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Welcome to Lent for Families!

WHOLE40

"...helping people change their relationship...and create life-long, healthy habits."

"...telling stories of life transformation..."

"Witnessing the success of others... is not only extremely fulfilling, it is inspiring."

"...helping people make that personal change and better choices possible."

"...use it as a source of clarity and direction when feeding myself and all those around me."

Those are actual testimonials – but not about church or family practices during the 40 days of Lent. I am assuming that a lot of you have heard of the Whole30 program, the diet du jour. Those quotes were excerpted from the online bios of the people who created Whole30 and support their followers. I only know about it from friends who have adopted the program. But as soon as I heard the name and its basic intent, I thought about the 40 days of Lent. And just as Whole30 is not only about losing weight, but about intentionality in making choices for ongoing health and wholeness. Lent is not just about self-deprivation and penance that ends on Easter, nor is being closer to God an annual event.

In our religious language, we talk about our appetites in terms that are not food related but can also be healthy or unhealthy. We also talk about practice, ritual or regimen, and wholeness. And we talk about gratitude a lot – for the things that matter most. Those things can easily get buried under our unintentional accumulations, so that true abundance is obscured by excess. Removing obstacles to God, like reconditioning our eating habits is not a project with a deadline. It is a new way of living. Across all disciplines, including being Jesus' disciple, intentionality and consistent practice is required in order to transcend the conscious effort and enable it to root in your unconscious so that you and the discipline are one. This effort can be hard and painful for adults as it requires a willingness to let go of some attachments. Children have it easier, because they have fewer if any. For them, it is more about taking something on, or even receiving a gift. This is why it makes so much sense to enter into the season with children.

In these pages, we hope that you will find some ideas that will help you and your family be present to God and each other in intentional sacred space - every day. Many of these practices can be easily woven into your daily routines. Many require little to no materials, or disruptive scheduling, preparation, or experience. You will mainly need a degree of attentive presence and comfortable intimacy that is right for your family. At the same time, don't be afraid to stretch yourselves.

Scientist who study human conditioning say it takes a minimum of 21 <u>consecutive</u> days to break or acquire a habit. These Lenten practices could well become permanent strands of your family's spiritual DNA. 40 days (+6 Sundays) is really not long in the whole of your lives.

Let's begin,

Kathryn Carroll and Brian Pinter

We suggest that you use one of the following calendar templates in conjunction with your family's daily practice. If you use one of the calendar pages, each family member could have a copy and mark their own. Or you could take turns with one.

Lent 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			March 1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	April 1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15

