



Being with Jesus. Becoming people of love.

## Lent with LifePoint 2024 - A Daily Life Guided Retreat

### INTRODUCTION

**Welcome to the Lenten journey with LifePoint!** Lent is the forty-day season, not counting Sundays, that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. This retreat is **a time to reflect upon our own experiences with God in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.**

Historically, Lent begins with committing to 40 days of fasting, mirroring the time Jesus fasted in the wilderness as he started his ministry. With the season of Lent being 46 days, every **Sunday will be a celebration and rest day.** This day of breaking our fast will remind us of the sabbath rest we are encouraged to participate in weekly.

**This guide is a starting point** as we explore the steadfast love of the Lord in our daily lives. As a way of paying attention to what the Lord is up to in your life, **we encourage you to keep a daily journal** documenting your thoughts and experiences with God during this Lenten season.

We enter this season of Lent with joy, sorrow, hope, and despair. **However you come** into this Lent retreat, **know you are not alone.** The truth for many of us is that we live daily in both wholeness and brokenness. In this reality, we often find ourselves in seasons of waiting on the Lord and questioning the Lord in our anger, sadness, and suffering.

**This Lenten season begins on February 14th, 2024. You are invited** on this journey **to come as you are** believing that **the Lord desires to meet you every step of the way.** Our greatest hope at LifePoint is that you will experience an extra measure of God's grace in your life and a loving community to walk alongside you in this season of fasting, reflection, and preparation for the celebration of Easter.

### WEEKLY GUIDES

**Each weekly guide includes a weekly scripture meditation** inviting you to spend time daily in the Word with **daily questions** to encourage you to connect the scripture and your life experiences. The guide also includes **a weekly spiritual practice** that offers ways to listen, communicate, and be with the Lord. We hope this retreat will be something you can carry as you move throughout your day. With this in mind, we have provided **an I AM name of God to ponder and a breath prayer** centered around the themes to help give you ways to stay connected with God in each moment.

The **weekly themes** begin with **recognizing our need for the Lord** in confession and repentance, **receiving forgiveness**, and **knowing God's promises**. Then, we will spend a couple of weeks exploring the promises of **God with us** and **God's love for us** before we move into more challenging themes of **waiting on the Lord** and acknowledging **suffering, pain, and death** in our lives in light of the **passion of Jesus** as he moves towards his death. In our final week, we will spend time **celebrating the resurrection of Jesus** and exploring what that means for us today.

**Our prayer is that** through this retreat, **the Lord will speak** truth into lies, offer healing in brokenness, give presence amid sorrow, and bring light into darkness and that you will know in your heart, mind, body, and soul **the resurrection power Jesus offers us today**.

**Consider ways to allow this retreat to become a way of life.** In preparation for this journey, take time to become aware of or create an inviting place to meet with Jesus. If your area is not as you hope, use your imagination and allow yourself to create a space in your mind that is welcoming to you and the presence of God. Set aside 20-40 minutes daily to engage the scripture meditations and questions. If helpful, get up and move as you consider the questions. Whether you are sitting quietly, walking, doing dishes, changing diapers, or on your commute to or from the activities in your life, **there is no wrong way to invite the Lord into the everyday moments**. God longs to spend this time with you and delights in your desire to draw close to Him.

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

If you feel the invitation to journey with one of the spiritual directors at Lifepoint, we would be honored to walk alongside you. We are offering a special four-session **Spiritual Direction package** during the Lenten season.

If we have enough interest, we will offer a package for **four weeks of online group direction**. Dates for these group sessions will be Monday, February 26th, March 11th, March 25th and April 8th. We will offer two different time slots, 10-11:30 am and 7-8:30 pm CST, to accommodate various schedules. **Group direction will be limited to 3-4 people and the director**.

Visit [www.lifepointresources.org/resources](http://www.lifepointresources.org/resources) to learn more and connect with a spiritual director.

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## Week One Guide (Ash Wednesday, February 14-17)

### Return to the Lord - Confession

Return to the Lord is our theme this week. As we begin this Lenten journey, we will choose something to give up for the next 40 days to notice areas in our life that cause us to feel/experience separation from God.

