know who does not love and trust Jesus. Parents, pray for your child's salvation out loud over them.

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS**

### **Easter Bag**

In our Preschool ministry, we give kids ages 3 and older a My Little Easter Bag. If you missed it, just ask a Preschool staff member for one. Let your child tell you the story of Jesus' death and resurrection using the book and items in the bag. Keep the bag in your car or somewhere where your child can easily play with it to capture moments to remember the good news that Jesus came to save sinners.



### **Sharing Your Crucifixion and Resurrection Creation**

As your family learned about Jesus' instructions to tell everyone the good news of Jesus, you made a work of art, story, poem or song about the crucifixion and resurrection. Find an opportunity to share your creation with someone else. Take the time to tell them the story of Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Pray that the person you share with would love and trust Jesus.



# I HOPE I DON'T END UP IN HEAVEN

CLINT PATRONELLA

Most people have some element of confusion when it comes to life after death. Popular belief is that the final, ultimate “resting” place after we die or when all is said and done is “heaven.”

But is this true? Is this what the Scriptures teach?

This belief is often more informed by pop culture than the Scriptures. Sometimes preachers are so hell-bent on “saving” you that they forget to tell you the whole story, making it sound like the only “saving” we need is from hell, and the only benefit of salvation is heaven. Or sometimes it is because in light of not having the truth, you simply fill in the gaps with what you think the Scriptures say on the issue.

I write to offer the hope of resurrection “as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:18-25; 6:5).

The Bible teaches that, before Christ returns, all believers who die will be with God in heaven in a conscious, immaterial (non-bodily) state (2 Cor. 5:6-10). You see, that is exactly what death is. Death is the separation of the immaterial (your soul) from the material (your body). God created humanity with bodies and souls. The soul is not more precious than the body, nor is the body more precious than the soul. A person’s soul is not the “real” you. The real you is what you have right now: body and soul. When a person dies, the body separates from the soul. This is why death is such a formidable enemy. Death defiles humanity of the dignity that God created us to have. Death tries to “uncreate” us.

God’s restoration and redemption of humanity is not focused on “saving” your soul and leaving your body to perish. This would give death a half victory and God a pitiful rescue.

God defeated death on the cross through Jesus Christ, the Righteous.

God is in the business of total restoration and complete redemption.

So when a believer dies before the return of Christ, that person is present with the Lord but absent in body in heaven (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). So, yes, we do go to heaven when we



die, but this is not the final, ultimate place of rest. All the saints who have died before are eagerly anticipating the day of redemption, the return of Christ when we will be united with Him in our resurrection.

Christ will return and bring consummation to all things, eventually creating a new heaven and new earth. When all has come to pass, we will be reunited with a body, a new heavenly body—precisely what Paul speaks of when he says that we are “glorified” in Romans 8:28-30.

This is the fullness of redemption. We were made human with a body and, in the future eternal state, we will continue to be human with bodies—we will be the image bearers we were created to be. There will be no more possibility for sin and no more death, and our humanity will be what it was created to be. What death tried to uncreate, God will recreate.

Redemption is not a deliverance from the material world, but the reestablishment and sanctification of it (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-27; 22:1-21). God saves us in body and spirit through the incarnation, perfect life, death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ who will return to raise our mortal, corruptible, shameful bodies to be like His glorious, incorruptible, immortal body unified with our purified spirit now fit for the kingdom of God on the new earth (1 Cor. 15:42-49).

So what will our new resurrected bodies be like?

Paul writes in Philippians that his desire is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection so that he would attain his own resurrection (Phil. 3:8-11). On the one hand, the Bible doesn’t give us the exact details of the resurrected body. On the other hand, we are not completely unknowledgeable of what it will be like. We see through a mirror dimly. Thus, it is helpful to think of our new heavenly bodies as being like our old bodies, as opposed to an immaterial existence.

In fact, Jesus even used the word flesh to speak about His resurrected body (Luke 24:36-42).

What Jesus does not mean by the word “flesh” is anything that could be construed as “sinful” or “earthly” flesh. Though different authors of Scripture use the term in various ways, Jesus uses the word to show that He was not an apparition or ghost but a physical body. His resurrected body could be touched, take up space and eat fish for breakfast. Christ is in His resurrected body, and He is referring to it as flesh and bones.



Other references to the risen Savior help us see what our resurrected bodies will be like:

- Jesus eats breakfast with the disciples in His resurrected body (John 21:9-15).
- Mary clings to Jesus (John 20:11-18).
- Jesus shows the disciples His body with marks from the crucifixion (John 20:20).
- Thomas touches the Lord's scars (John 20:24-29).
- The disciples take hold of His feet and worship Him (Matt. 28:9-10).
- He appears to over 500 people (1 Cor. 15:6).

Scripture makes clear our future resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-58). Though we do not have every detail on what this new body looks like or how it will be, we do have a general picture and the hope that it will be like that of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:35-58).

“Oh death where is your victory? Oh death where is your sting?” Because death has been swallowed up by the life (and death) of Christ, death is fully defeated and we are able to live.

This reality should bring us to a place of worship and gratitude, for Christ has achieved for us what we could not. Our blessed hope is the future resurrection of the saints. And this should also change the way we live today. Paul says that, because of the resurrection (Christ's and ours), we should be steadfast, immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Our lives here are not in vain. We live as redeemed people preaching the gospel in word and deed, awaiting our resurrection.

The resurrection of the body is a distinctive teaching in Christianity and a pivotal point of doctrine. In fact, the resurrection of the body is one of the most widely held beliefs across denominations, geographies and time. It appears in the Nicene Creed (AD 325):

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;  
and I look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Bible doesn't map out each strand of the resurrected DNA or give a breakdown of all the things that we will and won't be able to do. The beauty and hope of resurrection far exceeds the need for a blueprint. We can sing the song of resurrection even without knowing the exact words and make beautiful harmonies and melodies.



So I mean what I say: I hope I don't end up in heaven.

I hope that Christ comes to bring completion and consummation, and that, when He does, all those who have been adopted as sons and daughters of God will be finally and completely saved (justified, sanctified, glorified): redeemed, restored, renewed and resurrected to live in the city of God on the new earth as God's image bearers, both body and soul—the way we were created to be.





# THE RESURRECTION COMPELS US TO DO BETTER WORK

DAVID ROARK

When we think about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our imagination is flooded with connections. From the iconic image of an empty tomb to memories of egg hunts and giant bunnies, this fundamental Christian doctrine conjures up a number of thoughts and questions for believers and unbelievers alike. But what we may not think about when we think about the Resurrection might just be the most important thing of all—the implications for our everyday lives, specifically our work and our jobs.

There's a well-earned stigma around Christians and work, especially things like art and entertainment. Most people—and that includes actual Christians—think of it as shoddy and kitschy, second rate at best. As Gregory Thornbury, president of King's College in New York City, once said, “Christian’ is the greatest of all nouns and the lamest of all adjectives.”

Of course, things haven't always been this way. Throughout history, Christians actually led the way when it came to culture. Michelangelo, Beethoven, Lewis, Eliot—there is an endless list of Christians who dominated the arts for a span of centuries. And while a negativity emerged around the 20th century, there doesn't seem to be one silver-bullet reason for why we've gotten where we are now with Christians and art.

In a culture and faith growing further from tradition and orthodoxy, it seems that one way we might start to set things right again is by reclaiming a proper understanding of the Resurrection. Yet, most Christians don't see the relevance of the Resurrection when it comes to work and culture. They see the Resurrection as a doctrine related to the personal, not the cultural—the theoretical, not the practical.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, however, is as much about work and vocation as it is anything else. In his book *Surprised by Hope*, theologian N.T. Wright unpacks this idea:

The point of the resurrection...is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die...What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it...What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of



making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether (as the hymn so mistakenly puts it...). They are part of what we may call building for God's kingdom.

