



HE WAS THERE

A LENTEN JOURNEY
BY WORLD RELIEF



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world relief*

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Since then, for over 80 years, across 100 countries, World Relief has partnered with local churches and communities to develop sustainable, locally-driven solutions to some of our world's greatest problems.

To learn more, visit worldrelief.org

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Curated and edited by Kelly Hill & Shreya Shukla Thornton. Family Guide written by Jess Galván. Designed by Rachel Leeds.

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Dear Friends,

Thank you for joining us for this special season of Lent as we walk together in the footsteps of Jesus.

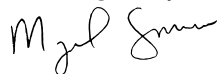
Over the next weeks, I pray you'll see how Jesus' time on earth was indelibly marked by a deep attention to and care for those who were on the margins — the sick, the disenfranchised and the lost. And I hope you'll be reminded that this deep and sacrificial love is for you, too.

The season of Lent has played an important role for us at World Relief. In fact, it's where our work and mission began! Back in 1944, faithful Christ followers at Park Street Church in Boston felt stirred to respond to the plight of refugees in the wake of World War II. They spent the 40 days leading up to Easter praying, fasting and seeking God on how they could best respond to the urgent needs of their day.

Eighty years later, we get to gather as a global community of Christ followers asking some of those same questions: What are the most pressing needs in communities around the world? Where are people most in need of the care and transformative love of Christ? How can we act as his hands and feet in the world today?

I am eagerly expectant as we set out on this journey together. May you encounter the life of Jesus in new ways, and may you be blessed with fresh vision for transformation in your own life and in the lives of people around the world.

Blessings on your journey,



Myal Greene | World Relief President & CEO

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

On behalf of all of us at World Relief, we warmly welcome you to this season of Lent!

Over the next weeks, we'll walk together in the footsteps of Jesus — from his anointing in Bethany to his resurrection on Easter morning. Throughout, you will hear from World Relief staff, partners and program participants around the world, each offering unique reflections on the life and example of Jesus.

We'll start our journey on Ash Wednesday with a series of daily readings, reflections and prayers to help lay the foundation for our time together. Then, we'll settle into the following weekly rhythm:

MONDAY: SCRIPTURE REFLECTION + PRAYER

Begin each week with a scripture reading, global reflection and prayer of preparation.

TUESDAY: SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Experience a spiritual practice from our global community.

WEDNESDAY: JESUS IS HERE

Read a testimony of how Jesus' redemptive power is still at work around the world.

THURSDAY: LISTENING FOR GOD'S VOICE

Reflect and listen for God's voice.

FRIDAY: FAITH IN ACTION

Discover new ideas for advocating or serving on behalf of others.

SATURDAY: PRAYER + REST

Pray and rest in your dependence on God.

In the tradition of Lent, we've left Sundays open for rest and gathering with your faith community.



We have also included two special sections at the end of each week: **Journeying Together** includes prompts and discussion questions for groups that can be used whenever you gather, and our **Family Guide** offers resources and prompts to help families experience this season together. Look for these symbols to find them.



You may notice some prompts or questions are intentionally repeated to help establish rhythms of introspection and discussion.

We believe Lent is best experienced in community with other Christ followers, and encourage you to walk through this season with a friend, your small group, your family or members of your community.



Finally, we've created a special *Lent playlist* to accompany your journey. With songs submitted by our global World Relief community, we hope this playlist will draw you into moments of reflection, reverence and renewal. *Scan the QR code or visit tinyurl.com/songs-for-lent to listen!*



We pray this devotional will bring you into holy fellowship with God's global church and nearer to his heart for you and for his image-bearers around the world. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Lord, may the work of our hands, the words from our lips and the meditations of our hearts be fully submitted to you. Amen.



Welcome to the first week of your Lenten journey. In these first few days, we've invited members of our World Relief community to provide an introduction to the season of Lent. We hope these readings, reflections and prayers will prepare your heart for what God has for you in the days ahead. May God bless these first steps of our Lenten journey together!

WEDNESDAY | DAY 1

Ash Wednesday

By Jess Galván

READ

Romans 12:1-2, Isaiah 58:6

REFLECT

There is no better day than Ash Wednesday to remind us of where we come from — I mean, it's right there in the name. Our Creator tells us in Genesis 3:19, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

From the beginning, our fragile mortality has rested in the hands of a trusted father. But it can be so easy to forget this when the distractions of life take over. We begin to believe we have control and that our time on earth is endless.

That's how I remember feeling as a 20-year-old, a sophomore in college living in the big city of Chicago and completely wrapped



If you are journeying through Lent as a family, view page 20 for this week's supplementary Family Guide.

up in the pressures of school and my buzzing social life. The last thing on my mind was my own weakness and need to rely on God. I was well under the spell of the promise that if I pursued a higher education, it would lead to a successful career and produce a life lacking nothing. Coming from a family and church community of Mexican immigrants, this seemed like a lifeline.

Growing up, I had watched my mother as she juggled multiple jobs trying desperately to create stability for her daughters. We relied on the kindness of strangers at our local food pantry when the scattered paychecks didn't add up, creating a determination within me that got me to a university. I could feel the hopes and expectations of my community on my shoulders.

It was a typical Wednesday night as I ran down the steps of the elevated Red Line platform on my way to night class. There, in the middle of the train station, was a priest dressed in full liturgical vestment with a deacon beside him holding a jar of ashes. The priest was applying ashes in the form of a cross on the foreheads of commuters exiting the station. Suddenly, the image of the ashes, of Jesus meeting me right where I was that day, brought me back to my roots as I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, *“Remember where you came from.”*

I felt that I had descended from my own platform of idealized success — the pursuit of a college education and bright future in a bustling city — and landed on sacred ground where Jesus himself was elevated and honored. I was brought low in reverence for all that I lacked while knowing that I was still completely loved.

I had been fighting for a false ideal where all the struggles of my parents, neighbors and, by connection, hundreds of thousands of other immigrants would be “worth it” if I only kept doing everything right and stuck to the plan. But that striving left no room for God and his work.

He wasn't just reminding me of where I came from culturally but also where I came from physically and spiritually — where we all come from. On Ash Wednesday, we boldly mark our bodies and confront our place in God's creation. *Our weakness and need for a Savior cannot be hidden as we face the sins that bring us to the foot of the cross.*

His reminder to me that day led me down a path of living a life of justice that would infiltrate my work, my parenting, my faith and my future. So today, I invite you to slow down and think back to where you came from. Remember the moments of humility, brokenness and abandonment that led you to see your flesh as it is.

Ash Wednesday is bold and on display. It marks the beginning of a season that disrupts our daily life. It gives space for contemplation and mourning in order to truly appreciate the joy that is coming. The beauty in a day like today is not found in an attitude of resignation but in a disruptive, celebratory surrender. Remember and mark the day that brought you to the feet of Jesus.

PRAY

Spend some time coming before God openly and honestly. Set aside the need to strive. Think about your mortality and the reality of your sin — seek his forgiveness. Thank him for his deep and unending love for you and his mercies that are new every morning.



Jess Galván is a Content Writer at World Relief. As a writer, editor and church leader, she is passionate about storytelling and amplifying diverse voices. She resides in Texas and enjoys spending time with her husband and three children.

THURSDAY | DAY 2

What is Lent and Why Do We Celebrate It?

By Matthew Fretwell

READ

1 Peter 5:6-7

REFLECT

As a boy growing up among Catholic, Lutheran and Episcopal peers on Long Island, New York, I thought I knew about Lent. My young friends and I assumed Lent was a time when someone had to give up something they loved in order to please (or manipulate) God. The big question among friends and classmates was always, “What are you giving up for Lent?” But we couldn’t have told you why.

Maybe you’ve felt that way about a religious tradition or ritual. It’s something you think you’re “supposed” to do, but you’re not really sure why...

Thankfully, through the instruction of Father Hemsley, a lovely and gentle elderly man, I was introduced to a new understanding of the Lenten season.

During that time, I served in my Episcopal church as an acolyte. For myself and many of my friends from different Christian traditions, being an acolyte was a right of passage. Our Sunday duties included carrying the crucifix in the processional to and from the altar, filling the communion goblets and lighting and snuffing out candles.

We also received religious instruction, and it was through serving and learning as a young acolyte that I first began to feel the

holy presence of God. I remember I would ride my bicycle to Father Hemsley’s home and sit with him and his wife as they discussed the things of God.

In those conversations, my eyes were first opened to how Lent could help us demonstrate our hearts of gratitude, humility and loving devotion to Jesus Christ. He helped me see that it is an outward showing of our inward heart. In retrospect, 11-year-old kids don’t know as much as they think!

For those who may be new to the tradition of Lent, this season first began when the early church set aside 40 days of fasting and reflection before Easter. Historically, Lent evolved into a penitent season to rid the soul from obstacles created by the self, sin and the world.

But Lent has consistently been a time of introspection, soul-seeking, alignment and giving. Unlike Christian rhythms that begin on Sunday, Lent begins in the middle of the week. It’s purposefully designed as a holy interruption of our busy lives.

While Lent can be ritualistic, it should not be legalistic. Engaging in spiritual disciplines and seasons like Lent are best motivated out of adoration and love. *Lent is a time of renewal and the aligning of body, soul and spirit with God in preparation of celebrating the glorious resurrection of Christ and merciful redemption of humanity.*

Nearly forty years later, I’ve explored and aligned with Christian traditions beyond my Episcopal roots, but the lessons I learned from Father Hemsley continue to shine through during the Lenten season.

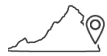
As you begin this journey, I encourage you to explore your own traditions, feelings and beliefs around this season. *Have you ob-*

served Lent before? If yes, how and why? How do you hope the season of Lent will draw your heart closer to God's this year?

PRAY

Spend some time humbling yourself before God in prayer today. You might choose to kneel or take a posture of submission.

