

Lent

Bible Devotions and Activities for Each Week of the Lenten Season



*In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God. –Isaiah 40:3*

In the Christian tradition, Lent is the period of 40+ days that begins on Ash Wednesday. It's a time set aside to reflect and prepare before the celebration of Easter Sunday.

These prayers, meditations, and activities are designed to help the elders in your care to engage with the season of Lent. The material is especially designed to meet the spiritual needs of older adults with dementia (though anyone may enjoy them). Feel free to pick and choose the elements that work for you.

Access easy-to-sing video versions of the hymns by using the links provided, or go to youtube.com/spiritualeldercare and search for any song name.

Bless you during this time of reflection and hope.



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All opening and closing prayers gratefully borrowed and adapted from FaithandWorship.com.

Lent Week 1: Repentance

Sing: [When I Survey the Wondrous Cross](#)

Opening Prayer:

Circle us, O Lord, during this Lenten season.
Circle this world with the joy of your salvation.
Where there is sickness and disease, bring healing.
Where there is hunger and despair, bring hope.
Where there is weight and oppression, bring release.
Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation,
Circle this world with the light of your presence. Amen.

Scriptures:

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts.

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 4:8-9)

Discussion or Private Reflection:

- The scriptures tell us to ask God to search our hearts for everyday wrongs. What are common ways that we hurt ourselves and others with words, attitudes, or actions?
 - Harsh words, cold shoulder, complaining, anger ...

- How does it feel when you're hurt, or when you've hurt someone else?
 - Heavy heart, guilt, sorrow, regret, burden
- "Sin" simply means missing the mark. How does the apostle John describe the reality of sin?
 - "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."
- Who is included in "we"? How universal is sin and the need for repentance?
- How does it feel when you admit a wrongdoing and ask God for help to make it right ("lead me in the way")?
 - Freedom, relief, joy
- When we confess – say "I'm sorry" – God offers forgiveness and cleansing for every wrong. How can this truth help us day to day?

Closing Prayer:

God of healing, God of wholeness, we bring our brokenness, our sinfulness, our fears and despair, and lay them at your feet. Forgive us, draw close to us, and embrace us once again in your loving arms. Bring to us the cleansing waters of your forgiveness, that having washed, we might know refreshment and release. Amen.

Sing: [Just As I Am](#)

Activity: Cleansing Water

Supplies:

- Buckets of dirt and buckets of clean water; cups and seeds

- Even better, weather permitting: Outside raised garden beds, spades, seeds, and hoses

Activity Meditation:

Gardening brings beauty and growth, but also some discomfort and work. That's what confession and repentance are like.

Either outside in a garden or inside with cups, prepare a place for seeds. Spend some time with the dirt. Dig your hands into it. Smell it. Pick out the rocks, weeds, and other debris.

Then plant some seeds. Get your hands good and dirty! How would it feel to leave your hands covered in dirt for the rest of your day, while eating, having conversations, sleeping? Without confession, sin clings like dirt.

Now wash your hands in clean, fresh water. Reflect on how the water feels as it washes away the dirt. This is the sense of forgiveness that God offers us every moment. Reflect on the seed(s) you planted: the hope and promise of new life.



Lent Week 2: Humility

Sing: [All Creatures of Our God and King](#)

Opening Prayer:

Circle us, O Lord, during this Lenten season.
Circle this world with the joy of your salvation.
Where there is sickness and disease, bring healing.
Where there is hunger and despair, bring hope.
Where there is weight and oppression, bring release.
Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation,
Circle this world with the light of your presence. Amen.

