

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

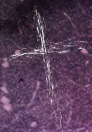
# The DEVO

FEBRUARY 15 - 19, 2021

LENTEN SERIES 2021

FEB 21 - APR 4

## New Rhythms



# MONDAY

**James 3:3-8; Matthew 15:11, 18-19; Proverbs 10:19-20**

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This week's Ash Wednesday initiates Lent, the 6½-week period of prayer and preparation for Easter. The 40 days of Lent—each Sunday is excluded—correspond to Jesus' 40-day fast and temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11) preceding His public ministry. This week's featured Scripture, James 3:3-12, was penned by the Lord's half-brother. James knew Jesus all his life and started following Him post-resurrection—he is a capable guide as we look ahead to Easter.

I find today's Scriptures highly convicting. Those confident in their own reasoning and speaking abilities should heed the associated warnings: an unbridled tongue absent love is damaging. I've had friends and a family member so gifted in their ability to verbally one-up others that this became idol-like. Ironically, two of these became mute prior to their deaths, and another was fired partly due to this "strength" (intellect and oratory skills) running him versus his managing it.

James 3:3-8 uses the terms "fire" and "ablaze" five times collectively, surfacing a discipline that critically inclined, intense people (like me) should remember: Fire in the firepit is great—providing warmth, light and protection, cooking food, etc. But on the hillside, such fire is destructive—keep the "fire" in the firepit! Jesus' Matthew 15 quote cautions that damaging speech doesn't just hurt others, but also its defiled source.

Consider these related quotes. “Don’t criticize others simply because they sin differently than you.” (Erykah Badu) “You never heal yourself by injuring another.” (Source unknown) “We judge others by their actions and ourselves by our intentions. We need to offer grace to all because we all need a little grace.” (Jayce O’Neal)

Do you control your tongue or vice versa? A strength that is unmanaged or, worse, that manages you is no longer a strength. Paul penned, “... *if I have all faith ... but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have ... but have not love, I gain nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:2-3). When you “speak truth”—at least as you understand it—do you do so “in love” (Ephesians 4:15)? Look forward and upward to Calvary’s cross for guidance.

## QUESTIONS

Why are there 40 (non-Sunday) days in the Lent season? Why does James use several “fire” references when discussing the tongue? Why is it so important, yet for some so hard, to “control your tongue”?

## PRAYERS FOR EMRE UFLAZOGLU, IFES IN TURKEY

Emre Uflazoglu serves with International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) as a student pastor in Turkey. He asks for prayer for the continued growth of two special young men in his youth group. He has watched them become active and effective in sharing their faith and in finding ways to serve the church.

# TUESDAY

**James 3:9-12; Ephesians 4:29-32; Proverbs 4:23-24**

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Today's featured passages apply to cursing, but also to much more. Many people consider the 2nd Commandment, "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain*" (Exodus 20:7), only referring to using God's name while swearing. "*Corrupting talk*" (Ephesians 4:9) and "*vain*" speech, however, also misrepresent God as something common—i.e., "OMG!" Yahweh is holy (perfect and set apart) and we're to reflect His holiness both in our lives and our speech.

When my wife beats me in cards—which happens far too frequently—I might not swear outwardly, but the associated words may occupy my thoughts and emotions. This is a heart problem, indicating felt entitlement, ingratitude for God's provision, selfishness and pride. Such feelings and vile words symptomize a deeper issue, revealing "*a salt pond*" (James 3:9)—something "undrinkable," unpleasant, stagnant and base.

"Christians say, 'Praise the Lord' in one breath, and in the next breath they say evil things about another. ... They sit in church singing hymns to God and no sooner get out the door than they whisper, 'Did you see so-and-so? ... Do you know what she did?' ... James [implores us]: '*My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.*' ...

"Have you ever thought about how terribly embarrassing life would be if there were a direct line between your thoughts and your mouth, so that you blurted out loud whatever you were thinking? ... After listening to someone drone on about something, instead of, 'Yes, that's very interesting,' you blurt out, 'How can I get away from this bore?' ... Even

if you control your tongue, you often have a heart problem. If you want to tame the terrible tongue, the place to start is with your heart.”  
(Steven Cole)

Are you quick to press for “your rights,” perhaps while waiting in line or when driving? Are you easily provoked by another’s seeming thoughtlessness, ready to “set them straight”? Is it easy for you to judge and criticize others, whether openly or simply in thoughts? I am far from guiltless in these. Father, renew us with surrendered hearts, hearts more like the Savior’s!

## QUESTIONS

What does “*taking the LORD’s name in vain*” mean? What is the “*salt pond*” that James alludes to? What are a few of the symptoms of a heart misaligned with God’s heart?

