

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

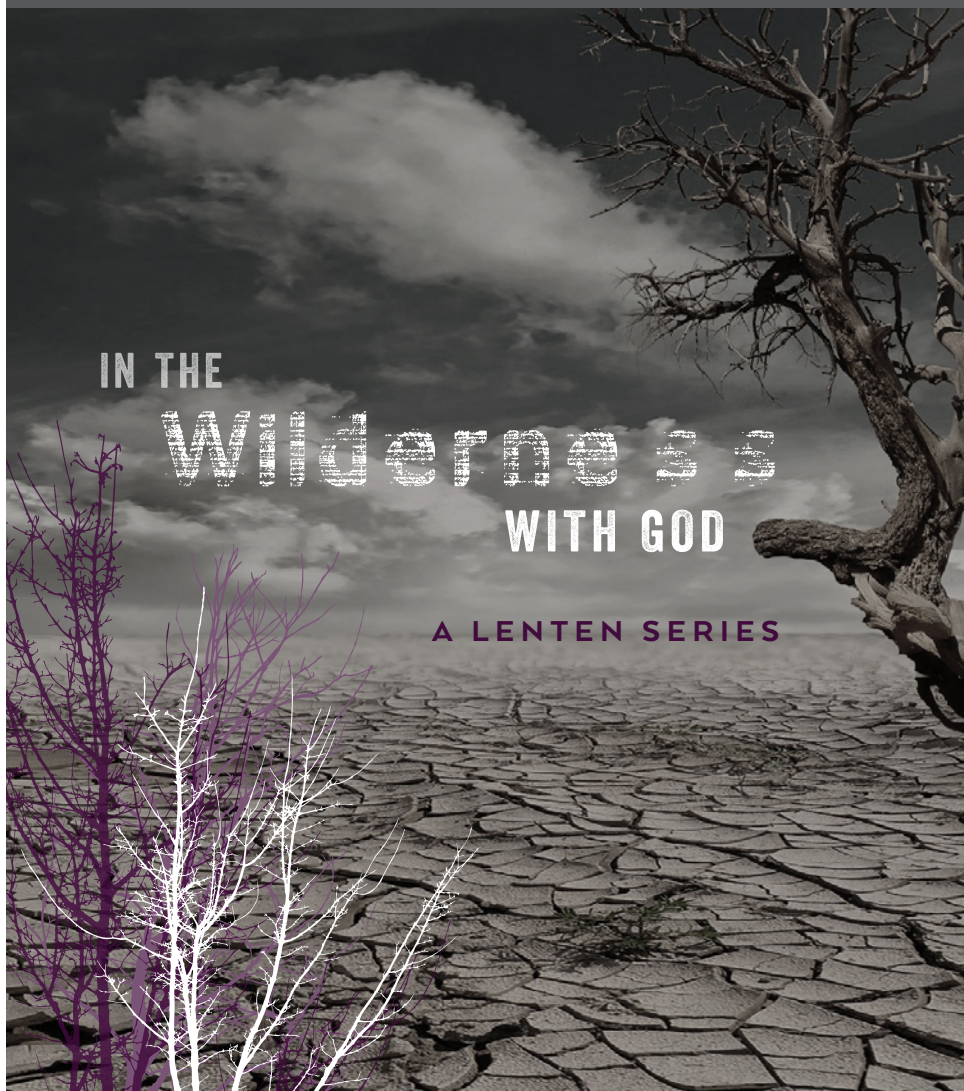
MARCH 18 - 22, 2019

IN THE

WILDERNESS

WITH GOD

A LENTEN SERIES



Second Week of Lent

What one says at the end of one's life is often of great importance. The last night Jesus was with His disciples Jesus revealed what was most important to Him. It all began with what He prized most: servanthood. Jesus got up from the table, took off His robe of authority and put on the cloth of a servant, the lowly of lowest servants, the foot washing servant. The roads of Jesus' time were not paved. So, people's bare or sandaled feet walked along the same dusty roads as donkeys, stray dogs and other animals. Not to mention that there was no running water or modern toilets, so people threw out their waste into the streets.