### Spiritual Practice - Fasting

This practice of fasting includes abstaining from food, drink, shopping, desserts, social media, T.V. music, computer games, or any other habit or comfort to offer God your greater attention. Prayerfully consider your commitment and take a few minutes to write about it in your journal.

### Breath Prayer

Merciful God, help me experience your lovingkindness.

### I AM name of God to Ponder

I AM the One who searches hearts and minds to bring repentance and restoration.

### Daily Scripture Meditation - Joel 2:12-13; Psalm 51:1-2

*Yet even now, says the Lord, **return to me** with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment.*

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

### Wednesday, February 14, 2024 (Ash Wednesday)

Considering this week's scripture, what does it look like for you to return to the Lord with your whole heart?

### Thursday, February 15, 2024

Take some time to be quiet with the Lord. Ask the Lord to show you an area in your life that needs confession. Once it has come to mind, ask the Lord how you can experience His mercy over this area.

### Friday, February 16, 2024

In thinking about your confession yesterday, what does the Lord desire for you to know about your weakness?

### Saturday, February 17, 2024

What is the most notable emotion you are experiencing this week as you begin your fast? What are you most thankful for this week?

## **Week Two Guide (February 18-24)**

### **Forgiveness and God's Promises - Repentance**

Repentance, Forgiveness, and God's Promises are the themes for this week. Last week, we considered what it looked like to return to the Lord and considered areas of our lives that created separation from experiencing the Love of God. This week, we will continue to examine our lives and allow the Lord to speak forgiveness and love into our broken places.

#### **Spiritual Practice - The Daily Examen**

**Examine Prayer:** Help me, Lord, in this moment of quiet, to examine my day in gratitude. May I be attentive to how You have been at work in my life. May I see how you have blessed me in abundance, and may I become aware of areas of growth or pain I may have caused myself or others.

##### **Pause...Rest...Breathe**

Where have I felt true joy today?

##### **Pause...Rest... Breathe**

What has troubled me today?

##### **Pause...Rest...Breathe**

What has challenged me today?

##### **Pause...Rest...Breathe**

Thank the Lord for the joy you experienced and ask for what you need in the areas that troubled you or were challenging.

#### **Breath Prayer**

God of Love, create in me a clean heart.

#### **I AM name of God to Ponder**

I AM merciful and Gracious, full of Compassion for my beloved children.

#### **Sunday, February 18, 2024 - Celebrate and Rest**

## Daily Scripture Meditation - Psalm 51:6-12, 15-17

*You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*

***Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.***

*Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.*

*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

### Monday, February 19, 2024

As you consider the text this week, ask the Lord what truth and wisdom would be helpful for your heart.

### Tuesday, February 20, 2024

What feels unclean in your life? Where do you need the Lord to purge you?

### Wednesday, February 21, 2024

What would you like the Lord to create in you?

### Thursday, February 22, 2024

In what area do you need to be restored to joy with a willing spirit?

### Friday, February 23, 2024

What has the experience of fasting been like for you this week? What praise do you have to declare to the Lord?

### Saturday, February 24, 2024

Reflect on your practice of the Examen over the week. What do you notice? What invitation do you sense from God?

## **Week Three Guide (February 25-March 2)**

### **God is With Us - Intimacy**

God is with us, which is our theme for the week. Over the last couple of weeks, we have been exploring the struggles that cause us not always to love God and our neighbor wholeheartedly. We have also explored our need for God's mercy and grace. This week, we will focus on practicing the awareness of God's presence with us.

#### **Spiritual Practice – Practicing the Presence of God**

Practicing the presence of God is an invitation to develop an awareness of seeing and experiencing every moment as God's continual gift of abiding with us. The idea is to keep company with Jesus all day long.

##### **Practices Include:**

- Developing a rhythm that brings the Lord to mind throughout the activities in your daily life.
- Seeing yourself through God's eyes rather than the eyes of others also includes becoming aware of seeing others through the eyes of God.
- Take time to stop throughout your day to listen to God to grow in all areas of your life.
- Create or pray a breath prayer or use other Word-centered phrases that help keep or return your thoughts in any moment on the awareness of Christ's presence with you.

