

The background features a warm, colorful gradient from orange to yellow at the top, transitioning into darker reds and purples towards the horizon. Silhouettes of rolling hills are visible against the sky. In the dark, shadowed foreground at the bottom, there are silhouettes of various plants and leaves.

2017 LENT GUIDE

RETURN



2017 LENT GUIDE
RETURN

Lent is a season of preparation, getting our hearts and minds ready to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, our Savior and King. We join with believers all over the world seeking personal and corporate spiritual renewal focusing on the practices of prayer, fasting, and self-examination. We want to invite you to take intentional steps to seek after Christ over the Lenten season. The theme we want to focus on over the course of Lent this year is RETURN. We want to ask God to help us to RETURN to Christ with all hearts and all our might.

This guide includes a weekly Scripture and a daily prayer for each of the 40 days of Lent from Ash Wednesday (March 1) to the day before Easter Sunday (April 15). Please note that Sundays are not included in the Lenten days and have traditionally been a day of feasting and celebration rather than fasting in anticipation of the resurrection.

Week 1 (March 1-4)

Weekly Scripture: Joel 2:12-13

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Daily Prayers

Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Thursday

Dear Lord, as we spend time in self-reflection we are thankful for the Holy Spirit whom you have given us. May we experience fullness of the Spirit of your Son that we may better know ourselves and see our need for you. Amen.

Friday

Heavenly Father, as we take this time to fast and focus on you we pray that you would grant us clear vision. Give us eyes to see the encumbrances that prevent us from experiencing fullness of life with you. Draw us who are weary to come and drink living water that we may be forever satisfied. Amen.

Saturday

Creator God, we thank you for the abundance that you have given us, for all of the blessings of this life. Above all we are thankful for your work of liberation, freeing us from the power of sin, death, and the Devil. Grant us true repentance and fill us with gratitude for the work of your Son, who though he died, now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Week 2 (March 6-11)

Weekly Scripture: Isaiah 44:21-22

“Remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, are my servant. I have made you, you are my servant; Israel, I will not forget you. I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

Daily Prayers

Monday

We thank you Lord for the work that you have begun in us. Help us to trust your promise that you will bring it to completion. May we be a people of hope, looking forward to transformation both in this life and in the life to come. Amen.

Tuesday

Remind us, oh Lord, of the resources you have given us. We thank you that we do not have to walk alone, and that you have given us one another to rely on in times of trial. Strengthen the unity of our fellowship and empower us to carry one another's burdens in fulfillment of the law of Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, we acknowledge our weakness in our times of trial. Sustain us that we may not fail when tempted. Empower us through your Spirit to follow in the example of your Son who when tempted did not sin and who always proves faithful. Transform us by his faithfulness so that we may reflect your light into the world. Amen.

Thursday

Lord, as we spend time in fasting and reflection, let us never lose sight of you. Help us shed all that blinds us, not for the sake of simplicity, but for the sake of knowing your Son in the power of his death and resurrection. Draw us near and transform us so that we become a vibrant reflection of your love. Amen.

Friday

Father, though we are weak, you are strong. We call upon you to sustain us by that power. Just as you gave your Son the strength to do your will, do the same for us through your Spirit. Amen.

Saturday

Creator God, you are gracious and benevolent. During this time of fasting and prayer show us how much we need that grace. May this experience transform us and may we reflect your graciousness toward each other and toward your broken world. Amen

Week 3 (March 13-18)

Weekly Scripture: Hosea 6:1-3

“Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.”

Daily Prayers

Monday

Lord, you are a merciful and compassionate God. We pray that out of your benevolence you would preserve us. We repent of all of the idols we seek after to give us security. Give us the strength to cling to your Son, and to put our fate in the hands of him who lives and reigns over the whole of creation with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday

Father, we know that you delight in the death of no one, and desire to see all come to repentance. Please work in the hearts of our friends and family members who have strayed from you. By your Spirit, draw them back to your Son so that they may find life with you. Amen.

Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, show your power again in our lives. As we reflect on you may we also reflect your character; your love and your holiness. As we contemplate your glory, transform us into the image of your Son that in word and deed we might proclaim your gospel unveiled. Amen.

Thursday

Lord, while your grace is free, it is not cheap. Open our eyes to the depth of your Son’s sacrifice, and may our lives reflect true understanding. Help us be a forgiving people, a loving and accepting people, and a people who bring peace. Through us, bring healing to one another and to the world to bring glory to your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Friday

We come to you, Father, grateful that you have not remained hidden from our sight. Thank you for giving us the Scriptures which witness to you; your acts and your words. Through them we have heard your voice and have found life. By your Spirit, fill us with passion to hear you speak anew. Amen.