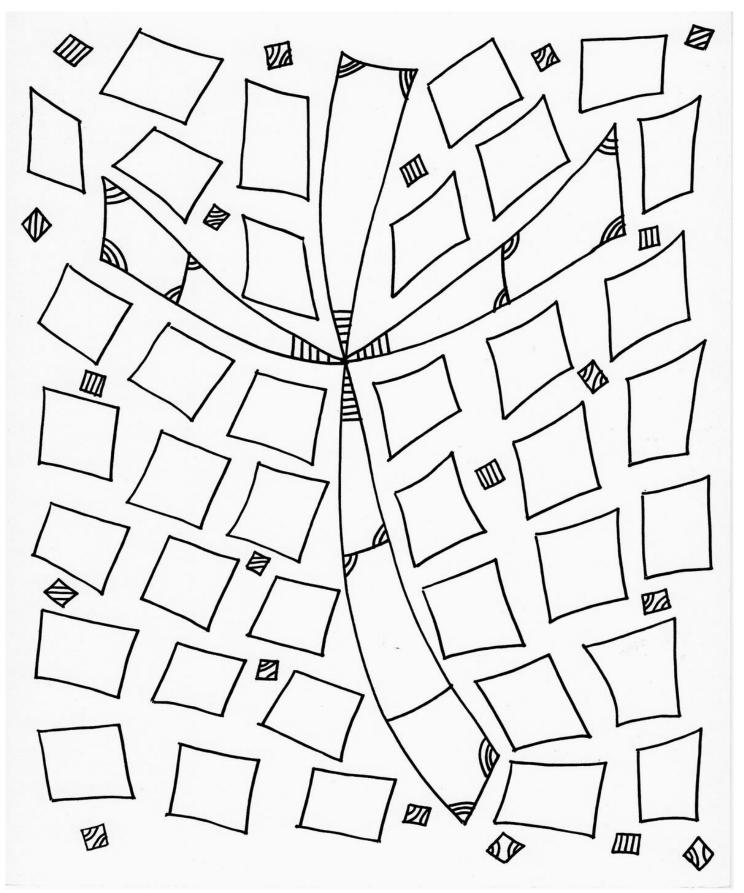
Word Labyrinth

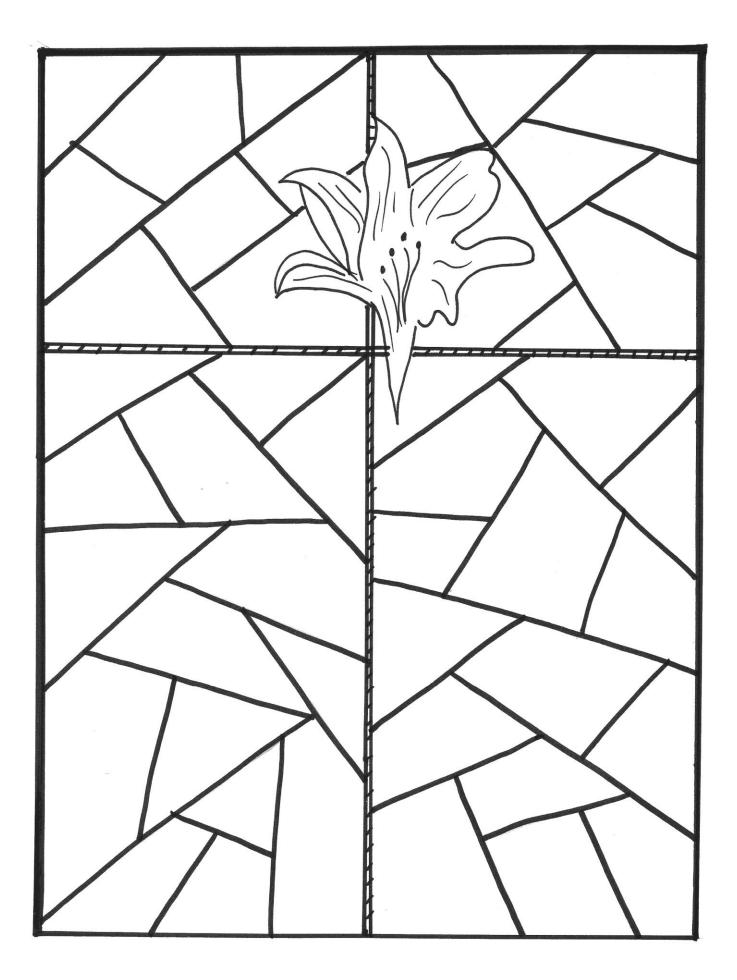
Choose words from the Ash Wednesday Psalm 51:1-17 or Gospel, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 that you would like to spend time reflecting on, print them then cut them out and glue on or write them on each tile. Or write or draw something you will "give up" or "take on" that day, or just write the numbers 1 – 46 on each wooden tile. You could use them with the "Practice Cards". Use a stone, wooden person, or other marker to move to a new tile each day. This action could coincide with your family's daily practice. It could be part of your preparation for sacred space.

We'll have supplies for this at church at the workshop. You can arrange them on a metal surface at home. A pizza pan is suggested and pictured below.

Some word suggestions:								
Give	e Up	Take on – give in to						
screens	sweets	walking everywhere	noticing God					
blaming	yelling	repairing something	eye contact					
social media	sulking/dwelling	someone else's chore	earlier bedtime					
unhealthy beverage	bossiness	saving \$ for giving	family cooking					
rushing	interrupting	stretching	clean something					
complaining	a demand	smiling more	daily prayer					







Many of us have certain ideas about prayer that make us feel reluctant to try a new way, or with children, or at all. Oftentimes we feel ill-equipped. But all you really need is presence. In Lent we are present to Jesus during his 40 days and nights in the desert. We are present to our own still, small voice. We are present to each other. We are present to God.

But how? In the next pages we will offer some ideas and some materials that you can adapt to suit your family. Again, we encourage you to engage in some kind of practice every day throughout Lent. If you can regularize the time and place it will soon be integrated into your family life: bedtime, mealtime, or first thing in the morning. A time when you are most reliably all together.

FAQs and Tips

How do we even start?

We would suggest that you begin with silence and breath. At church we use a singing bowl to mark the silences. We listen until we can't hear it anymore. If you don't have a singing bowl, there are some good free apps you can use. ("Resonant" is free and has many options for sounds and duration). We also use a Hoberman sphere to help everyone breathy deeply and slowly. These tools are not critical. Children, even babies can be in complete silence and stillnes. In fact, they often respond surprisingly well. These days, it's novel to them. Our senses are on constant overload and we weren't built for it. So, intentional silence can reach in to their most ancient instincts.

How long should it take?