#### **Breath Prayer**

Abiding Presence, attune my heart to your companionship

#### **I AM name of God to Ponder**

I AM with you always, in my presence there is fullness of Joy!

#### **Sunday, February 25, 2024 - Celebrate and Rest**

## Daily Scripture Meditation - Isaiah 43:1-5; Psalm 34:1-8

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O [your name] he who formed you, O [Beloved]: 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, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior... you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you... **Do not fear, for I am with you.***

*I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. **O magnify the LORD with me**, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant, so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried and was heard by the LORD and was saved from every trouble. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.*

### Monday, February 26, 2024

Read Isaiah 43 several times with your name and allow the words to settle into your heart. The Lord knows your name and calls you Beloved. Imagine the loving gaze of God on you as you listen to the promises of this scripture. What thoughts or emotions does this exercise create in you?

### Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Consider an area of your life where you feel like you are overwhelmed. Spend a few minutes in silence and ask the Lord to show you how He is holding you.

### Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Think about a time that you felt held by the Lord. What words would you use to describe the presence of God with you? What do the words "do not fear, for I am with you" mean to you?

### Thursday, February 29, 2024

What has the experience of fasting been like for you this week? What praise do you have to declare to the Lord?

### Friday, March 1, 2024

Ask the Lord to help you become aware of the presence of God with you. How has the Lord heard you and answered you?

### Saturday, March 2, 2024

Consider your weekly spiritual practice with the Lord; what are you noticing about your experience of practicing the presence of the Lord? What invitation does the Lord have for you this week?

## **Week Four Guide (March 3-9)**

### **God is Love – Consolation**

This week, we are exploring the theme that God is Love. We continue to reflect on the goodness and kindness of a God who sees us, knows us, and loves us. Allow yourself to focus on the joy of the Lord with you and the assurance of God's abiding love in and over your life.

#### **Spiritual Practice - Centering Prayer**

In this practice, we quiet the heart and rest in the presence of God. Set aside 5-15 minutes and settle into a comfortable position. Intentionally place yourself in the presence of God, knowing that you are deeply loved.

Choose a word or phrase from a scripture that expresses your desire for God.

As you move toward stillness, take comfort in God's desire to be with you. If your thoughts wander, simply return to your word or phrase and let the loving presence of God bring peace to your soul. Centering prayer is letting go and letting the Lord love you. Rest in the center of God's love. Trust in the presence of the Holy Spirit who abides in your spirit. As you finish your prayer time and slowly move toward engaging life again, offer yourself to the Lord with a simple phrase like, "I am yours; remain in me."

It may be helpful to spend a few minutes each day noting your experiences of centering prayer. While this may seem like an easy prayer, it can be challenging to still your mind and rest in the Love of God. If this is happening to you, rest assured that the Lord sees and celebrates your efforts.

#### **Breath Prayer**

Jesus, thank you for loving me

God of love, fill me with your joy

#### **I AM name of God to Ponder**

I AM steadfast Loving-Kindness that leads you gently to truth.

#### **Sunday, March 3, 2024 - Celebrate and Rest**



## Daily Scripture Meditation - 1 John 4:7-19

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

*By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because **he has given us of his Spirit**. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.*

***God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.** Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, **but perfect love casts out fear**; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. **We love because he first loved us.***

### Monday, March 4, 2024

Reflecting on this week's text, how do you experience the truth that God is love?

### Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Spend a few minutes in silence. Ask the Lord where he would like you to experience more of His love.

### Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Think about a time that you felt loved by the Lord. What words would you use to describe the presence of God with you? What do the words "perfect love casts out fear" mean to you?

### Thursday, March 7, 2024

What situation or person is easier for you to love because God loves you? Spend time praying for continued grace to love the difficult people in your life well.

### Friday, March 8, 2024

What has the experience of fasting been like for you this week? What area of your life is the Lord inviting you to become more aware of his love?