Jesus' act was unprecedented. In fact, such an action would have been considered "unclean" according to the Jewish purity code and therefore not permissible. In this act we see that the Greatest Person of all-time revealed God's true character by humbly serving those around Him. The gods of the ancient world were capricious, vindictive, and self-serving; but the One True God of the universe serves. In this act and on the cross, we see Jesus bearing our sin and shame so that we might experience life. He is able to do this because He knew He was loved and cherished by the Father—because He knew the Father.

Jesus called His disciples to take up their cross (How often? Daily) and follow Him and to take off their robes of privilege and serve the least of these. Have you ever dared to ask Jesus: "Where is my cross today?" Prayerfully examine your own sense of privilege. What would it look like to give it up in various situations in your daily life? How can you serve others as Christ served?*

*Adapted from *Survival Guide for the Soul* by Ken Shigematsu, New York: Zondervan, 2008, and from "Journey to the Cross" by Ken Shigematsu, *Christianity Today*, Lent/Easter, 2019.

This week use the prayer guide below and each day read the following from the prophet Isaiah, asking the Lord how you might be a servant and how you might practice a true fast? At the conclusion of each day, reflect on where you were able to "bear the cross of Christ." What opportunities might you have missed?

Isaiah 58: True Fasting

“Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the descendants of Jacob
their sins.

² For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does
what is right and has not forsaken
the commands of its God. They
ask me for just decisions and seem
eager for God to come near them.

³ ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say,
‘and you have not seen it? Why have
we humbled ourselves, and you have
not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of
your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.

⁴ Your fasting ends in quarreling
and strife, and in striking each other
with wicked fists. You cannot fast
as you do today and expect your
voice to be heard on high.

⁵ Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for people to humble
themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s
head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth
and ashes? Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶ “Is not this the kind of fasting
I have chosen: to loose the chains
of injustice and untie the cords
of the yoke, to set the oppressed
free and break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your food with
the hungry and to provide the poor
wanderer with shelter—when you
see the naked, to clothe them, and
not to turn away from your own
flesh and blood?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like
the dawn, and your healing will quickly
appear; then your righteousness will
go before you, and the glory of the
LORD will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD
will answer; you will cry for help, and
he will say: Here am I. “If you do away
with the yoke of oppression, with the
pointing finger and malicious talk,

¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves in
behalf of the hungry and satisfy
the needs of the oppressed; then
your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like
the noonday.

¹¹ The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a
sun-scorched land and will strengthen
your frame. You will be like a
well-watered garden, like a spring
whose waters never fail.

¹² Your people will rebuild the ancient
ruins and will raise up the age-old
foundations; you will be called
Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

¹³ “If you keep your feet from
breaking the Sabbath and from
doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the LORD’s holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your
own way and not doing as
you please or speaking idle words,

¹⁴ then you will find your joy in the
LORD, and I will cause you to ride
in triumph on the heights of the
land and to feast on the inheritance
of your father Jacob.” For the
mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Morning Prayer -15 minutes / 1-2 minutes each

Be still. Find a quiet place. Get seated comfortably. Relax. Take a few deep breaths. Remind yourself: “I am here to meet God. No other appointment competes in importance.”

Sit with a verse. Choose a line of Scripture and repeat it slowly. Ponder each word. Or, slowly pray a Psalm back to God, progressively going through the Psalms one psalm a day.

Adoration. Think on the greatness of God. How incredible it is that God knows you and desires to have fellowship with you. God is eager to encounter you! Adore Him.

Thanksgiving. Name the things that God has given you for which you are grateful: family, friends, health, work, a place to live, food, fun, the church and other gifts ... and be thankful for Christ’s death on the cross, salvation, life in Him now, and the promise of eternal life. Picture these gracious gifts and thank God for each one.

Dedication. Review the significant vows you have taken ... those you’ve taken as a Christian, as a church member, as an employee, those you’ve taken as a spouse, parent, and even as a son or a daughter. Reaffirm these vows, but also focus intently on this day. Offer your life to God for joyful service today!

Guidance. Envision your day with God. Foresee God in each task, in each relationship, in each opportunity, in each member of your family ... and in every unscheduled event or encounter that will happen today. Ask for God’s guidance in each aspect of your day.

Intercession. Make a list of the names of people who are in need of your prayers. Contemplate each one and lift up his/her individual needs to God. Love them.