The silences are dependent upon your family's capacity. With babies and toddlers, start with 30 seconds or less. School age children should be able to handle 1 – 3 minutes. If you can, add on a little more time each day or week.

You will have to gauge how much time your family can and wants to spend for any of these meditations or devotional practices. Even if you only take one minute, but every day, and make it sacred and fully present, you may well find your spirit dwelling in that space at other times and places throughout the day. These rituals can become a portal to God and binding threads in the fabric of your family life.

What if we never have a regular time together?

If that is the case, like in all of your routines, the adults could tag-team, or share in the practice one-on-one with multiple children at times that works best. It is great to make whatever you do unique to your family.

Where?

This depends on the family practice that you choose. Creating sacred space doesn't have to be in a location apart from your daily lives. We describe Sacred Space as a special time and place with God. And so some kind of sensory demarcations can set the tone. The candle Tenebrae is lit, or lights are dimmed, the table is emptied, you ring the singing bowl, turn off all electronics, have everyone exit through a doorway and then literally cross the threshold, this time into sacred space etc.

Holy Listening

Holy listening invites us to enter into a sacred moment and space, to be fully present to each other, to listen with the ear of the heart, and to speak from the heart. Traditionally, this practice invites us to share something significant that happened in the past day or week, and then respond to each other with a brief and affirming thought or verse of scripture that might come to mind. With children, we can adapt this practice by inviting them to draw a picture or create something that helps them to express themselves from a spiritual place. Below are a few forms that Holy Listening can take in a family setting.

With children age 12+

- 1. Participants need a notebook or paper and a pen. Start by creating a sacred space. For example, everyone might sit in a circle with a lit candle in the middle.
- 2. Someone offers an original, spontaneous prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to open our hearts.
- 3. Someone begins the sharing by briefly telling of something significant that occurred over the past day or week. Those listening write down a thought or Bible passage that comes to mind. There is no responding at this point.
- 4. The next person in the circle shares, all make notes, and so on.
- 5. When all have finished sharing, the person sitting to the right of the first person who spoke offers a brief response based on their notes, followed by responses from everyone else in the group.
- 6. Then, the next person receives responses, etc.
- 7. At the end, take a moment of silence to savor the graces and wisdom. Someone offers a spontaneous prayer to close the session of Holy Listening.

With younger children

- 1. Create a sacred space around a table, perhaps with a lit candle in the middle.
- 2. Everyone is given a blank piece of paper and crayons/colored pencils/markers or a piece of playdough or modeling clay.
- 3. Offer a brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to open our hearts.
- 4. Invite everyone to draw a picture or make a sculpture; it could be a self -portrait, their world, family, school, friends, home, anything they want.
- 5. Each person is invited to talk about their picture or sculpture. Simply listen! Affirm their reality that they share. Don't worry if the piece doesn't match your perception of people, events, or places. Discuss things you notice about it and give them time to reflect and share.
- 6. Ask the child what they would like to do with their creation they keep it or you keep it. Don't throw it away it is sacred!
- 7. Close with a spontaneous prayer, holding hands. Bless one another with a sign of the cross on the forehead or hand, group hug, gentle hand squeeze, etc.

Tenebrae with Sacred Reading (Lectio Divina)

Tenebrae is an ancient Christian ritual traditionally conducted on Good Friday. A number of candles are gradually extinguished, reminding us of the darkness and hopelessness of a world without God. We can join the practice of Lectio Divina (praying with Scripture) with Tenebrae. Lectio Divina invites us to hear the word of God with the ear of the heart. We select a short scripture passage and listen for the word or phrase that resonates with us. We sit quietly with the word and allow it to make its way deep into our heart. Below is an example of a home Tenebrae/Lectio prayer.

- 1. Choose a short scripture passage, for example, John 1:5: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."
- 2. Set up the Tenebrae candles in an otherwise darkened room.
- 3. Begin the prayer with these or similar words: "God speaks to us quietly in our hearts, in a still, small voice. To hear this voice we need to quiet ourselves. Let's do that now. Try to be as still and as quiet as possible." Then say, "now listen, listen for God's word to you. A word that you feel is God speaking to you in the quiet of your heart."
- 4. Read the passage slowly and reflectively.
- 5. Then ask, "What was that special word from this verse that God speaks to you? Quietly repeat that word or words to yourself." Take several moments for silence.
- 6. Extinguish a candle or two.
- 7. Again, read the passage.
- 8. Ask, "What was the word that God speaks to you. If you'd like, say that word out loud." After everyone shares, extinguish another candle or two, until only one is burning.
- 9. Read the passage a third time. After a moment of quiet, ask if there is anything anyone would like to pray for out loud.
- 10. Then, extinguish the final candle and conclude with this or a similar prayer: "Dear Jesus, we thank you for your word and for our time of listening tonight. Without your light our world would be in darkness. We wait now for Easter, the day you brought new light and life to all. Help us to be a light to others. In your name we pray, Amen."

