

Introduction To This Guide

These daily devotions are provided to encourage you to listen and reflect on how God is speaking to you during this Season of Lent. The question at the end of each day's contemplation is intended to foster further reflection and prayer throughout the day. In addition, space is provided for you to document your thoughts on how you hear God speaking to you at this time. May you be blessed and transformed through the Holy Spirit as you ponder God's word during this most holy of seasons. ++ *Provided by:* Community Missions Inc., 1570 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303, Phone: (716) 285-3403, www.communitymissions.org

Where Do I Begin?

Begin each day with the Prayer of Illumination to help, prepare your heart to hear God's word for you. Read "to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information...Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed...Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence."ttt

Let us Pray a *Prayer of Illumination*:

All-Seeing One, above me, around me, within me —

guide my vision as I engage with your sacred words.

Look down upon me, look out from within me, look all around me.

See through my eyes, hear through my ears, feel through my heart.

God of Wisdom, touch me where I need to be touched;

and when my heart is touched, give me the grace to lay

down this Holy Book and ask significant questions:

Why has my heart been touched by you?

How am I to be changed through your touch?

All-Seeing One, I need to change, I need to look a little more like You.

May these sacred words change and transform me.

Then I can meet You face to face...when I shall be healed forever.

Your Word and the touch of your Spirit bring healing...

a healing that will last.

O Eye of God, look not away.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and put a new and right spirit within me. Amen.

Adapted from *A Tree Full of Angels* by Macrina Wiederkehr [As quoted in *A Guide To Prayer For All God's People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room]

FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK - Day 10

TURNING AWAY FROM OUR SINS

Ezekiel 18:21-24

But if the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is lawful and right, they shall surely live; they shall not die. None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them; for the righteousness that they have done they shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the LORD GOD, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live? But when the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity and do the same abominable things that the wicked do, shall they live? None of the righteous deeds that they have done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which they are guilty and the sin they have committed, they shall die.

THE GOAL IS LIBERATION

What is God's intention? What God wants is for God's people is to live life in freedom and joy. God wants them to live both in this life and in the life to come. And so the Divine poses this scenario to the Hebrew people: If you are wicked and you turn away from your sins you will live. But if you are good and then you become wicked I won't even remember any of the good things you did, and you will die. For the believers of Ezekiel's day, there is no defense if you were once righteous and then you fall from grace. In Ezekiel's world it was from God's word to Ezekiel's lips.

God's forgiveness given through Jesus the Christ changes everything. So how then are we to understand Ezekiel's words in the light of Christ—the one who answers the question "How many times must I forgive?" with this answer: "Not 7 but 70 times 7!" (Matthew 18:21)

If you have ever been forgiven you know, the goal is freedom! There is no greater feeling on earth than having your guilt lifted, but to know that you have to have experienced it! Once that merciful forgiveness happens, you never - NEVER - want to go back! And so I wonder about *the righteous people* who *turn* from their righteousness. Is this about whether someone is good or bad, or is it about *false piety* - about those who *pretend* to be righteous? Jesus railed at the Pharisees

and scribes who positions *assumed* their righteousness, and yet Jesus called them *white-washed tombs*. (Matthew 23:27) He *saw* their pretensions, and *loathed* their hypocrisy. Those who are truly righteous confess their iniquity, and rejoice in their freedom it brings!

PRAYER

Holy One of God, help me to turn away from my sins. Reveal to me your lovingkindness and your merciful forgiveness. Let me hear you call me Beloved. Turn me toward *your* righteousness, and give me the freedom of knowing and loving you, now and forever. Amen.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Name a time when you truly felt forgiven and free?

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Lent 2022 – Day 10

A Guide for Devotion and Prayer



Love • Larry Cole (2010)

FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK TURNING AWAY FROM OUR SINS



This week’s devotional resource was written by Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow, President of the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions, and edited by Rev. Mark H. Breese of Community Missions. The content was created specifically keeping in mind the populations served by Community Missions.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Scripture Verses are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), HarpurCollins Publishers, 1989.

The choice of Daily Scripture texts are taken from *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications.

¹ James C. Fenhagen, *Mutual Ministry*, as quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for All God’s People*, Job & Shawchuck, The Upper Room, pgs. 89- Quote reworded for easier reading. Ibid. ¹¹ pg.88.

¹¹Walter Russell Bowie, *The Compassionate Christ*, Abington Press, 1965, pgs. 99-100.

¹¹¹Thomas Merton, *Lent & Easter, Wisdom from Thomas Merton*, Linguori Publications, pg. 28.