



2026 PRAYER AND FASTING DEVOTIONAL





40 DAYS

OF PRAYER AND FASTING

An Easter devotional and
fasting guide based on
Journey to the Cross
by Paul David Tripp.



Introduction

In the coming 40 days, we want our church to come to the understanding of what it means to lament over the days leading up to the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These 40 days will culminate with the celebration of His resurrection on Easter Sunday. This celebration is such a refreshing and exciting time in the life of believers. However, to fully understand the gravity and grace of this Christian holiday, we must first wade in the muck of the events that led up to that great day.

What is lament? A passionate expression of grief or sorrow.

The key word in this definition is not grief or sorrow, but passion. When we truly understand the graveness of our sins, there really should not be any other reaction than passionate grief.

Our prayer and hope for our church is that these 40 days will be a lovely journey in our spiritual lives. We want to learn the proper, passionate response to our sins during this journey. BUT, just like the journey to the cross did not stop with the sufferings of Christ, our response to sin does not stop with sorrow. His mercies are new every morning. As we will see, we have much to celebrate!



Section 1.

Fast from social media for the next seven days. Every time you feel the need to pick up your device and click on an app, STOP and pray for the sins in your life; that Christ would help you to turn from them.

Day 1

"God is holy, so sin is serious. God is gracious, so sin can be forgiven. On the cross his holiness and grace kiss.(13)" — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalms 51:1-12

Most of us that have been raised in church know the drill. We know about God, we know the Bible stories, and we can most likely quote scriptures from memory. We are mostly faithful members of a local church and believe in the importance of the body of believers. Our Christian life is made up of the necessary spiritual disciplines including scripture, prayer, and maybe even fasting. However, most of us (if courageous enough) would admit that we do not concede to the idea of one necessary part of our spiritual growth...confession of sin. We pray for health, our finances, our safety and for others in the same way. But if we are honest, how much time do we spend in prayer over our sins? When was the last time you were so aware of your sin that it broke you? We have all heard that David participated in one of the "worst" sin events recorded in the Bible and was still considered a man after God's own heart. What we do not hear much about is how David responded after he admitted his guilt. In the passage you read for today, we see a man grieving his sins from birth until present day. We see a man begging God not write him off, but to give him back his joy in this terrible time in his life.

Spend time in prayer today asking God to:

- 1. Reveal the sin in your life that is keeping you from becoming closer to Him.*
- 2. Break you over this sin so that you will understand the depth of your wickedness.*
- 3. Open your eyes to the mercy and grace that awaits you at the foot of the cross through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Ask yourself if you have other brothers or sisters in Christ in your life that you can confess your sins to and have a healthy response in prayer with.

Day 2

“When the shadow of the cross hangs over us, we are not surprised by sin, and we are not afraid to look at what has already been forgiven (17).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 130

As believers, it is easy to look to the world when we face difficulties that come into our lives. It can be tempting to look to the people and things around us to find out what we think we should be doing with our lives to find joy and contentment. How many times when searching for answers to problems, or maybe the correct paths that we think may lead to ‘success’, do we use those same people and events to compare our lives to? We use these things as sorts of measuring sticks of who we are, where we are, and how should we act. It is so easy to forget that the measuring stick we SHOULD be using is the life and death of Jesus. When we look at His life and look at His death, what we see in that reflection is sin. Compared to Jesus, that is ALL we should see. In Jesus, we are reminded not only of our sin, but of how gracious He is. Think about this...If we believe that God is truly Sovereign, then we must reconcile the fact that He knowingly sent His son to suffer an excruciating death FOR US! What does that say of the grace that he pours out on us every single day? Jesus’ perfect life shows us where all of our problems come from in our own sin and the sinful world we live in. It gives us the example of holiness and what we should be imitating. Jesus’ death shows us where the answers for our life should come from in his grace and mercy towards us when we sin against him.

Ask yourself today:

What do I think about my own sin compared to those around me? Do I see myself as the better person compared to those around me?

Pray that God would show you daily that you are the worst sinner that you will meet, and then pray that God would show you His grace that is so freely given.

Day 3

“Keep reminding yourself that you live in a world that is groaning, waiting for redemption, but remind yourself also that the cross guarantees that the groaning will someday end (21).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 74

When asked what you might think about sin, you would most likely reply, “bad”, “evil”, or “messy”. However if someone were to catch us in the act of sin, before the remorse or conviction set in, we would probably describe it as “fun”, “fulfilling”, or even “needed”. In the act of the sin, we do not see the damaging effects that may be waiting for us on the other side. This is a part of the cosmic problem we find ourselves in; living in a fallen state in a fallen world. There is a constant tension of worshiping sin while also being convicted of our sin. We see this in scripture described as the groaning of the world waiting on Christ’s return. Tripp writes, “Part of the deceitfulness of sin is it’s ability to make what is destructive appear attractive (23).” This is our lives. We live in a world that is continually calling us to be more like the world; while as Christians, our call and our mission is to separate ourselves from this world. We are to live as exiles, just like the Israelites. But so often in our current predicament, just like the Israelites, we look like we fit right in. We must ensure that our groaning is fixed on the redemption that has been won and will be fully restored in Christ’s return. If our groaning is over our sin but never turns to this glorious promise to be fulfilled, then even our groaning over our sin can be unhealthy. Our sin is where our plight begins, but for believers is it NOT the end. Our future is glory to glory and oh, what a day it will be!

As you read the Psalm for today, how do you see both groaning or lament from Israel, but also a reason to be filled with hope?

Pray and ask God to break your heart over your sins. Call a brother or sister in Christ you can trust and confess these sins to them. Then both of you spend time in a prayer of thankfulness that this groaning and lament will NOT last. Redemption has come and glory will come.

Day 4

“God intends suffering to pry open our hands so we let go of the things of this earth and hold more tightly to Jesus (28).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Luke 9:23–25 and Romans 6:1–14

What is it that you have to control in your life? Finances? People’s attitudes or efforts? Your own health? Set a timer for 5 minutes. In these 5 minutes, write down everything that you find yourself getting frustrated or angry over. If we are honest, most of this list (if not all of it) are people or things that we want to be able to control. When we feel out of control, fear sets in and that fear leads us to secondary emotions that include anger and frustration.

Next, reset the 5 minute timer and begin writing down things that make you feel content or fulfilled. Is it a certain amount in your bank account? Is it a good report of health? Is it being able to sleep at night because of the new security cameras you installed? This list is going to show you what means the most to you, and most of it will likely be synonymous with security and comfort. Our lives as Americans are built around the idea of comfort and control. Look at our hotels, our vacation experiences, the amount of self-care coaches and financial investment plans all available to us. All of these things, while not evil in their own right, breathe into our souls the idea that we are and should be in control of our own destiny. It is the mantra of Hollywood and the algorithm of social media. When we track down these things in our life we begin to see a pattern of things that have in one way or another become more than things...they have become idols. The late pastor Tim Kellar once said in a sermon, “All sin stems from idolatry of these four idols in which we put our hope in, instead of Christ.”