We suggest that your family uses the Tenebrae on Sundays in addition to, or instead of your daily practice. We will send a scripture suggestion for the week in the C&F eNewsletter and also with your child on Sunday mornings. If you choose to use this as a daily practice, we suggest that you start with full size candles.



Other Practices

Declutter! Is your life or your home too cluttered? No matter how fen shui we try to be, we probably have an excess of stuff, particularly if we have children in the house. There is actually a movement called #40bagsin40days from a website that is dedicated to "intentional living". The basic program suggests that you declutter an area in your home every day, removing a bag-full of superfluous items from your home. If you don't want to add to the landfills or if this is too big a task for children, you should feel free to adapt. Perhaps it's an item per day and you can keep a collection box each: for trash, recycling, repair/repurposing, and donating. Perhaps you can save-the-date for your family to distribute the filled boxes on Holy Saturday or Easter Monday. At the end of this guidebook, you can find a copy of a form that you can use to keep track of your decluttering efforts. Or check out the website; <u>http://www.whitehouseblackshutters.com/40-bags-in-40-days/</u>

Youth - From The Fuller Youth Institute, "Sticky Faith"

"This year in our youth ministry, we've been inviting students to *notice* more. Notice the ant crawling through the grass. Notice the way we spend our time when it's up to us. Notice the kid who ends up as the punch line of everyone's jokes.

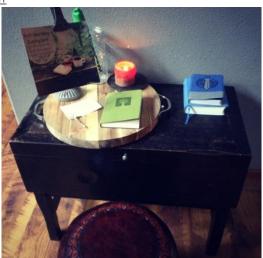
Above it all, we're inviting them to notice God—the way God is actively at work in and around us each day, the way God speaks through Scripture and through our community, the whispers in the silence, and the shouts from the dramatic sunset. It turns out that paying attention can make all the difference.

In the midst of all that noticing, we're inviting them into practices of faith. These practices, or disciplines, shape us largely because they open up space in our lives to notice—and make meaning of—God with us. The more we practice, the more we form patterns and rhythms in our lives that in turn allow the Holy Spirit to do the work of transformation. So when we pray, we become more aware of God and what God is doing. When we forgive someone, we notice that God is at work forgiving us too."

Fasting is traditionally associated with Lent, but we may need to reframe fasting. I like to think of it as a practice of both "subtracting" and "adding." In other words, fasting isn't just about subtracting for the sake of subtraction. We subtract something so that we—or perhaps God—can add something new. What happens in the void left by whatever we choose to "give up" or abstain from? If we give up an hour of video games, what do we do with those extra 60 minutes? If we give up lattes, what do we do with that money? Lent means subtracting something so that we- or perhaps God-can add something new."

In the back pages, you can find a copy of their really good "Introduction to Lent" for youth. Or visit their website for full resources and to view video stories of young people who are "adding and subtracting" in their lives: <u>https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/lent</u>

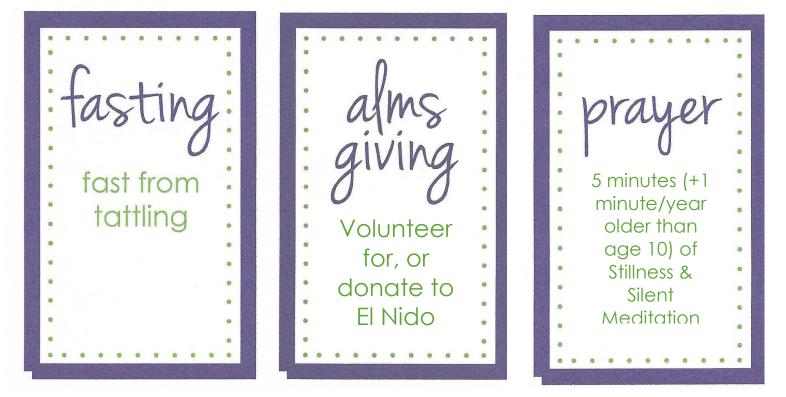
Create a Prayer Station at Home – If you live in NYC, there is a good chance that you don't have a lot of extra space to dedicate to prayer and sacred space. However, most of us with a space crunch can be pretty resourceful about adapting and diversifying the space we have. One suggestion is to use a decent sized serving tray to keeping your artifacts of faith in one place, yet portable. Your Tenebrae candles, a singing bowl, bible, writing and drawing materials, and other "spiritual tools" could be kept on this tray throughout the season. This is also helpful with young children to distinguish an item's special purpose from a toy, which will also help establish an intentional time and place with one another and God – or Sacred Space.