Scriptures:

⁸ He has told you, O people, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

¹³ [Jesus told a story that compared a proud religious leader with a scorned tax collector.] “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the [proud religious leader]. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:13-14)

Discussion or Private Reflection:

- Write down or discuss: What qualities are you likely to see in a humble person?
 - Gentleness, not arrogant, considerate of others
- What qualities are you likely to see in a proud person?
 - Nose in the air, haughty, “better than you” attitude
- The Bible says to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.” Let’s look at each one.
- How can we practice justice? What does justice look like?
 - One act of justice is to treat everyone with respect. Who can you treat with respect today?
- How can we practice kindness?
 - One way of being kind is simple politeness. Who taught you how to be polite? What are some basic politeness instructions?
- How can we walk in humility with God?
 - One act of humility is letting go of things that create a barrier between us and God, and between us and other people: pride, anger, hopelessness, fear. Ask God to heal anything weighing on your soul today.

Closing Prayer:

Remind us often Lord,
when we are feeling proud, arrogant, beyond reproach,
pleased with ourselves, self-sufficient in our ways,
that for such as us, and better and worse, you walked a road
that took you to a cruel cross, and rose again to show us where
we might look for rescue. Amen.

Sing: [I Surrender All](#)

Activity: Untying Knots

Supplies:

- Thick pieces of rope with knots in them (not too tight)

Activity Meditation:

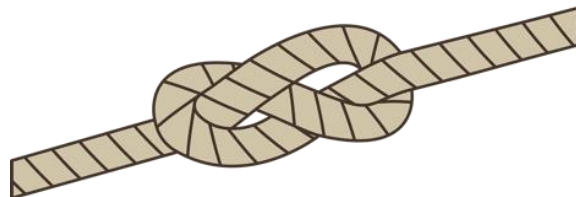
It's easy to get tied up in knots over things we can't control.

Consider things in your life that bother you, such as:

- a health problem
- a tense relationship
- a worry about the future
- a sadness from the past
- a regret

Look carefully at the ropes with knots in it. Touch them. Imagine that a knot is the thing that bothers you.

As you work to untie the knot(s), humbly ask God to help you give that concern to his care. Ask God to give you the humility to trust him, knowing that you cannot solve this problem on your own. As the knot comes untied, humbly and thankfully ask God for his freedom and peace in your mind and heart.



Lent Week 3: Charity

Sing: [Jesus Loves Me](#)

Opening Prayer:

Circle us, O Lord, during this Lenten season.
Circle this world with the joy of your salvation.
Where there is sickness and disease, bring healing.
Where there is hunger and despair, bring hope.
Where there is weight and oppression, bring release.
Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation,
Circle this world with the light of your presence. Amen.

Scripture:

¹⁰ God, who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. (2 Corinthians 9:10-11)

Discussion or Private Reflection:

- The word “charity” is often translated as “love” because in the New Testament, both are the same Greek word: agape. One sense of charity and love is giving to others.
- Write down or discuss: What kinds of things can we give to people in need?
 - Money, time, attention, physical care, a listening ear, food, shelter, kindness, gentleness

- Who benefits from an act of giving? How does it feel to each person involved?
- Is it better to give or to receive? Why?
- What has God given you in your life?
- Why is God generous with us?
 - God loves us!
 - As the scripture says, God showers us so that we may in turn be generous with others.
- Who and what can you be generous with today?

Closing Prayer:

Father God, inscribe love upon our hearts as your everlasting mark, beautiful and true. By our love for you and for one another, may all know that we are precious children of our generous, heavenly Father. Amen.

Sing: [I Know That My Redeemer Lives](#)

Activity: Giving to Others

Supplies:

- Homemade or store-bought cookies or quick bread
- Brown paper lunch sacks
- Colored pens, crayons

Activity Meditation:

Giving a gift is one way to communicate love. Giving spreads joy and grows gratitude in ourselves and in others.

Make a simple recipe, such as banana bread or cookies. (Alternatively, you can use store-bought cookies or even candy.) Decorate plain brown paper bags with words or pictures that say “Thank You,” “I Love You,” “From Me to You,” or other signs of gratitude and love.

Put a few goodies in each sack; if desired, tie with a ribbon. Give to your caregiver, neighbor, local emergency worker, postal worker, or store clerk.