## PRAYERS FOR EMRE UFLAZOGLU, IFES IN TURKEY

While the universities may be slow to reopen, many students are signing up for English conversation classes led by volunteers from my church. Pray that many students will be drawn to Jesus through these volunteers!



## **Joel 2:12-13; Mark 1:12-15; Philippians 3:8-11**

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Today is Ash Wednesday, a day with different meanings depending upon your orientation. For many, including some Protestants, it's downplayed mainly as "a Catholic thing" representing only the Lent season's beginning. I've experienced some people smugly dismissing others bearing the traditional ash cross on their foreheads.

To many in New Orleans and elsewhere, Lent means the day after "Fat Tuesday" (*Mardi Gras* in French), the sad end of a two-week "party without restraint, almost nothing is off limits" carnival. For them Mardi Gras represents their "big blowout" before the Lenten season of projected pious restraint. Anyone considering it simply "festive, harmless fun" might note that "Mardi Gras may be linked with the ancient Roman pagan celebrations of spring and fertility such as Saturnalia, which ... honored the god of agriculture, Saturn." (Wikipedia)

"Lent is intended to be a time of self-denial, moderation, fasting, and forsaking sinful activities and habits. Ash Wednesday commences this period of spiritual discipline. ... People in the Old Testament used dust and ashes as symbols of repentance and/or mourning. ... Rubbing [an ashen] cross on a person's forehead [expresses identification] with Jesus Christ. ... [However] Jesus warned us against making a show of our fasting: '*When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.*' ...



(Matthew 6:16-18). We must not allow spiritual discipline to become spiritual pride.” (GotQuestions.org)

Is donning an ashen cross on your forehead today misguided? The self-righteous legalist might argue, “Absolutely!” If ash-bearing is done simply to project “piousness” or as empty ritual, I might agree. If, conversely, it reflects one’s heartfelt surrender to Christ—a declaration that “*My Beloved is mine, and I am His!*” (Song of Solomon 2:16)—that sounds pretty righteous to me. As in all such situations, externals matter little—“*God looks upon the heart*” (1 Samuel 6:7).

Whether with ashes today or not, what better day to “*deny yourself and take up your cross and follow [Jesus]*” (Matthew 16:24)? Do so in a grateful spirit of meekness, lamenting personal sinfulness and the world’s fallenness while projecting winsome joy in the Lord.

## QUESTIONS

What is the significance of Ash Wednesday? What is Lent’s purpose? Is it wrong to feature an ash cross on your forehead on Ash Wednesday?

## PRAYERS FOR EMRE UFLAZOGLU, IFES IN TURKEY

“M” gave his life to Christ two years ago; but his twin brother, “H,” showed no interest at the time. Now “H” is meeting with Emre weekly, asking deep questions, and bringing curious friends with him. Pray that all will come to faith in Jesus.

# Lent

## How do you traditionally celebrate Lent?

Many use Lent as a time to “fast” from something. In fact, as Tim begins his new sermon series this Sunday, he is going to begin by talking about “fasting.” The purpose of “fasting” is to free up time in order to direct our attention to God. The whole point of the traditional spiritual practices is to create space in our lives so that God might provide nourishment to our souls, enabling our lives to be transformed so that we might become more like Jesus to glorify God the Father, yielding the abundant life He promises and empowering us to love others. The spiritual disciplines are intended to deepen our relationship with Jesus and to make us aware of what we might need to confess and release in our lives in order to better reflect Jesus.

This year as we move into Lent, why not intentionally plan to set aside time to practice these disciplines. The devo each week will provide some suggestions in keeping with Tim’s sermon series. The 9am Sunday morning class will also be taking a deeper look into the spiritual practices. You also might go to [GlenkirkChurch.org/become](https://GlenkirkChurch.org/become) and prayerfully use this booklet to allow God to further guide you in “becoming a more fully follower of Jesus.” After answering the questions in this booklet, please email the Spiritual Formation team and let us know how we can help you, what we can do for you, and we can



provide for you to deepen your walk with Jesus (email [become@glenkirkchurch.org](mailto:become@glenkirkchurch.org)). As with growth in any area of our lives, even growth in relationships, without intentionality it does not happen. Make a commitment during this season to be intentional.

Finally, I would encourage you to use the Daily Prayer guide during these days. By stopping 3 or 4 times a day and turning our attention to God, we are reminded that He is in control, that He knows our needs, and that He provides for us. We can rest in Him; we can “let go and let God.” Enjoy His presence and His love. Find joy and hope in Him, even in the midst of these days.