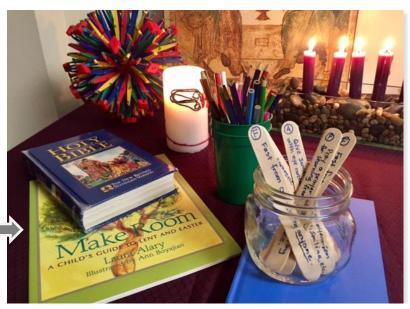
Practice Sticks and Cards

Make a set of Cards or Sticks with a different intent for each day or each week of Lent. We will have cards that are already printed, and some that are fill-in-the-blank. Or, we have large craft sticks on which you could write, or stick on printed descriptions. Each day/week different family members "draws" a card or stick at random, or chooses one for everyone, or themselves, or another family member. There are three "categories" of cards/sticks: Prayer, Almsgiving, and Fasting.

On the first day of Lent or the first Sunday of Lent, take your first step into Lent by choosing what and who you would like to take on your journey. In other words, decide if you would like for the whole family to share the same intention; daily or weekly. Choose how you will track or trace your path, and then create with these materials or by adapting or making up your own! Remember, these are **practices**. No one is an expert, or winner or loser. The outcome really is just to practice. For those who wish to DIY the cards at home, you will find copies in the back that you can print.



The book pictured here is <u>Make</u> <u>Room</u>, by Laura Alary. It is an excellent companion for any Lenten practices with the perfect balance of teaching and spiritual wondering language and imagery, for all ages. Try reading it one section per week. Use it with the Lectio Divina Tenebrae sharing; find words for Practice Cards; use it as a map or guide for your family's Lenten journey. We have a few copies at church for \$10 or order from <u>Amazon</u> or <u>Christian Bookstore</u>



Holy Week

We have found that, for parents, there are few topics more difficult to talk about with young children than Holy Week. Parents are concerned about their children's readiness to think about death and suffering in general, and specifically of Jesus whom we have taught them to love and emulate. Certainly, a lot of the Holy Week theology will be over their heads and most adults also continue to change and grow in their own understanding. The following resources are simply ways of exploring the narrative in the gospels. It provides language for the who, where, and what happened.
Equipped with this language, children and youth can continue on, long past this Easter to explore the why, and what it has to do with them and our shared faith. Again, don't worry, just walk with them.
Share your own questions, but try not to project fears you may have beyond admitting that you have them, as Jesus knew.

Holy Week Box, Younger Children – We have all of the materials that you need to make this for your home.





PALM SUNDAY Luke 22: 7-23

Take the green paper and the Jesus figure out of the box. Cut the paper into palm leaves. Place them and Jesus beside the closed box.

The people waved palm leaves to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem.

How can we welcome Jesus into our home?

Say the Lord's Prayer together.



MONDAY

Mark 11:15-9 Take one of the coins and the Jesus figure out of the box. Place the coin on the box with Jesus beside it.

The people in the Temple were cheating others out of their money and Jesus got angry.

How can we use our money wisely?

Say the Lord's Prayer together.



TUESDAY Mark 12:13-17 Take a second coin and the Jesus figure out of the box. Place the coins on the box with Jesus beside it.

The religious leaders asked Jesus if it was right to pay their taxes. Taxes help to pay for things that help everyone, like roads, hospitals, schools.

Can taxes and giving to God be the same?

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

WEDNESDAY

Mark 12:41-44 Take the third coin and the Jesus figure out of the box. Place the coins on the box with Jesus beside it.

Jesus watched people in the Temple giving money to God. Some made a big show of giving lots of money. But one person didn't. Read her story in the Gospel.

How can we give to God?

Say the Lord's Prayer together.



The three nights and days from the evening meal on Maundy Thursday until the evening prayers of Easter Sunday is called the Paschal Triduum when we recall Jesus' last supper and betrayal, his crucifixion and death, his burial, and his Resurrection.











MAUNDY THURSDAY

John 13:1-17, 31b-35 Draw a cup and loaf of bread on the lid of the box. Use it like a table. Place the Jesus figure next to it.

Today we remember the last Passover meal Jesus had with his friends, when he said, "Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other."

At church, how do we remember this meal?

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

GOOD FRIDAY

John 18:1-19:42

Draw a cross on the bottom of the box and stand it up. Place Jesus in front of the cross.

The religious leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus. They told lies about him. Jesus was arrested. And Jesus forgave them. It was a very sad day, because the authorities put Jesus to death on a cross.

How do you think Jesus' friends felt? How do you feel when a friend is hurting?

