



A DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

give, pray, fast

Lent 2021



introduction

Welcome to the season of Lent! The church year is set to act in rhythm with your life and Creation around us. As you enter into the season of Lent in the darkest month of our calendar year, we join generations of faithful Christians before us who have sought glimpses of God's holy presence in their lives. This particular devotional is written to stand alone for personal reflection or to be shared with others. Each day ties in loosely with a map that steps us day-by-day through the 40 days of Lent with a prompt to pray, give, or fast—the traditional disciplines of Lent.

You will notice that Sundays are not included in this devotional. This is because Sundays are historically treated as “mini Easters” and are meant for relief from fasting, to be treated with joy! Find a way to engage in worship on Sundays, utilizing the many and various opportunities at our fingertips these days.

Lastly, Holy Week is left blank. It is our hope that you will intentionally seek out and participate in the Holy Week services your church plans to host. The more engaged we can be in the rituals of this week, the richer our experience!

May your Lenten journey be littered with blessings. We pray for God's Holy Spirit to draw near to you as you settle into the Word.



Ash Wednesday Feb 17

Feb 18 1- Fast from ALLELUIA for Lent

Isaiah 58:6-9

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

"Alleluia" is our joyful word of praise to the Lord. We don't say or sing it during Lent because we take this time to recognize the ways that our lives fail to be a joyful living praise to the Lord. What are the things about this world that make God sad? What can we do to make those things better?

Feb 19 2- give your time: call a loved one

John 11: 32-35, 43-44

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ...he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

We can't raise the dead like Jesus raised Lazarus, but we just might be in the right place at the right time to help our loved ones find their way out of darkness and back into light. When has someone you love lightened your load or brightened your day? Who could use a reminder that you care about them?

Feb 20 3- pray for the sick

Luke 4:38-40

After leaving the synagogue Jesus entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them.

Luke tells us that many who were sick were brought by others to Jesus for healing. How does your spirit feel when your body is sick? How does it help to know that others are praying for you?

Feb 21 SUNDAY

Feb 22 4- give love: send a letter

1 Corinthians 1:1-4

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,
To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus...

Paul spread the good news in many different communities, and since he couldn't be everywhere at once, he would write letters to the churches to stay connected. He begins his letters with a greeting that reminds the recipient of their relationship to him. Think of a time you received a memorable letter or card. Who took the time to write to you and for what occasion? How does receiving mail feel different than a phone call or text message? Think of someone who you can't be with in person right now. Imagine sending them a letter that they would keep for a long time, like the Corinthians kept Paul's letter. How would you greet them and what would you want to tell them?

Feb 23 5- Pray for students & teachers

Psalms 90:12

So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.

Our ability to survive and thrive together as a community depends on the commitment of good teachers and the work of dedicated students. What has the past year taught us about school and learning? What do our schools, teachers, and students need to improve the learning experience?

Feb 24 6- Fast: try giving up something you like and pray when you are tempted

Luke 4:1-4

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.'"

Jesus turns to God's word to help him overcome his hunger in the wilderness. When we fast in Lent, the purpose is not for us to overcome temptation by our own strength but to turn to God in our weakness. What is something that you have fasted from or gone a long time without before (it doesn't have to be food)? What does it feel like to be tempted by it? How does it feel when you make it another hour (day, week) without it? How does praying about it help?

Feb 25 7- Give hope: donate to a food pantry

Exodus 16:13-21

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.'" The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over until morning." But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

God provided manna in the wilderness, first of all because the Israelites needed to eat, but secondly so that they understood that everything they had was a gift from God. If the people tried to hoard more than they needed, it would

spoil. What does it mean to us to have enough? What could we share because we have more than we need? If you needed to use the food pantry, what foods or care items would you most hope to find? (Those are good things to donate!)

