

Lent Devotions 2019
Growing in Grace
*Grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*
2 Peter 3:18



The season of Lent is the forty days before Easter, not including Sundays. Forty is a number which represents fullness, or a long time: forty days and nights of rain for Noah, forty years in the wilderness for the Hebrews, forty days of fasting for Jesus in the wilderness. The early church used these forty days for instruction of candidates to be baptized on Easter; later the church observed Lent as a time of confession and fasting. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning “lengthening of days,” since it always begins in winter and continues into spring in the Western hemisphere.

These devotions are an invitation to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: that knowledge is rooted in the Bible, with a scripture reading and brief prayer for each day of Lent--and even Sundays! Our image for Growing in Grace will be a tree: readings for Week 1 and Week 2 are titled “Planted Deeply” and focus on the ways we are planted – what may not be easily seen, but are the grounding practices which give us nourishment and life. Week 3 and Week 4 are “Standing Strong” and will highlight the ways we stand firm in faith. Week 5 and Week 6 are “Raised Up” and will remind us of Christ being raised up by God, but also raised up on a cross.

In 2019, Ash Wednesday is March 6 and Easter Sunday is April 21. During those weeks, we should be able to see trees which are leafless begin to bud and blossom and put out green leaves. There will be quotes and facts about trees throughout this booklet to remind you to observe the re-awakening of creation and the cycle of springtime. Facts about trees come from Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: The Illustrated Edition*, Graystone Books 2016. Trees grow naturally with water and sunlight; Christians grow intentionally with prayer and study.

You will want to keep a Bible at hand as you use these devotions; most texts are not printed in their entirety. May you be nurtured and blessed by these resources as we grow in the grace of Jesus Christ.

*Pastor Rosanna
Creekside Church of the Brethren*



Wednesday, March 6

Ash Wednesday

Genesis 3:19-24

Dust to Dust

By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.

*God, I pray for the humility to return to the soil
from which you created me. Plant me deeply so
that I can grow and flourish. Amen.*

Thursday, March 7

Isaiah 58:1-12

An Acceptable Fast

The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

*God, show me what is acceptable to you; give me
your water of life. Amen.*

Friday, March 8

Psalm 51:1-17

A Clean Heart

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

*God, open my lips and let my mouth declare your
praise. Accept the offering of a willing spirit and
a contrite heart. Amen.*

Saturday, March 9

Matthew 6:1-6

Public Piety

Beware of practicing your piety before others
in order to be seen by them; for then you
have no reward from your Father in heaven.

*God, help me to grow in my faith in you and the
grace of Jesus Christ. Thank you for practices
which nourish my soul. Amen.*

WEEK 1
Planted Deeply



**I pray that Christ may dwell
in your hearts through faith,
as you are being rooted and grounded
in love. Ephesians 3:18**

*"It's what's under the ground that
creates what's above the ground.*

*You cannot change the fruits
that are already hanging on the tree.
You can, however, change tomorrow's fruits.
But to do so, you will have to dig below the
ground and strengthen the roots."*

– T. Harv Eker

Most individual trees of the same species
growing in the same stand are connected to
each other through their root system. p 8

Sunday, March 10

Romans 10:8b-13

Confessing and Believing

Because if you confess with your lips that
Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that
God raised him from the dead, you will be
saved. For one believes with the heart and so
is justified, and one confesses with the mouth
and so is saved.

*God, this is your day of salvation! Let me confess
with my mouth and believe in my heart that Jesus
is Lord. Amen.*

Monday, March 11

Deuteronomy 26:6-11

Fruit of the Ground

So now I bring the first of the fruit of the
ground that you, O Lord, have given me.
You shall set it down before the Lord your
God and bow down before the Lord your
God. Then you, together with the Levites

and the aliens who reside among you, shall
celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord
your God has given to you and to your
house.

*God, you have brought me to the place where I
am. Show me how I can grow here so that I can
offer what I have to You. Amen.*

Tuesday, March 12

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Refuge and Strength

Those who love me, I will deliver;

I will protect those who know my name.

When they call to me, I will answer them;

I will be with them in trouble,

I will rescue them and honor them.

With long life I will satisfy them,

and show them my salvation.