The Resurrection is not only about the deity of Christ and the defeat of Satan and sin. It's also about the beginning of a new creation and the reality that, as Christ was resurrected, we too will be resurrected—and all of creation will be resurrected. And we live in this reality today, letting the implications of the Resurrection affect everything that we do—including all of the things that we do and make. In other words, God uses His people to bring a sense of heaven to earth, as He will completely and wholly, once and for all, in the resurrection and restoration of all things.

There's surely a deep mystery within this understanding of the Resurrection. Somehow, the work that we do now—the art we make, the systems we manage, the goods and services we provide—is not temporal but eternal. The movies, the music, the paintings, the designs, the sculptures, the food, the products—they're not merely a signpost or foretaste of what is to come because of the Resurrection; they're actually a part of that Resurrection and story.

When we think of our work in this way—in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ—it makes us see it differently. It makes us want to do better. It makes us want everything that we do to be marked by the same truth, goodness and beauty that is found in the triune God of the Bible. It makes us want to take N.T. Wright at his word, as he describes the implications of the gospel—and, thus, the Resurrection:

The gospel of Jesus points us and indeed urges us to be at the leading edge of the whole culture, articulating in story and music and art and philosophy and education and poetry and politics and theology and even—heaven help us—Biblical studies, a worldview that will mount the historically-rooted Christian challenge to both modernity and postmodernity, leading the way...with joy and humor and gentleness and good judgment and true wisdom.

The Resurrection compels us to not only share the good news of the gospel through our work but also to do better work. When we do this, we live out the mandate given to us at creation. And as we sustain and care for culture, we get a foretaste of the new creation that we see in Revelation 21 and 22: a new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem, where all things will be made new again, which includes the gifts we've been given and the work that we do.







# PENTECOST

*The  
Spirit of  
Jesus Christ*





## INTRODUCTION

Even more than Epiphany, which tends to get mixed into Advent and Christmas, Pentecost is the most neglected of the seasons. Given the association with various charismatic and Pentecostal movements and traditions, there may be a certain hesitancy and fearfulness when it comes to this celebration, depending on your theology and background. Yet, to miss Pentecost is to miss the for-now conclusion of the one true story of the Bible—the story of Jesus.

The season of Pentecost represents a time to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, marking not only the presence of God dwelling in and empowering His people, but also the birth of the Church and the establishment of God's kingdom over all creation. As we remember and rejoice in the reality of the Spirit, Pentecost creates an extraordinary excitement among the people of God. The season reminds us that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead fills us, empowers us and sends us. It is a time to remember our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ and that, as we go, God is with us. It is a season to look forward to the mission of Christ completed through His Church, as God makes all things new again and lives with His people for eternity. Pentecost gives us a renewed sense of peace and power as we proclaim the gospel to a lost and dying world.

As our culture builds into us stories of individualism and nihilism, leading us to believe that life is meaningless and only terminates on ourselves, Pentecost gives us a better story, the one true story of the Bible—the story of Jesus. It reminds us that we are not our own, but we are caught up in a body of believers from past, present and future and a mission that transcends the here and now of this life. When we participate in the rhythms and practices of this story, specifically the reality that Christ sent His Spirit to live in us and that same Spirit sends us to live on mission for Christ, our lives take on new meaning and purpose. We become inspired and invigorated as the people of God living out the mission of God.



## HISTORY & TRADITIONS

Celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter, Pentecost comes from an Old Testament feast called the Feast of Weeks. God's people celebrated this agricultural feast for thousands of years as a way to give thanks to God for the "firstfruits" of the early spring harvest, but by the New Testament period, the meaning of this feast shifted to be less about crops and more about the history of God's people. So when God's people gathered from all over the world to celebrate this feast and the Spirit of God fell on them in Acts 2, Pentecost took on a new meaning. It was now about a different firstfruit, Christ, who died and rose again with a new, resurrected body, as we will one day be raised up with new, resurrected bodies because the same Spirit who lived in Christ now lives in us. And, at Pentecost, a new people was formed—men, women and children from every tribe, tongue and nation, continuing the history of God's people and God's promise to Abraham fulfilled.

Pentecost is unique because it wraps up the season of Easter—some traditions even consider it to be a part of Easter—and kicks off the beginning of "Ordinary Time," the period of time on the Church Calendar that lasts until Advent. Sometimes called "After Pentecost," Ordinary Time consists of the "ordinary" days, weeks and months of the Christian life, where the people of God live out the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

As a part of Pentecost, many traditions historically celebrate Trinity Sunday, which focuses on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. In the West, Trinity Sunday is observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost, and in the East, it is celebrated on Pentecost, though sometimes Eastern traditions dismiss Trinity Sunday altogether, claiming that they celebrate the Trinity every day. This day stands out among other celebrations within the seasons because it centers not around an event but a doctrine.

**Posture:** joyful, excited, intentional, missional

**Colors:** red, white, green

**Symbols:** fire, wind, dove, red flags

**Flowers and Greenery:** ginger, heliconia



## WEEK 28

JUNE 9 - 15

### READING PLAN

**Sunday (Pentecost):** Numbers 1:1-46; Psalm 81:1-6; Acts 10-12

**Monday:** Numbers 1:47-2:34; Psalm 81:7-16; Acts 10-12

**Tuesday:** Numbers 3; Psalm 82; Acts 10-12

**Wednesday:** Numbers 4; Psalm 83:1-4; Acts 13-15

**Thursday:** Numbers 5; Psalm 83:5-10; Acts 13-15

**Friday:** Numbers 6:1-7:11; Psalm 83:11-18; Acts 13-15

**Saturday:** Reflect and catch up

### PASSAGE: JOHN 15:26-27

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

### DEVOTIONAL

For us, the term “helper” has taken on something of a diminutive sense. We think of “Santa’s helper” or “mommy’s little helper.” A helper, for us, might be someone who comes along and fills in a few gaps by checking off the menial duties on our to-do list. A helper is nice to have; they might make life easier, but they’re not necessary to get the job done.

When Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as Helper, He could not have a more different role in view. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit precisely because Jesus’ disciples are inept to fulfill their calling apart from His work. Jesus says that it is to the disciples’ advantage that He leaves, because if He doesn’t leave, the Helper will not come. The Holy Spirit is vital for fulfilling the mission of God on earth.

Pentecost serves as the exclamation point at the close of the Easter season that reverberates throughout the rest of the year. It reminds us that we are a commissioned people—sent to the ends of our driveways and the ends of the globe to bear witness to





the good news of the kingdom of the risen Lord. And this seemingly impossible task is made possible because we've been sent the Helper—a Helper who fills up all that we lack and empowers us in every way to do all that we've been called to do until our King returns.

## **REFLECTION**

Define “helper” in your own words. How might your definition of the word impact (for better or worse) the way you envision the Spirit’s work?

According to this passage in John, what is the Holy Spirit’s primary activity? How does recognizing this influence the way you evaluate the validity of activities or ministries that claim to be works of the Spirit today?

What is one way that you are struggling to “bear witness about Jesus” in your life? How can you allow the Holy Spirit to be your Helper in that?