# 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, each relationship, 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 their 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.

## Mid-day Prayer

5 minutes

Just take 5 minutes and stop whatever you are doing and turn your attention to the presence of God. Sit quietly, or as you breathe in pray: “Come, Lord Jesus” and as you breathe out: “I belong to you.” Ask Him to make you aware of His loving presence; resist the temptation to make this a time of intercession where you tell God what you want him to do. Just be with Him.

## Evening Prayer

10 minutes

**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.”

**Review the day.** Identify the places that 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.

# THURSDAY

**Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15-19; Acts 2:37-41**

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**The Bible can be helpful with words that steer us in the right way.**

Given this week's "taming the tongue" theme, consider some gaffes of the apostle with "foot-in-mouth" disease, Simon Peter. Remember, however, that Simon was an uneducated fisherman before meeting the Lord, reinforcing how *"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise"* (1 Corinthians 1:27). Let's survey these together, one *"foolish thing"* to another.

In Galilee, the apostles saw Jesus walking on water; Peter asked Jesus to command him to walk to Him. After a successful start Peter sank, exclaiming the Bible's shortest prayer, *"Lord, save me!"* (Matthew 14:29-30). Later, after Jesus predicted His crucifixion and resurrection, Peter rebuked Him, earning Jesus' scolding, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* (Matthew 16:22-23). Peter, James and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and Moses' and Elijah's appearance on a mountain, Peter blurting out, *"Let us make three tents for you,"* as though they were peers. This prompted the Father's reprimand, *"This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!"* (Mark 9:2-7). After Jesus taught on the snares of riches, Peter replied, *"We have left everything and followed You. What then will we have?"* (Matthew 19:23-27).

Peter twice joined other disciples arguing over who was the greatest among them (Luke 9:46; 22:24). As Jesus commenced washing His disciples' feet at the Last Supper, Peter initially objected, *"You shall*

*never wash my feet!”* (John 13:1-10). When Jesus told the disciples that they would soon abandon Him, Peter declared, *“Even though they all fall away, I will not.”* Jesus then predicted Peter’s three-time denial, which Peter refuted (Mark 14:27-30) and was fulfilled within hours (Mark 14:66-72). Peter, like the others, slept amidst Jesus’ prayerful agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45-46). After the Roman posse arrived to arrest Jesus, Peter severed the high priest’s servant’s ear (John 18:10).

Fortunately, Peter’s story doesn’t end here; the risen Savior lovingly reinstated him (John 21:15-17). Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, later delivered a powerful message in Jerusalem at Pentecost—3,000 were saved that day (Acts 2:14-47).

Peter’s story and God’s powerful use of this flawed, impulsive man gives hope: no one is beyond redemption. God can use anyone for His glory—even you and me!

## QUESTIONS

Why do some consider Simon Peter as the disciple with “foot-in-mouth” disease? Which of Peter’s blunders do you relate to most? How is Peter’s overall story encouraging to you?

## PRAYERS FOR EMRE UFLAZOGLU, IFES IN TURKEY

The young people whom Emre works with have formed a caring, welcoming community. About five of over twenty-five students are still seekers, while the others take turns preparing questions and teaching. Pray that these five seekers come to faith, and may this group keep growing.

# FRIDAY

**James 3:9; Genesis 1:27, 31; Matthew 5:38-48**

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We live within one of the more polarized times in American history. The year 2020, featuring COVID and a US presidential election, amplified our societal differences and related turmoil. It's too easy to criticize or dismiss others who "voted for the other side" or otherwise hold views that you dispute. But the Bible tells us that all people were made in God's image, though the distortion of that likeness may vary by person.

Consider the following types of people, reminding yourself that all were created in God's image—people who: are impatient; talk "too loudly" or "too much"; are homeless; have different religious beliefs; are "immature"; promote "alternate lifestyles"; are "too slow"; support racism; are "uptight"; cut in line; are indecisive; are "immodest"; express seemingly every thought; are pro-choice; speak harshly; are atheists; mislead; are addicts; have opinions "on everything"; drive "too fast"; are legalistic; act "entitled"; are racially, ethnically and/or culturally "different." Do any of these resonate particularly for you?

"We are the only creatures—men and women, human beings—[made] in God's image ... with the capacity to relate to God. ... Human life is valued based on the image of God, which is the basis of human dignity. ... [All are] created in God's image, and that's the sense of [our] worth and [our] value and [our] meaning before God." (Stephen Nichols)

Not only are all of us—perhaps in differing degrees—God’s image-bearers, but each also is a “recovering human” and “shattered mirror” desperately needing Jesus. And all yearn to be understood and appreciated—this is true of our latest ex-president, the new administration, local and state officials, church leaders, etc.