### Saturday, March 9, 2024

Reflect on your Spiritual practice with the Lord this week; what is the most notable emotion you are experiencing? What are you most grateful for this week?

## **Week Five Guide (March 10-16)**

### **Waiting and Trusting – Detachment**

This week, our journey explores the themes of waiting and trusting the Lord in different seasons of life. We have spent the last couple of weeks looking and practicing God's love and presence with us. As we move forward these next few weeks, it will be helpful to remember the reassurance of God's presence in every moment. We will explore the importance of letting go of our expectations and trusting the Lord to work things out for our good.

#### **Spiritual Practice - Detachment**

As we look at Jesus, we see in His ministry that He was diligent in His attachment to God. Jesus, while fasting in the wilderness, was tempted by worldly power. As he relinquished these temptations, he was able to live fully into the Father's calling on His life and ministry. Detachment is becoming aware of idolatrous relationships, self-serving goals, and agendas around money, productivity, image, power, or any other vice that holds us captive over our desire for God. Detachment requires us to nurture our hearts to attach to the Trinity in every aspect of our lives.

#### **Practices Include:**

- Name and confess attachments that take priority over God.
- Letting go of notions that your money and possessions belong to you and make you who you offer freedom from attachments to personal image, possessions, and achievements.
- Keeping company with Jesus in letting go of temporary security, seeking to trust God more.
- Trusting outcomes to God rather than your own capabilities, living as God's beloved.
- Allowing others to take the lead and recognizing that following Jesus includes a downward movement. Taking the stance of the Lord must increase, and I must decrease.

#### **Breath Prayers:**

Steadfast Love, my soul waits for you

Provider of all, I trust in your timing

Trustworthy Lord, I take delight in you

#### **I AM name of God to Ponder:**

I AM the Good Shepherd who leads you and calls you by name.

#### **Sunday, March 10, 2024 - Celebrate and Rest**

## Daily Scripture Meditation - Isaiah 43:15-19; Psalm 33:20-22; Psalm 37:3-7

*I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down; they cannot rise; they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: **Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing;** now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

***Our soul waits for the LORD;** he is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in him because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.*

*Trust in the LORD and do good; live in the land and enjoy security. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. **Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.** He will make your vindication shine like the light and the justice of your cause like the noonday. **Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him;***

### Monday, March 11, 2024

As you consider the Isaiah 43 text this week, where in your life do you need to trust the Lord to make a way forward? Where do you sense an invitation to let go and trust God's provision?

### Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Consider an area of your life where you are waiting on the Lord. What do you notice about how the need to wait feels in your mind and body? Share this awareness with the Lord.

### Wednesday, March 13, 2024

What are you hoping for? What do the words, "Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you" mean to you?

### Thursday, March 14, 2024

What has the experience of fasting been like for you this week? How are you taking delight in the Lord today?

### Friday, March 15, 2024

What do you want to ask the Lord for today? Ask the Lord to help you become still and wait patiently for whatever you need today.

### Saturday, March 16, 2024

Reflect on your spiritual practice of detachment this week. What has been easy to let go of this week? What continues to be a challenge to let go of this week?

## Week Six Guide (March 17-23)

### Suffering and Death – Desolation

This week, our journey takes a turn as we explore themes that take us deeper into acknowledging more difficult places of suffering and isolation in our life with God. While these places will seem darker than the past several weeks, we can draw from our experiences of God's love and presence as we have found joy and thankfulness in being intentional about being with the Trinity.

As we admit suffering, we can be reassured that God desires us to experience his loving kindness amid our deepest pain. Letting go of our expectations and trusting the Lord to move is extremely difficult when we suffer. If at any time you feel overwhelmed, feel free to return to previous weeks, where you can reattach yourself to a safe place in the presence of God. We hope that if you desire to move into the more challenging areas of suffering with the Lord, you will reach out to a listening friend or Spiritual Director who can accompany you so that you do not feel alone.

Suffering can pull us away from God. It can make us angry, apathetic, selfish, and resentful. The Christ-like response to suffering is trusting God to lead us in it and through it.