Petition. Now, after you have done these things, lift up your own needs to God. Tell Him what you most deeply desire in your own life. As you spend time in God’s presence, your desires will change and mature; your true wants get crystallized by the Spirit. So, persist in asking for what you really want until you know what it is.

Act of Trust. Intentionally release your prayers to God ... and trust God to answer them.

Wait. In the ensuing silence, wait to hear what God wishes to say to you. Silently contemplate the phrase: “Speak, Lord, your child listens.” And wait. Repeat your Scripture verse for the day and reflect upon it.

Evening Prayer -5 minutes

Review the day. Identify the places where God has been at work in your life today and give thanks to Him for His consistent presence.

Confession. Note the feelings, thoughts, words, actions, and choices throughout the day which have been contrary to God's will for your life in Christ. Be specific. Acknowledge them, confess them and accept God's forgiveness. Christ has already paid the price for these sins. Harboring guilt robs Christ of His gift to you.

Commitment. Release yourself to God for the night. Pray that you may drift into sleep, conscious of God's loving presence.

MONDAY

Deuteronomy 1:26-33; Luke 12:4-5; Hebrews 12:28-29

The natural, fallen person—even me and, perhaps, you periodically—lives life awash in fear. We can fear death and illness, consequences, looking foolish, and even the fear of appearing fearful. This is a trap the enemy promotes, as such fears can distract us from trusting and seeking God. “Unbelief puts our circumstances between us and God; faith puts God between us and our circumstances.” (Tracie Miles)

Deuteronomy 1:26-33 illustrates how the ancient Hebrews yielded to the “fear of man”—a horizontal [people focused] vs. vertical [God-honoring] perspective—as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. God addressed their fears by reminding them that He fought for and freed them from Egyptian bondage (v. 30), how He carried them through trials during the Exodus (v. 31), and lovingly led them (v. 33). When the Bible emphasizes who God is and what He’s done—“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)—it’s a reminder that He has the power, wisdom and love to handle anything.

Jesus addressed faithless worries in Luke 12:4-5, saying essentially, “Fear God, not man.” What?! John 4:18 teaches, “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*” How do we reconcile these two, loving and “fearing” God at the same time?

“For the unbeliever, the fear of God is the fear of the judgment ... and eternal death, which is eternal separation from God. ... For the believer, [however], the fear of God is ... [profound, abiding]

reverence. ... Proverbs 1:7 declares, ‘*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.*’... Believers are not to be scared of God ... Fearing God ... [entails] respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshiping Him in awe.” (GotQuestions.org) So, godly “fear” meshes with love for Him, borne out of deep admiration and a related desire to serve Him.

God doesn’t *need* our reverence and worship—in His perfection, He needs nothing. But He *wants this for us*, so that we grasp reality more firmly. “We praise God, not because He needs our praise ... but in order to see Him more clearly, enlarge our soul, and relieve our spirit.” (Ron Brackin) Unfortunately, like the ancient Jews, I need ongoing reminders here.

QUESTION

What are the pitfalls of fear that disabled many of the ancient Jews, as well as ourselves at times? How can we “fear” God while loving Him at the same time? Why does God want our reverence?

PRAYERS FOR JESSIE AND NATHAN WEBB

Obeying God’s call on their lives, the Webbs have gone to different parts of the Middle East; and now they are back to the USA after eight years in the field. Pray for the Webbs as they now work to continue to send and equip those serving God internationally.

TUESDAY

Deuteronomy 8:2-5; Proverbs 3:11-12

If you're a parent, have you ever felt under-appreciated by your kids? That's likely a given, as we're all inclined toward taking things for granted and entitlement. So, how do you think God must feel when we discount His loving provision or otherwise act ungratefully toward our Creator, Father, Provider, and Savior, who came into our midst to suffer and die for us at Calvary?

Good parents don't allow a toddler to play in the street unattended; they don't let their children eat only candy and sweets vs. nourishing food. Good parenting includes allowing children decision-making, trials, and consequences of "failures" on a small scale as preparation for later, bigger life challenges. And so it is with our loving Lord. Today's passages remind us that God is our faithful Father, who created us for eternal, intimate relationship that includes walking lovingly with us through troubles that He permits through daily routines, events, etc.