*God, you are my refuge. Thank you for the love
that knows my name and the strength which
protects me in life's storms. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 13

Luke 4:1-13

Not By Bread Alone

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from
the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the
wilderness, where for forty days he was
tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all
during those days, and when they were over,
he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If
you are the Son of God, command this stone
to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered
him, 'It is written, "One does not live by
bread alone." '

*God, I pray for the grace of your Son, Jesus, who
knew that he did not live only by the physical need
for bread, but by the spiritual food of your Word.
Amen.*

Thursday, March 14
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Now is the Time!

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

God, thank you for the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Help me to accept and share your grace. Amen.

Friday, March 15
Isaiah 55:10-12
It Shall Not Return Empty

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,

and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty.

God, water our roots with your word of life so that we can bring forth new life in you. Amen.

Saturday, March 16
Psalm 80:7-11
Fill the Land

You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.

God, bless us with strong roots so that our land may be filled with your glory. Amen.

WEEK 2
Planted Deeply



Nor height, nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 8:3

"A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be grounded and that no matter how high we go it is from our roots that we draw sustenance."

— Wangari Maathai

The root is certainly a more decisive factor than what is growing above ground . . . it is in the root that centuries of experience are stored, and it is this experience that has allowed the tree's survival. p 32-33

Sunday, March 17
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Hold Firm

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

God, my citizenship is in heaven; help me to hold firmly to the expectation of salvation in Jesus. Amen.

Monday, March 18
Genesis 15:1-6
Beyond Number

But the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.' He brought him outside and said, 'Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'

God, you take us beyond what we can understand or imagine. Help us to trust in your promises even when we cannot see the outcome. Amen.

Tuesday, March 19

Psalm 27

The Goodness of the Lord

I believe that I shall see the goodness
of the Lord

in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord;

be strong, and let your heart take courage;

wait for the Lord!

God, I will be strong and take heart, for your goodness is my light and my salvation. Amen.

Wednesday, March 20

Matthew 7:7-12

Good Gifts

Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

God, help me to seek your kingdom and your righteousness so that others will see your good gifts. Amen.

Thursday, March 21

James 1:17-18

God's Generosity

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

God, I give thanks for your faithfulness. Make me part of your purpose in the world and let me grow in your grace. Amen.

Friday, March 22

Colossians 1:2-6

Growing the Gospel

You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

God, may your good news grow in me so that it can spread to the world. Amen.

Saturday, March 23

Psalm 63:1-8

Better than Life

O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;

my flesh faints for you,

as in a dry and weary land where there is
no water.

So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.

Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.

God, I am humbled by your power and glory, and strengthened by your steadfast love. Amen.

WEEK 3
Standing Strong

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

"If you would know strength and patience, welcome the company of trees."

— Hal Borland

If there's an unusually strong hurricane-force wind, the tree community stands together to help each individual tree. p 91



Sunday, March 24
1 Corinthians 10:5-13
Do Not Fall

So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

God, I pray for the strength to withstand the storms of life. With Christ's help, I can endure anything. Amen.

Monday, March 25
Romans 5:1-8
Strong in Hope

Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

God, thank you for the love which you have poured into my heart through your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tuesday, March 26

Psalm 32
Deliverance

Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.

You are a hiding-place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

God, help me to acknowledge where I have fallen short so that I can experience your forgiveness and steadfast love. Amen.

Wednesday, March 27

Luke 13:6-9
Fruitless

Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." '

God, help me to grow in grace so that I can bear fruit for your kingdom where you have planted me. Amen.

Thursday, March 28
Deuteronomy 4:39-40
Only God

So acknowledge today and take to heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-

being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for all time.

God, give me the strength to follow your commandments and take heart: there is no other God but you. Amen.

Friday, March 29

Hosea 14:2-10

Flourishing

His shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive tree,
and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.
They shall again live beneath my shadow,
they shall flourish as a garden.

God, thank you for your love which is so freely given. Let me grow and flourish in you. Amen.

Saturday, March 30

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

An Honest Heart

But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

God, I pray for an honest and open heart so that your Word would take root and grow in me. Amen.

WEEK 4

Standing Strong

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree. Luke 13:19

*"Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky."
– Kahlil Gibran*



A tree is not a forest . . .
but together, many trees create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold, stores a great deal of water, and generates a great deal of humidity. And in this protected environment, trees can live to be very old. p 10

Sunday, March 31

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

New Creation

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

God, thank you for reconciliation in Christ and the gift of new life. Give me eyes to see the new things which you are doing. Amen.