Comfort, Approval, Power, and Control – these are the source idols. And as Paul David Tripp explains, “Here’s the core of the struggle: as long as sin still resides in our hearts, we will have an inclination to ask the physical creation to do for us what the Creator alone is able to do.(26)”

When any of these idols are taken from us, most of us would admit that, even if it's just for a bit, it leads to suffering. Suffering is both revealing of what is important in our lives and also necessary for our growth in our walk with Christ. Without suffering, we are without the mechanism to recenter our efforts away from the pull of this world and back to the holiness of Christ. Just as our sin led

Christ to suffer on the cross, our suffering illuminates the pathway back to that same cross. The same cross where we see our sin reflected in His perfection, and that hopefully opens our eyes to see the grace of Christ.

Ask yourself today: When suffering comes, do I pray that God would show me how to grow with Him in the suffering? Or do I just want it to go away?

Where do you feel like you have already experienced suffering this year?

Pray that God would comfort you in the suffering that may come, and also show you the sin in your life that may be causing the suffering so that you can let go and make your way back to the cross.

Day 5

“Prayer is abandoning my righteousness, admitting my need for forgiveness, and resting in the grace of the cross of Jesus Christ (29)” — Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 6:9–13

Stop and take just a moment and say a prayer before you move forward in today's devotional.

Now, try to write down exactly what you prayed as best as you can remember. What was it? Personal needs met? Maybe praying for your health or someone else's? Maybe you're making a difficult decision in your life and need God to give you guidance? All of these things are worthy of prayer but must not be the only thing we pray for. Our prayer life is a healthy indicator of what we think about God and what our relationship with God is for.

Imagine meeting someone on this earth that you thought did everything close to perfect. A mentor or maybe a leader in the things you are most interested in. Would you immediately ask that person to do something for you? Or would you begin by telling that person the reasons why you worship the ground they walk on? Most of us would do the latter. Then why are we so tempted to treat the creator of the universe like a genie in a bottle or a welfare agent? If God is who we say He is, then the language we use to talk to Him should reflect His character. Concerning our sins, our prayer life should be a constant state of asking, as the Psalmist wrote, to blot out my sins before Him. There should be some language of asking God to forgive us, to not look on the shameful things we may have done, and then being thankful for who He is and what He has done for our sins. Our prayer is a form of worship and our worship should be cloaked in humility before our King.

During these 40 days leading up to Easter, let us be intentional in our prayer life. For the remainder of this devotional, commit to praying in a way that shows remorse, humility, obedience, and thankfulness to God. Challenge yourself to pray prayers with spiritual substance, submitting to the holiness of God instead of prayers to meet your demands. Allow the confession of sin to be the theme of your prayers alongside thankfulness for how God shows love and mercy to us in spite of those sins.

As you end the devotion today, write out your prayer to God. See if intentionally writing your prayer affects how you pray.

Day 6

"The empty tomb stands as an eternal promise to you that God will always finish what he has begun in you and for you (33)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Romans 12:1-2

Death is a complicated subject. It brings a bag of mixed emotions. As Christians we know that we should not fear death but that does not always equal feeling contentment or joy when we lose a loved one. If we look through scripture, death is a part of the redemptive story of Christ. From God telling Adam and Eve there will be finality to their lives after their sin, the killing of Abel, the passover in Egypt, the sacrifices that God instructed of the Israelites, to the death of Christ and the deaths of the apostles; death is an essential part of the Gospel that saves us. Not only does the Bible give us story after story of death being necessary to the story of redemption, we also see death as a part of our everyday lives in our walk with Christ. We see an incredible amount of scripture calling us to die to our sinful human characters and to take up the new abundant life in Christ. We have all heard these verses if we have attended a church for any length of time. The call to action is clear in scripture. But what does that actually look like? For the past few days we have been reading about how sin serious, and that it is something we should treat seriously in our personal spiritual growth. We have identified idols that keep us from being closer to Christ today than we were yesterday, or the day before. For believers, turning from these idols is to die to ourselves and to be raised in Christ. Make no mistake, this process of death that must happen is not something that happens overnight. It is a daily, hourly, constant part of who we are and what we should do as we pursue the holiness of God.

When we read Romans 12:1-2, Paul is instructing and calling us to be living sacrifices. What does that mean for you today? What must you sacrifice today to live as Christ has called you to?

Day 7

“In this broken world we won’t get paradise now, but the empty tomb guarantees us that a new heaven and new earth are in our future (37).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Revelation 21:1-7

How many times have you had a dream of a perfect vacation, a big team win, a career milestone, or any other dream goal? Maybe it came true, maybe you fell short? In either scenario there can be let down. The win was not the pinnacle you thought it would be. The vacation you so diligently planned was not what you expected. The point is that we all have a fantasy of this perfect scenario that, if it happens the way we dream, could make us extremely happy. They could be THE things that help us catapult ourselves to that affirmation we need or maybe gives us the time of peace we have been longing for.

Unfortunately, on this earth none of this will quite measure up. The bible is clear that our lives here will be filled with disappointment and heartache. In this chapter of Revelation though, we see a promise of paradise fulfilled. It is only until Christ’s return that we will get to experience this epic utopia we have all longed for. So what do we do for now? We continue in the call from this guide we have been reading to lament. We must groan. We keep our eyes fixed on running the race well until Jesus returns and rights all the wrongs we have experienced on this earth because of the effects of our sin.

What does your attitude in the midst of disappointment say about who you worship? As you pray today, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength you need to have the attitude of Christ’s call in the sermon on the mount: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matt. 5:4



Section 2.

Fast one meal per day for the next seven days. Every time you feel hungry, STOP and pray that the physical pain you feel from hunger would remind you of the pain Jesus suffered for our salvation.

Day 8

"It's good to be poor. It's the only pathway to the riches of grace (40)."

— Paul David Tripp

Read Ephesians 2:1-22

As we enter Day 8 of this Easter devotional, you can see the theme running deeply through these pages. We cannot escape our sin. We **MUST** recognize it is woven into us from Genesis 3. And the only way to turn from it is to admit it's there, and then learn how to lament it while also living in the grace provided to us through Christ if we are Christians. It is necessary that we heed the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount where he tells us that we are blessed if we are poor in spirit. Jesus is not referring to our financial net worth here. He is addressing that those who follow him need to understand the grave danger in thinking we are good people; and the danger in being jealous of the ones who seem to have it all together in their walk with Christ. Neither one of these situations are profitable for the Christian life. Our lives as disciples **MUST** be centered around an understanding of our sin and our great need for Jesus, our Savior.

Here is an eye-opening thought: How many funerals have you been to where people were mourning that the one who died was not a Christian? The answer is probably none. As humans, we are very quick to believe that our eternal security is held in our own good deeds and righteousness. This is a dangerous lie that the enemy sneaks in on us. Those of us who would admit and believe that not all humans go to heaven still are very hesitant to think someone we know might actually be in hell. Our transparency of our own poor spirits should pour out to those around us on a daily basis.