Praise him for his goodness and his sovereignty over all creation. Seek his forgiveness for any areas where you need to repent. Praise him for his mercy and love.



Matthew Fretwell, D.Min., is the Spiritual Formation Director at World Relief. He is an ordained pastor, author and church planting practitioner and has served in various pastoral and leadership roles. He and his wife have three daughters and live in Virginia.

FRIDAY | DAY 3

Why Journey Through Lent as a Community?

By Julian D. Linnell

READ

Psalm 133, Matthew 25:34-40

REFLECT

In the aftermath of World War II, a community of ordinary believers in Boston, Massachusetts, felt moved to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of displaced peoples in war-torn Europe.

Park Street Church decided to use Lent, the same season you are now entering, as an opportunity to fast and pray and to give financially to what was initially called the War Relief Commission. Other churches across the U.S. caught this vision and World Relief emerged from this groundswell of Christian concern.

The movement that is now World Relief started in community. This Lent, we hope you can experience something similar in connection with other believers locally and around the world.

Throughout history, the traditions of Lent have been based in community. For the first Christians, Lent was an occasion to ready themselves for Holy Week and Easter through repentance and fasting. New believers were prepared and instructed for baptism. Believers who had been separated from their community due to notorious sins were offered the opportunity to be reconciled.

The entire fellowship of the church was impacted as the gospel was preached and lived out through repentance, forgiveness, faith and pardon. It would have been unthinkable to do this alone.

Likewise, there are contemporary reasons for why our journey through Lent is most impactful when undertaken as a community. It can be easy for many Christians today to focus exclusively on celebration and success. While Jesus' victory over sin, death and Satan should always be central to believers, lament, suffering and injustice also mark our spiritual journey.

Through the Holy Spirit, believers in one place can learn, identify and empathize with believers in many other parts of the world, sharing in their suffering. *"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it..."* (1 Corinthians 12:12, 26).

Observed in local and global community, Lent can provide a corrective to a thin Christianity that isolates believers from complexities that are inherent to life on earth, as well as from the meaning of the cross. As the Apostle Paul writes, “*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body*” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). Lent brings us as a community closer to the sufferings of Jesus and to one another.

Tragically, the number of displaced peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East today has increased to historic proportions. But as we seek to respond compassionately and wisely, who can understand and comfort those who suffer better than Jesus himself?

When the body of Christ meditates together on Jesus’ journey of suffering and his persistent care for the brokenhearted and marginalized, we have the unique opportunity to enlarge our sense of solidarity, engagement and commitment to those who are the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40) — those whom Jesus continually chose to be present among during his days on earth.

If you have not already decided to journey through this Lenten season with other believers, whether through your church, family or circle of friends, we encourage you to do so.

Thank you for your willingness to humbly and expectantly enter this Lenten journey with us.

PRAY

Spend some time praying for the next six weeks. Ask God to open your mind and heart to hear from him. Pray for others who are joining you on this journey all over the world. Praise God for

the work he has already done in and through his people and for all that he will do in the future.



Julian D. Linnell, PhD, is Minister of Missions at Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts. He also serves as a Center Associate at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University.

SATURDAY | DAY 4

*Prayer of Preparation:
Jesus’ Journey from Bethany to Jerusalem*

By Martine Decase

As you prepare your heart to walk in the footsteps of Jesus toward his death and resurrection, we invite you to pray this prayer aloud.

Jesus, on your excruciating journey, you set aside your own suffering to meet the suffering of others. Help me to see other people’s suffering in the midst of my personal trials and challenges. Help me to stop along the road of life to see those who have become vulnerable and to serve them.

*On the road from Bethany to Jerusalem you saw **Lazarus** (John 11:38-44; 12:1). Lord, raise the dead things in my life, do the impossible.*

*On the road from Bethany to Jerusalem you saw **Mary** (John 12:2-8). Lord, help me to abandon myself to extravagant praise so I can draw closer to you, taking no account of how others perceive me.*

*On the road from Bethany to Jerusalem you saw the **Widow** (Mark 12:41-44). Lord, help me to give from my lack, knowing that nothing*

I sacrifice in this life will ever compare to the sacrifice you made on the cross.

*On the road from Bethany to Jerusalem you saw **Peter, who denied you** (John 18:15-17, 25-27). Lord, help me to boldly declare my love and allegiance to you. Forgive me when I miss the mark and don't live in a way that shows that I am your disciple.*

*On the road from Bethany to Jerusalem you saw the **Thief on the Cross** (Luke 23:39-43). Lord, thank you for bridging the gap between me and God; covering me by your blood from the everlasting punishment that I justly deserved. Thank you for loving me.*

As we enter into this season, prepare our hearts to not overlook the suffering of man, but to take the same journey you took from Bethany to Jerusalem.

You see the poor, sick and broken. You run towards them and not away from them. Help us to be more like you, running towards those who have been disenfranchised. Prepare our hearts, minds and souls during this season of Lent

I pray this in the name of the one who "came to seek and save the lost," King Jesus. Amen.



Martine Decase is the Sales Process Specialist for World Relief's Strategic Engagement Division. The daughter of immigrants from Haiti, she desires to see the unseen and love the lost and forgotten. She resides in Chicago, Illinois, with her husband and three children.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you will take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Have you observed Lent before? If yes, how and why?
2. What feelings or past experiences does Lent bring to mind?
3. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
4. How do you hope the next six weeks will draw you closer to God's heart?
5. Are there any ways in which you sense God inviting you to align more with the character and example of Christ?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Preparing for Your Lenten Journey

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

This week marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is a time when Christians slow down and prepare for Easter. How do we prepare for Jesus' resurrection? That's a great question! While we are all looking forward to the same thing, many people prepare differently.

The most common tradition is to fast, or to not eat a certain type of food in order to practice self-control and feel closer to God. This old tradition is a reminder of when Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights and he stood strong against Satan's temptations.

Another way to prepare during Lent is the complete opposite. Instead of taking something away, many people add on something to remind them to show love or gratitude. For example, they read more of the Bible every day, serve their community or do a devotional like this one!

Whichever way Jesus' followers prepare, the hope is that it brings them closer to God and understanding his unending love for all of us. For the next six weeks, we are going to prepare by gathering together and learning about where Jesus was leading up to his resurrection. We'll then see how we can use those lessons in our own lives today!

READ TOGETHER

Read Matthew 4:1-11 together. Then discuss:

1. How do you think Jesus felt while in the wilderness?
2. It can be so difficult to practice self-control. What do you do when you need to try really hard to not do something?
3. Ask your parents to share how they have observed Lent in the past.

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, thank you for all the ways that you show us your strength and love. It must have been so hard to be tempted from the very beginning, but you found your strength in the Lord. This Lent season, we pray for our hearts to be opened to learn from you and love others just as you did. Amen.

DO TOGETHER

Lent can help show our hearts of gratitude, humility and loving devotion to Jesus Christ. He can help us express on the outside what is in the inside of our hearts.

Draw a big heart on a sheet of paper. Then, fill the inside of the heart with drawings of all the things that you love and are grateful for and color it. It could be your family, friends, your pet, your home or your school. Hang it up somewhere you can see as a reminder of how Jesus shows his love to you through these blessings.



Jesus Was Anointed in Bethany

MONDAY | DAY 5

Scripture Reflection + Prayer

This week, Amanda Patterson guides us in the footsteps of Jesus, which lead to the home of his friends in the town of Bethany. Here, a woman anoints him with expensive perfume, preparing him for his death and burial.

READ

John 12:1-8

REFLECT

As a humanitarian aid worker, my day starts by reading bad news. I remember one particularly hard season when I had hit a wall.

I had returned to the U.S. several months earlier and started work with World Relief after a decade of living abroad in some challenging locations. Global conflict was fresh on my mind and my hyper empathy was on overdrive. The news wasn't about far removed people — I had experiences and friends in these places.

It was 2019, and Yemen was experiencing one of the world's biggest famines. Just months prior, I had sat at a Yemeni house church in Ethiopia listening to a sermon, a fraction of which I understood. Yet God's word translated clearly without words through the actions and quiet smiles of the people in the room.



See page 30 for this week's Family Guide.

Meanwhile in Syria, the Islamic State's hold was still strong. I remembered meeting the many listless families who were waiting for an unknown future in a Greek refugee camp.

In Australia, wildfires surged out of control. I thought of a beloved and newly retired colleague who had just relocated to Kangaroo Island where the fires hit hard. He had just built a house to start life anew after the painful decision to move his wife to an Alzheimer's care facility.

How could I possibly take on these overwhelming traumas? Perhaps you've asked yourself a similar question... The good news is that Jesus never asked us to.

When Jesus traveled to Bethany, he opted to spend the last week of his pre-resurrection life in a place he must have loved dearly — a place surrounded by friends and where he could find rest and restore his soul.

The four Gospels each give differing details of the event mentioned in this week's scripture, but we do know that a woman poured costly perfume on Jesus' body while he was eating, and another guest scolded her. In all tellings, Jesus immediately comes to her defense, saying, *"She did what she could when she could* — she pre-anointed my body for burial" (Mark 14:8 MSG).

We live in a world where bad news only seems to be intensifying. Yet God does not call us to worry and take on every burden outside of our control. This leads only to burnout and self-reliance.

The woman in Bethany understood what it meant to be reactive in the present, only taking on the burden that was within her control. She could anoint Jesus with expensive perfume one week before his burial, perhaps without even knowing why she was called to do it.

As we reflect on the people and places in Jesus' life up to the time of his crucifixion, let's remind ourselves that despite the chaos that is present or impending, Jesus opted to camp out in a place of rest. Meanwhile, the woman opted to be led by trust to do the thing she could do in her space and place in history. *May our homes be filled with that same fragrance of simple obedience to respond to what is right in front of us.*

PRAY

Jesus, embalm our hearts, minds and spirits with the sweet fragrance that comes only from being actively present in you. Open our eyes to the needs directly in front of us, the simple needs that we often overlook for those we perceive to be more urgent.