When Jesus had died, his friends were so sad. They took his body down from the cross and wrapped it in linen cloth. They placed Jesus' body in a tomb cut out of rock.

Take the white cloth out of the box and wrap Jesus in it. Place him inside the box and close the lid. Wonder what it would be like to not have Jesus with us.

On the Saturday, everything was so still you could almost hear the earth breathe. There was nothing that could be done. Holy Saturday is a waiting day.

Place a votive candle by your box as a way of showing that you are waiting.

Say the Lord's Prayer together. Sit in silence and candlelight.

EASTER SUNDAY!

John 20:1-18 Open the box and take Jesus out of the box and out of the cloth. Place the lid next to the open box.

Early on the Sunday morning, the women went to the tomb and had an amazing surprise.

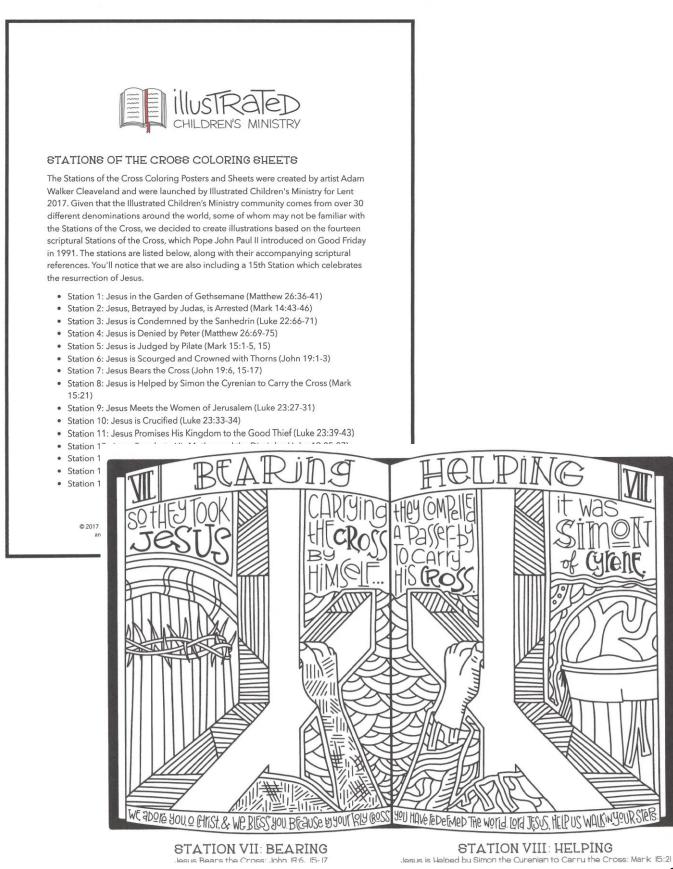
Jesus is with us in a new way! Sing "Alleluia!"

Say the Lord's Prayer together.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Coloring and Devotions

For Youth and Adults (Click the links for all full-size copies that you can print)



NOTICE Sticky Faith Every Day Daily Guide Extra

LENT:

A 40-day journey of noticing God

If you've heard of Lent before, chances are one of the L rst things that comes to mind is "giving something up," as in "I'm giving up chocolate for Lent."

That's sort of right. But not quite.

When you stop doing something you're used to doing (like eating dessert), you notice dilerent things. Lent is like that. It's a season—40 days to be exact (not counting Sundays)—when the Church throughout the ages has chosen to pause and notice something. That "something" is the journey of Jesus to the cross. Alongside his journey, we're also called to notice our own journeys toward death and resurrection. In many traditions, Lent starts out with "Ash Wednesday," when many Christians choose to wear a cross or smudge of ashes on their foreheads or hands. This is a symbol that represents our death, or "mortality." It's a reminder of the pain, sullering, and loss that are part of life. It's a reminder to turn away from sin and toward God.

Sounds kind of morbid, doesn't it?

But here's the thing. "Lent" actually means "Spring" you know, the season of new life. So in the midst of the bitter winter cold and all the death that might be around us, there's this uncanny hope that rebirth is possible.

FAST: -subtract+add

Lent often involves a form of "fasting", which usually means some kind of hunger.

When most of us think "fast", we think "speed". You might be a fast runner or a fast test-taker. Ironically, the spiritual use of the word sort of means the opposite. Fasting is a "slow" thing. It makes us stop and notice something—something we're missing, something we're going without. Something we subtract from our lives. Like food.

Fasting may typically mean we avoid eating food, or certain kinds of food, for a set period of time. But fasting is a practice that goes beyond food. It can mean choosing to go without TV, Facebook, or Xbox. In fact, fasting is the opposite of dieting, which is about controlling our bodies for the sake of achieving a certain waist size or belly l rmness. If that's one of your goals, you should absolutely not fast from food, because it's too easy to confuse the two (or celebrate one as a by-product of the other).