Feb 26 8- Pray for your family

Luke 3:23-38

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli, son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, son of Jannai, son of Joseph, son of Mattathias, son of Amos, son of Nahum, son of Esli, son of Naggai, son of Maath, son of Mattathias, son of Semein, son of Josech, son of Joda, son of Joanan, son of Rhesa, son of Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, son of Neri, son of Melchi, son of Addi, son of Cosam, son of Elmadam, son of Er, son of Joshua, son of Eliezer, son of Jorim, son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Simeon, son of Judah, son of Joseph, son of Jonam, son of Eliakim, son of Melea, son of Menna, son of Mattatha, son of Nathan, son of David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz, son of Sala, son of Nahshon, son of Amminadab, son of Admin, son of Arni, son of Hezron, son of Perez, son of Judah, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, son of Terah, son of Nahor, son of Serug, son of Reu, son of Peleg, son of Eber, son of Shelah, son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah, son of Lamech, son of Methuselah, son of Enoch, son of Jared, son of Mahalaleel, son of Cainan, son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

Jesus was part of a family just like all of us. What are the traits, traditions, gifts, and wisdom that have been passed down to you by family members? For what struggles might your family members appreciate your prayers?

Feb 27 9- Pray for peace

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

What is the difference between the peace God gives and what the world gives? What is troubling your heart today? How is the Spirit helping you to be unafraid of that trouble?

Feb 28 SUNDAY

Mar 1 10- Give joy: take cookies to a neighbor

Luke 9:12—17

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each." They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

The crowds who were following Jesus would have been hungry, but they wouldn't have expected Jesus to feed them. The miraculous meal would have been a surprise. When did someone share something unexpected with you? How does a surprise gift feel different than something you expect?

Mar 2 11- Pray for the homebound

Mark 2:1-4

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.

The friends of the man who was paralyzed stopped at nothing to bring him to Jesus. The church is called to stop at nothing to extend the faith community to people who are homebound. What would be hard about being confined to home? What are ways to make sure everyone stays connected, even when not everyone can be together in person?

Mar 3 12- Fast from whining today

Matthew 11:16-17

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’”

God welcomes our lamentations (griefs and complaints) and sometimes we have good reasons to be disappointed and even angry. But sometimes we get so stuck in our complaining that we can't see how God is reaching out to us. Name just one thing that is most disappointing to you. Now name three things for which you are grateful.

Mar 4 13- Give thanks: thank a healthcare worker today

Psalms 121:1-2

A Song of Ascents.

I lift up my eyes to the hills—

from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

It can be easy to descend into an ugly place of sulking or complaining when we are in trouble or pain. It is an important practice to root ourselves in a place of gratitude. Psalm 121 tells us that, “Our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth.” Can you think of ways that God has helped you in times of trouble or sickness, using the hands or feet of someone around you? Who are the helpers in your community? Take time today to share a word of gratitude for their presence in your life.

Mar 5 14- Pray for our leaders

Jeremiah 29:7

But 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.

Jeremiah prophesied in a tumultuous time of political upheaval. God's people were in exile, cast out from their homeland, and lamenting their lack of leadership. Jeremiah instructed God's people to seek the welfare of the city where they were located, even in exile, and to pray for its welfare. We live in a time of political discord as well. How might you pray for the leaders of our country and state, even if we disagree with them politically?

Mar 6 15- Pray for the lonely

1 John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

In these days of isolation and distancing, we spend a lot of time alone. For those who were lonely before the pandemic, the consequences of this loneliness can be all-consuming. But even in our distancing and loneliness, we belong to God and to one another. We are reminded again and again throughout scripture of the ways God loves us, but we often fail to remember how God compels us to love one another. Who in your life could use a reminder of God's love in their life? How might you reach out to them in love?

Mar 7 SUNDAY

Mar 8 16- Fast from television today

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

There are a great many things that compete for our attention and our loyalty these days. Many people turn the television on as soon as they wake up and don't turn it off until they go to sleep. Cell phones, iPads, and computers demand our time and attention, too. If left unchecked, this becomes a form of idolatry in our lives. What holds you fast without your even noticing? How might you fast from that thing and try to spend more time throughout the day intentionally in prayer?

Mar 9 17- Give love: take a meal to a friend

1 John 4:19, 21

We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

It can be easy to brush this passage off as obvious— of course we don't hate our brothers and sisters! This passage from 1 John pushes us to see that whoever does not actively love (that is, to care for and interact with) their brothers and sisters actually hates them. How might you put love into action today to care for a sister or brother in Christ?

Mar 10 18- Pray for people with no home

Micah 6:8

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?