The famous poem, "Footprints in the Sand," illustrates this beautifully: "One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord, across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord. After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that

at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

“This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. ‘Lord, you said once I decided to follow You, You would walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me.’

“He whispered, ‘My precious child, I love you and will never leave you, never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.’” (Author unknown) Amen!

QUESTION

Why does God “feel pain” when we misstep and sin against Him? Why does God permit troubles in our lives? Where have you felt His “footprints” with yours when you needed Him most?

PRAYERS FOR JESSIE AND NATHAN WEBB

There is a great need to have a better and more sustainable way for people to financially support missions. This is a huge part of the work the Webbs are doing here in the USA. Pray the Lord would bless their business endeavors as they tackle this problem head on.

WEDNESDAY

Numbers 14:1-5; Isaiah 1:2-4; Romans 1:18-23

I want to shake my head when reading about the ancient Jews' ingratitude toward the LORD. God freed them from Egypt's oppression, guiding them toward the Promised Land, and yet they complained, "*Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?*" (Numbers 14:3). Amazing! Then I remember my own behavior—when I lose in a card game, when something doesn't work "the way it's supposed to," or when someone treats me "unfairly"—and I'm reminded how much I'm like these Israelites.

On Monday we touched upon horizontal and vertical perspectives, the former applying to when we compare ourselves to other people, perhaps coveting, clinging to our "rights" and/or griping about a "raw deal." The Bible is very explicit about warnings here. Of the things that God hates—envy (the 10th Commandment, Exodus 20:17), complaining (Psalm 2:1), slander (Leviticus 19:16) and gossip (Proverbs 11:9)—several are decidedly "horizontal," each revealing a heart problem.

When the grumbling Hebrews threatened to "go back to Egypt," they were saying, essentially, "We don't trust God, so let's leave Him and return to our old ways." But isn't that a definition of sin, turning from God toward self, "Egypt" representing our sinful lives before knowing Christ? "Because we are made in God's image, in fleeing from a relationship with a loving God, we are also running from being our most authentic selves." (Kathleen Norris)

You might argue, “All they wanted was happiness—what’s wrong with that? The ‘pursuit of happiness’ is even stated as a God-given right in the US Declaration of Independence!” Is temporal “happiness” the goal? “People who always want to be happy and pursue it above all else are some of the most miserable people in the world.” (Henry Cloud) In Philippians 4:11 Paul stated, sublimely, “*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*” He knew that joy interweaves with contentedness, both enabled by gratitude toward God.

It may sound clichéd, but an “attitude of gratitude” is key to walking faithfully, serving God cheerfully, and reflecting His glory. Paul understood the wisdom of “counting your blessings”—if only I walked this way more steadily!

QUESTION

What is a “horizontal perspective” and what are some of its problems? What does “Egypt” represent biblically? What are the problems with a preoccupation with “happiness”?

PRAYERS FOR JESSIE AND NATHAN WEBB

There are many people in ministry support roles all over the world. Jessie is specifically responsible for coaching those in this mission organization who are in communications. It can often feel isolating for those abroad. Please pray that Jessie will be able to encourage and bless those in her network who are discouraged and lonely.

THURSDAY

Deuteronomy 1:32-33; Numbers 14:11-12; Isaiah 1:18-20

The word *jealousy* often carries negative connotations, describing one who's seen as controlling and suspicious about relationships and perceived rivalry. Yet God describes Himself accordingly in the Bible: "... the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God ..." (Exodus 34:14). Yesterday we touched upon envy as one of the things God hates. Jealousy, however, is not envy [coveting what is someone else's]—our perfect, all-powerful God needs nothing. God's jealousy is not wanting to lose that which is His; it's an expression of His love, stirred when His own stray from Him perilously.

Today's Scriptures display God's heart. God loves us; therefore, He's pained when the objects of His love act self-destructively. Deuteronomy 1 shares how God instructed and led the Jews; Numbers 14 shows how God hurts regarding rejection by His chosen people; and Isaiah 1 shows His desire for the best for Israel and the consequences of their continuing rebellion.