Lent Week 4: Prayer

Sing: [Sweet Hour of Prayer](#)

Opening Prayer:

Circle us, O Lord, during this Lenten season.
Circle this world with the joy of your salvation.
Where there is sickness and disease, bring healing.
Where there is hunger and despair, bring hope.
Where there is weight and oppression, bring release.
Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation,
Circle this world with the light of your presence. Amen.

Scripture:

[Jesus said,] ⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:7-11)

Discussion or Private Reflection:

- Write down or discuss: In this passage, what are the three actions that Jesus tells us to do? And what are the outcomes of each?
 - Ask → receive

- Seek → find
- Knock → open
- What would your response be if a small child asked you for something that's good for them, like a healthy snack?
 - You'd give it! Wouldn't really think twice.
- What if a child asked for something that was bad for them, like permission to drive your car?
 - No way! You'd say no because you'd know the child would get hurt.
- Jesus' logic: God's love is so much greater than ours could ever be. When we ask for something good, God desires to give it!
- Likewise, if we ask for something God knows would be bad for us, what will God wisely and kindly do?
- How can this teaching guide how we pray?
 - Ask, seek, knock: be persistent and honest with God.
 - Submit to God's wisdom to give us only what's good.

Closing Prayer:

You are the God who formed us,
 The God who knows us,
 The God who loves us,
 The God who leads us,
 The God who feeds us,
 The God who blesses us.

Lord, grant us both strength and peace, in knowing you are there beside us in darkness and in light, never further away than a silent prayer is heard.

You are worthy of our praise. Amen.

Sing: [In the Garden](#)

Activity: Prayer Cube

Supplies:

- Printed cube template (enlarge if desired). Use cardstock if possible, and cut out along solid lines.
- Colored markers, crayons, or pencils.

Activity Meditation:

When we pray, we ask for what we and others may need, trusting that God is our good and giving Father.

On each square, write a name or draw a picture representing someone or something you'd like to pray for. Ideas could be yourself, a family member, friend, caregiver, leaders in church or government, the poor, the sick, the Earth, world peace.

Fold and glue or tape the shape into a cube. Each day, toss the cube on a table. Pray for whatever person or situation appears on the top.

Today I pray for:

Today I pray for:

Today I pray for:

Today I pray for:

Today I pray for:

Today I pray for:

Lent Week 5: Grace

Sing: [Amazing Grace](#)

Opening Prayer:

Circle us, Lord.

Circle this world with the joy of your salvation.

Where there is sickness and disease, bring healing.

Where there is hunger and despair, bring hope.

Where there is weight and oppression, bring release.

Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation,

Circle this world with the light of your presence.

Amen.

Scripture:

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
(Ephesians 2:4-9)

Discussion or Private Reflection:

- Write down or discuss: In verse 4, what are the words that describe how God feels about us?
 - Rich in mercy
 - Great love
- How are we described in verse 5 before God acted?
 - Dead! How much can a dead person do for themselves??
- What has God done in grace for us, who are helpless?
 - Made us alive together with Christ.
 - Raised us up and seated us in the heavenly places
- How long does “heavenly places” life in Christ last?
 - Forever!
- And how big is God’s grace?
 - Immeasurable!
- *Grace* is a word for God’s boundless, measureless love and mercy that he showers on us.
- How do we receive this gift of grace? Is it because we’ve racked up good deeds?
 - “By grace you have been saved *through faith*.”
 - *Not* because of what we’ve done, but because God loves us. We do nothing to earn this gift; we simply receive it with faith and thanks.

Closing Prayer:

Gracious Father, loving unconditionally,
whose heart overflows with forgiveness,
accept this, our thankful prayer.

Gracious Son, giving sacrificially,
whose body bled for our salvation,
accept this, our thankful prayer.

Gracious Spirit, flowing eternally
whose breath revives our faith and soul,
accept this, our thankful prayer. Amen.

Sing: [O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing](#)

Activity: Sun Catchers

Supplies:

- Clear contact paper
- Tissue paper of all colors, cut into small squares
- Scissors, hole punch, ribbon

Activity Meditation:

As C.S. Lewis wrote, “The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a sunhouse does not attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it.”