Give us discernment to know when we are carrying too much and to let go of burdens we were never meant to bear. You have told us that your yoke is light. We trust in you, and we hand our burdens over to you.

“A toi soit toute la gloire pour toujours” — to you we give all glory forever and ever, amen.



Amanda Patterson is World Relief's Senior Program Officer for the Humanitarian and Disaster Response Unit. She has served in the non-profit sector in France, Niger, South Sudan, Greece and Ethiopia. She is passionate about filling cultural gaps between people, and growing with and from cultural differences. She currently lives in New York.

TUESDAY | DAY 6

Spiritual Practice

Today and throughout the week, we invite you to join in this spiritual practice shared by Amanda.

Light a scented candle, buy a bouquet of flowers or burn incense. Breathe in the sweet fragrance. Sit still for 5 minutes in meditation with God, and ask him to reveal areas of your life where you are opting to take on chaos, unrest and burdens you were never meant to handle. Ask him to help you reside in his peace, let go of fears and trust in him despite the unknowns.

Then consider: in light of the many needs in this world, what can you do in the season where he has placed you that would bring honor to him?

WEDNESDAY | DAY 7

Jesus is Here

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he chose to be present with the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40). At World Relief, we witness how Jesus is still reaching people around the world today. As you read this story, consider how God used the church and people like you to bring his hope and healing to someone in their greatest moments of need.

“I went to school. I speak good English. So, why not involve me?” asked Wisdom.

He had lost his sight at the age of five after suffering from a skin disease that affected his eyes. As he grew into adulthood, he would discover that the loss of his sight meant another kind of loss, as well — due to perceptions of blindness in his

community in Malawi, he was often excluded from social roles and responsibilities.

Yet, he longed to be involved in his community and to serve. “Despite my disability,” said Wisdom, “I always tell people in my community not to ignore me in other things they feel I can get involved in.”

That’s why, when World Relief offered a training on disability inclusion through a network of churches in Wisdom’s community, he decided to attend with others from his congregation. There, he learned of the need for Sunday school teachers and boldly volunteered himself.

The leaders of Wisdom’s church organized a practice session to see what he was really capable of. He used a small book to teach two children a lesson on the topic of “guiding children to the Savior.” His skills at explaining these deep truths amazed everyone.

“God creates ways for me to do things that people don’t expect me to do because I am blind,” explained Wisdom. “But I thank God because He blessed me with this disability I have. I strongly believe that this disability is not a curse.”

Through this experience, others in Wisdom’s church have had their eyes opened to both the needs and the unique gifts of those with disabilities in their community. As one church leader shared, “We have whole-heartedly embraced [Jesus’] call to care for people with disabilities in our communities.”

As Christians, we believe we are all fearfully and wonderfully made. Yet, in communities across the globe, people with disabilities are often relegated to the periphery. But the Lord sees them. People on the margins of society flocked to Jesus because

they felt valued and loved. Jesus spent time serving and fellowshiping with people with disabilities, and he calls us to do the same.

Do you know someone who feels unseen or undervalued? How can you care for and value those who may be overlooked?



Spend some time praying for persons with disabilities and for churches around the world to find ways to include people with all kinds of gifts and abilities as equal bearers of God’s image.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

THURSDAY | DAY 8

Listening for God’s Voice

Reread this week’s scripture and spend 10-15 minutes quietly in prayer. Then, journal about anything God is drawing your attention to this week. What has moved your heart, caused you discomfort or inspired questions? This is your time to listen for God’s voice and process any ways he might be speaking to you.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

FRIDAY | DAY 9

Faith in Action

As you reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross and his care for the marginalized, we invite you to take an action on behalf of others.

Consider whether anyone close to you might feel unseen or overlooked. Then, brainstorm ways you can help them feel cared for and celebrated. Some ideas might include writing them an encouraging note, bringing them a meal, inviting them to coffee or checking in on them over the phone. Act on one of your ideas.

SATURDAY | DAY 10

Prayer + Rest

This weekend, we invite you to rest in complete dependence on God. This prayer is written by Damon Schroeder.

*Jesus, thank you for your invitation for weary souls like ours to **come to you** to find rest. We draw near to listen and learn the way of gentleness and humility from you. We respond to your call to take up your yoke as we lay down our own. Free us from the burdens we shoulder that are not ours to carry. Help us to journey with you in the joy of your rest. May this be so, amen!*



Damon Schroeder is the U.S. National Mobilization Director for World Relief, supporting efforts to equip local churches to follow Jesus in “welcoming the stranger.” Damon grew up as a missionary kid in Cyprus, and has served in many diverse communities. He and his wife Crystal live in West Chicago, Illinois, and have four adult children.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you'll take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
2. Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the weight of the world's challenges? If so, what do you do in response to the feeling?
3. What has “simple obedience” to the leading of Jesus looked like in your life?
4. What has made it difficult to respond in obedience to your callings?
5. Is there anyone in your community who you think is overlooked or undervalued? What would it look like to treat them as an image bearer of God?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus Was Anointed in Bethany

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

While in the town called Bethany, Jesus was at a dinner party with his friends and disciples. Suddenly, something rather strange happened. It left everyone confused and wondering how Jesus would react. To make things even stranger, Jesus did not react the way his friends thought he would!

This is one of the reasons why Jesus' teaching was so powerful. Many times, it left people surprised and shocked because he didn't always go along with what was popular. Because of this, Jesus wants us to be present with him. He wants us to focus our attention on him and not on what is expected so we don't miss out on an important lesson.

READ TOGETHER

Read John 12:1-8 together and pay special attention to Jesus' reaction. Then discuss:

1. What was the surprising thing that happened? How did Jesus react to Mary?
2. While Judas asked a good question, why didn't Jesus agree with him?
3. Do you know what it means to be present? Is it easy or hard for you to stay focused on what is right in front of you?

*If time allows throughout the week, read Wednesday's **Jesus is Here** story together.*

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, you continue to surprise us and teach us how to follow you. This week, can you show us how to slow down and be present to hear from you? Give us a heart like Mary's, willing to see you and do selfless things in your honor. Thank you for always wanting us to share your love for the world with those around us. Amen.

DO TOGETHER

Random acts of kindness are known to surprise and baffle people just the way Mary's did. They are unexpected, thoughtful and selfless.

Look back at the heart you drew last week. Who in your life could use a random act of kindness? It could be something as simple as holding the door open for your parents or a stranger without being asked or something big like raising money to help someone in need. This week, pray to God and ask what you can do to show kindness to someone in your life. Then do it!



MONDAY | DAY 11

Scripture Reflection + Prayer

This week, Matthew Soerens guides us in the footsteps of Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. The people celebrate his coming, but do they really understand the kingdom he is bringing to earth?

READ

Matthew 21:1-11

REFLECT

I parked my car at the airport and opened my trunk, only to realize I'd left my suitcase on my kitchen table, 45 minutes away. There was no time to return home, the remaining flights that day were booked and I was wearing far too casual clothing for the meeting I was set to attend in Washington, D.C. — with the president of the United States.

Panicked, I called a friend in Washington. She had a friend whose husband was about my size and would lend me a suit. Those friends were out of town, but some construction workers were working in their house. I was told to go to their house, let myself in and, if anyone asked, explain that I had permission to rummage through this friend-of-a-friend's closet.

It all worked out, and I met the president the next day in a borrowed suit. But, as I entered this home-under-construction, I was very nervous that someone would be skeptical of my story.



See page 40 for this week's Family Guide.

I imagine that's how Jesus' disciples felt when he instructed them to untie a particular donkey and colt — presumably someone's valuable property — with the assurance that “the Lord needs them” would satisfy all inquiries. They might have wondered if they'd be arrested for grand theft donkey. Or maybe they had spent enough time with Jesus to know that they could trust him.

By the end of this passage, as Jesus enters Jerusalem, many are convinced he is a king. *But do they really recognize the sort of king he is?*

The kind of king who enters gently on a donkey, yet a few verses later was filled with righteous anger over those who had turned a “house of prayer for all nations” into a den of robbers (Matthew 21:12-14, Mark 11:17)?

The kind who, days later, would reveal himself as a king whom they had either served or neglected in how they responded to “the least of these” who were hungry, sick or a stranger (Matthew 25:31-40)?

Their challenge, and ours, is to take Jesus at his word, even when he asks us to do something unexpected.

PRAY

Jesus, you entered Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey. You asked your disciples to trust you as you assigned them tasks that might have felt risky.

You revealed yourself as a king who enters in humility, who cares for those who are vulnerable and is frustrated by those who seek to limit the wide scope of God's love for people of all nations.

Lord, help us to not dismiss your voice in our own lives when you call us to something risky, difficult or unconventional.

Help us to listen, to trust and to obey. Amen.



Matthew Soerens is the Vice President of Advocacy and Policy at World Relief. He started as an intern with World Relief Nicaragua in 2005, joined our Immigration Legal Services team in Chicagoland in 2006 and now leads public policy and public relations efforts. Matt has co-authored books on the issues of immigration and the global church and currently resides in Illinois.

TUESDAY | DAY 12

Spiritual Practice

Today and throughout the week, we invite you to join in this spiritual practice shared by Matthew.

As we seek to prayerfully discern where Jesus might be calling us to respond, it's easy to get distracted and dismiss a nudge from God's word that might feel too difficult or uncomfortable to pursue.

This week, find a place apart from your usual routine. Maybe try a couple of places — try walking, biking or being still. Leave your phone behind if you can. Close your eyes or observe your surroundings. Then, listen, talk to God and meditate on what he might be saying.