How do you portray the type of transparency about your life that says "I know I am a sinner"? Do your actions say "I am self-righteous," or "I am poor in spirit"?

Day 9

"Where you point the finger of blame is where you will be convinced that the most help is needed (44)." – Paul David Tripp

Read 1 John 1:5-2:6

What is our first response when things go wrong, get difficult, or maybe fail? Defensiveness? Do we look inward first, or do we tend to immediately look for ways to blame our circumstances on other things or people? At times, we may come around to the fact that it is our sin, and other times we may never admit it. How many times have we been hurt by someone and instead of thinking about how we could have done things differently, we just live in the "right to be mad" because this person has wronged us?

Our sin and corruption runs so deep in us that we have a difficult time being able to admit our sin because we actually are sinning in not admitting the sin! Say that again 3 times fast! Any time we experience things in our lives that do not go our way, or maybe people hurt us, or we experience a failure; our tendency is to find something or someone to blame. Scripture, however, tells us we should do otherwise. In the scripture from today, we read that if we do not admit that sin is in our lives then there is not light in us and we cannot call ourselves followers of Christ. In other words, without Christ, we are left to nothing but our sin. So if we are not willing to admit that we are sinners and in need of a savior, or admit our sin in our everyday lives, then it is impossible to say we are Christians. Humility in recognizing our sin is key to our spiritual health and life. Pride, especially concerning the lack of confession of our sin, is a key indicator that a person is living in darkness.

During these 40 days, our goal is to center ourselves on admitting and confessing sin and then turning to the grace of Jesus Christ. It is the same cycle of what Christ did for us by suffering in His death and then being resurrected to rule at the right hand of the Father.

Think about a recent time that you maybe blamed someone or something for a difficult time in your life. Is there a sin you could admit to that might provide a path to becoming closer to Christ?

Day 10

“Jesus did what he did for us because there simply was no other way.”

— Paul David Tripp

Read Romans 5:1-21

We are all saturated in a microwave culture. Everything is instant. Companies like Amazon have taken our lack of patience and elevated it to a level of which we likely do not understand the full consequences. This lack of patience has overflowed into our lives when dealing with long term processes. We do not have the ability to sit and wait. Problems come and we want a fix now. The quick fix is the only fix. That is why devotionals and seasons like Easter are so good for us as Christians. It is a time to stop and reflect on the goodness, in the midst of the pain and difficulty, of who God is and why He has us in this season. It is an opportunity for us to focus and center our minds on the suffering that Christ had to endure in order for us to be able to have access to the Father eternally. There was no quick fix for Jesus, and there is no quick fix for us. This world will remain difficult and painful until Christ comes to restore His order and establish his new creation.

Think about the suffering that Christ had to endure. The days leading up to the crucifixion were terrible and unthinkable. Pray that we would not want to move quickly through the problems of our life but focus on why we are enduring.

Day 11

"The cross of Jesus Christ purchased more than forgiveness for you (52)."

— Paul David Tripp

Read Romans 2:1-16

Has someone ever done anything to you that really hurt you? Have you ever hurt someone? Forgiveness is most always a long process made up of many hurdles to work through. Forgiveness is not the final step in the process of restoration though. It is being able to trust that the person won't hurt us or the offended again. This is not easy because we know that as humans we typically fail and can hurt people repeatedly. Especially those of us that are married. The cross of Christ makes a way though.

When Christ died for us, he did not die just to forgive our sins. He died so that, as a part of the forgiveness process, he would change us. The story of redemption does not end with forgiveness. It starts there. The sanctification process that comes after forgiveness is the process that turns us away from our sin so that when ask for forgiveness from others, it is not just empty words. His work in us and through us gives us the power and the courage to stand on our apologies and actually be changed.

Is there someone in your life you know you have hurt? Pray that the Lord would give you an opportunity to ask for their forgiveness by confessing your sin to them and then trusting the Lord will change you.

Day 12

“Your emotional life is a window into what is truly important to you and what you are really living for (56).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Colossians 3:1-10

So many of us reading this devotional right now grew up in the life of a church. Most of us possess an extensive amount of what Tripp calls, “habits of religion (58)”. An inspection of our lives would show church attendance, service in and outside of the church, some sort of devotional life, bible study, small group attendance; we could go on and on. But what if we took a look at our emotions? What would we find? Would we find a Christ centered joy that is not built on the “highs” of our life? Would we find a peace that surpasses all others? Or would we find fear? Anxiety? Anger? What kind of person are we when we are in the quiet moments of lives by ourselves or with our close family? Just like our bank accounts can show us what is important to us, our emotions can also show us what or who we really worship.

Do we say we trust God for the outcomes of this world and yet spend time worrying over the political climate of our country? Do we say that we love others but spend most of our time casting blame and being upset because people have not lived up to OUR expectations? Do we say we are thankful for the blessing of our family and friends and yet spend most of our time speaking to them in anger? Do we say that we have a peace eternally because of what Christ accomplished on the cross and yet spend much of our time anxiously saving and planning financially so that we can feel safe and comfortable?

Our emotions are a direct window into what we worship as Christians. How we respond and react to the events of our lives show a picture of who and what we really hold tight to in worship. The habit of religion is not why Christ died for us. He tells us in Hebrews that the sacrifices and the offerings are not enough. Jesus wants our heart, mind, and soul not our religious habits. During these 40 days leading up to Easter, once again, we must confess the sins that are keeping us from truly worshipping Christ. When we are not willing to confess sin and focus on what is keeping us from becoming like Christ, we cannot be near Christ.

*Think about which emotion you deal with the most. Fear? Anger? Anxiety? Worry?
Ask God to show you the root of that sin and turn from it.*

Day 13

“Every piece of Christ’s suffering was suffered for you, and every victory accomplished by that suffering was accomplished so that you can now live in victory too (60).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Isaiah 53:1-12

During these 40 days we have been asked to sacrifice something each week. These things are mostly superficial things that are not necessary to sustain life. However, that does not mean that it is not difficult at times. We develop habits in our daily lives that can be very difficult to break when asked.

Jesus’ death and resurrection was the fulfillment of the prophecies and meant to be the substitutionary event for redemptive history. His death became the substitute for the original Adam. Jesus became the second and better Adam by living a life of no sin. Jesus’ death was the substitute for the animal sacrifices that had to be made in the Old Testament to cleanse the Israelites of their sin before the Levitical Priests entered the temple. Jesus’ death was also the substitute for these same priests. After His death, we no longer need these priests to approach his throne in confession, prayer, and worship.

So we see that because of the sacrifice through Jesus’ death, He became the replacement. The question is, how willing are we to sacrifice things in our lives in order to replace them with Christ? What things are we worshipping that need to be sacrificed in order to draw nearer to the throne of Christ? Maybe we are not sacrificing at all. Maybe we need to confess the sin of simply not being willing to sacrifice idols in our lives for the sake of Christ.