## **SONG: “O SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD”**

O Spirit of the living God, Thou light and fire divine  
Descend upon Thy Church once more and make it truly Thine  
Fill it with love and joy and power, with righteousness and peace  
Till Christ shall dwell in human hearts and sin and sorrow cease

Blow wind of God, with wisdom blow until our minds are free  
From mists of error, clouds of doubt, which blind our eyes to Thee  
Burn winged fire, inspire our lips with flaming love and zeal  
To preach to all Thy great good news, God’s glorious commonweal

So shall we know the power of Christ who came this world to save  
So shall we rise with Him to life which soars beyond the grave  
And earth shall win true holiness which makes Thy children whole  
Till perfected by Thee we reach creation’s glorious goal



## PRAYER

Gracious God, we rejoice and praise you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. But as we celebrate the release of your power we would confess our own lack of power. While our need is great for your Spirit, we frequently have not taken the time to ask or pause long enough to receive your Spirit. Tragically we have often sought to do your ministry with our own might. Forgive our impatience and rebellious efforts to run the church and your kingdom on our own. We acknowledge that our actions and attitudes have often grieved you and suppressed your Holy Spirit. Cleanse us from our sins so that we might be renewed and refreshed by this liberating gift of Pentecost. Hear us now as we continue to confess our sins and needs before you. In the strong name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

*-The Services of the Christian Year (Vol. 5) by Robert Webber*



## IDEAS FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Pentecost is an intentional season of remembering the gift of the Holy Spirit to everyone who loves and trusts in Jesus and the responsibility to share the good news of Jesus with others. While the Holy Spirit might be difficult for some younger children to fully understand, we can teach them (and remember ourselves) that the Holy Spirit is a Helper. The Spirit helps us remember the truth of God and gives us courage to share the good news of Jesus with others. During Pentecost, we have the opportunity to practice and model what it looks like to think of and serve others like Jesus did.

### SONGS

Our God Wants to Talk With Us  
He Will Always Be There

### DECORATIONS

The goal of Pentecost is to remember the gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers and the joy we have in telling others the good news that Jesus came to save sinners. This is a fantastic opportunity to use maps and flags from countries all over the world to decorate spaces in your home. Write Scripture (like the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20) on a chalkboard or mirror.

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

#### **The Helper Comes**

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised that a Helper was coming. The Holy Spirit is that Helper. The Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit lives inside those who love and trust Jesus, helping them to understand and believe the Bible and to share the good news of Jesus with others. If you have preschoolers, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* is a great resource to read together, specifically, “God Sends Help” (p. 326). If you have older children, reading the account of the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost directly from the Bible can be a sweet time to grow together as a family. The account of Pentecost can be



found in Acts 2:1-13, 41. Help your kids find the story in their Bible using the table of contents and the chapter and verse numbers.

After reading the account of the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost, talk about what it must have been like to hear the disciples speaking in lots of different languages they did not know. Were they confused? Excited? Peter spoke to a crowd of people and told them about Jesus. The Bible says many people “received his word.” That means they believed Peter’s message, and God gave them hearts that loved and trusted Jesus. How many people believed that day?

There are so many languages spoken all over the world. The Bible tells us that Jesus will not return until people from every tribe, language and nation love and trust Jesus. Spend time together looking at a map and praying for the people of different countries. Pray that someone would tell them the good news of Jesus. Pray that they would receive a Bible written in their language.

### **Missionary Encouragement**

There are men, women and families who have left their homes to go to other countries to tell people about Jesus. We often call these people missionaries. The Village Church has lots of missionaries in all different parts of the world. Go to [thevillagechurch.net/outreach/missionaries](http://thevillagechurch.net/outreach/missionaries) to see a list of some of our missionaries. When you click on each missionary, you will see information about that missionary and the country that they are serving in. There are also links to their websites and ways to contact them. Spend time as a family praying for these missionaries. Send them a note of encouragement. If you feel led, send them a financial contribution to help them in their work.

### **The Church Begins**

After Peter’s sermon where 3,000 people were saved, something beautiful happened. The people who loved and trusted Jesus began to come together to form the Church. Read about the beginning of the Church in Acts 2:42-47. What are some of the things the people of the Church did together? Do we still do these things with other people who love and trust Jesus? What does verse 47 say was happening as the Church spent time together?

How does your family practice the things we see in Acts 2 with other people who love and trust Jesus? What are some things you see in these verses that you are not practicing? Are there ways to add this to the rhythm of your family? Pray as a family, thanking God for His Church.



## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS**

### **Out to Eat, Around the World**

The next time your family goes out to eat, pick a restaurant that serves food from another country. Be adventurous. Google facts about the country and talk about them as you wait for your food. As you experience another culture through their food, capture the moment to pray for that country. Pray that people in that country would hear the good news of Jesus and believe. Pray for missionaries in that country.

### **Praying for Countries Where Your Clothes Are Made**

As you put on your clothes each morning, take a moment to look at the tag to see where they were made. Find the country on a map or in an atlas. Then, say a quick prayer for the people and missionaries in that country.

### **Maps, Pictures, Stories and More Maps**

It is our natural tendency to focus on ourselves and what is immediately around us. One way we can help our children begin to have a heart for the nations is to help them understand just how big the world is. Look at maps together as a family. Talk about different countries you have visited or want to visit. Look at pictures from countries your child notices. Encourage your child's imagination and desire to see and experience different parts of the world. As you have conversations, remind your family of the people in these different countries around the world. How are you the same? How are you different? Pray that people from every tribe, language and nation would love and trust Jesus. And dream together about what it will be like when we all worship Jesus together.



# WE HAVE REASON TO CELEBRATE

ADAM HAWKINS

Christians, especially of the Reformed species, don't often do a good job of celebrating. We are good at self-reflection and somberness. We are good at staring into suffering and acknowledging sin. But we don't do so with much hope; we often focus so much on our sorrow over sin that we forget to celebrate who God is and what He has done in our lives. For example, as a pastor, I've been guilty of turning the Lord's Supper, a time of historic celebration in the Church, into a sad, melancholy practice.

If you know anything about Church history, you know that it hasn't always been this way. But how has the Church historically combated this drive toward lament and contemplativeness? The answer may surprise you: They used the Church Calendar.

Most of us orient our lives around a calendar whether we realize it or not. This calendar tends to be either the school calendar, for those of us with school-age kids, or a bevy of secular or secularized holidays. How many of us have thought, "If I can just make it to Thanksgiving," or "Starting in the new year"? Our lives are informed, planned around and shaped by this annual cycle.

But what if, instead, we oriented our lives around God's redemptive story by celebrating and contemplating the gospel? Our entire lives would be shaped and formed by God's story. Imagine how our lives would be a testimony to our children, coworkers and neighbors if we planned dinners and holidays and celebrations around the seasons of the Church Calendar. Celebrating Pentecost is one way we could do just that, and I would argue that the result will be life-altering.

The Church Calendar orders life in such a way that the people of God spend seasons reflecting and seasons celebrating, seasons fasting and seasons feasting. Through this rhythm, the Church can avoid becoming imbalanced, acknowledging its sinfulness and suffering while celebrating that God did not leave His people alone in their sin. Whereas Lent is a season of reflection, Pentecost is meant to be a season of celebration.

The Bible talks about Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4:

*When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and*



*rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

As we see in the book of Acts, Pentecost is the day that Christ, the Son of God, sends His people the Spirit of God, thereby marking the birth of the Church. Before Christ came onto the scene, Pentecost was a Jewish agricultural feast to praise God for the firstfruits of the harvest that occurred 50 days after Passover. This is where the name comes from, as Pentecost actually means “fifty” in Greek and comes from a Christian expression meaning “50th day.” Yet, just as He reoriented the Passover meal around Christ in the sacrament of Communion, God reoriented this Jewish celebratory feast around the birth of the Church. For Christians, Pentecost transitioned into a time to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the firstfruits of the Resurrection.

To be clear, I am not proposing that we celebrate Pentecost out of a desire to carry on an Old Testament tradition or because it is ordered in the Scriptures. In that sense, none of the seasons of the Church Calendar are required or ordered in the Scriptures. I’m merely proposing that we celebrate Pentecost, like the other seasons, because celebration is the fitting response to the reality that God has given His Spirit to those whom He calls. It is a chance for God’s people to reflect on the fact that the Church started with this gift, it is maintained by this gift, and it will be consummated by this gift.