WEDNESDAY | DAY 13

Jesus is Here

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he chose to be present with the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40). At World Relief, we witness how Jesus is still reaching people around the world today. As you read this story, consider how God used the church and people like you to bring his hope and healing to someone in their greatest moments of need.

In March 2022, a convoy entered the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv — but it wasn't the kind you might expect in the middle of a war zone.

In a coordinated effort, humanitarian responders from Romania met with sixteen trucks organized by Ukrainian churches to transfer food, blankets and other supplies from across the border. The fully loaded trucks then returned to Kyiv, where churches distributed the essential items and provided care and comfort for those newly caught in the middle of war.

Meanwhile, local churches and World Relief partners set-up shelters to house those who were able to escape Ukraine — people like Natalia*.

Natalia, a 26 year old architecture student, remembers waking up to explosions. Shortly after the bombing began, she received a call from her Uncle Marco* who told her to pack her things and be ready to leave.

The ticket lines for buses and trains were impossibly long, so Natalia and Marco carpooled with a local pastor and drove from Kyiv to Uzhhorod. The trip took 40 hours instead of the usual 14, but finally, they crossed the border into Slovakia. There, they found shelter in a camp set up by World Relief and our partners.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, we have been able to “enter into” the lives of Ukrainians through partner agencies and churches in the region, as well as through resettlement efforts in the U.S.

Despite the challenges and dangers, we have remained committed to being present for people impacted by crises and conflicts around the world, even going so far as to establish a permanent presence in Ukraine in 2023.

But this commitment to helping people in their greatest moments of need doesn’t come from our own strength. We are able to be present in seemingly impossible situations only because Jesus is present there, too.

Jesus’ life was marked by a pattern of “entering into” unexpected and impossible places. He continually engaged in the lives of the brokenhearted — people like the widow whose only son had died (Luke 7:11-16) and Mary and Martha when they mourned the death of their brother Lazarus (John 11:17-34).

Where might God be calling you to “enter into” the lives of others in both big and small ways?

**Pseudonyms have been used to protect the safety of individuals mentioned.*



Spend some time praying for peace and for the churches and agencies responding to global conflicts.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

THURSDAY | DAY 14

Listening for God’s Voice

Reread this week’s scripture and spend 10-15 minutes quietly in prayer. Then, journal about anything God is drawing your attention to this week. What has moved your heart, caused you discomfort or inspired questions? This is your time to listen for God’s voice and process any ways he might be speaking to you.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

FRIDAY | DAY 15

Faith in Action

As you reflect on Jesus’ journey to the cross and his care for the marginalized, we invite you to take an action on behalf of others.

As Christ-follower who are called to seek justice for refugees, immigrants and others experiencing vulnerability, one of the best ways we can steward the influence that God has entrusted to us is by reaching out to our congressional representatives regarding public policies that impact our neighbors (locally and around the world) who are experiencing vulnerability.

But making a phone call can be intimidating! This week, step out of your comfort zone. Identify a public policy issue impacting those in vulnerable situations, look up the office telephone number of an elected official with the authority to make change and leave a message sharing your concern.

For help finding telephone numbers for your officials, visit [usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)

SATURDAY | DAY 16

Prayer + Rest

This weekend, we invite you to rest in complete dependence on God. This prayer is written by Pascal Bimenyimana.

Heavenly Father, we, your children, pray to understand you fully so that we might continue enjoying your favor. As you promised King David, those who live in the shelter of the most high will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Dear Lord, as you did for Moses, help us trust in the assurance that you will personally be with us and give us rest. Dear Father, there is no doubt that everything will be well for us.

Dear Lord, you warned us that it is useless for us to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously striving for food to eat. For you, God, give rest to your loved ones and let them be refreshed in green pastures.

You called us, Lord, to come to you — all of us who are weary and carry the heavy burdens of this world, for you will give us rest. Today, we return to you, O Lord, resting in you for our salvation. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.



Pascal Bimenyimana is the Country Director at World Relief Haiti. A crop production specialist by training, he has served a number of international agencies, governments and local organizations and churches in countries around the world. He and his wife are blessed with four adult children.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you'll take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
2. On Monday, we prayed that we wouldn't dismiss God's voice and calling in our lives. How do you discern what God is calling you to do? What makes discernment difficult and what helps?
3. Have you ever felt God calling you to do something others would have a hard time understanding (or that you had a hard time understanding)? What happened?
4. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was praised as a king. Based on your understanding of Jesus and the Bible, how would you describe God's kingdom?
5. Jesus had a habit of showing up in some unexpected places. Have you ever encountered Jesus in an unexpected way? What happened?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus Was in Jerusalem

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

Did you know that in Matthew 18:3, Jesus said none of us could enter his kingdom unless we become like children? What do you think that means?

For adults, it can be easy to forget what it's like to have an unbreakable faith in God like when we were young. Jesus is reminding us to have faith like children in all seasons of our lives. Many times, kids have a unique perspective on the scriptures that even adults need to hear.

READ TOGETHER

Read Matthew 21:1–11 together. Parents, before explaining, ask your kids for their perspective on the passage first. Discuss:

1. What is memorable about this story?
2. How would you respond if Jesus sent you to find a random donkey?
3. What sort of king do you think Jesus is?
4. Was there a time when we asked you to do something that made no sense at the time but later it did?

*If time allows throughout the week, read Wednesday's **Jesus is Here** story together.*

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, you are a king like no other. When most kings arrive in fancy cars and with lots of riches, you arrive on a donkey to keep showing us that you are different. Give us the courage to be different, as you are. Amen.

DO TOGETHER

God gave us all amazing imaginations. Today we are going to practice what it would have been like to be there when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Find a comfy spot to sit or lay down. Close your eyes and focus on my words while I describe the scene to you:

You are in the streets of Jerusalem, and all of a sudden, you hear a commotion. You look behind you, and down the road you see the most curious thing. A man on a donkey is entering the city. The people around you begin to whisper in excitement, "Who is this man?" The whispers get louder and turn to shouts, "Hosanna!"

Could this be the king that so many people have been talking about? Your heart lights up as you realize, yes, it has to be him! Hundreds of people begin to cover the man's path with palms and tree branches as well as their own cloaks. They are also fanning him with the palms as he gets closer. What do you do? Do you look for a spare tree branch or lay your own cloak on the ground? As the man passes you by, you wave in complete awe that God's promise has been fulfilled — a king, a savior has come!



MONDAY | DAY 17

Scripture Reflection + Prayer

This week, Todun Afolabi guides us in the footsteps of Jesus, finding him seated at the table with his disciples. In word and deed, Jesus teaches how his followers are to lead and to serve.

READ

Luke 22:14-30

REFLECT

I will always remember the call I received one afternoon in 2011. The pastor of the new church my husband and I were attending called us and asked if we were home. We answered affirmatively, and he said he would see us soon.

A few minutes later, I looked out of the window of my apartment and saw a truck loaded with furniture driving in. “Another person moving in,” I thought to myself — until I saw the truck pull up in front of our building.

I immediately recognized the men from church, including the pastor! All the emotions I felt at the same time cannot truly be expressed in words. I called my husband and we immediately joined the men to bring in the furniture.

Just months earlier, we had arrived in the U.S. from Nigeria as newlywed graduate students. As a couple, we couldn’t stay on



See page 50 for this week’s Family Guide.

campus, so we found a small apartment. We didn’t have enough money for furniture and were just glad to have a roof over our heads. *At that moment, when the men from church went over and above to set up our little apartment, I truly felt at home.*

I am constantly thrilled at the kingdom culture, which is always so different from the culture of the world. For instance, the world tells you to grow up and be independent... but in the Kingdom of God, the more you grow, the more dependent you become — you grow into dependence on God.

The passage we read today has the same lesson for us. In his final hours, Jesus is surrounded by his friends and teaching how different the culture of his kingdom is from the culture of the world (verse 29). In the world, those who lead see themselves as benefactors and lord their authority over others, but Jesus reminds us that we are called to be different (verse 25-26).

In answering the question about who should be considered the greatest, Jesus juxtaposes the one who sits at the table and the one who serves — the greatest being the one who serves. Even as he teaches, we see Jesus himself hosting and serving his disciples the bread and wine.

In God’s kingdom, those who lead serve others. That’s the kingdom culture Jesus demonstrated for us in the scriptures.

PRAY

Turn your heart to Psalm 119:33-40 (AMPCE) and pray the verses as you respond to God’s call to true service.

“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I will [steadfastly] observe it to the end. Give me understanding [a teachable heart and the ability to learn], that I may keep Your law; and observe it with all my heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I

delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain and envy.

“Turn my eyes away from vanity [all those worldly, meaningless things that distract — let Your priorities be mine], and restore me [with renewed energy] in Your ways. Establish Your word and confirm Your promise to Your servant, as that which produces [awe-inspired] reverence for You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your ordinances are good. I long for Your precepts; renew me through Your righteousness.” Amen.



Todun Afolabi is the U.S. Volunteer Engagement Program Manager at World Relief, supporting efforts across our U.S. offices. She first joined World Relief in 2018 as the Church and Volunteer Engagement Coordinator in Chicagoland. With a background in law, she is passionate about humanitarian efforts and engaging communities in their stories of change.

TUESDAY | DAY 18

Spiritual Practice

Today and throughout the week, we invite you to join in this spiritual practice shared by Todun.

In Matthew 25:35, Jesus says, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in...”

This week, spend time meditating on this verse and praying for those in need. Consider using your times of preparing and eating meals as times of prayer. Pray as you unpack groceries, cook or drive to a restaurant or after the meal as you drive home,

wash dishes, etc. Allow these moments to become reminders to pray that the physical and spiritual needs of others will also be met, even asking God how you can be a part of his plan to care for those in need.