#### Spiritual Practice - Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer invites us into God's care and concern for us, our families and friends, and the created world. We offer our worries, fears, difficult situations, and the brokenness in us and others to the Lord in prayer, hoping that we will receive peace and comfort in knowing that the Lord promises to hear us when we cry out.

Take time to honestly bring your cares and concerns before the Lord. **Where in your life does the physical, emotional, or spiritual pain and suffering feel like it is too much? Ask the Lord to help you know how to pray for yourself and/or others.** Trust that the Holy Spirit will intercede.

#### Breath Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, your Beloved

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress

#### I AM name of God to Ponder

I AM the One who comforts and heals you in suffering.

#### Sunday, March 17, 2024 - Celebrate and Rest

## Daily Scripture Meditation - Psalm 31:1-5, 9-10, 14-17, 22-24

*In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.*

***Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.***

*But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." **My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love. Do not let me be put to shame, O Lord, for I call on you.***

*But you heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help. Love the Lord, all you his saints. The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily. **Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.***

### Monday, March 18, 2024

Reflect on Psalm 31: where do you need the Lord to be your refuge and rescue you?

### Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Recall an area of your life that is painful. Take some time to name your suffering and sorrows. As you sit with the Lord, ask him to reveal his presence in your grief. What does the Lord desire for you to know?

### Wednesday, March 20, 2024

What are you having trouble trusting the Lord with? In our painful experiences, being honest with the Lord is hard. Do not be afraid to share exactly how you feel; allow the Lord to meet you there.

### Thursday, March 21, 2024

What stands out to you in your reflections this week? If you have cried out for help, how has the Lord met you in your need? What has the experience of fasting been like for you this week?

### Friday, March 22, 2024

Where does your heart break for the suffering in the world? Ask the Lord to help give you wisdom and understanding in praying for the present suffering of others around you.

### Saturday, March 23, 2024

Reflect on your spiritual practice of intercessory prayer. What prayer has meant the most to you this week? What prayer are you still holding before the Lord to have answered?

## Week Seven Guide (Palm Sunday, March 24-30)

### *A Prophecy of the Life and Death of Jesus - Isaiah 53*

*Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity, and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.*

*Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases, yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with affliction. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.*

### **The Passion of Christ – Lament**

The passion of Christ marks the final week of our fast as we walk towards the Cross with Jesus. Last week, we spent time inviting the Lord into our suffering, and now we are invited to walk with Jesus as He is rejected and crucified. **His obedience to death on the cross is a pivotal moment for humankind.** This week, we will allow ourselves to lament our pain and suffering alongside the pain and suffering of Jesus and trust that death does not have the final say.

### **Spiritual Practice - Silence and Solitude**

*For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. Isaiah 30:15*

Solitude involves consciously distancing yourself from others. It could be as simple as walking or finding a quiet space nearby. Practicing solitude does not necessarily mean being alone for hours just to be alone. It is the freedom to be alone to be able to listen better. In practicing solitude, we can find the mental distance and settle our hearts from the commotion of our lives to see the things that worry, trigger, and oppress us.

Silence invites us to withdraw from the noise of our surroundings to hear God's voice, hoping to return to daily life with peace and clarity. The discipline of silence goes hand in hand with solitude. Silence is turning off the noise of the world, which at its most basic level is removing the commotion in everyday items like the TV, music, cell phone, and computer.

### **Practices Include:**

Intentionally step away from the pressures of life that demand your time and energy. This act of withdrawal is not an escape but a strategy to gain clarity in stressful situations, complex relationships, or painful experiences. It's a journey towards not striving and growing in peace in trials.

Identify an area of stress, sorrow, shame, or suffering. Spend time in solitude and silence, slowing your breathing and inviting the Lord into your experiences and emotions. Ask the Lord to help you release unproductive thoughts and expectations. Listen in the quiet, anticipating God speaking into the circumstance.

### **Breath Prayer**

Holy God, in the darkness, be present and near us

### **I AM name of God to Ponder**

I AM the Bread of Life, the one who sustains you in sorrow.