Write down what would be the most difficult or has been the most difficult thing to sacrifice over the course of this devotion so far. What made or would make this one thing such a difficult part of our life to sacrifice?

Day 14

“One of the scariest, most destructive aspects of sin is its ability not only to blind us, but to blind us to our blindness.” — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 139

“You see, if sin blinds—and it does (see Heb. 3:12–13)—then I will not have an accurate view of myself as long as there is sin remaining in me (65).” What a sobering thought this is for ourselves. We would all agree that until Christ’s return we will always deal with sin in our personal lives to one degree or another. So this blindness that Paul David Tripp refers to is inescapable. If we cannot even see some of the sin that is in our lives because of the blindness sin causes, how do we repent? How do we repent for something we do not know exists? This is yet another reason that seasons of fasting, praying and seeking God are so important as a regular spiritual discipline in our lives. It is a time we can REALLY focus on not only the sin we know we struggle with, but also ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of the sin we are blind to.

Another indicator that we can watch for in our lives is how receptive we are to our brothers and sisters approaching us about sin they may see in our lives. If every time someone says something to us we immediately get defensive and ignore their encouragement, we can definitely see some blind spots in our lives. Gospel community is meant to be difficult and confronting. Yes, it should be done in gentleness and in the right context. But, more importantly, it should be done. So our attitudes as disciples of Christ should be of humility to these rebukes that may come from others.

Think about your relationships with other Christians. Do you have the type of relationship with a brother or sister in Christ that you can confront each others sin in love in order to mature in your walk with Christ? Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to the sin-blind spots you may have right now in your life.



Section 3.

Fast from sleep: Set your alarm 1 hour early for the next 7 days. Use this time to specifically read scripture and pray over your family.

Day 15

"The core enemy in our struggle with sin is not wrong behavior, but the idolatry behind the behavior (68)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

When we think of the word 'idolatry' most often, as Christians, we think of the golden calf the Israelites worshipped or some other man made object. Maybe some think of something like a wooden buddha statue. The point is, many of us have strong idols in our lives that we do not even think about. Most of our idols, as the good followers of Jesus we are, are somewhat unassuming things. Maybe you have a show that are drawn to, or maybe its Facebook or Instagram. Maybe you love to workout, eat healthy, and be active. Those things do not seem like idols. In fact, they appear like you are taking care of your temple, your body, as God has instructed you to do. Idols in our lives most often look good on the surface. However, if we were to take a closer look at the time we spend planning and doing these type of things compared to the time we spend participating in any sort of spiritual disciplines, we might be shocked to see what we really worship. Our minds and our attention are preoccupied with so many things that the world throws at us. So, anything that can capture us in a way that distracts us from spending time in prayer and scripture could become an idol very quickly. For many, even careers can become an idol.

When you break down your day in terms of time, what consumes you the most? What 'good' things are taking you away from better things in your life? How is satan distracting you with seemingly responsible habits that are causing you to be weak in your faith and trust in Christ?

Pray and ask the Lord to open your eyes to the good things that distract you from being more disciplined in your walk with Christ.

Day 16

"No sacrifice is more pleasing to your Lord than the sacrifice of words in the form of humble, honest, heartfelt confession (72)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Romans 3:10–18

Confession may be one of the most humbling things we can do as people and Christians. We are not made, in our sinfulness, to desire confession. Any time we are at fault for something, we immediately start rationalizing in our heads why exactly it is not our fault. Kids are born with this trait. It is not taught. Finger pointing comes natural. When it comes to confession, it is so incredibly difficult. Think about something though. For a Christian, is it easier to confess a sin to God in prayer or to a brother or sister in Christ? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together*, challenges Christians in this thought. This is paraphrasing, but he says that we find it so much easier to admit our sin to the most Holy being ever to exist and yet confessing that same sin to the person standing right next to us, who probably acted out the same sin recently, is almost impossible. Shouldn't this be the other way around? This idea shows how little we comprehend of the holiness of God. Regardless, confession should be a regular part of our daily lives. No, standing up in front of the church and confessing a lie you told this week is not exactly what we are referring to. As Christians though, we should be living in such a way with others in community that we have those people we can go to and confess these sins. Then they can join with us, on our behalf, crying out to a holy God to forgive us and give us the strength to repent.

Read the following prayer aloud. At the end, ask God to bring someone to you that you can establish a relationship with where regular confession can take place in your lives. If you have this person already in your life, ask God to continue to give you the strength and desire to meet with them in prayer and confession.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

—Book of Common Prayer, Seabury Press, 1979

Day 17

“The Christian life is a battle of treasure. Whatever treasure captures your heart will control your life.” — Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 6:19–34 and 13:44–46

The notorious pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It is literally what movies are made of. We all deep down chase it; the treasure that will never fulfill us. It can make us obsessed. Chasing the world, the so-called rat race, giving all of our effort to the world so that we might find that missing link that will ultimately give us contentment and happiness. As we see in the reading today, we cannot be a servant of two masters. If our desire in life is this world's treasure then it is impossible to also serve God with our whole heart, soul, and minds. We are definitely made to seek out treasure. We are made to desire hope and joy. But we get so distracted with the things of this world because they are physical. We can see them, touch them, interact with them. It entangles us into a web of desire for things that will never fully fill us. Only Christ can do that. Only Jesus can give us the everlasting treasure that we long for.

It should be our hope in these 40 days of seeking Christ for the Easter season that we will center our aim on the only treasure that will sustain us. No matter how flashy and tempting the things of this world can become, we must stay the course. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment for the things we ache for in this world.

What is it, in your life, that you treasure? What are you seeking from this life? Do you find yourself looking for ways to serve God and others or do you find yourself seeking ways to become more affirmed and secure in the present world we live in?

Day 18

"The story of our redemption is historical proof of the unstoppable sovereignty of God (80)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Isaiah 46:5-13

How many times have we been surprised by events in our lives? All of us can say there have been surprises that have led to joy and surprises that left us devastated. Our lives are literally built on these surprises because we simply cannot see into the future to know what happens next. Frankly, there are also numerous times that not only do we not know what is coming next, but even after it has happened, we are left wondering what we should do. The good news is that God is never caught by surprise. Read this poem from Paul David Tripp and meditate on how good our God is.

Surprised again.
Quiet conversation erupts into heated debate.
Surprised again.
Sickness interrupts well-being.
Surprised again.
A loved one is unexpectedly lost.
Surprised again.
A long-trusted leader falls.
Surprised again.
An unexpected gift alleviates need.
Surprised again.
Opportunity's doors open wide.
Surprised again.
A sleepless night plunders rest.
Surprised again.
Sudden conflict crushes peace.
Surprised again.
An emergency alters day's schedule.
Surprised again.
Divine provision propels a plan.
Surprised again.
Sudden mystery sows confusion.
Surprised again.
Grace proves too big to grasp.