No, fasting isn't about obsession with our bodies.

Here are a few other things fasting is NOT: It's not punishing yourself for bad behavior. It's not working to earn God's favor, or doing something to please God. It's much bigger than all that.

In fact, fasting isn't just about subtracting for the sake of subtraction (which is what your math class might feel like most of the time). We subtract something so that we-or perhaps God-can add something new. In other words, what happens in the void left by whatever we choose to give up? If we give up an hour of video games, what do we do with those extra 60 minutes? If we give up lattes, what do we do with that money? Maybe it's adding true hunger, a hunger for spiritual growth. Maybe it's adding silence and stillness to a life full of noise and movement. Maybe we add prayer when we're usually silent toward God. Maybe God adds passion for serving the poor where we're usually pretty self-absorbed.

If all of this sounds intriguing, maybe you'd like to join in this 40-day journey of Lent together with other Jesus-followers around the world. Each week we're going to give you ideas for becoming more aware of God in your everyday life. You can use them in whatever way is most helpful to you, though many people J, nd that setting apart a particular time of day to pray and practice other disciplines helps them keep up a rhythm. As you consider the 40 days ahead, we encourage you to also think about what you might want to subtract and what you might want to add during the season of Lent to help you notice God more.

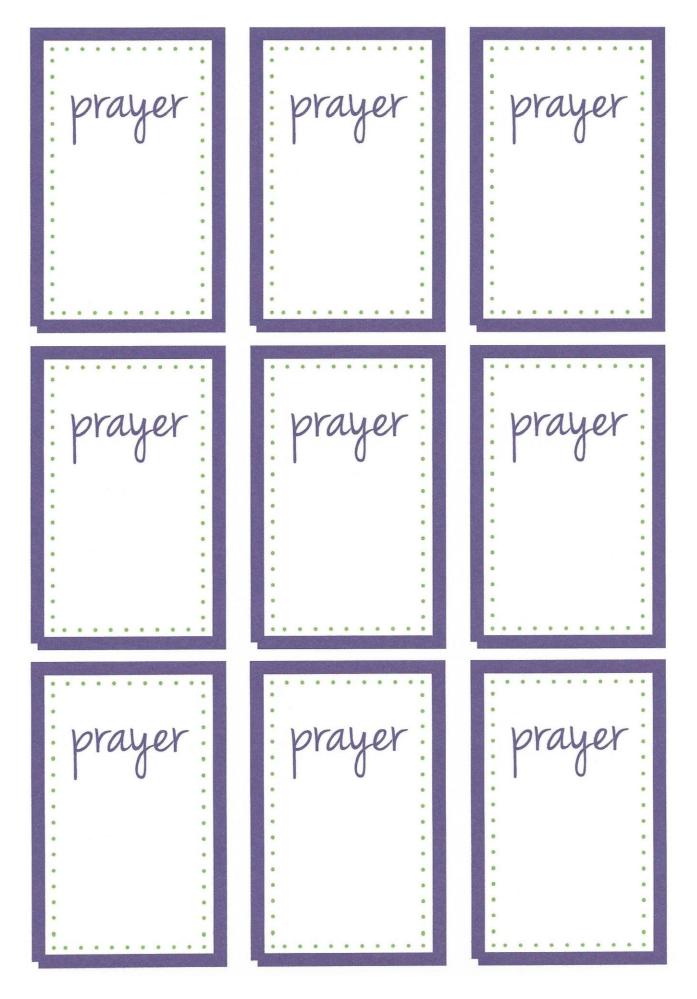
MY 40 BAGS IN 40 DAYS PROGRESS:

During 40 BAGS IN 40 DAYS, you will work on cleaning up a spot per day. Use this worksheet to plan the spots where you will declutter for 40 BAGS IN 40 DAYS. Don't forget to give yourself a day off each week. On the next sheet, chart your actual progress. For more details, visit whitehouseblackshutters.com.