WEDNESDAY | DAY 19

Jesus is Here

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, he chose to be present with the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40). At World Relief, we witness how Jesus is still reaching people around the world today. As you read this story, consider how God used the church and people like you to bring his hope and healing to someone in their greatest moments of need.

For Becky, it all began with volunteering to deliver Christmas gifts for an organization in San Diego. While out on deliveries, an Afghan family invited her in for tea. She noticed that the apartment they had recently moved into was almost bare. Yet, the family graciously extended hospitality to her.

“We sat on the floor and just talked with them,” Becky remembers. With daughters close in age, the two families exchanged phone numbers.

Becky’s heart was moved to stay connected with this family, and she soon learned about World Relief’s Good Neighbor Team (GNT) program. Through GNTs, groups of volunteers from local churches partner with World Relief to welcome and walk alongside a newly arrived refugee family. Following the calling she felt to help, Becky decided to start a GNT with her church small group to assist this Afghan family.

She will be the first to tell you it wasn’t always an easy journey, especially when navigating language barriers. “The amount of

emotional energy it takes is a big piece,” she says. But, motivated to reflect the welcoming heart of Christ and valuing the opportunity for her children to experience new cultures, she continued to lean in.

Slowly, the bond between the families strengthened, especially through food and fellowship. From sharing cups of tea to favorite family dishes, Becky noticed that her children began craving the food they ate with their new Afghan friends! “My kids have really grown to love them,” Becky shared.

Although Becky and her team were focused on helping the family get connected with the wider community, they noticed that their team started getting more connected, too. Their new Afghan friends began introducing them to others living in their apartment complex. What started as a connection between one family and one GNT has become a network of friends and connections that is enriching everyone’s lives.

Becky and her family have come to love and value this reciprocal hospitality — sharing life, learning from and being in community with their immigrant neighbors. “They bless so many people by just being who they are. Just by being beautiful people,” says Becky.

Now, she often finds herself thinking about Jesus’ time on earth. “His work was to find the brokenhearted. The heart of what Jesus wants us to do in the world is to be able to show people, ‘You’re loved. You’re welcome here.’ And to watch what happens when people can move in that confidence of just knowing how loved they are.”

How might you more freely give and receive hospitality? How can you reflect the love of Jesus to those who may feel unwelcome or unseen in your community?



Spend some time praying for refugees rebuilding their lives in the U.S. and for churches to find meaningful and mutually transformative ways to love and live alongside their immigrant neighbors.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

THURSDAY | DAY 20

Listening for God’s Voice

Reread this week’s scripture and spend 10-15 minutes quietly in prayer. Then, journal about anything God is drawing your attention to this week. What has moved your heart, caused you discomfort or inspired questions? This is your time to listen for God’s voice and process any ways he might be speaking to you.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

FRIDAY | DAY 21

Faith in Action

As you reflect on Jesus’ journey to the cross and his care for the marginalized, we invite you to take an action on behalf of others.

Think of someone you can serve through hospitality. Maybe the person you always greet at church but have never spent time with during the week. Perhaps the friend you haven’t connected with in a while or the neighbor you have always wanted to learn more about. Maybe even your pastor who is so busy serving oth-

ers that they are rarely served themselves. Then, be bold and extend an invitation!

Remember, hospitality doesn't have to include a fancy meal or a spotless house. Hospitality is simply openness to and care for others. Step out of your comfort zone and show someone Christ-like welcome.

SATURDAY | DAY 22

Prayer + Rest

This weekend, we invite you to rest in complete dependence on God. This prayer is written by Raymond Trembath and is inspired by Matthew 11:28 and John 15:4.

Father, too often we believe our standing in the world and our acceptance by you is based solely on our productivity — and so we work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Forgive us for working harder and not trusting deeper when we're weary and burdened with impossible demands. Forgive us when we forget that only in you, and not in our performance, do we find the rest that our souls crave. Because you were lifted up on a cross, a tree that grew from a vine, you now allow us, the branches, to bear much fruit as we remain in you!



Raymond Trembath is part of the Path, World Relief's faithful community of monthly donors. In addition to generously supporting World Relief for over 30 years, he has served churches and communities in New England and California's Bay Area in various pastoral roles. He and his wife have two sons.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you'll take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
2. Which feels more attractive to you — being a servant or a leader? Why?
3. Throughout Jesus' life, he challenged cultural norms and expectations. What other examples can you think of?
4. What do you find challenging or uncomfortable about serving others?
5. Have you ever had an experience while serving others that changed how you thought or felt about something? What happened?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus Was at the Table

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

This week, we are going to hear about Jesus' last meal, also known as the last supper. It was the last time Jesus was going to be together with his friends and followers before he was hung on the cross.

Many times when we are feeling worried or scared, we can hide or want to be left alone. Even though Jesus knew that one of his disciples was about to deceive him and cause him to be crucified, he still chose to surround himself with the people he loved the most. Wow! Can you even imagine that?

Through this story, we see the importance of community, having close relationships with trusted people who love and care for us. Jesus' example shows us that even though he had the ultimate connection to God in heaven, he still needed to be around his support system on earth.

READ TOGETHER

Read Luke 22:14-34 together. Then discuss:

1. When the disciples began to argue over who was the greatest, how did Jesus respond?
2. What does it mean to be the "one who rules like the one who serves"?

3. Who in your life is an example of someone who serves you well?

*If time allows throughout the week, read Wednesday's **Jesus is Here** story together.*

PRAY TOGETHER

Thank you Jesus, for surrounding me with people who love and care about me like my family, friends and teachers. It helps to know that even you needed support when things got hard and you felt scared. Help me this week to remember to trust them and you when I need it most. Amen.

DO TOGETHER

Host a community dinner! Invite 2-4 of your close friends, family or community members to your home to eat together. Think of who you would like to share a meal with and invite them over to celebrate how important they are to you and your family. To make it extra special, find out their favorite dish ahead of time and surprise them with it. Make sure to serve them and let them know how thankful you are for their support in your life. Don't forget to ask how you can be praying for them this Lent season.



MONDAY | DAY 23

Scripture Reflection + Prayer

This week, Robyn Brown guides us in the footsteps of Jesus as he stands trial before the governing officials. He faces accusations and unjust treatment as his very life rests in the hands of others.

READ

Mark 14:43-65; 15:1-20

REFLECT

Imagine you are on trial for violating a law in another country. You do not understand the court system or language. A judge is speaking to you, supposedly explaining your rights, but you struggle to understand. They mention legal concepts that have no corollary in your country of origin. Meanwhile, you're preoccupied by the fear that the judge will order you to leave the life you have built and your support network of family and friends.

Hundreds of thousands of individuals in immigration court proceedings face this reality each year in the U.S. They are dependent on an interpreter, and if they are in the minority of individuals who have obtained legal counsel, they also rely on their advocate.

If you can imagine yourself in their shoes, you can also imagine how critical it would be to have an experienced advocate who



See page 60 for this week's Family Guide.

could prepare you for the hearing. Someone who could explain what to expect in court, present evidence and speak confidently on your behalf.

While Jesus' trials were quite different from our modern immigration court system, he nevertheless experienced what it was like to be taken somewhere he did not want to go (Mark 14:35-36), to be confronted with false witnesses, to lack an advocate and to have a judge's decision dramatically change his life.

In my work in immigration law, I have encountered countless stories of individuals and families who have faced unjust actions at the hands of governments or actors who government officials were unable or unwilling to control.

When I consider how Jesus conducted himself during his arrest, before the high priest and before Pilate, I am motivated to continue seeking his wisdom in responding to injustice. At times he remained silent, and at times he boldly spoke the truth — but at all times he entrusted himself to the will of the Father.

How deeply reassuring it is to know that Jesus identifies with those facing injustice, and that we can rely on him as our advocate (1 John 2:1). How soul sustaining it is to trust that we can approach the throne of grace with confidence and find help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

PRAY

O Loving Father, thank you for providing Jesus as an advocate for your children when we repeatedly fall short of your glory. Thank you for providing the Holy Spirit as an advocate to guide, counsel and help us as we seek to live out your justice in an unjust world.

We know that without Jesus's sinless life and sacrificial death we could never come to you, but through his victorious resurrection we

have confidence that you are redeeming us from our brokenness. May we be attentive to the Spirit's leading as we learn to be more like Jesus, pursuing justice in our broken world.



Robyn Brown is the Director of Immigration Programs at World Relief. She formerly worked for the U.S. immigration court system. She lives in Akron, Ohio, and delights in cultivating meaningful conversations, facilitating community-building and looking for the true, good and beautiful.

TUESDAY | DAY 24

Spiritual Practice

Today and throughout the week, we invite you to join in this spiritual practice shared by Robyn.

Spend some time meditating on how you might “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” (Proverbs 31:8-9). Consider: What vulnerable populations has God laid on your heart? What experience or skill might you use in your own community to bring about justice? Is there a training or resource you could pursue to become a more effective advocate?

Make a list of your ideas and pray over that list throughout the week, asking God to guide you toward a next step.

WEDNESDAY | DAY 25

Jesus is Here

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he chose to be present with the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40). At World Relief, we witness how Jesus is still reaching people around the world today. As you read this story, consider how God used the church and people like you to bring his hope and healing to someone in their greatest moments of need.

“When I find myself in these hard times,” Yousif* explained, “I think about the story of Joseph and Jacob in which they are hated by their brothers but loved by their father... We see that God works in [their] lives and they become a powerful example of how a godly person overcomes adversities.”

Yousif certainly knows what it means to find security in God's love while being hated by others. As an Afghan Christian and a former employee of the Afghan government, he and his young family were forced to flee following the Taliban's return to power in 2021.

Their journey of escape is nothing short of miraculous. After hiding in their home for two days, they made the difficult calculation that, even if they got caught while on the run, their chance of survival was higher than staying in place.

The roads to the airport were already controlled by the Taliban, so the family traveled by bus to Pakistan, where they caught a flight to Brazil — one of few countries offering humanitarian visas to Afghans at the time.