Monday, April 1

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

Foolishness

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called,

both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

God, help me to stand strong in Jesus: the weakness of Christ is stronger than human strength. Amen.

Tuesday, April 2
Jeremiah 29:5-7
Plant Gardens

Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

God, we pray for the welfare of our city; let us be part of planting gardens so they can grow. Amen.

Wednesday, April 3
Micah 6:6-8
What Is Good

He has told you, O mortal, 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?

God, I pray that I can do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you. Amen.

Thursday, April 4
Psalm 29
Storm

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.
The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'

God, in sunlight or in storm, may I always proclaim your glory. Amen.

Friday, April 5
Mark 4:22-32
Harvest

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

God, thank you for the miraculous power which makes the earth produce food. I pray that your harvest would be full. Amen.

Saturday, April 6
Isaiah 43:18-21
Water in the Desert

I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

God, let me perceive what new things are springing forth in the desert and give you praise. Amen.

WEEK 5
Raised Up

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. John 3:14



*"We can learn a lot from trees: they're always grounded but never stop reaching heavenward."
— Everett Mamor*

A mature beech can send more than 130 gallons of water a day coursing through its branches and leaves. p 51

Sunday, April 7
Philippians 3:7-14
Press On

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

God, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. Amen.

Monday, April 8
Hosea 6:1-6
Spring Rains

After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.
Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord;
his appearing is as sure as the dawn;
he will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the earth.

God, may I know you better and love you more as I grow in grace. Amen.

Tuesday, April 9
Psalm 23
The Darkest Valley

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff –
they comfort me.

God, help me to trust in you, even when the road ahead is dark. Your presence is my comfort. Amen.

Wednesday, April 10
Luke 9:18-22

Who Do You Say That I Am?

He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, 'The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'

Lord Jesus, I proclaim that you are the Messiah, the son of the Living God. Amen.

Thursday, April 11
Psalm 52:8-9
Trust In God

But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love of God
for ever and ever.

I will thank you for ever,
because of what you have done.

In the presence of the faithful
I will proclaim your name, for it is good.

God, I give thanks for what you have done for me. I praise you because of your steadfast love. Amen.

Friday, April 12

John 8:21-30

Lifted Up

So Jesus said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.'

God, do not leave me alone. I pray for the grace to follow Jesus wherever that path leads. Amen.

Saturday, April 13

John 11:25-27

Believe

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'

Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, I believe in you. Help my unbelief. Amen.



WEEK 6

Raised Up

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12:24

*"Of all man's works of art, a cathedral is greatest. A vast and majestic tree is greater than that."
— Henry Ward Beecher*

And what if you cut a tree down? Is it then dead? It gets even more complicated when a new trunk grows out of an old stump. p 32

Sunday, April 14

Luke 19:36-40

Hosanna!

'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!' Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

Lord Jesus, save us: hosanna! We know the enthusiasm of this day will fade soon. Forgive us. Amen.

Monday, April 15

Luke 20:22-26

Taxes

'Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, 'Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?' They said, 'The emperor's.' He said to them, 'Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'

God, all that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to be belongs to you. Help me to use your gifts for your glory. Amen.

Tuesday, April 16

John 12:3-8

Anointed

Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

Jesus, be with me in this day. Because of your grace, I can have life with you in eternity. Amen.

Wednesday, April 17

1 Corinthians 15:10-11

What I Am

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them – though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

God, I believe in you--not through my own wisdom and power, but because of the grace you have shown me in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday, April 18

John 13:12-16

An Example

So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.

Lord Jesus, give us the humility to serve one another, just as you knelt and served your disciples by washing their feet. Amen.

Friday, April 19

Luke 23:44-48

Innocent

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my

spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.'

Lord Jesus, you were innocent of sin, and yet you died for me on the cross. I am covered by your amazing grace. Amen.

Saturday, April 20

Luke 23:50-56

Buried

It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

Lord Jesus, I wait in sorrow. Prepare my heart for the morning to come. Amen.



EASTER SUNDAY, April 21

He is risen! Halleluiah!

He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:8-11