People commonly misunderstand the LORD and His love. It's a mistake to overstate God's righteousness at the expense of His loving kindness. "God is not a celestial prison warden jangling the keys on a bunch of lifers—He's a shepherd seeking for sheep, a woman searching for coins, a father waiting for his son."
(Clarence Jordan)

It's likewise misguided, however, to dismiss God's holiness and emphasize only His love. God's longsuffering [loving, patient restraint] has limits: "*My Spirit will not contend with humans forever*" (Genesis 6:3, NIV). Those holding the sentimental view that "a loving God wouldn't subject 'good people' to damnation" need to read today's passages. "*I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them*" (Numbers 14:12) and "*If you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword*" (Isaiah 1:20) are serious warnings from a God who, though loving (1 John 4:8), is also holy and all-powerful.

Love cannot be compelled, but must accompany free will and choices; otherwise it's not love at all. God's love gives us room to err, even to reject Him. "Perfect power is by nature persuasive and not coercive." (Marilyn McCord Adams) God lovingly woos and corrects to draw us toward Him. Have you thanked Him for this recently?

QUESTION

How is God "jealous" and why is that a good thing? What sorts of things provoke God's jealousy? How are God's love and patience commonly misunderstood?

PRAYERS FOR JESSIE AND NATHAN WEBB

Pray for those who are working and serving in the Middle East. Ask the Lord to give them renewed passion and energy. Pray for the friends they are meeting with and ask the Lord to transform the seeds that have been planted into fruit-bearing trees of life.

FRIDAY

Numbers 14:6-10; Malachi 3:16-18; Philippians 3:12-17

Of the original group of Jews freed from Egypt's bondage, those journeying to the Promised Land, only Joshua and Caleb survived to enter it. Even Moses didn't enter the Promised Land, given his misrepresenting God at Meribah (Deuteronomy 32:51-52). The rest of this first generation complained, feared the land's inhabitants instead of God, and/or openly rebelled against the leaders whom God had established, thus dying in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29-30).

Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel's leader; Caleb, then an 85-year-old man, asked for land amidst Israel's enemies and later had great victories there for God's glory. Both of these are role models for trusting God and persevering in the faith. Joshua was the quiet servant whom God raised up to lead, and Caleb was the steadfast warrior ready for any challenge. They demonstrate that God's faithful remnant is comprised of all types, including even the brilliant thinker and former church persecutor, the Apostle Paul [formerly Pharisee Saul of Tarsus], and a Roman refugee and fellow tentmaker partnering with Paul, Priscilla of Corinth.

God's sustaining a faithful remnant is a biblical pattern. "Noah and his family were the remnant saved out of the millions on the earth before the flood (Genesis 6). Only Lot and his two daughters survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, a very small remnant, indeed (Genesis 19). When Elijah despaired that he was

the only one left in Israel who had not bowed down to idols, God assured him that He had reserved a remnant of 7,000 ‘whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him’ (1 Kings 19).” (GotQuestions.org)

In a fallen world racked with foolishness, fear and rebellion, God calls us to be His faithful remnant, both “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-14). We may face criticism for our faith or even outright persecution—Joshua and Caleb were threatened with stoning by the people (Numbers 14:10). But, as touched upon Monday, we’re not to fear men and women, but to deeply revere and serve God.

How has God asked you to persevere in your faith? For whom are you praying? Where can you serve for God’s glory?

QUESTION

How were Joshua and Caleb different from others in the first generation of Jews who God freed from Egyptian bondage? What is meant by the term “God’s faithful remnant”? What does being part of the faithful remnant have to do with “fearing” God?

PRAYERS FOR JESSIE AND NATHAN WEBB

Pray for the nations. Think of a country for each letter of the alphabet and ask the Lord to bring people who can share the love of God with the lost in each of those locations. (i.e., Algeria, Angola, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chad, Chile ... Zambia).

Sources:

- Tracy Miles's, Ron Brackin's, Kathleen Norris', Henry Cloud's, Clarence Jordan's and Marilyn McCord Adams' quotes are from www.goodreads.com/quotes
- GotQuestions.org quotes can be found at www.gotquestions.org
- The "Footprints in the Sand" poem can be found at www.onlythebible.com/Poems/Footprints-in-the-Sand-Poem