Saturday

Creator God, you brought light into the world, and through that light we have come to inherit life in the age to come. Lord, may we reflect the light that we have received out into the world. May you use us as beacons for those who have lost their way that many more may share in that same inheritance. Amen.

Week 4 (March 20-25)

Weekly Scripture: Mark 1:14-15

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Daily Prayers

Monday

Lord God, we know that we often fail to do as you require. We pray that you would be merciful to us. For the sake of your Son, overlook our sin and transform our desires and will to bring us into alignment with your good and perfect will. Amen.

Tuesday

Father, you are loving, compassionate, and full of grace. Help us to be a community that reflects that grace to one another and supports one another. Together let us quest to be a holy people, submitting to the rule of your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, we confess that often we despair, believing we will never change. In us, renew hope and trust in the power of your Spirit to conform us to the likeness of your Son. Let us see victory in our lives now that is a foretaste of the victory to come. Amen.

Thursday

Lord, be our protector and deliverer. Open our eyes to the many ways the adversary tempts us, misleads us, and attacks us. Give us spiritual eyes to see what is happening in the spiritual realm. Provide a way out when we are tempted. Fight on our behalf when we are attacked. Fill our hearts with trust in the one who has overcome the evil one and will come again to complete the victory. Amen.

Friday

Father, help us to be children of the light and to shun deeds of darkness. As we live in your light may we reflect that light out into the darkness, so that those whom the darkness has overcome might see and be drawn to your Son for your glory. Amen.

Saturday

Creator God, we are your people and we love you with all of our being. Create in us clean hearts and a hatred for sin that we may be pleasing in your sight. Amen.

Week 5 (March 27-April 1)

Weekly Scripture: Luke 9:23-25

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self?”

Daily Prayers

Monday

Lord God, we thank you for giving the Spirit of your Son to live in us. Attune our hearts to his voice that we would not stray after our own desires or the leading of another. Amen.

Tuesday

Father, through your Son, you have awakened us to new life. Help us to be faithful to your call and live in the light, shunning the deeds of darkness. When we stray use your Spirit to guide us through the darkness and toward the light, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, we know that you are our faithful provider, but we often forget what you have done for us. Remind us of the work of your Son who laid down his life so that we might have life now and in the age to come. By your Spirit, open our eyes to see our inability and to humbly rely on you, knowing that only you can meet all of our needs. Amen.

Thursday

Lord, you gave the Israelites in the wilderness manna from heaven. You have given us the Bread of Life, your Son. Help us to surrender our hearts to him that he may fill us with his presence and his life that we may never hunger again. Amen.

Friday

Heavenly Father, we come to you with hearts that are grateful for the multitude of blessings that we have received in Christ Jesus. Through your Spirit, remind us day by day that we may never forget. Grant us wisdom that we would express our gratitude in a way that pleases and glorifies you. Amen.

Saturday

Creator God, through your word you called everything into being. By your Spirit you have given us life by uniting us with your Son. Strengthen that bond that we may never fall away and that we may experience unity and fullness of life together as your body. Amen.

Week 6 (April 3-8)

Weekly Scripture: Ephesians 4:20-24

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Daily Prayers

Monday

Lord of all, we submit our hearts to you. Have your way in us individually and as a church. Cleanse us from desires that are contrary to your will and fill us with your Spirit that we might emulate the faithfulness of your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday

Father, often it is not easy to do your will. Even though we try hard, we still fall short. During times of struggle remind us of the gift you have given us in the Holy Spirit to give us strength. Through his admonition, words of comfort, and love, transform us day by day into the likeness of your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Wednesday

Almighty God, while our days are few, yours are everlasting. While this world is decaying and longing for renewal, you never change and always are faithful. Through the ebbs and flows of life, help us to keep our focus on you that we may exhibit faithfulness to your calling on our lives. Amen.

Thursday

Lord, make us different. Give our lives a quality that sets us apart from the world. May we shine with your holiness and love and be a testimony of your goodness and grace that draws those who are lost into your fold. Amen.

Friday

Heavenly Father, we desire to experience true joy. By your Spirit, enable us to shun the paths of emptiness the world beckons us down. Remind us that only you can satisfy and that lasting fulfillment only comes through doing your will. Amen.

Saturday

Creator God, you have given us your Scriptures to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. As we seek to follow your instruction, give us the courage to walk whatever path your Spirit leads us down. Amen.

Week 7 (April 10-15)

Weekly Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Daily Prayers

Monday

Almighty God, whose dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Tuesday

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Wednesday

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Thursday

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Friday

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Saturday

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.