The prophet Micah reminds us the essentials of our faith— the bear necessities that God asks of believers: to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. We can be quick to judge others for the better and the worse, making assumptions about their place in society. What might happen if you set aside your assumptions about others and simply prayed for God's mercy and justice to be worked in their lives?

Mar 11 19- Give hope: invite a friend to Bible Study on Zoom

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Steeping our lives in God's word opens pathways for God's voice to reach our hearts. How has engaging in scripture opened your eyes to God's presence? How might you share the gift of God's word with others today?

Mar 12 20- Fast from buying things today

Matthew 6:19-21

'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

We are bombarded with advertisements vying for our wallets and our loyalties. We live in a society where nearly everything we purchase is meant to be "convenient" and disposable, ultimately adding to landfills as well. Buying things becomes a habitual practice of our convenience instead of a thoughtful engagement of our needs. How might you fast from the "habit" of buying things today?

Mar 13 21- Pray for pastors and faith leaders

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

"God calls the equipped and equips the called!" Or so the pithy statement goes. We sometimes default to looking to our faith leaders—pastors and bishops, especially—to do the work of the church. But God uses ordinary human beings to do God's work on earth. How does God equip you to work in your faith community?

Mar 14 SUNDAY

Mar 15 22- Give joy: surprise someone with a piece of art

Acts 20:35

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Jesus tells us that we are to find blessing in giving. We can buy things for others, make something special, and we can also give our time and love. In what ways can you give to others today?

Mar 16 23- Pray for Creation

Psalm 104: 1, 10, 12, 13

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honour and majesty,
You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;

they sing among the branches.
From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

We are surrounded by God's majesty, from gushing springs to singing birds. Where is your favorite place to experience God's Creation? How might you spend time immersed in Creation today?

***Mar 17 24- Pray for first and final responders**

Isaiah 43:1-2, 5a

But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, the flame shall not consume you.
Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
And from the west I will gather you.

There are times in our lives when we suffer. We struggle with the loss of loved ones, isolation from family, chronic pain, depression, and more. God promises to remain with us in our suffering. How have you seen God with you today? Pray for others to know the presence of God in their suffering.

Mar 18 25- Fast from sweets today

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

The biblical practice of fasting is not meant to kickstart a diet or even to break bad habits. Instead, fasting is meant to turn our hearts to God. Consider fasting from sweets or some other treat you might enjoy today. In moments when you feel the pull to reach for a treat, turn instead to prayer.

Mar 19 26- Give alms- donate to a favorite charity

Isaiah 58:9b-12

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
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.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,

the restorer of streets to live in.

How does giving to others change your heart?

What is something unconventional that you might give to “satisfy the needs of the afflicted?”

Mar 20 27- Fast from the internet today

Luke 5:15-16

But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. Yet He frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray.

We as a society spend a lot of time refreshing our screens and checking social media and the news on the internet, mostly rooted in our collective FOMO (fear of missing out). Our minds are trained to wander and drift back to the many things that draw our attention. What would happen if you retreated from screens and spent time in uninterrupted prayer? How long might you last?

Mar 21 SUNDAY

Mar 22 28- Pray for courage to share the Good News

Mark 16:8

And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This is the traditional last verse in the Gospel of Mark. When the women went to the tomb on that first Easter, they discovered that Jesus had risen, but they were terrified. We know that they didn't stay afraid... how else would we have ever learned about the resurrection ourselves?! What makes it hard for you to share the Good News of Jesus' love with others? Who might you share the Good News with?

Mar 23 29- Give from your abundance- donate clothes in good condition

Matthew 25:35-40

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, [f] you did it to me.'

From clothes with stains and holes to expired food, charities can become swamped with unusable donations. What might change if people imagined Christ as the recipient of the things they donate to charity?

Mar 24 30- Pray for Christians around the world

1 Timothy 2:1-2

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

How can the things that happen to Christians across the globe affect my own life? What difference can my prayers for believers around the world make?

Mar 25 31- Pray for sanitation workers

Mark 10: 42-45

42 So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

What does it look like to be a leader who serves? How do we support or treat people who do the jobs that we don't want to do?