As Christians, we must be a reflective people, and these reflections should stir up nothing less than worship and celebration. During the season of Pentecost, we are called into a season of celebrating God’s gift of Himself, the Holy Spirit, to the Church. As we look back on this event in Acts, we celebrate God’s goodness and faithfulness to His people. By reorienting our lives around the story of Jesus and His Church, we will discover that we have much reason to celebrate.



# PENTECOST: EMPOWERED FOR THE ORDINARY

MATT CLAKLEY

Each May brings with it graduation season. Clad in cap and gown, students of all stripes convene, surrounded by family and friends, for the culmination of their studies. And how have we chosen to celebrate this consummation of educational achievement? With a commencement ceremony—a recognition that though one chapter is closing, a new chapter is beginning.

Pentecost stands in the Church Calendar much like a commencement ceremony stands in a student's life. It culminates the seasons of Advent through Easter. It's an exclamation point on the Church's reflection on Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection. And also, it stands as the grand "therefore" leading into a season of Ordinary Time as the Church of Jesus Christ continues about the work she was commissioned to do: make disciples of every nation to the glory of God.

The roughly six months between Pentecost and Advent are called Ordinary Time—this is in contrast to the previous six months which were a time focused on the extraordinary events of Jesus' birth, ministry, death and resurrection. However, we would be terribly remiss if we concluded that Ordinary Time is somehow less important than the extraordinary seasons that surround it. Pentecost simply will not allow such a mundane view of the ordinary.

The Christian Church has historically seen the events of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, as the birth of the Church. Luke records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people of God to embolden and empower them for the mission they had been called to. At Pentecost, we see the baton of Jesus' extraordinary ministry passed on to His disciples who would continue His work. And this ministry was a ministry marked by power.

The New Testament is full of references to Jesus' power, seen perhaps most clearly in Luke's Gospel. He records great multitudes of people pressing in on Jesus, "and all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19). In his account of Jesus healing the paralytic, Luke recounts that "the power of the Lord was with [Jesus] to heal" (Luke 5:17). Later, in the scene where Jesus is touched by the woman with the issue of blood, Jesus says, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me" (Luke 8:46).





When we read *power* in the New Testament, whether in some of the passages referenced above or otherwise, it might be tempting to think of it as some mystical, impersonal force. But before we begin to interpret Scripture through the lens of *Star Wars* and see this power as a biblical equivalent to “The Force,” we must realize that the power that accompanied Jesus’ ministry is synonymous with the work of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 10, as Peter is ministering at the house of Cornelius, he says that Jesus of Nazareth had been anointed by God with “the Holy Spirit and with *power*” (Acts 10:38). The last recorded words of Jesus in the book of Luke show a direct parallel between the coming of the promised Holy Spirit and the resultant power, “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). This *power* represents a *Person*, the Holy Spirit, God.

It’s often easy to equate the extraordinary miracles that Jesus worked during His ministry on earth with His own divine nature as Son of God. We think, “Well, of course He was bold to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God—He is God.” Or we think, “Of course He could make the lame to walk and the blind to see—He is God.” But the reality is, Scripture gives every indication that the powerful working of miracles by Jesus was not necessarily a result of His own divine nature, but rather of ministry done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the same Holy Spirit that empowered the apostles to work extraordinary miracles—just like Jesus—and the same Holy Spirit that belongs to every woman and every man who puts their faith in Jesus. This is the same Holy Spirit that Peter is speaking of when he writes, “His divine *power* has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). It’s the same Holy Spirit that Paul speaks of when he prays that his brothers and sisters in Ephesus would know “what is the immeasurable greatness of his *power* toward us who believe” (Eph. 1:19) and “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with *power* through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph. 3:16).

And so, at Pentecost, we celebrate that the Father has sent the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:26). We celebrate that in the Holy Spirit we’ve been given the *power* to be witnesses to Christ’s gospel “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We celebrate that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead now dwells within us (Rom. 8:11).

The Lord is “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the *power* at work within us” (Eph. 3:20). Let us move confidently forward into all that the Lord has called us, empowered by and full of the Holy Spirit, expecting the extraordinary power of God to invade the ordinary.



## ORDINARY TIME

Pentecost both concludes the season of Easter and ushers in what the Church has historically called “Ordinary Time.” While the name can be confusing, Ordinary Time is anything but a break from entering the story of Christ. Whereas Advent is about the coming of Christ, Epiphany the manifestation of Christ, Lent the temptation and death of Christ, Easter the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost the Spirit of Christ, Ordinary Time is about the mission of Christ. You could even say that all the seasons lead up to this point between Pentecost and Advent. During Ordinary Time, the Church is empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent on mission to make disciples. It’s “Ordinary Time” because it’s the time and space where we seek to be the people of God living out the mission of God in ordinary, everyday life—in our homes, neighborhoods, communities, workplaces and to the ends of the earth.

### WEEKLY PRACTICES AND BIBLE READING PLAN

During Ordinary Time, we will not provide weekly practices like we have throughout the seasons, but we would encourage you to continue through the Bible Reading Plan found in Appendix A. This part of the reading plan will focus on the mission of Christ and His Church.

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

This is Part 2 of a two-year plan that covers the New Testament six times, the Psalms twice and the rest of the Old Testament once. Sundays are left free for reflection and to catch up on any passages you missed throughout the week.

### ADVENT

#### WEEK 1:

- 12/2/18: Amos 1-3; Psalm 1-2; Mark 1-3
- 12/3/18: Amos 4-6; Psalm 3; Mark 1-3
- 12/4/18: Amos 5-6; Psalm 4; Mark 4-6
- 12/5/18: Amos 7-9; Psalm 5:1-4; Mark 4-6
- 12/6/18: Jeremiah 1; Psalm 5:5-12; Mark 4-6
- 12/7/18: Jeremiah 2-4:4; Psalm 6; Mark 7-9
- 12/8/18: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 2:

- 12/9/18: Jeremiah 4:5-5:13; Psalm 6; Mark 7-9
- 12/10/18: Jeremiah 5:14-6:30; Psalm 7:1-7; Mark 7-9
- 12/11/18: Jeremiah 7:1-29; Psalm 7:8-17; Mark 10-12
- 12/12/18: Jeremiah 7:30-9:26; Psalm 8; Mark 10-12
- 12/13/18: Jeremiah 10; Psalm 9:1-7; Mark 10-12
- 12/14/18: Jeremiah 11-12; Psalm 9:8-20; Mark 13-14
- 12/15/18: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 3:

- 12/16/18: Jeremiah 13; Psalm 10:1-8; Mark 13-14
- 12/17/18: Jeremiah 14-15; Psalm 10:9-18; Mark 13-14
- 12/18/18: Jeremiah 16-18; Psalm 11; Mark 15-16
- 12/19/18: Jeremiah 19-20; Psalm 12; Mark 15-16
- 12/20/18: Jeremiah 21-22; Psalm 13; Mark 15-16
- 12/21/18: Jeremiah 23; Psalm 14; 1 Thessalonians 1-3
- 12/22/18: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### EPIPHANY

#### WEEK 4:

- 12/23/18: Jeremiah 24-26; Psalm 15; 1 Thessalonians 1-3
- 12/24/18: Jeremiah 27-28; Psalm 16; 1 Thessalonians 1-3
- 12/25/18: Jeremiah 29; Psalm 17:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4-5
- 12/26/18: Jeremiah 30-31; Psalm 17:6-15; 1 Thessalonians 4-5
- 12/27/18: Jeremiah 32; Psalm 18:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4-5
- 12/28/18: Jeremiah 33; Psalm 18:7-13; 2 Thessalonians 1-3
- 12/29/18: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 5:

- 12/30/18: Jeremiah 34-35; Psalm 18:14-22; 2 Thessalonians 1-3
- 12/31/18: Jeremiah 36; Psalm 18:23-30; 2 Thessalonians 1-3
- 1/1/19: Jeremiah 37-38; Psalm 18:31-39; John 1-3
- 1/2/19: Jeremiah 39-40; Psalm 18:40-50; John 1-3
- 1/3/19: Jeremiah 41-42; Psalm 19:1-5; John 1-3
- 1/4/19: Jeremiah 43-44; Psalm 19:6-14; John 4-5
- 1/5/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 6:

- 1/6/19: Jeremiah 45-47; Psalm 20; John 4-5
- 1/7/19: Jeremiah 48; Psalm 21:1-5; John 4-5
- 1/8/19: Jeremiah 49:1-22; Psalm 21:6-13; John 6-8
- 1/9/19: Jeremiah 49:23-39; Psalm 22:1-5; John 6-8
- 1/10/19: Jeremiah 50; Psalm 22:6-13; John 6-8
- 1/11/19: Jeremiah 51; Psalm 22:14-20; John 9-10
- 1/12/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 7:

- 1/13/19: Jeremiah 52; Psalm 22:21-31; John 9-10
- 1/14/19: Genesis 1; Psalm 23; John 9-10
- 1/15/19: Genesis 2-3; Psalm 24:1-3; John 11-12
- 1/16/19: Genesis 4; Psalm 24:4-10; John 11-12
- 1/17/19: Genesis 5:1-6:8; Psalm 25:1-9; John 11-12
- 1/18/19: Genesis 6:9-7:24; Psalm 25:10-22; John 13-15
- 1/19/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 8:

- 1/20/19: Genesis 8:1-9:17; Psalm 26:1-4; John 13-15
- 1/21/19: Genesis 9:18-10:32; Psalm 26:5-12; John 13-15
- 1/22/19: Genesis 11; Psalm 27:1-6; John 16-17
- 1/23/19: Genesis 12; Psalm 27:7-14; John 16-17
- 1/24/19: Genesis 13; Psalm 28; John 16-17
- 1/25/19: Genesis 14; Psalm 29:1-4; John 18-19
- 1/26/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 9:

- 1/27/19: Genesis 15; Psalm 29:5-11; John 18-19
- 1/28/19: Genesis 16-18; Psalm 30; John 18-19
- 1/29/19: Genesis 19; Psalm 31:1-6; John 20-21
- 1/30/19: Genesis 20-22; Psalm 31:7-15; John 20-21
- 1/31/19: Genesis 23; Psalm 31:16-24; John 20-21
- 2/1/19: Genesis 24; Psalm 32; Jude; 1 John 1-2
- 2/2/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 10:

- 2/3/19: Genesis 25; Psalm 33:1-6; Jude; 1 John 1-2
- 2/4/19: Genesis 26; Psalm 33:7-13; Jude; 1 John 1-2
- 2/5/19: Genesis 27; Psalm 33:14-22; 1 John 3-5
- 2/6/19: Genesis 28; Psalm 34:1-5; 1 John 3-5
- 2/7/19: Genesis 29; Psalm 34:6-13; 1 John 3-5
- 2/8/19: Genesis 30; Psalm 34:14-22; Hebrews 1-3
- 2/9/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 11:

- 2/10/19: Genesis 31; Psalm 35:1-5; Hebrews 1-3
- 2/11/19: Genesis 32; Psalm 35:6-14; Hebrews 1-3
- 2/12/19: Genesis 33; Psalm 35:15-20; Hebrews 4-6
- 2/13/19: Genesis 34; Psalm 35:21-28; Hebrews 4-6
- 2/14/19: Genesis 35; Psalm 36; Hebrews 4-6
- 2/15/19: Genesis 36-37; Psalm 37:1-5; Hebrews 7-9
- 2/16/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 12:

- 2/17/19: Genesis 38; Psalm 37:6-13; Hebrews 7-9
- 2/18/19: Genesis 39; Psalm 37:14-19; Hebrews 7-9
- 2/19/19: Genesis 40; Psalm 37:20-28; Hebrews 10-11
- 2/20/19: Genesis 41; Psalm 37:29-40; Hebrews 10-11
- 2/21/19: Genesis 42; Psalm 38:1-4; Hebrews 10-11
- 2/22/19: Genesis 43; Psalm 38:5-12; Hebrews 12-13
- 2/23/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 13:

- 2/24/19: Genesis 44; Psalm 38:13-16; Hebrews 12-13
- 2/25/19: Genesis 45; Psalm 38:17-22; Hebrews 12-13
- 2/26/19: Genesis 46; Psalm 39; Matthew 1-3
- 2/27/19: Genesis 47; Psalm 40:1-7; Matthew 1-3
- 2/28/19: Genesis 48; Psalm 40:8-17; Matthew 1-3
- 3/1/19: Genesis 49:1-27; Matthew 4-6
- 3/2/19: Reflect and catch up

LENT

### WEEK 14:

- 3/3/19: Genesis 49:28-50:26; Psalm 41:6-13; Matthew 4-6
- 3/4/19: Song of Solomon 1-2; Psalm 42; Matthew 4-6
- 3/5/19: Song of Solomon 3:1-5:9; Psalm 43; Matthew 7-9
- 3/6/19: Song of Solomon 5:10-8:14; Psalm 44:1-6; Matthew 7-9
- 3/7/19: Lamentations 1; Psalm 44:7-16; Matthew 7-9
- 3/8/19: Lamentations 2; Psalm 44:17-26; Matthew 10-12
- 3/9/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 15:

- 3/10/19: Lamentations 3:1-39; Psalm 45:1-7; Matthew 10-12
- 3/11/19: Lamentations 3:40-66; Psalm 45:8-17; Matthew 10-12
- 3/12/19: Lamentations 4; Psalm 46:1-4; Matthew 13-15
- 3/13/19: Lamentations 5; Psalm 46:5-11; Matthew 13-15
- 3/14/19: Ezekiel 1:1-3:15; Psalm 47; Matthew 13-15
- 3/15/19: Ezekiel 3:16-5:17; Psalm 48:1-5; Matthew 16-18
- 3/16/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 16:

- 3/17/19: Ezekiel 6-7; Psalm 48:6-14; Matthew 16-18
- 3/18/19: Ezekiel 8-9; Psalm 49:1-8; Matthew 16-18
- 3/19/19: Ezekiel 10:1-11:13; Psalm 49:9-20; Matthew 19-21
- 3/20/19: Ezekiel 11:14-12:28; Psalm 50:1-6; Matthew 19-21
- 3/21/19: Ezekiel 13; Psalm 50:7-13; Matthew 19-21
- 3/22/19: Ezekiel 14-15; Psalm 50:14-23; Matthew 22-24
- 3/23/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 17:

- 3/24/19: Ezekiel 16; Psalm 51:1-8; Matthew 22-24
- 3/25/19: Ezekiel 17; Psalm 51:9-19; Matthew 22-24
- 3/26/19: Ezekiel 18-19; Psalm 52; Matthew 25-26
- 3/27/19: Ezekiel 20; Psalm 53:1; Matthew 25-26
- 3/28/19: Ezekiel 21; Psalm 53:2-6; Matthew 25-26
- 3/29/19: Ezekiel 22; Psalm 54; Matthew 27-28
- 3/30/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 18:

- 3/31/19: Ezekiel 23; Psalm 55:1-8; Matthew 27-28
- 4/1/19: Ezekiel 24-25; Psalm 55:9-23; Matthew 27-28
- 4/2/19: Ezekiel 26; Psalm 56:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1-3
- 4/3/19: Ezekiel 27:1-28:10; Psalm 56:6-13; 1 Corinthians 1-3
- 4/4/19: Ezekiel 28:11-29:11; Psalm 57; 1 Corinthians 1-3
- 4/5/19: Ezekiel 30-31; Psalm 58; 1 Corinthians 4-6
- 4/6/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 19:

- 4/7/19: Ezekiel 32; Psalm 59:1-7; 1 Corinthians 4-6
- 4/8/19: Ezekiel 33; Psalm 59:8-17; 1 Corinthians 4-6
- 4/9/19: Ezekiel 34-35; Psalm 60:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7-9
- 4/10/19: Ezekiel 36; Psalm 60:5-12; 1 Corinthians 7-9
- 4/11/19: Ezekiel 37; Psalm 61; 1 Corinthians 7-9
- 4/12/19: Ezekiel 38:1-39:24; Psalm 62:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10-12
- 4/13/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### EASTER

#### WEEK 20:

- 4/14/19: Ezekiel 39:25-40:27; Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Corinthians 10-12
- 4/15/19: Ezekiel 40:28-41:26; Psalm 63:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10-12
- 4/16/19: Ezekiel 42-43; Psalm 63:5-11; 1 Corinthians 13-16
- 4/17/19: Ezekiel 44-45; Psalm 64; 1 Corinthians 13-16
- 4/18/19: Ezekiel 46; Psalm 65:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13-16
- 4/19/19: Ezekiel 47-48; Psalm 65:6-13; 1 Peter 1-3
- 4/20/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 21:

- 4/21/19: 1 Kings 1; Psalm 66:1-8; 1 Peter 1-3
- 4/22/19: 1 Kings 2; Psalm 66:9-20; 1 Peter 1-3
- 4/23/19: 1 Kings 3; Psalm 67; 1 Peter 4-5
- 4/24/19: 1 Kings 4-5; Psalm 68:1-6; 1 Peter 4-5
- 4/25/19: 1 Kings 6; Psalm 68:7-16; 1 Peter 4-5
- 4/26/19: 1 Kings 7; Psalm 68:17-24; 2 Peter 1-3
- 4/27/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 22:

- 4/28/19: 1 Kings 8; Psalm 68:25-35; 2 Peter 1-3
- 4/29/19: 1 Kings 9; Psalm 69:1-12; 2 Peter 1-3
- 4/30/19: 1 Kings 10; Psalm 69:13-2; 2 Peter 1-3
- 5/1/19: 1 Kings 11; Psalm 69:23-28; Luke 1-3
- 5/2/19: 1 Kings 12; Psalm 69:29-36; Luke 1-3
- 5/3/19: 1 Kings 13; Psalm 70; Luke 1-3
- 5/4/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 23:

- 5/5/19: 1 Kings 14:1-15:8; Psalm 71:1-11; Luke 4-6
- 5/6/19: 1 Kings 15:9-16:20; Psalm 71:12-24; Luke 4-6
- 5/7/19: 1 Kings 16:21-17:24; Psalm 72:1-8; Luke 4-6
- 5/8/19: 1 Kings 18:1-40; Psalm 72:9-20; Luke 7-9
- 5/9/19: 1 Kings 18:41-19:21; Psalm 73:1-4; Luke 7-9
- 5/10/19: 1 Kings 20; Psalm 73:5-10; Luke 7-9
- 5/11/19: Reflect and catch up



## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 24:

- 5/12/19: 1 Kings 21; Psalm 73:11-19; Luke 10-12
- 5/13/19: 1 Kings 22:1-28; Psalm 73:20-28; Luke 10-12
- 5/14/19: 1 Kings 22:29-53; Psalm 74:1-6; Luke 10-12
- 5/15/19: 2 Kings 1; Psalm 74:7-14; Luke 13-15
- 5/16/19: 2 Kings 2; Psalm 74:15-23; Luke 13-15
- 5/17/19: 2 Kings 3:1-4:17; Psalm 75; Luke 13-15
- 5/18/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 25:

- 5/19/19: 2 Kings 4:18-5:27; Psalm 76:1-4; Luke 16-18
- 5/20/19: 2 Kings 6; Psalm 76:5-12; Luke 16-18
- 5/21/19: 2 Kings 7; Psalm 77:1-5; Luke 16-18
- 5/22/19: 2 Kings 8; Psalm 77:6-11; Luke 19-21
- 5/23/19: 2 Kings 9; Psalm 77:12-20; Luke 19-21
- 5/24/19: 2 Kings 10; Psalm 78:1-5; Luke 19-21
- 5/25/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 26:

- 5/26/19: 2 Kings 11-12; Psalm 78:6-14; Luke 22-24
- 5/27/19: 2 Kings 13; Psalm 78:15-22; Luke 22-24
- 5/28/19: 2 Kings 14; Psalm 78:23-30; Luke 22-24
- 5/29/19: 2 Kings 15; Psalm 78:31-41; Acts 1-3
- 5/30/19: 2 Kings 16:1-17:23; Psalm 78:42-47; Acts 1-3
- 5/31/19: 2 Kings 17:24-18:12; Psalm 78:48-55; Acts 1-3
- 6/1/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 27:

- 6/2/19: 2 Kings 18:13-19:13; Psalm 78:56-62; Acts 4-6
- 6/3/19: 2 Kings 19:14-20:21; Psalm 78:63-72; Acts 4-6
- 6/4/19: 2 Kings 21:1-22:7; Psalm 79:1-5; Acts 4-6
- 6/5/19: 2 Kings 22:8-23:27; Psalm 79:6-13; Acts 7-9
- 6/6/19: 2 Kings 23:28-24:20; Psalm 80:1-7; Acts 7-9
- 6/7/19: 2 Kings 25; Psalm 80:8-19; Acts 7-9
- 6/8/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### PENTECOST

#### WEEK 28:

- 6/9/19: Numbers 1:1-46; Psalm 81:1-6; Acts 10-12
- 6/10/19: Numbers 1:47-2:34; Psalm 81:7-16; Acts 10-12
- 6/11/19: Numbers 3; Psalm 82; Acts 10-12
- 6/12/19: Numbers 4; Psalm 83:1-4; Acts 13-15
- 6/13/19: Numbers 5; Psalm 83:5-10; Acts 13-15
- 6/14/19: Numbers 6:1-7:11; Psalm 83:11-18; Acts 13-15
- 6/15/19: Reflect and catch up

### ORDINARY TIME

#### WEEK 29:

- 6/16/19: Numbers 7:12-89; Psalm 84:1-4; Acts 16-18
- 6/17/19: Numbers 8; Psalm 84:5-12; Acts 16-18
- 6/18/19: Numbers 9; Psalm 85; Acts 16-18
- 6/19/19: Numbers 10; Psalm 86:1-7; Acts 19-22
- 6/20/19: Numbers 11; Psalm 86:8-17; Acts 19-22
- 6/21/19: Numbers 12-13; Psalm 87; Acts 19-22
- 6/22/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 30:

- 6/23/19: Numbers 14:1-38; Psalm 88:1-5; Acts 23-25
- 6/24/19: Numbers 14:39-15:31; Psalm 88:6-18; Acts 23-25
- 6/25/19: Numbers 15:32-16:50 ; Psalm 89:1-4; Acts 23-25
- 6/26/19: Numbers 17; Psalm 89:5-11; Acts 26-28
- 6/27/19: Numbers 18; Psalm 89:12-17; Acts 26-28
- 6/28/19: Numbers 19-20; Psalm 89:18-26; Acts 26-28
- 6/29/19: Reflect and catch up