(Continued on next page)

It is the story of
my life.
I am surprised again
and again.
Surprised again,
reminded again
and again,
that I am not sovereign.
I am surprised again but not afraid.
My surprise,
my misguided expectation,
the mystery I live with,
my lack of control,
does not mean
my world,
my life,
my present,
my future,
is out of control.
I will be surprised again
and again,
but I am not afraid,
because you, Lord, are incapable of being
surprised (80-82)."

*Pray a prayer of thankfulness that God is Sovereign and He
alone is never caught by surprise.*

Day 19

“You and I have three problems that only the Redeemer has the power and willingness to solve (83).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 51

Tripp explains in his book, *Journey to the Cross*, that the nature of sin is a 3 prong problem. It consists of transgression, iniquity, and sin (85).

Transgression is the willing action to cross over into a sin. It is the act of crossing the line, if you will. Sometimes we do it knowing full well what we are doing and other times, not so much (85).

Iniquity is the thing in our spirit that causes us to be rebellious in the first place. It is not so much the action but the psychology of why we act on the sin. Iniquity is what shows us that sin is something we are born with. It cannot be escaped as it is in the very makeup of who we are (86).

Sin is the specific action we have committed that has gone against God. It is the lie we tell, the paper we cheat on, the specific argument where we yelled at our spouse. It is THE moment of weakness in our lives.

As you read Psalm 51, use this confession from David as a model to pray a prayer of confession in your life today. Although David commits a grave sin that has consequences that will ripple through time, his confession to God is what Christians need to understand should be a part of our own prayer lives on a daily basis.

Day 20

"It is good to silence complaint in your life by sitting down and taking the time to count your blessings (88)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 103

Over the last nineteen days we have been focused on defining sin, identifying sin, confessing sin and fighting sin. During a focused time like this devotional is, it is good to also stand back at times and not lose sight of all the characteristics of God. Talking about sin can be very hard and very emotional because it seems like it is a fight that we cannot win. And we can't! But God...He is so very good. He is our victory and He is the ONE thing that does not change in our lives. As we have reached the half way point of this 40 day devotional, stop, and write down 20 blessings that you have in your life right now that you can show gratitude for.

Recently there was a worship song written called, "Gratitude". The song tells us that even when we do not feel like we have anything to be grateful for, we can be thankful that we are able to praise God for who He is! Listen to this song today and focus on the words that are a powerful description of our spiritual lives at times.

Day 21

"It is impossible to excuse, deny, or minimize your sin without telling yourself that you do not need the grace of Christ Jesus (92)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 62:5-8

Have you ever looked at another person and thought, "Man, I'm glad I'm not that bad of a person..." For those of us that have kids, how many times have we scolded one child for them only to tell us how someone else was doing something way worse? Sin is a funny thing. As we said a few days ago, not only does sin come out in our lives, but we also have a tendency to be blind to our own sin. In the world of social media, humans are constantly comparing ourselves to others like never before. Sometimes it's thoughts of how we would like to be like other people or sometimes it's a thought of happiness because we are not quite as bad as another person. Regardless, anytime we have an attitude that someone else's sin is worse than ours, we are missing the whole point of why we are able to live in the grace of Jesus Christ. The grace of Jesus Christ does not coincide in a world where we are defensive or have a tendency to blame our sin on actions we are not in control of. Excuses are a humans way of elevating ourselves to a platform that does not need the grace of Christ as much as we would say we need. There is nothing fair about the world we live in. Our sin being not as bad as our neighbors does not make the gospel more fair for us than others.

If we understand the grace of Jesus Christ, we must get rid of the excuses in our lives and the attitudes of defensiveness about the sin that is so prevalent in our lives. As we celebrate this coming Easter, lets be the type of people that are not looking to level the playing field of sin. Lets show others the great gift we have to be able to live under the grace of Jesus through confessing and turning from our sin no matter how small it is.

Pray today that you would not give in to the temptation to compare yourself to others, and go and live unashamed in the grace of Jesus Christ.



Section 4.

Spend 15 minutes everyday this week with your family in prayer for each other. If you are a single adult, find another single adult in your church you can do this with, even if it is over FaceTime.

Day 22

“On this side of eternity, it is easy to love the gift more than the giver (99).”

— Paul David Tripp

Read Psalm 50:8-15

How many times have you prayed for something in your life or someone else's life and whatever you prayed for actually happened? We are most always ecstatic when this happens, aren't we? And why shouldn't we be? When God answers our prayers in the way that we want Him to, it most always feels like we are in tune with what God desires; but also because (if we are honest) we tend to think we know the best outcome for each situation. What happens, though, when our prayers are not answered like we have prayed? How many times have we heard people stand up in church and give a testimony of praise for a loved one who lost their battle with cancer? Have we ever heard someone praise God in a public setting for Him not providing the money they needed to make ends meet at certain times? We could all say this does not happen too often, if ever. So the real question becomes: do we believe God is good in the midst of prayers not being answered the way we would like?

Some of the most powerful stories heard in life oftentimes are stories of a Christian's faithfulness to truly praise God when things did not go their way. There can be no greater testimony of how powerful God is than when his followers portray faith that says “You are still the loving God I worship in all circumstances.”

Think about the times in your life that have been some of the most difficult times you have experienced. How did you react? Do you remember publicly giving God the glory in the midst despair? If not, think about how you could use what you may have learned from that circumstance to give God glory now.

Day 23

"No sacrifice that you and I will ever make is as great as the sacrifice that was made for us and for our redemption (100)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 26:20 – 27:53

The sacrifices that Jesus made leading up to His death are unthinkable. So many times we think only of the physical sufferings before and during the crucifixion when considering His sacrifices. However, as humans, think about the betrayal and isolation He suffered by those He was closest to. When we experience this kind of hurt from those we are closest to, it can be a pain that we may never truly forgive; and yet He did. The emotional toil that the road to the crucifixion brought to Jesus would be difficult for any of us to bear.

Grab a piece of paper and write down all the ways that Jesus was betrayed and isolated from those closest to him. Also write down the physical ways He suffered. Now pray over this list and ask God to break us over the suffering that Jesus took for us, so that we could eternally be forgiven and have a relationship with God through these sufferings.

Day 24

"The purpose of fasting is not to earn God's love, but to more deeply surrender to it (104)." — Paul David Tripp

Read 6:16-18

In March 2020, our world was upended. Many of us at the time really did not realize what was going on or understood what our lives would be like over the next 24 months. The world essentially shut down. Our healthcare system changed, our jobs relocated to our homes, and for the first time in a long time we were somewhat confined to our homes. There were many tragedies that happened because of Covid, no matter how you felt you about it politically. If we are honest though, not everything from the shut down was negative. For the first time in many of our lives, we got an opportunity to STOP. The extracurricular activities all came to a screeching halt along with the long work days. For the first time we were able to really focus on some of the most important things within our families: each other. I know personally it was the first time my family and I were able to go on bike rides, sit in the front yard and just watch our kids play. We talked to neighbors that we have never talked to. There was a sort 'back in the good old days' feeling that emerged.