Never forget that the words we speak and write have the power to bring life or death. Words intended to tear people down, insult, ridicule or curse are an assault on God Himself, in whose image all people were created. “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.” (Francis of Assisi)

## QUESTIONS

What are some of the implications of every person being “*created in God’s image*”? Which of the behaviors listed are most irritating to you? With which of them might others describe you?

## PRAYERS FOR EMRE UFLAZOGLU, IFES IN TURKEY

Emre’s wife’s visa situation is precarious. The government is declining to renew the visas of many foreign residents, especially those who are non-Muslims. Pray that God will intervene and allow Emre and his wife to continue their ministry in Turkey, their home.



# SATURDAY

## Isaiah 58

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Prayerfully read Isaiah 58 slowly. (you might read both the Message and the NIV version to help you get a better understanding of what this passage is about.) Underline words and phrases that the Holy Spirit causes you to pause on and then answer these questions.

- If this is the type of “fast” activity God desires, how might it inform your decisions as to what to give up or take on for Lent?
- What specifically might you need to confess?
- If Isaiah were declaring this to us as a nation, and particularly you, what might he specifically be referring to?

### Prayer Focus

As Christians worldwide participate in this season of lent, pause and pray for the followers of Jesus around the world. Pray that we will be able to manifest God’s love these next days in specific ways to people who do not feel loved, who do not know love, who are in need, who have lost hope. Ask God to show you someone that you can show love to today in some tangible way.

## Isaiah 58 (The Message)

### YOUR PRAYERS WON'T GET OFF THE GROUND

#### 1-3

“Shout! A full-throated shout!

Hold nothing back—a trumpet-blast shout!

Tell my people what's wrong with their lives,

face my family Jacob with their sins!

They're busy, busy, busy at worship,

and love studying all about me.

To all appearances they're a nation of right-living people—

law-abiding, God-honoring.

They ask me, 'What's the right thing to do?'

and love having me on their side.

But they also complain, ‘

Why do we fast and you don't look our way?

Why do we humble ourselves and you don't even notice?'

#### 3-5

“Well, here's why:

“The bottom line on your ‘fast days’ is profit.

You drive your employees much too hard.

You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight.

You fast, but you swing a mean fist.

The kind of fasting you do won't get your prayers off the ground.

Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after:

a day to show off humility?

To put on a pious long face

and parade around solemnly in black?

Do you call that fasting,

a fast day that I, GOD, would like?

## 6-9

“This is the kind of fast day I’m after:  
to break the chains of injustice,  
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,  
free the oppressed,  
cancel debts.

What I’m interested in seeing you do is:  
sharing your food with the hungry,  
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,  
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,  
being available to your own families.  
Do this and the lights will turn on,  
and your lives will turn around at once.  
Your righteousness will pave your way.  
The GOD of glory will secure your passage.  
Then when you pray, GOD will answer.  
You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’

## A FULL LIFE IN THE EMPTIEST OF PLACES

### 9-12

“If you get rid of unfair practices,  
quit blaming victims,  
quit gossiping about other people’s sins,  
If you are generous with the hungry  
and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,  
Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,  
your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.  
I will always show you where to go.  
I’ll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—  
firm muscles, strong bones.  
You’ll be like a well-watered garden,  
a gurgling spring that never runs dry.

You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew,  
rebuild the foundations from out of your past.  
You'll be known as those who can fix anything,  
restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate,  
make the community livable again.

### 13-14

"If you watch your step on the Sabbath  
and don't use my holy day for personal advantage,  
If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy,  
GOD's holy day as a celebration,  
If you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,'  
making money, running here and there—  
Then you'll be free to enjoy GOD!  
Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all.  
I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob."  
Yes! GOD says so!

## Sources:

- Erykah Badu's quote is from <https://inspire99.com/inspirational-quote-you-cant-judge-people-because-they-sin-differently-than-you-judging-others/>
- Jayce O'Neal's quote can be found at <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/740534-we-judge-others-by-their-actions-and-ourselves-by-our>
- Steven Cole's quote is from <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-12-taming-terrible-tongue-james-31-12>
- The Wikipedia quote is from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mardi\\_Gras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mardi_Gras)
- The GotQuestions.org quote can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Ash-Wednesday.html>
- Stephen Nichols' quote is from <https://ask.ligonier.org/podcast-episodes/what-does-it-mean-that-we-are-created-in-gods-image>
- Francis of Assisi's quote can be found at <https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=134>