They had planned to stay in Brazil, but soon found that, as immigrants, they felt unsafe there too. What came next was a series of what Yousif describes as “escapes” from country to country on their way to seeking asylum at the U.S. border.

For two months, Yousif traveled with his wife and their infant child by foot, boat and bus. They faced many dangers along the way. “You’re not sure about anything,” he explained, “The only thing you can do is just trust God.” And God did help them.

While traveling in the jungles of Panama, Yousif’s son started crying. He and his wife stopped to give him some milk, thinking they could easily follow the path of the group they were traveling with. But just five minutes later, they had lost sight of the others.

Alone, they tried to find their way back through dense vegetation, but as the day went on, they couldn’t seem to catch up. So they began to pray, asking God to rescue them. Towards nightfall, they saw glimmers of light in the jungle — fires burning where the group had stopped to camp!

“I saw the presence of God in every single step of my journey — all the way. I felt the presence of God when I was escaping from Afghanistan. God protected me... The same thing in the Panama jungle... We just prayed and God saved us.”

Finally, Yousif’s family made it to the U.S. border, where they are now applying for asylum. But their future is still uncertain. “When I got to the United States, I thought that it’s over,” he said. “We got here and we’re blessed... but when we were faced with this complicated process of immigration... sometimes, even now, I just want to give up.”

Despite Yousif’s excellent English and education, the process of applying for asylum has felt overwhelming. But once again, he found he wasn’t without help. He connected with World Relief and our Immigration Legal Services team in Southern California. What’s more, the family found a new church home where, for the first time in their lives, they can freely worship the God who has rescued them over and over again.

At the time of writing, Yousif’s case has yet to be decided, but he trusts that God has not left him without a defender and an advocate. That God was with his family in Afghanistan and he remains with them now.

Has God ever given you the opportunity to advocate on behalf of someone else? Where might he be calling you to use your voice to speak up for others?

**Pseudonyms have been used to protect the safety of individuals mentioned.*



Spend some time praying for people around the world who are facing persecution and for the churches and communities that are welcoming them.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

THURSDAY | DAY 26

Listening for God’s Voice

Reread this week’s scripture and spend 10-15 minutes quietly in prayer. Then, journal about anything God is drawing your attention to this week. What has moved your heart, caused you discomfort or inspired questions? This is your time to listen for God’s voice and process any ways he might be speaking to you.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

FRIDAY | DAY 27

Faith in Action

As you reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross and his care for the marginalized, we invite you to take an action on behalf of others.

Has God laid a burden on your heart for individuals navigating the U.S. immigration system? Explore the resources and opportunities to take action from our partners at the Evangelical Immigration Table at evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/take-action

Choose one of their resources or advocacy opportunities to engage with this week.

SATURDAY | DAY 28

Prayer + Rest

This weekend, we invite you to rest in complete dependence on God. This prayer is written by Sivan Oun.

Heavenly Father, we are here praying right now because pressures, weariness and other burdens of life have piled up on our shoulders. May the Holy Spirit help us learn your words, Lord Jesus.

So we pray Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Please help us to find rest for our souls and renew us every day by the power of your words, in Jesus' name! Amen.



Sivan Oun is the Church Empowerment Program Support Advisor at World Relief Cambodia. She started with World Relief in 1998 with the Child Survival Program.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you'll take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
2. Scripture tells us that Jesus advocates for us (1 John 2:1). What does that mean to you?
3. Have you ever advocated on behalf of someone else? What happened?
4. We are all guilty of sin, but because of Jesus' sacrifice, our "records" are wiped clean. How can you embrace that truth more fully in your life?
5. Have you ever had to trust that God would deliver you from a circumstance or situation? What happened?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus Was on Trial

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

Today we are going to read about when Jesus was on trial. Judas had betrayed Jesus and turned him in to be judged by the chief priests. If Jesus was found guilty, he would be severely punished. The leader at the time was Pontious Pilate and only he had the power to declare Jesus guilty.

When Pilate asked the crowd what Jesus' punishment should be, they all began to yell, "Crucify him!" — or hang him on a cross. Today, this sounds very extreme, but back then, that was how criminals were punished for horrible crimes. But Jesus' only crime was speaking the truth.

No one out of the crowd spoke up to defend Jesus. In fact, another one of Jesus' followers did something that he never thought possible.

READ TOGETHER

Read Mark 14:43-65; 15:1-20 together. Then discuss:

1. What did Peter say when someone recognized him as one of Jesus' followers?
2. Did you ever get in trouble for something you didn't do? How did that make you feel?

3. What could have been different if someone had spoken up to defend Jesus?
4. Because Jesus was God, he could have escaped the punishment of the cross, but he chose not to. Why do you think he did that?

*If time allows throughout the week, read Wednesday's **Jesus is Here** story together.*

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, you experienced so much trouble while you were obeying God and trying to bring us closer to him. Help us this week to remember that your suffering began long before you were on the cross. Your sacrifice is greater than we can imagine. Amen.

DO TOGETHER

Do you know what it means to be an advocate? It means to be a person who speaks up in support of someone or something — usually someone who is going unheard. Even though Jesus didn't have anyone to advocate for him, he advocates for us today and saves us from our sin. And just like Jesus advocates for us, we can help advocate for other people who need help.

Draw or write about a time when you wished you had helped someone in need. What happened? How did you react and how would you do it differently now?

This week, try to be an advocate and do something small or big to speak up for someone. It's important that we find our strength and courage in Jesus. For example, if someone is being teased, pray to God in that moment and ask if you should step in and speak up for them. Then, help that person feel better afterwards by seeing what they need.



MONDAY | DAY 29

Scripture Reflection + Prayer

This week, Yamikani Mawaya Binali guides us in the footsteps of Jesus to the cross. Jesus sets the ultimate example of sacrificial love, giving his life to save all of us.

READ

Isaiah 61:1-3, Matthew 27:22-50

REFLECT

In Lilongwe, Malawi, the city where I live, it is common to see someone begging in the streets. Often, the most one does is check for pocket change to give away.

Sometimes discussions come up about whether there is a “better way” such people could be helped. Immediately after, a question erupts, “What impact would this have? The poor will always be with us!”

Unfortunately, I have seen this mindset result in ignoring the genuine needs of people around us. We are hesitant to move out of our comfort zones. We don’t want to deprive ourselves in order to meet other people’s needs. We fear advocating for the cause of others because we may experience rejection ourselves.

Have you ever felt this way? If so, you’re not alone.



See page 70 for this week’s Family Guide.

In a world filled with suffering, we are called by the Father to show compassion and be of service to people in need (Matthew 25:34-36). *Yet, because of the discomfort that living a life of service to others may bring, many of us are at risk of rejecting our calling.*

Fortunately, we have somewhere to look for help. As followers of Christ and sons and daughters of God, we can be encouraged by the example Jesus gave us in his life and ministry.

The way Christ lived his life was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 61, giving us substantial evidence of his mission and serving as a benchmark for us as believers.

Through this prophecy and the accounts of the four gospels, we see Jesus as God who came in the form of man — healing the sick, raising the dead, showing compassion to those in need and even giving his own life for the atonement of mankind’s sin.

Jesus was so concerned with the suffering of man that he made himself available for a mission to save mankind, the ultimate purpose for which he was sent to earth by the Father.

Driven by this purpose, Jesus went to the cross even though it was excruciating and shameful — even though he himself was without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). His selfless love allowed him to endure to the end for the redemption of mankind, bringing good news to the poor, comforting the brokenhearted and proclaiming freedom for the captives (Isaiah 61:1).

When we are there for others, we demonstrate that same commitment to service, living a sacrificial life and ultimately, loving others as Christ has loved us.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, thank you for the mission that you have given us. Thank you for the example you set for us through the life you lived, but also ultimately through your death on the cross.

Lord, I pray that you will help us practice your love through selflessly serving those in need. Lord, I thank you for the strength and encouragement you will give us each time an opportunity arises to serve you through service to others. In Jesus' name I pray, amen!



***Yamikani Mawaya Binali** is a Human Resources Officer at World Relief Malawi. She is honored to also serve God through the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Malawi. She is married and has three children.*

TUESDAY | DAY 30

Spiritual Practice

Today and throughout the week, we invite you to join in this spiritual practice shared by Yamikani.

Spend some time this week worshipping God through music. Try beginning each of your devotional times for the rest of the week by singing a song of worship. If you are meeting with a group, consider beginning your meeting with a time of worship, as well. Praise Jesus for his sacrificial love and for giving his life for you on the cross.

WEDNESDAY | DAY 31

Jesus is Here

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he chose to be present with the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40). At World Relief, we witness how Jesus is still reaching people around the world today. As you read this story, consider how God used the church and people like you to bring his hope and healing to someone in their greatest moments of need.

1 Corinthians 13:7 tells us that love “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” But there was a time in Denyse’s life where she may have doubted this truth.

Burdened by poverty and the stigma of being an unmarried mother in her community in Rwanda, she began drinking as a means of escape. But escape was elusive.

Soon drinking began claiming all the money she earned as a fish seller. She eventually resorted to prostitution just so her family could survive.

Denyse’s situation seemed desperate and she had little interest in looking to the church for help — but God was already at work in unexpected ways.

When a World Relief volunteer began organizing savings groups in her village, Denyse saw a glimmer of hope. Despite her dire circumstances, she couldn’t shake the feeling that things still could change for herself and her child. So she decided to join in.

Her savings group just so happened to be named Ejoheza, or “A Better Tomorrow.” Sure enough, as she became involved in the group, things started to change.

She made new friends who taught her the word of God, and during meetings, the group shared in a devotional time. Soon, Denyse made the most important decision she would ever make — she gave her life to God.