AREA YOU PLAN TO WORK ON:	DATE:	COMPLETED PROGRESS:
	1	
		AREA YOU PLAN TO WORK ON: DATE:

alms giving alms giving alms giving plant a open the let someone door for flower or go ahead herb of you someone in line alms giving alms giving alms giving buy the send a nice volunteer with a local email to a homeless a friend charity meal alms giving alms giving giving do something call a unload the anonymously. relative dishwasher for a friend or neighbor

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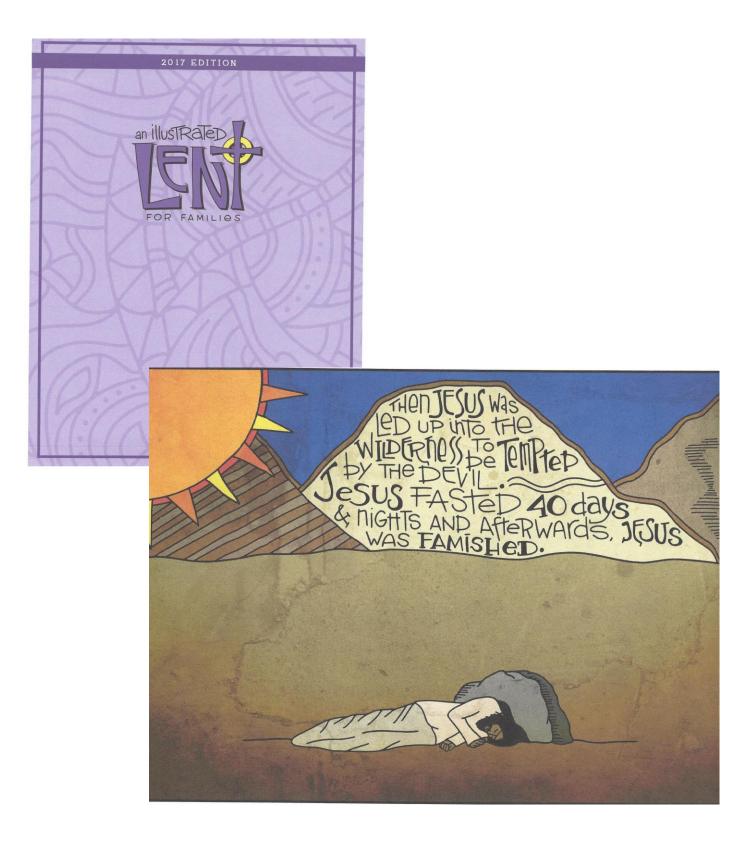


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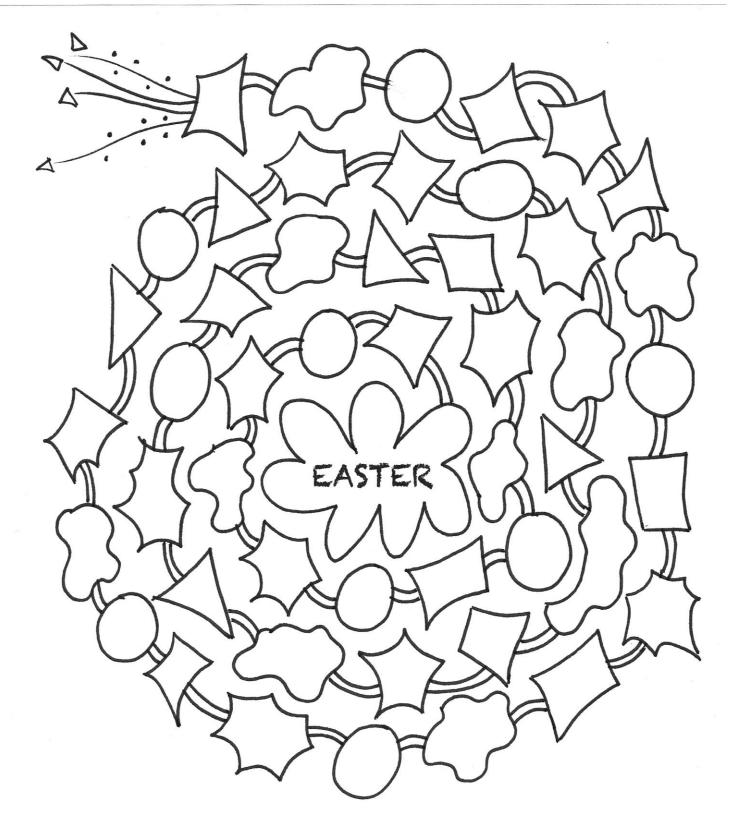
alms giving alms giving

alms alms alms giving giving giving take an do a chore give away unexpected: a toy or without book being treat to a asked friend alms alms alms giving giving giving donate smile at give food to three someone a a local people you compliment charity meet alms alms alms giving giving giving donate give away joyfully help with a money to a homeless survival bag project or a cause you love chore

If you can't get to church on Sundays, feel free to download a copy of <u>Illustrated Lent for</u> <u>Families.</u> You can find the link on our website or on the digital copy of this guidebook that will be linked in the weekly C&F email. We will be using some similar materials with peer groups on Sundays.



After Easter, keep going! The Great 50 Days of Easter Calendar





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