Mar 26 32- Pray for those who are hungry

Luke 6:20-25

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

'Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

'But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

'Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus gives a list of blessings and woes that name reversals of life on earth. How do you take food for granted in your life? How might you overlook the presence of hunger in your community?

Mar 27 33- Fast: drink only water and milk today

1 Corinthians 7:5

Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

What might happen if you fast from something you do every day? Perhaps you could fast from your phone or from a treat you enjoy. Whatever you choose, be sure to turn to prayer when your mind drifts to the thing you've given up.

Mar 28 PALM SUNDAY

Mar 29 34- Give warmth- make & share hot cross buns

1 Corinthians 11:23-25

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Bread and wine are two very simple elements, but they entirely life-altering when they become the body and blood of Christ. How has the pandemic changed the way you feel about receiving communion?

Mar 30 35- fast from busyness this week

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

There is always important work to be done and scripture is clear that sloth can lead to sin, but there is significance in settling down from busyness to sit at the feet of Jesus. How might you slow down this Holy Week to sit at Jesus' feet?

Mar 31 36- Pray the Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one.'

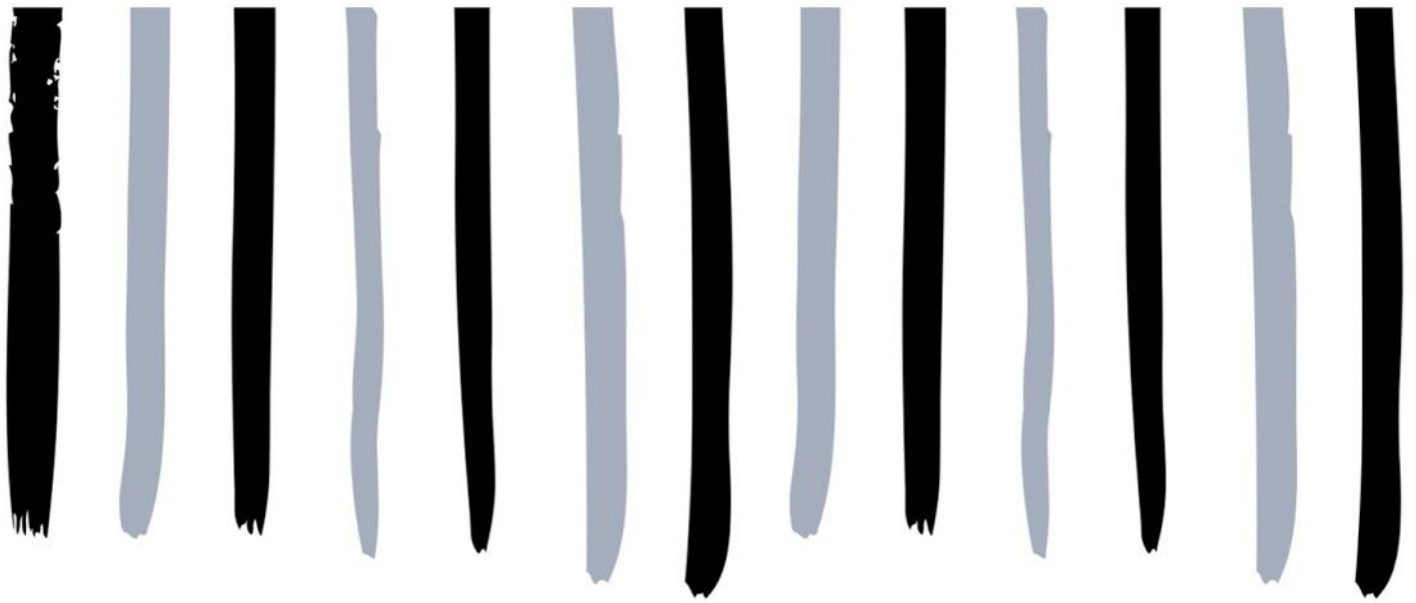
How old were you when you learned to pray the Lord's Prayer? How does praying this prayer in private make it feel different from praying it collectively in worship services?

Apr 1 37- Maundy Thursday

Apr 2 38- Good Friday

Apr 3 39- Easter Vigil

Apr 4 40- Easter Sunday



special thanks to:

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