Our lives can be described in one word: busy. So much of our lives are spent making things a priority that simply should never be so. The reason devotionals like this can be so healthy for a church body is it gives all a sense of stopping to recenter our focus. It is a time to focus on what really should be the priority in our spiritual lives. Scripture, prayer, and fasting should be regular disciplines in our spiritual diets, so these devotionals help us to see the need and hopefully pursue these disciplines more regularly.

Spend time thanking God for the ability to pray, read scripture, and fast. Take some time to write out a plan of 2 more times you could have a focused 30-40 day window of pursuing these spiritual disciplines this year.

Day 25

"Lent is not about what you will give of yourself to God, but about what he, in grace, has so bountifully given to you (108)." — Paul David Tripp

Read James 4:6-10

At times when we make extra effort to do devotionals like this one that call us to do the things we should already be doing but with more intention, we can easily start feeling good about what we are doing. The sin of pride that is in us is where most sin begins and many times when we feel like we are doing a better job at living for Christ, pride can set in. We must remember that focused times such as these are not about what we are doing. The extra time spent fasting, praying, or reading is not the time to stand back and think "Man, look at what all I am accomplishing for the sake of Easter season!" No, this focused time is a time for us to continually remember who Christ is and what *He* did for us.

When we are fasting something and we are frustrated because we cannot check social media or maybe there are hunger pains because we have not eaten, we think about the pain Christ went through. When we are spending time confessing our sins to one another and praying over these sins, we think about Christ and the grace upon grace He offers us. Be aware that during this time of seeking Christ more, the enemy is lurking and will use the pride of our own efforts to blind us in the midst of these same efforts.

Think about your walk with Christ. Is it possible to trace every sin back to pride? Write down Philippians 4:8, tape it in your car this week, and read it aloud daily.

Day 26

"Lent teaches us that sorrow is the only pathway to a life of true joy (112)."

— Paul David Tripp

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16–21

Think about any good thing in your life. Friendships, Marriages, climbing the career ladder. They all have one thing in common if we want to succeed at these things: Hard work. When we become complacent or when we become satisfied with the way things are, things immediately will stay the same or begin to get worse. Just like a beautiful garden did not bloom overnight and does not stay beautiful without being tended to, the things in our lives that we want to be good cannot be good without work. However, as sinful humans, oftentimes we have to first become dissatisfied with a situation or relationship before seeing the need to change that circumstance.

Since Genesis 3, God has been dissatisfied with this world and our sinful acts. His dissatisfaction with how He knew we would be created the plan of redemption to one day be fully satisfied. His dissatisfaction was what set in motion our salvation through the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ's life, torture, death, and ultimate resurrection is the satisfied plan of redemption that will one day be brought to fulfillment upon Jesus' return. We must get through the bad in our lives to see a way out. A way to the good.

Think about all the work that you have put into being satisfied in anything in life.

Now pray a prayer of thankfulness that God was not satisfied and set forth a plan of redemption for us.

Day 27

"What allows you to humbly and honestly look back is the invitation to look up at the same time (116)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Acts 3:17-20

"I wish I could say I asked you,
but I didn't.
I wish I could say I reached for you, but it didn't happen.
I wish I had thought that I needed help,
but my mind was elsewhere.
I wish I had sought your wisdom,
but I saw myself as wise.
I wish I had leaned on you,
but I thought I was standing up straight.
I wish I had cast myself on your grace,
but in the mirror I looked like someone who didn't need it.
I wish I'd begun each day with you,
but I was too busy.
I wish I had ended the night with you,
but I was too tired.
I wish I had spent more time in your word,
but I had people to see, places to go.
I wish I had looked ahead to a pathway I couldn't traverse alone,
but I was too focused on the here and now.
I am older now with more life behind me
than in front of me. I mourn my
assessments of strength,
my appraisals of wisdom,
tagging myself righteous,
my quest for independence.
I regret the moments lost,
opportunities gone,
dreams now faded.
I would spend my last days
in the cloud of despondency,
beating myself up,
hoping to get back what is forever gone,
if it were not for your grace.

(Continued on next page)

I would not be able to
look up as I
look back.
You went to the cross knowing
every choice I would make,
all that your mercy would need
to cover.
I can be honest about my choices.
I can confess it all,
and I can rest
because your grace is that
thorough and your love has that much power.
Through the years I have learned
that to find the strength to
look back,
I need the grace to
look up (116-118)."

*Thank God that we do not have to live with a life full of regret when we know He
is Sovereign, even in our sin.*

Day 28

"In order to pray with confidence and hope, you need to know who you're praying to (119)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

Our Lord Jesus, the King of Kings, knows us. He formed us, knitted us together, and tells us He knows the hairs on our heads. He knows our weaknesses, our strengths, our failures and our successes. There is nothing that we can hide from Jesus. He knows exactly what it is like to walk in our shoes in this broken world. Imagine if God had not sent Jesus to earth. What if Jesus just stayed in heaven until it was time to die on the cross? Think about Him never being tempted, never experiencing loss, never experiencing pain, never experiencing joy. How impersonal and how difficult at times would it be to pray to a Savior like this? He would still be Savior but we might catch ourselves proclaiming, "Well you don't know what its like to go through this..." How comforting is it to know that the God of the universe experienced all of this and more? And now, instead of judging us because he responded perfectly in all of these experiences, He offers us mercy and grace that is unending. Isn't this the most comforting thing? We have full access to our Lord who was perfect and knows what we are going through, and comforts us in spite of our selves. What a glorious God we serve!

Thank God today for being a God who knows us and loves us anyway.



Section 5.

Over the next 7 days find a person that crosses your path and pray with them. For example: You see a person in line in front of you at the grocery store and ask them if you can pray for them. If they say yes, ask how you can pray for them. Invite them to church for Easter if they do not attend somewhere.

Day 29

“Jesus was born with a cross in his future, so that there would be such a thing as forgiveness for sin (123).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Isaiah 53

Think about who Jesus was prophesied to be... a King. A King to rescue the persecuted Jews. A King to restore the order and power of His people. Many who knew this prophecy only thought in terms of earthly elements. When they heard a Savior was coming, they were not thinking in terms of saving them from death. They were not thinking about a King who would give them the keys to eternal life and restore their relationship with a Holy God. It was simply a political power move in many of their minds. Jesus came and when he came, he came in a way that caused much confusion. King? Many who were there would disagree. This was not the way of a king. Look at these descriptions of Jesus in the list:

“to be despised and rejected
to have a life of sorrow and grief
to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows
to be stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God
to be pierced for our transgressions
to be crushed for our iniquities
to take our chastisement
to be wounded for our spiritual healing
to carry our iniquity
to be oppressed without defending himself
to endure oppression and judgment
to be cut off
to have a grave with the wicked
to experience anguish of soul
to pour out his soul to death
to be numbered with transgressors (126)”

*This hardly looks like a list of characteristics for a King...But a King He was
and a King He is! Pray today that you would desire to be a follower
who looks like Jesus.*

Day 30

“You can’t repent of what you haven’t confessed, you can’t confess what you haven’t grieved, and you can’t grieve what you haven’t seen (128).”