### **Palm Sunday, March 24, 2024 - Celebrate and Rest**

*Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Mark 11:7-10*

## Daily Scripture Meditation - Psalm 22:1-2, 14-21

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night but find no rest.*

*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they bound my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. **But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid!** Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.*

### Monday, March 25, 2024

We are in the final week before the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus is walking towards death, knowing that the result will be resurrection. In your silence and solitude, ask the Lord to reveal where he is asking you to give up your life in anticipation of resurrection.

### Tuesday, March 26, 2024

In silence and solitude, ask the Lord to show you how he is with you as you consider giving up your life for others in this time of reflection.

### Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Where are you crying out daily and not receiving relief? Spend time in silence and solitude and ask the Lord what he would like you to notice about your suffering.

### Maundy Thursday, March 28, 2024

Today, we observe Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples and remember the importance of humility and service to others. How is the Lord blessing your broken life for the sake of the world?

### Good Friday, March 29, 2024

Today, we observe the crucifixion of Jesus. In several gospels, we see Jesus cry out the words David cried in Psalms 22:1-2 "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" Recall a time when you have honestly cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In your solitude and silence, invite the Lord to be present in your past or present suffering and pain.

### Saturday, March 30, 2024

Lament is an integral part of our life with God; allow yourself to rest and grieve with the Lord as you wait in hope for what will come. Reflect on your silence and solitude this week. What invitation does the Lord have for you?



## Week Eight Guide (Easter Sunday, March 31-April 6)

### Resurrection – Celebration

**Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed!** After the past few weeks of sitting with the Lord in our suffering and walking with Christ in His final hours before death, we celebrate Jesus's resurrection this week. Celebrating the resurrection is a time of great joy, even as we still live daily with great hope and sorrow. **The power of the resurrection is that Jesus defeated death once and for all.** While we do and will continue to experience death, we no longer need to fear it. Death is not the end but the beginning of a new life. In both suffering and joy, we have the assurance that God is with us, and every death we experience will be raised to life again. ***Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? John 11:25-26***

### Spiritual Practice - Celebration

Celebration is engaging in activities and actions that focus our heart, mind, body, and soul on worship, praise, and thanksgiving. While Easter is a natural time of celebration, celebrating God does not depend on perfect circumstances or even having feelings of happiness. Celebration is a commitment to believing in the power of the resurrection and that God is with us and loves us. David reminds us in *Psalm 16:11*: “*You show me the path of life. In your presence, there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*”

#### Practice Includes:

Spend time celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. As you grow aware of His abiding presence, what joy are you experiencing? We often associate death with the physical body. However, death comes in many forms and happens to all of us in relationships and transitions in life. Consider where you have experienced a death and noticed the Lord bringing new life from that death. Write a note to the Lord expressing your gratitude.

### Breath Prayer

Risen Christ, we celebrate New Life

In your presence Jesus, there is fullness of joy

### I AM name of God to Ponder

I AM the resurrection and the Life, the one who redeems you from death.

**Easter Sunday March 31, 2024 - Celebrate and officially end the 40 days fast.**

## Daily Scripture Meditation - Isaiah 40:3-5; Psalm 22:27-31; Matthew 28:5-10

*A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.*

*But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

### Monday, April 1, 2024

Reflect on the scripture above, and notice a word or phrase that stands out. Ask the Lord to show you how the word(s) you choose offer hope and light to your soul.

### Tuesday, April 2, 2024

Recall an area of your life of joyful celebration. Spend time enjoying your memory and thank the Lord for the joy he has given to you in your life.

### Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Where are you having trouble celebrating? Ask the Lord to bring you the fullness of His presence in this hard place. Ask Him what he would like you to know about this circumstance.

### Thursday, April 4, 2024

What stands out in your reflections of joy and celebration this week?

### Friday, April 5, 2024

We are coming to the end of this retreat. Reflect on how the Lord has been with you and transformed you. Spend time asking the Lord to show you something you may not have noticed yet.

### Saturday, April 6, 2024

Reflect on your spiritual practices over these past several weeks. Which ones have you found to be the most helpful in your daily life? What thoughts or words feel influential to you as you end this retreat? What are you looking forward to in your continued journey with God?