#### WEEK 31:

- 6/30/19: Numbers 21; Psalm 89:27-33
- 7/1/19: Numbers 22; Psalm 89:34-41
- 7/2/19: Numbers 23; Psalm 89:42-52; Romans 1-3
- 7/3/19: Numbers 24-25; Psalm 90:1-7; Romans 1-3
- 7/4/19: Numbers 26; Psalm 90:8-17; Romans 1-3
- 7/5/19: Numbers 27; Psalm 91; Romans 4-6
- 7/6/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 32:

- 7/7/19: Numbers 28; Psalm 92:1-6; Romans 4-6
- 7/8/19: Numbers 29; Psalm 92:7-15; Romans 4-6
- 7/9/19: Numbers 30; Psalm 93; Romans 7-9
- 7/10/19: Numbers 31; Psalm 94:1-9; Romans 7-9
- 7/11/19: Numbers 32; Psalm 94:10-23; Romans 7-9
- 7/12/19: Numbers 33:1-49; Psalm 95:1-4; Romans 10-12
- 7/13/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 33:

- 7/14/19: Numbers 33:50-34:15; Psalm 95:5-11; Romans 10-12
- 7/15/19: Numbers 34:16-35:8; Psalm 96:1-5; Romans 10-12
- 7/16/19: Numbers 35:9-36:13; Psalm 96:6-13; Romans 13-16
- 7/17/19: Zephaniah 1-3; Romans 13-16
- 7/18/19: 1 Chronicles 1; Psalm 98; Romans 13-16
- 7/19/19: 1 Chronicles 2; Psalm 99; James 1-3
- 7/20/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 34:

- 7/21/19: 1 Chronicles 3; Psalm 100; James 1-3
- 7/22/19: 1 Chronicles 4; Psalm 101; James 1-3
- 7/23/19: 1 Chronicles 5; Psalm 102:1-4; James 4-5
- 7/24/19: 1 Chronicles 6:1-48; Psalm 102:5-11; James 4-5
- 7/25/19: 1 Chronicles 6:49-81; Psalm 102:12-18; James 4-5
- 7/26/19: 1 Chronicles 7; Psalm 102:19-28; Colossians 1-2
- 7/27/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 35:

- 7/28/19: 1 Chronicles 8; Psalm 103:1-5; Colossians 1-2
- 7/29/19: 1 Chronicles 9:1-34; Psalm 103:6-12; Colossians 1-2
- 7/30/19: 1 Chronicles 9:35-11:9; Psalm 103:13-22; Colossians 3-4
- 7/31/19: 1 Chronicles 11:10-47; Psalm 104:1-6; Colossians 3-4
- 8/1/19: 1 Chronicles 12; Psalm 104:7-15; Colossians 3-4
- 8/2/19: 1 Chronicles 13-14; Psalm 104:16-22; Galatians 1-3
- 8/3/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 36:

- 8/4/19: 1 Chronicles 15:1-16:7; Psalm 104:23-35; Galatians 1-3
- 8/5/19: 1 Chronicles 16:8-43; Psalm 105:1-6; Galatians 1-3
- 8/6/19: 1 Chronicles 17-18; Psalm 105:7-12; Galatians 4-6
- 8/7/19: 1 Chronicles 19-20; Psalm 105:13-20; Galatians 4-6
- 8/8/19: 1 Chronicles 21-22; Psalm 105:21-27; Galatians 4-6
- 8/9/19: 1 Chronicles 23; Psalm 105:28-35; Ephesians 1-3
- 8/10/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 37:

- 8/11/19: 1 Chronicles 24; Psalm 105:36-45; Ephesians 1-3
- 8/12/19: 1 Chronicles 25:1-26:19; Psalm 106:1-8; Ephesians 1-3
- 8/13/19: 1 Chronicles 26:20-27:34; Psalm 106:9-18; Ephesians 4-6
- 8/14/19: 1 Chronicles 28; Psalm 106:19-27; Ephesians 4-6
- 8/15/19: 1 Chronicles 29; Psalm 106:28-36; Ephesians 4-6
- 8/16/19: 2 Chronicles 1-3; Psalm 106:37-48; Philippians 1-2
- 8/17/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 38:

- 8/18/19: 2 Chronicles 4-5; Psalm 107:1-7; Philippians 1-2
- 8/19/19: 2 Chronicles 6; Psalm 107:8-16; Philippians 1-2
- 8/20/19: 2 Chronicles 7-8; Psalm 107:17-24; Philippians 3-4
- 8/21/19: 2 Chronicles 9; Psalm 107:25-32; Philippians 3-4
- 8/22/19: 2 Chronicles 10-11; Psalm 107:33-43; Philippians 3-4
- 8/23/19: 2 Chronicles 12-13; Psalm 108:1-5; Philemon; 2 John; 3 John
- 8/24/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 39:

- 8/25/19: 2 Chronicles 14-15; Psalm 108:6-13; Philemon; 2 John; 3 John
- 8/26/19: 2 Chronicles 16-17; Psalm 109:1-4; Philemon; 2 John; 3 John
- 8/27/19: 2 Chronicles 18; Psalm 109:5-10; 2 Corinthians 1-3
- 8/28/19: 2 Chronicles 19-20; Psalm 109:11-18; 2 Corinthians 1-3
- 8/29/19: 2 Chronicles 21-22; Psalm 109:19-23; 2 Corinthians 1-3
- 8/30/19: 2 Chronicles 23:1-24:19; Psalm 109:24-31; 2 Corinthians 4-6
- 8/31/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 40:

- 9/1/19: 2 Chronicles 24:20-25:28; Psalm 110; 2 Corinthians 4-6
- 9/2/19: 2 Chronicles 26-27; Psalm 111; 2 Corinthians 4-6
- 9/3/19: 2 Chronicles 28:1-29:19; Psalm 112; 2 Corinthians 7-8
- 9/4/19: 2 Chronicles 29:20-30:27; Psalm 113; 2 Corinthians 7-8
- 9/5/19: 2 Chronicles 31:1-32:8; Psalm 114; 2 Corinthians 7-8
- 9/6/19: 2 Chronicles 32:9-33:9; Psalm 115:1-8; 2 Corinthians 9-10
- 9/7/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 41:

- 9/8/19: 2 Chronicles 33:10-34:21; Psalm 115:9-18; 2 Corinthians 9-10
- 9/9/19: 2 Chronicles 34:22-35:27; Psalm 116:1-8; 2 Corinthians 9-10
- 9/10/19: 2 Chronicles 36; Psalm 116:9-19; 2 Corinthians 11-13
- 9/11/19: Judges 1; Psalm 117; 2 Corinthians 11-13
- 9/12/19: Judges 2:1-3:11; Psalm 118:1-8; 2 Corinthians 11-13
- 9/13/19: Judges 3:12-4:24; Psalm 118:9-19; 1 Timothy 1-3
- 9/14/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 42:

- 9/15/19: Judges 5; Psalm 118:20-23; 1 Timothy 1-3
- 9/16/19: Judges 6; Psalm 118:24-29; 1 Timothy 1-3
- 9/17/19: Judges 7:1-8:21; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Timothy 4-6
- 9/18/19: Judges 8:22-9:21; Psalm 119:9-16; 1 Timothy 4-6
- 9/19/19: Judges 9:22-57; Psalm 119:17-32; 1 Timothy 4-6
- 9/20/19: Judges 10:1-11:28; Psalm 119:33-40; 2 Timothy 1-2
- 9/21/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 43:

- 9/22/19: Judges 11:29-12:15; Psalm 119:41-48; 2 Timothy 1-2
- 9/23/19: Judges 13-14; Psalm 119:49-56; 2 Timothy 1-2
- 9/24/19: Judges 15:1-16:22; Psalm 119:57-64; 2 Timothy 3-4
- 9/25/19: Judges 16:23-17:13; Psalm 119:65-72; 2 Timothy 3-4
- 9/26/19: Judges 18; Psalm 119:73-80; 2 Timothy 3-4
- 9/27/19: Judges 19; Psalm 119:81-88; Titus 1-3
- 9/28/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 44:

- 9/29/19: Judges 20; Psalm 119:89-96; Titus 1-3
- 9/30/19: Judges 21; Psalm 119:97-104; Titus 1-3
- 10/1/19: Job 1-2; Psalm 119:105-112; Acts 1-3
- 10/2/19: Job 3; Psalm 119:113-120; Acts 1-3
- 10/3/19: Job 4-5; Psalm 119:121-128; Acts 1-3
- 10/4/19: Job 6; Psalm 119:129-136; Acts 4-6
- 10/5/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 45:

- 10/6/19: Job 7-8; Psalm 119:137-144; Acts 4-6
- 10/7/19: Job 9; Psalm 119:145-152; Acts 4-6
- 10/8/19: Job 10-11; Psalm 119:153-160; Acts 7-9
- 10/9/19: Job 12; Psalm 119:161-168; Acts 7-9
- 10/10/19: Job 13-14; Psalm 119:169-176; Acts 7-9
- 10/11/19: Job 15; Psalm 120; Acts 10-12
- 10/12/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 46:

- 10/13/19: Job 16-17; Psalm 121; Acts 10-12
- 10/14/19: Job 18-19; Psalm 122; Acts 10-12
- 10/15/19: Job 20; Psalm 123; Acts 13-15
- 10/16/19: Job 21; Psalm 124; Acts 13-15
- 10/17/19: Job 22; Psalm 125; Acts 13-15
- 10/18/19: Job 23-24; Psalm 126; Acts 16-18
- 10/19/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 47:

- 10/20/19: Job 25-27; Psalm 127; Acts 16-18
- 10/21/19: Job 28; Psalm 128; Acts 16-18
- 10/22/19: Job 29-30; Psalm 129; Acts 19-22
- 10/23/19: Job 31; Psalm 130; Acts 19-22
- 10/24/19: Job 32; Psalm 131:1-132:8; Acts 19-22
- 10/25/19: Job 33; Psalm 132:9-18; Acts 23-25
- 10/26/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 48:

- 10/27/19: Job 34; Psalm 133; Acts 23-25
- 10/28/19: Job 35-36; Psalm 134; Acts 23-25
- 10/29/19: Job 37; Psalm 135:1-9; Acts 26-28
- 10/30/19: Job 38; Psalm 135:10-21; Acts 26-28
- 10/31/19: Job 39-40; Psalm 136:1-7; Acts 26-28
- 11/1/19: Job 41-42; Psalm 136:8-26
- 11/2/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 49:

- 11/3/19: Haggai 1-2; Psalm 137; Revelation 1-3
- 11/4/19: Ezra 1-2; Psalm 138; Revelation 1-3
- 11/5/19: Ezra 3; Psalm 139:1-5; Revelation 1-3
- 11/6/19: Ezra 4-5; Psalm 139:6-13; Revelation 4-6
- 11/7/19: Ezra 6-7; Psalm 139:14-24; Revelation 4-6
- 11/8/19: Ezra 8; Psalm 140:1-5; Revelation 4-6
- 11/9/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 50:

- 11/10/19: Ezra 9; Psalm 140:6-13; Revelation 7-9
- 11/11/19: Ezra 10; Psalm 141; Revelation 7-9
- 11/12/19: Obadiah; Psalm 142; Revelation 7-9
- 11/13/19: Nahum 1-3; Psalm 143; Revelation 10-12
- 11/14/19: Habakkuk 1-3; Psalm 144:1-6; Revelation 10-12
- 11/15/19: Malachi 1-2; Psalm 144:7-15; Revelation 10-12
- 11/16/19: Reflect and catch up

### WEEK 51:

- 11/17/19: Malachi 3-4; Psalm 145:1-5; Revelation 13-15
- 11/18/19: Nehemiah 1-2; Psalm 145:6-13; Revelation 13-15
- 11/19/19: Nehemiah 3-4; Psalm 145:14-21; Revelation 13-15
- 11/20/19: Nehemiah 5; Psalm 146; Revelation 16-18
- 11/21/19: Nehemiah 6; Psalm 147:1-7; Revelation 16-18
- 11/22/19: Nehemiah 7; Psalm 147:8-12; Revelation 16-18
- 11/23/19: Reflect and catch up

## APPENDIX A: BIBLE READING PLAN

### WEEK 52:

- 11/24/19: Nehemiah 8; Psalm 147:13-20; Revelation 19-20
- 11/25/19: Nehemiah 9; Psalm 148; Revelation 19-20
- 11/26/19: Nehemiah 10; Psalm 149; Revelation 19-20
- 11/27/19: Nehemiah 11; Psalm 150; Revelation 21-22
- 11/28/19: Nehemiah 12; Revelation 21-22
- 11/29/19: Nehemiah 13; Revelation 21-22
- 11/30/19: Reflect and catch up



## APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

### MUSIC

Page CXVI – Advent to Christmas

Page CXVI – Lent to Maundy Thursday

Page CXVI – Good Friday to Easter

Sufjan Stevens – Silver & Gold

Sufjan Stevens – Songs for Christmas

Folk Angel – Christmas Songs, Vol. 1 – Vol. 8

The Brilliance – Advent, Vol. 1

Andrew Peterson – Behold the Lamb of God

Christy Nockels – The Thrill of Hope

Seasons playlists in Spotify – [vll.ge/tvcspotify](http://vll.ge/tvcspotify)

### BOOKS

*Ancient Future-Time* by Robert E. Webber

*Recapturing the Wonder* by Mike Cospers

*You Are What You Love* by James K. A. Smith

*Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross: Experiencing the Passion and Power of Easter*  
by Nancy Guthrie

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus: Experiencing the Peace and Promise of Christmas*  
by Nancy Guthrie

*The Book of Common Prayer*

*The Valley of Vision*

## APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

*Treasuring Christ in Our Traditions* by Noël Piper

*The Littlest Watchman: Watching and Waiting for the Very First Christmas*  
by Scott James

*Prepare Him Room: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus Family Devotional*  
by Marty Machowski

*Mission Accomplished: A Two-Week Easter Family Devotional* by Scott James

*God's Very Good Idea* by Trillia Newbell

*The Garden, the Curtain, and the Cross* by Carl Laferton

*The Biggest Story* by Kevin DeYoung

*The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Advent Table Cards by Kids Read Truth

Advent Scripture Calendar by Kids Read Truth

Kids Matching Cards: Isaiah's Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus by Kids Read Truth

*The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* by Sally Lloyd-Jones

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## SOURCES

### BOOKS

*The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated)

*Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993)

*Book of Prayers (Vol. 1 and 2)* (The Village Church, 2016 – 2017)

*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, Andrew Bonar (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991)

*Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, John Piper (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004)

*The Services of the Christian Year (Vol. 5)*, Robert Webber, from *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994)

*The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, ed. Arthur Bennett (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975)

*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, Andrew Bonar (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991)

### BIBLE READING PLAN

Church at the Cross, Grapevine, TX

### SONGS

“Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery,” Michael Bleecker, Matt Boswell and Matt Papa

“(Psalm 23) Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy,” Shane Barnard

“O Church Arise,” Keith and Kristyn Getty

“In Christ Alone,” Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” Thomas Obediah Chisholm

“New Again,” Mike Cospers and Brooks Ritter

“Christ Is Risen, He Is Risen Indeed,” Keith and Kristyn Getty

“O Spirit of the Living God,” Henry Hallam Tweedy