— Paul David Tripp

Read Mark 14:1–15:39

“I must admit,
I dislike the hardship of confession.
I avoid grief.
I don’t like painful moments of regret.
I don’t like thinking about my sin.
I want to follow you,
but free from the need to admit failure.
Your grace isn’t a backroom,
under-the-table,
secret-handshake
deal you’ve made with me,
where you gloss over
my sin
and I walk away relieved.
You didn’t make a deal;
you endured the cross.
You wouldn’t call sin nothing,
when sin is a big
dark,
horrible,
rebellious,
destructive,
idolatrous,
self-aggrandizing,
law-hating,
death-producing something.
Any deal you would make would
empower the enemy,
encourage falsity,
violate your holiness,
negate your justice,
crush your grace.

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Rather than a backroom deal,
you went public
on a hill outside the city,
where criminals die.
You put the ravages of sin,
my sin,
on display.
In a moment of
gross injustice
and public torture,
you hung between
heaven and earth,
suspended there by
justice and grace.
You not only took
the thorny crown,
the hard-driven nails,
the sword to the side.
You carried my sin
and the rejection of your Father,
as life seeped out of you.
You weren't accepting sin's victory;
you were declaring sin's defeat.
There is no denial permitted
at the foot of your cross.
The nails don't allow me to think
sin is nothing.
Your tomb opposes any notion
that sin is okay.
Your suffering and death calls me
to do what is unnatural for me:
to grieve,
to mourn,
to regret,
to confess,
to come out of hiding,
to admit my need for your grace,
to repent,
and to do all of these things
again and again,

(Continued on next page)

with the knowledge
that a debt paid
is better than a bad deal.
Sin forgiven is better than sin
ignored. Grace given is better. (131)"

*We all have secrets. Things hiding in the darkest places of our heart and mind.
Take extra time praying and confessing the sins you are still holding onto in your
life today. Give all of it to Christ and allow him to help you hate your sin.*

Day 31

“There is no defeat in the cross. Only triumph is to be found there. (132)”

— Paul David Tripp

Read Colossians 2:6–15

So much of our lives are measured in victory and defeat with both being exclusive from each other. If there is victory, there cannot be defeat and if there is defeat, there is definitely no victory. But do we see this being true in the life and death of Christ? Jesus’ suffering was not a final defeat, but there were defeating events. Jesus’ being tried in a court setup to convict an innocent man. Jesus being tortured for crimes he did not commit. Jesus ultimately dying as a solution to Jewish religious sect’s jealousy. These were defeats. However, in these defeats victory remained.

What is most victorious is the truth that Jesus’ victory was to provide us with a restored relationship with the Father. This victory not only set us free from our sinful nature, but actually creates something new. We are new. We become heirs with Jesus himself, having to do nothing more than come before Him in humility, repenting for the our sins and turning to Christ to redeem us. His victory became our victory. How amazing that the creator and king went through this defeating humility so that we could experience the ultimate victory!

Pray a prayer of thankfulness that Jesus is so merciful and so generous that He would put himself in our place so that redemption and victory could be our identity.

Day 32

“On the journey to the cross, not only is the heart of Jesus exposed, but our hearts are too (136).” — Paul David Tripp

Read James 2:1-13

Distractions are everywhere. When we start that new diet it seems as though all we see are desserts around us. When we set a goal to read more, the most exciting, binge worthy show comes out. We are not people who generally handle distractions very well. How many times, though, do we see ourselves as the distraction? In our walk with Christ we can seem to have it all together and then all of a sudden our distraction becomes how well we have it together. Our own pride of how good we are in that moment becomes the distraction that takes us away from becoming like Christ. Our heart becomes exposed with who and what we really are. Sinful. We say that we follow a Savior who innocently allowed himself to be brutally killed. Who, as the time got closer, became more intentional; serving the cause rather than displaying His power. Yet, His power was in His service and sacrifice. We see in Christ's journey to the cross what true humility looks like. We see what true sacrifice should look like. Over the final days of this journey to Easter, we need to be as Jesus. More intentional. We need to be followers who look to serve and look to sacrifice, while remaining the most humble. Jesus' example should become our goal and our goal does not include getting distracted by our own piousness.

Pray today for humility in our action and thoughts. Pray for opportunities to sacrifice for others to the point of being made uncomfortable while remaining focused on Christ.

Day 33

“The story of Jesus guarantees how your story will end (141).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Romans 8:31-39

As we all grow older, we all most likely begin to think about the legacy we are leaving behind. We may start to have regrets or realize that some of the goals we may have set while on this earth will not be met. This can be very difficult. The comparison that we experience to others around us can sink us further in darkness. Our lives, whether we are highly driven or not, still revolve around certain status or accomplishments in whatever we find important. As Christians though, we have to remember that our lives are not our own. God is the author of our stories. He is the creator of who we are and also who we will be seen as when we leave this world.

We can chase the successes of this world and may even find some of what we are seeking after. However, the closer we strive to walk with Christ, the less important these statuses become. Our goal, as our time on this earth dwindles by with every breath we take, should be to have the same story for ourselves that Christ has for us. And if we are honest, most of us do not want everything. We want a family, nice house, nice cars, adequate job, etc. These things, while good things and maybe even humble, cannot be the things we seek. Christ is what we seek and Christ will write the story.

So no matter how difficult or how great your life is, remember that life is a vapor. These circumstances are vapors. Eternity is forever. May we all be seeking Christ so intently that when we leave this world, nothing will be said of our economic or social statuses. May much be said about Christ.

Take some time and write down 5 goals you have that you would like to achieve before you die. Do these things look like things that Christ would also want from you? If not, how can we pray to seek Christ more and expose these idols we may be chasing out of good intentions?

Day 34

"Jesus's life saw no defeat, so we could know victory (145)." — Paul David Tripp

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

"In your weakest,
most vulnerable,
seemingly helpless,
public-shame
moment,
hanging on a rough-hewed cross
between
heaven and hell,
nailed,
bleeding,
thirsty,
life ebbing out of you,
victim,
mocked and scorned,
you were a
conquering King—
not defeated,
the victor.
Seemingly defeated,
you conquered
sin,
Satan,
death.
Put to shame,
you were putting to shame
all who would shame you.
Not cowering
in fear,
you were parading your
sovereign glory,
unleashing your
transforming grace,
expediting your
redemptive plan.