Make a sun catcher to remind you of God’s grace shining on and through you every day.

Cut two pieces of 8x11-inch clear contact paper. Remove the backing on one and place it, sticky side up, on a table. Place colored pieces of tissue paper all over the contact paper. Fill in any holes.

When done, remove the backing on the second sheet and place it sticky side down on top of the tissue-papered piece. Press out any bubbles.

Cut out whatever shape you like: a cross, heart, sun, star. Punch a hole in the top and thread with a piece of ribbon. Hang in a sunny spot, such as a window.



[Find image and craft instructions here.](#)

Palm Sunday

Sing: [Holy, Holy, Holy](#)

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, as the people spread their coats palm branches on the ground to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, so we welcome You into our lives. King of Glory, King of Peace, Servant King, reign in our hearts and lives this day and all days, that we might praise your holy name. Amen.

Scripture:

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

From the house of the Lord we bless you.

²⁷ The Lord is God,

and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festival procession
up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.

²⁹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever. (Psalm 118)

Discussion or Private Reflection:

- Write down or discuss: What is it like to welcome someone into your home, or to be welcomed into someone's home?
 - Joy, fun, anticipation, openness, gratitude

- Before you welcome someone into your home or space, what might you do to prepare?
 - Tidy the house, buy and prepare food, set up a spare bedroom, make things comfortable for that person.
- In verses 28-29, how does this psalm describe ways that we welcome God into our lives?
 - Praise, exalt, give thanks
- What does God bring to the table?
 - v. 27: He has made his light shine on us.
 - v. 28: He is our God.
 - v. 29: He is good.
 - v. 29: His love endures forever.
- Palm Sunday may be one of the most contradictory days in Christian history. On this day, the crowds welcomed Jesus with shouts of praise, laying palm branches and coats on the road before him. On the same day, the religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus, and by the end of the week they would succeed, with the crowd's approval.
- Let's use this day to welcome Christ into our lives in all humility. How can we open our hearts to Jesus?
 - Confession: admitting our wrongdoing.
 - Repentance: choosing to turn away from wrong and towards good.
 - Gratitude: accepting the Lord's forgiveness and going forth in freedom and joy.

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, as we sing our Hosannas today, may we remember also that which you rode toward: suffering and rejection, pain and humiliation, the cruel cross. Today, we silently confess the ways we close the door of our hearts, rejecting you and your love. (Moment of silence.)

We look forward to the joy of Easter Day when you conquered all sin by rising from death to reign forever. Help us, as we daily lay our lives before you, to live the resurrection life that acknowledges Jesus as Lord and King over our lives. Amen.

Sing: [My Jesus, I Love Thee](#)

Activity: God's Eye

Supplies:

- Jumbo craft sticks (you can also use twigs)
- Glue
- Variegated green yarn

Activity Meditation:

God's Eyes, also called Ojo de Dios¹ (Eyes of God), originated with the indigenous Huichol people of Mexico. The four points were thought to represent earth, fire, air, and water. Over time, the God's Eye has become a symbol of God's protective eye over the material and spiritual worlds.

¹ <https://layers-of-learning.com/ojo-de-dios/>

For Palm Sunday, using various shades of green yarn reminds us of the palm branches that the people spread before Jesus, as well as the new life we celebrate on Easter Sunday.

Glue two craft sticks crosswise to make a cross shape. Let the glue dry before proceeding. (This step can be done ahead; make as many crosses as you'll need.)

Wrap yarn around the center in an X shape a few times to get started. Then turn the cross 90 degrees and wrap the yarn around the next stick. Continue clockwise, wrapping once around each side in turn, until the yarn makes an "eye" as large as you want. You can change colors of yarn at any point (just tie it to the end of the original string), or keep it all one color.

When done, leave about 12 inches of yarn. Tuck in the end, or use it to create a loop and then tie it off.