“Due to prayers and Bible study that we had in every saving session, I became more interested in getting to know God,” says Denyse. “My friends helped me join a church and I later received salvation. My life was changed.”

The group helped her meet more than her spiritual needs, too. She began saving the money she earned selling fish and bought a pig, adding a source of income for her family. She stopped drinking and left prostitution.

Today, Denyse is working hard to save more so she can continue caring well for her son. She plans to build her own house and expand her fish selling business. She has even become an encouragement and advocate for teen moms and those struggling with alcoholism.

Even when she didn’t see him, God was making a way for Denyse to experience lasting transformation. Through the gift of hope and a supportive community, he has changed the course of her life and that of her son.

No matter how far we may feel from him, Jesus never gives up on us. Who might you be able to encourage with this truth this week?



Spend some time praying for single mothers and for churches to find ways to bring hope to people in the midst of desperate circumstances.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

THURSDAY | DAY 32

Listening for God’s Voice

Reread this week’s scripture and spend 10-15 minutes quietly in prayer. Then, journal about anything God is drawing your attention to this week. What has moved your heart, caused you discomfort or inspired questions? This is your time to listen for God’s voice and process any ways he might be speaking to you.

As time allows, revisit this week’s spiritual practice.

FRIDAY | DAY 33

Faith in Action

As you reflect on Jesus’ journey to the cross and his care for the marginalized, we invite you to take an action on behalf of others.

Something we all share is the experience of suffering. We may suffer from grief or loss, illness or pain. Some suffer from hunger, violence or persecutions. Because of Jesus’ experience on the cross, we know that he can relate to intense suffering, and he has promised that one day, “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4).

Even as we long for that perfect healing, we can help bring the mercy of Jesus to others in the world today. Consider what kinds of suffering move you. Is there a group of people or a cause that weighs heavily on your heart?

Spend time learning about what causes this kind of suffering in the world and how you can help those who experience it. Then, take an action this week to care for them.

SATURDAY | DAY 34

Prayer + Rest

This weekend, we invite you to rest in complete dependence on God. This prayer is written by Denise Kersey and is inspired by Psalm 23.

Thank you, Father, for being our Good Shepherd. Because of your boundless love and tender mercies, we have all that we need. You make us lie down in green pastures. You lead us beside quiet waters. You restore our souls. Today, with hearts of gratitude, we humbly accept your invitation to hide under the shadow of your wing, to rely on the sufficiency of your grace and to enter your good and perfect rest. It's in the beautiful name of Jesus that we pray, Amen.



Denise Kersey leads *The Path*, World Relief's monthly giving community. She joined World Relief's staff in 2021 and takes joy in walking alongside people who are committed to faithfully living out Christ's call to love and serve others. Denise is married and has three children.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you'll take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
2. Through the power of Jesus' blood and the work of the Holy Spirit, our lives can be completely transformed. How have you experienced the transformative power of Jesus in your own life?
3. Is there anything about Jesus' example of sacrifice that stood out to you in a new way this week?
4. Practically, what does it mean to you to live sacrificially for others? What obstacles do you experience in serving others?
5. Back on Day 5, we reflected on how, in the midst of overwhelming needs, it's important to discern where we are called to respond. How do you think that truth connects to this week's reflection?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus Was on the Cross

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

Since the beginning of Lent, we have been reading about Jesus and his journey leading up to this moment. Whether this is your first time hearing about Jesus on the cross or you've read it many times before, it can still be hard to imagine.

The way Jesus was treated at his trial, then by the soldiers making fun of him and ultimately the walk up to the crucifixion is heartbreaking to read. You might think that's where the story ends... but it's actually just the beginning.

READ TOGETHER

Read Matthew 27:22-50 together. Then discuss:

1. Why do you think Jesus was quiet and didn't respond much to defend himself?
2. People made fun of Jesus and mocked how he couldn't save himself. How hard do you think it was for him to have self control?
3. What do you think the people who witnessed the crucifixion were thinking about?

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, hearing about the pain you felt makes us so sad. Your sacrificial love is still something many of us are trying to fully understand. We praise and thank you for this incredible act of love. Amen.



 **COLORING PAGE**

DO TOGETHER

Scan the QR code to print and color the image of Jesus and the cross while listening to the Lent playlist. As you color, think about what it would have been like for the people there. Jesus told them this was going to happen and tried to prepare them but it still must have been a shock. What do you think you would have done if you were there?



Jesus Was in the Grave

MONDAY | DAY 35

Scripture Reflection + Prayer

This week, Jack Curham guides us in the footsteps of Jesus to his grave. Grief and despair filled the hearts of Jesus' followers, but would Jesus' journey really end in the tomb?

READ

Matthew 27:57-66

REFLECT

In Matthew 27, we read about Joseph of Arimathea's act of compassion as he tries to find a tomb in which to place the body of Jesus. In that moment, the sealing of the tomb must have seemed like an act of finality — of darkness and of despair. Can you imagine how Jesus' friends and followers must have felt?

Here in Ukraine, following the full-scale military conflict that erupted in 2022, the people have also felt many strong emotions. Similar feelings of despair and hopelessness can be found as they grapple with the crushing and devastating effects of the war. Homes, livelihoods and loved ones have been lost and lives forever changed. The true weight of the grief and trauma the people of Ukraine continue to experience may take many years to grasp.

However, when we read the entire account of Jesus' life, it is precisely in this sealed tomb that we find an unexpected message



See page 79 for this week's Family Guide.

of hope. Just as the resurrection followed the sealing of Jesus' tomb, hope can emerge from the darkest moments when justice, peace and healing seem impossible.

The message of Easter, of Jesus' resurrection and victory over death, is truly a message of hope — of new beginnings and of the triumph of light over darkness.

As Joseph provided a tomb for Jesus' body to await a new beginning, may we also strive to provide spaces of safety, compassion and hope for those who need it most. Knowing that even in the darkest of times, hope can and will shine through.

May the scriptures you read today also inspire you to be compassionate, to hold on to hope and to come together in solidarity, seeking a brighter future for Ukraine, for the world and for all who long for peace in their lives. The tomb was not the end of Jesus' story, nor will suffering and despair be the end of ours.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, as we consider this passage in Matthew this week, open our hearts to understand the message it holds. Let our reflections be guided by your wisdom and grace, and may we find in this scripture a source of inspiration and strength as we continue this journey together through Lent. Help us see hope in the midst of despair, light in the midst of darkness. Amen.



Jack Curham is the Project Coordinator at World Relief Ukraine, one of our newest country offices. With an academic background exploring the role of religion in the international relations of Eastern Europe, he joined the World Relief team responding in Ukraine in 2023. In his free time, he runs an outreach program teaching English at his local church in Ukraine.

TUESDAY | DAY 36

Spiritual Practice

Today and throughout the week, we invite you to join in this spiritual practice shared by Jack.

Spend some time thinking about Joseph of Arimathea's compassionate act of providing the tomb for Jesus. Make a list of three small ways you can bring hope to people you know who are in need.

Throughout the week, pray over your list and take steps to accomplish what you wrote down.

WEDNESDAY | DAY 37

Jesus is Here

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he chose to be present with the last, the least and the lost (Matthew 25:40). At World Relief, we witness how Jesus is still reaching people around the world today. As you read this story, consider how God used the church and people like you to bring his hope and healing to someone in their greatest moments of need.

Sopha knows what hopelessness feels like. At the age of 52, she found a cyst on her breast and received a breast cancer diagnosis.

A middle-class mother of three in Cambodia, she made her living as a farmer. With no other way to finance her treatment, her family made the difficult decision to sell cows and land that were crucial to supporting their livelihoods.

Despite their efforts, the costly cancer treatments only seemed to make Sopha worse. "I lived with so much pain day by day and

my emotions were down — hopeless," she said. "I felt so guilty that my whole family had to care for me and spend a lot of resources on me."

Sopha came from a strong Buddhist family, but her battle with cancer brought her to an all-time low. She needed help, but had nowhere left to turn. She didn't know it yet, but God was already at work...

While Sopha desperately fought for some reason to hope, Hoeun — a local house church leader — was attending a seminar hosted by World Relief Cambodia.

While there, he learned that serving those in need in his community could be a powerful way to share the love of God in word and deed. Hoeun had heard about Sopha's condition and immediately thought of her during the seminar.

Hoeun decided to visit Sopha regularly, offering her care, encouragement and prayer. Through World Relief's local network of churches, the community was able to provide her with much needed food, financial support and medicine. And, Sopha heard about Jesus.

Sopha shared, "Hoeun told me that Christ was a God of love, mercy, forgiveness of sins and healing. When I heard that, my feelings and spirit were relieved. I decided to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord of my life. I got hope and joy even though my illness was not healed yet. I felt warmth from God's hand hugging and comforting me to make my heart peaceful. I continue to pray to ask God to heal me of this terrible disease. I will glorify God, whether I live or die. Amen."

In the darkest moment of Sopha's life, where she felt nearer the grave than ever, Jesus revealed himself to her through the care of local churches. When all seemed lost, he was there with her.

Is there someone in your life who is struggling through a difficult moment? How can you be present with them?



Spend some time praying for those who are looking for hope in the midst of life-threatening illness. Also pray for churches around the world to find ways to care for the physical, mental and spiritual needs of their neighbors.

As time allows, revisit this week's spiritual practice.

THURSDAY | DAY 38

Listening for God's Voice

Reread this week's scripture and spend 10-15 minutes quietly in prayer. Then, journal about anything God is drawing your attention to this week. What has moved your heart, caused you discomfort or inspired questions? This is your time to listen for God's voice and process any ways he might be speaking to you.

As time allows, revisit this week's spiritual practice.

FRIDAY | DAY 39

Faith in Action

As you reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross and his care for the marginalized, we invite you to take an action on behalf of others.