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The darkest moment ever
became the brightest moment ever.
The greatest defeat
became the greatest victory.
The moment of death
was a triumph of life.
You were where you came to be,
doing what you came to do.
You did not surrender
for a moment
so that we could
stand firm for a lifetime.
You did not give into defeat
so that we would experience
victory.
Everything you suffered was
for us.
Every battle fought was fought
for us.
Every victory won was won
for us.
In your moment of
apparent defeat
you became forever
our victor (147)."

Pray a prayer of thankfulness for the amazing news of the Gospel.

Day 35

"The march of Jesus to the cross was a march of humility and triumph (148)."

— Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 21:1-11

This passage of Scripture is one that often gets overlooked because we think we know it so well. However, there are many details that are necessary for the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus riding into town on a donkey was very significant. It was significant because of the humility it showed. The only true heir to the throne of David, the one true king, rides into town on an animal not seen as regal. As Jesus comes into town, he is also being praised by the town people. They are cheering and worshipping Him as he rides slowly on this humble animal. However, in a matter of days, these same people will be exclaiming to release Barabbas instead of Jesus. The people are shouting for Jesus to save them and yet they do not understand what he is here to save them from. Remember, the ones that believe Jesus is the King, the messiah, believe so from a standpoint of earthly political gain. They are not interested in the eternal redemption that Jesus has preached about since He was a boy. These people are focused on themselves. And, once again, we see Jesus our Savior focused on the task at hand to fulfill prophecy and save them. Jesus knew that to sit on His throne, He would have to die a humiliating death of servanthood.

Pray today that you would not be callous to the details of the fulfillment of Jesus' story. Pray that, as we approach Easter, the details would come to light in a new and fresh way.



Section 6.

During these final two weeks leading up to Easter, pray for our community of churches and their Easter services.

Pray specifically that lost people would turn to Christ in repentance. Pray for families to be restored, marriages to prosper, and that revival would start in Cleveland, TN because of our humility and desire to seek Christ.

Day 36

“Scripture records the anger of Jesus in the temple to point to who he is and to clarify our values (153).” — Paul David Tripp

Read Mark 11:15–19 and Luke 19:45–48

Easter in most churches is a glimpse of worship, reverence, and faithfulness to the scriptures. However, sadly, in some churches the message becomes blurred with the good intentions of humans, desiring to put the focus not on the message of the cross but on creativity for the sake of reaching people. The intention is good but the message that gets sent often is one that says “Look at us!” instead of “Look at Christ!”

These next two weeks, as Christians, we should be solely focused on the message of the journey to the cross and what happened after. The distractions that the enemy will bring will be laced with good intentions but in the end, they are still just distractions.

What are some ways that through these 40 days you have been able to focus on Christ? What are some things that you have found helped you get rid of distractions so that your days were filled with Christ?

Day 37

"It should be a warning to us that the religious leaders of Jesus's day could be so zealous and yet so completely wrong (157)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 23

Are there days that you feel like your walk with Christ is more about a checklist of things you should or should not do? Why is it that some days Jesus feels so close and we are in a relationship with Him, and other days He seems so far away and we are just going through the motions? We see in the life of Jesus that there is a constant battle between he and the religious leaders. His battle with them was over their religious zeal and lack of relational faithfulness. They spent their whole lives attempting to keep the laws and the more they kept, the higher they thought of themselves. The problem as Tripp puts it is, false religious zeal does not need a Savior (159). We are our own saviors who do not need God to sanctify us. The problem with this line of thinking is it is obviously false. Our relationship with Christ is not based on anything we are able to do or achieve.

The reason we feel so far away from Jesus some days is most likely linked to how dependent we are on Him. The days we are checking the boxes and feel like we are doing all the 'good' things, are the days we are least dependent on God. The days we feel so close to Christ we can touch Him are most likely when we are extremely dependent upon Him. We NEED a Savior. We NEED Jesus to be that Savior. Without him, dependent upon ourselves, we start to have that feeling of emptiness. When we are not seeking Him we become more critical of other people's sin instead of our own.

Take a minute to think about how dependent you have been on Christ over the last week. Ask yourself, how critical have I been about others' sins? Is Christ my Savior or am I making myself my savior?

Day 38

"Our hope is found in the fact that Jesus came to be the final Passover Lamb, not just a great teacher and a miracle healer (161)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 26:17–30

We so often forget the link from the Old Testament story of Israel to the life and death of Jesus. Throughout all of history, bloodshed was mandatory for the cleansing of the people to be in relationship with God. We see this from the first passover as the Israelites are exiled from Egypt, to the laws established at Mt. Sinai, to the death of Jesus. There was and always had to be a sacrificial lamb, and Jesus was the prophesied final lamb. There is a huge importance in the words that Jesus spoke at the last supper with the disciples before his death. His body and his blood were the final chapter to the eternal cleansing of our sins to restore our relationship with a Holy God.

Jesus could not just be a teacher, a priest, a prophet, etc. He had to be the sacrificial lamb in order for our salvation and restoration to be completed.

Meditate over these amazing lyrics from the old hymn:

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Oh, precious is the flow
that makes me white as snow;
no other fount I know,
nothing but the blood of Jesus.
For my cleansing, this I see—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
For my pardon this my plea—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Nothing can for sin atone—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!*

*Naught of good that I have done—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
This is all my hope and peace—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
This is all my righteousness—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Now by this I'll overcome—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Now by this I'll reach my home—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Glory! Glory! This I sing—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
All my praise for this I bring—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!"*

Day 39

"We have hope because Jesus was willing (165)." — Paul David Tripp

Read Matthew 26:36-46

We live in a world that is filled with the message of "Your needs and wants are the most important." Your happiness and your comfort comes before all else. There is a message that we should be kind and loving, but not at the expense of our own happiness and joy. There is nothing that we experience on a daily basis that preaches a message that Jesus preached. His message was one of willingness. Not only was it a message of willingness but a willingness with no strings attached. If any person in the history of the world had the right to be self absorbed in their own virtue, it was Jesus Christ; and yet He was willing to serve in a way that we will never experience again in history.

The discipleship process is one of willingness – willingness to be a servant, to do things that are hard, and to find ways of discomfort. It will always be hard. On this earth and in our lives because of sin, this will be one of the hardest things we will deal with. Our sin prevents us from becoming willing to do these things that are necessary to become like Christ.

Think of different ways that you have been unwilling to put yourself in difficult spots. Think of ways that you have said no to someone or something that is kingdom work because you were not willing to be in this uncomfortable situation.

Day 40

“The empty tomb stands as your guarantee of help today and gives you hope for what is to come (169).” — Paul David Tripp

Read John 20:1-29

This devotional has spent much time helping us to focus on the dark days leading up to, and the day, Jesus was put to death. The reminder has been that we must go through the dark days before we get to the joyous truth of the resurrection. We will experience the ultimate victory upon Christ's return. We have experienced victory in His resurrection. But let the cross teach us to first lament who we are as sinners and how our sin was the reason for one of the darkest hours in history. Then rejoice that we have the victory! Christ is KING!