Today is Good Friday — a day on which we remember the death of Jesus on the cross. It can feel tempting to jump ahead to the celebration of Easter without first sitting in the grief of Good

Friday. We want to “fix” what's broken. But have you ever had someone try to fix your pain when what you really wanted was for them to just be with you?

Even Jesus longed for his disciples to simply be present with him when he was overwhelmed with grief in the garden (Matthew 26:36-41).

Today, remember that being present with God and with one another is a form of action. Sit with God today. Share in his grief over the brokenness that our sin brings to his creation — that it brought to his own son, Jesus. Reflect on the things that burden your heart and offer them at the foot of the cross. Let your prayer and your meditation be your act of service.

SATURDAY | DAY 40

Prayer + Rest

As Jesus died on the cross, he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). In this moment between Good Friday and Easter, rest in the confidence that Christ is the only one who can finish the work of our salvation. This prayer is written by Heritage Munyakuri.

Jesus, we belong to you. In rest, help us to focus our minds on your desire and ability to care for us. In rest, help us reflect on your great faithfulness. In rest, help us remember that our greatest need is connection and communion with you. Lord God, help us sleep and rest well each night, trusting you to watch over us. Amen.



Heritage Munyakuri is the Church Mobilizer at World Relief Western New York. Originally from Democratic Republic of the Congo, Heritage was resettled in the U.S. as a refugee in 2007. He also serves his local community as the lead pastor at El Shaddai Free Methodist Church. He is married and has four children.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Every week, we hope you'll take the opportunity to connect with others as you follow in the footsteps of Jesus together. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. Is there anything from this week's devotional so far that has moved or challenged you?
2. Is there anything in your life or in the world that you are feeling hopeless (or nearly hopeless) about? Spend some extra time praying together over these areas.
3. Have you ever felt God comfort you in the midst of a very difficult moment?
4. What kinds of things help you stay hopeful in the midst of personal or global challenges?
5. Do you know anyone who is currently struggling through a difficult situation? How can you be present with them?
6. Lent is a season to reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us, including on our own (and the world's) desperate need for him. Are there any other burdens in your life or in the world that you need to bring to him? Spend some time praying together over these.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus Was in the Grave

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

This Friday is called Good Friday, marking Jesus' death before Easter. When you hear that name, it could feel strange to think that the death of Jesus is good. But the good comes from his amazing love for you! Jesus was nailed to the cross out of love. His love is so great, that Jesus sacrificed himself to save us. Because of his sacrifice, we are made clean and our sins are forgiven!

After Jesus died on the cross, special care was taken for his burial. The chief priests wanted to make sure that the prophecy (or prediction) of Jesus rising again would not come true. So they placed guards outside the tomb to keep watch so that no one would come to take Jesus' body and claim that he rose again.

READ TOGETHER

Read Matthew 27: 57-66. Then discuss:

1. How do you think the disciples were feeling at this time?
2. No one knew for sure what was going to happen after Jesus' death. How do you handle life when things are uncertain?

*If time allows throughout the week, read Wednesday's **Jesus is Here** story together.*

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, it can be hard to imagine there is good in your death and suffering. But when we look at why you sacrificed your life, we can see your powerful love in action. We are in awe of that and praise you for what you have done for us. Thank you, Lord! Amen.

DO TOGETHER

Good Friday is a time to pause, remember and prepare our hearts for Easter. Jesus' sacrifice was costly and painful. In order to remember what his death means for us, use a marker and draw a simple dot on your palm. This dot symbolizes the holes



made by the nails that held Jesus to the cross. Write your name above the dot. Whenever you see this marking, remember what it means: Jesus died for you and he loves you.

Note: Easter Sunday's activity will require gathering some supplies ahead of time. [Scan the QR code to get the template.](#) You will also need:

- A sheet each of white, black and brown cardstock paper
- Multiple sheets of brightly colored construction paper
- Pencil for tracing
- Glue stick
- Scissors



Jesus is Alive Today!

EASTER REFLECTION

Happy Easter! After weeks of following in the footsteps of Jesus, we join in the miraculous revelation that "He is risen!" In celebration of Jesus' victory over sin and death, Emily Kankindi reflects on what the resurrection means for us today.

READ

John 20:1-18

REFLECT

The one thing that many fear to face and that we have failed to conquer in our human strength is death. Even when we pray for healing, it is often out of a fear of facing death and its consequences!

As the women visited Jesus' grave early on Sunday morning, they must have felt death was final. Death was the fearful end to the one they loved and in whom they had put their hope.

But praise be to God Almighty for his endless love for us — for he sent his only begotten son, Jesus, not only to come and die for us, but to conquer death and unlock our victory in Him!

From that day, Easter has become a promise that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, all things will be redeemed and made new in him — including our pain, trials and everything that falls short of a perfectly restored wholeness in Christ. As



See page 85 for the Easter Family Guide.

1 Corinthians 15:26-7 says, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he ‘has put everything under his feet.’”

In my home country of Rwanda, we are painfully familiar with the overwhelming power of death. In 1994, we suffered a genocide against the Tutsi people. In just 100 days, over one million people were killed, leaving families, communities and our nation completely broken.

And yet, even in the face of death, we heard testimonies of Christian victims who sang and prayed as they were killed. What can give someone that kind of faith in life’s darkest moment? Only the true knowledge, deep in their hearts, that their lives were eternally secure.

Years later, we have been on the long road to healing, and we still grieve the loss of loved ones. But here, too, our faith makes us strong as we believe that we shall see them again, thanks to Jesus’ promise. We know what the women who visited his grave on Easter morning would also come to know — that because Jesus has already conquered death, we will be with him and those who follow him again.

In his victory, he has secured our futures and gone ahead of us to prepare an eternal home for us. And this miraculous truth should encourage us to share the love of Jesus we ourselves have received with others — because Jesus did not leave anyone out!

Throughout his life, Jesus showed a deep care for the marginalized: women, orphans, widows, the poor, the sick and many others. Even by appearing first to women after his resurrection, we see that he includes those on the margins in his work of spreading the gospel.

Today, we get to be his hands and feet, delivering this good news to people around the world in both word and deed — but always through the strength of Christ and not our own.

As I have served World Relief for the last 18 years, it’s Christ who has given me wisdom and faith to believe in his love for me and for those we serve. It is his power and grace upon my life which inspires me to continue embracing the role I can play in transforming lives and creating lasting change in Jesus’ name.

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus give me hope and strength that I truly can do all things through Christ who strengthens me — Christ who is my solid rock in times of difficulties and my refuge in times of challenges and pains.

This Easter, may you also be reminded that what we do here on earth now is part of a story that is already complete. That he has conquered death and that we will be victorious — and that we get to humbly be a part of bringing his hope and victory into the lives of others!

PRAY

Spend some time praising God for his victory over sin and death. Thank him for the gift of his son Jesus, and for the new life that we have received through him. Thank him for ways you have felt him moving in your life, and continue to ask for his wisdom and guidance on how you can embody the good news of Easter in the lives of others.



Emily Kankindi is the Knowledge Management & Strategic Partnership Manager at World Relief Rwanda. She started with World Relief in 2005 and has grown through various roles. Driven by a mission to serve those in vulnerable situations, she has a passion for sharing stories of impact and inspiring others to care for those in need.



JOURNEYING TOGETHER

As you celebrate the end of the Lenten season, we invite you to spend some time reflecting with others. Here are some discussion questions to help get the conversation started.

1. As you celebrate the promise of Easter, what do you want to thank God for specifically in your life? Spend some time as a group praying and thanking God for these things.
2. Over the last six weeks, was there anything that especially surprised or challenged you?
3. You've spent time praying over burdens in your life and in the world. Have you seen God answer any of your prayers?
4. After meditating on the example of Jesus, are there any practical ways in which you want to more intentionally reflect his love in the world around you?
5. Is there any particular issue that God has placed on your heart throughout this journey? What do you think your next steps can be to respond?
6. What's something you want to remember or hold onto from the last few weeks?
7. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to continue giving you wisdom and guidance as you walk in the footsteps of Jesus.



FAMILY GUIDE

Jesus is Alive Today!

If you are journeying through Lent as a family, here are some ways to reflect, pray and act together this week.

REFLECT TOGETHER

Parents, read the Easter Reflection on page 81 out loud while your children complete the activity.

PRAY TOGETHER

Jesus, you have conquered death — something no one has ever done before! Today we celebrate the miracle that is your resurrection. We praise you, God, for victory over death and for giving us the freedom we will always cherish!

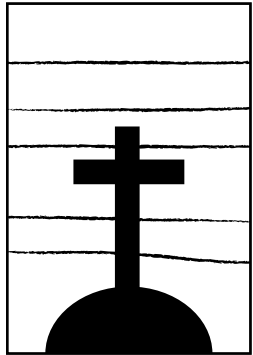
DO TOGETHER

Today, you'll be making a craft symbolizing the meaning behind Easter (see materials list on page 80). Proudly display your finished project or gift it to someone special.

Step 1: Cut out both the cross and half circle template. Then trace the cross on the black cardstock paper and the hill, or half circle, on the brown cardstock paper. Cut out both pieces.

Step 2: Gather 5 or 6 brightly colored pieces of construction paper to create your sunrise background. Tear strips from each paper that are about 2-3 inches wide. Don't worry about making them the same size or a smooth tear line. The jagged lines and differently sized paper strips will add a nice texture to the sunrise background.

Step 3: Choose the order in which you want to layer the colored paper strips in your sunrise background. Using a glue stick, glue a colored paper strip to the bottom of your sheet of white cardstock paper.



Step 4: Continue gluing the remaining colored paper strips in overlapping layers to the cardstock paper, completely covering the white background.

Step 5: Add glue to the back of the brown hill (half circle) and place it at the bottom of your sunrise background. Then glue the black cross in the center of the hill and your project is complete!

THE NEXT STEPS IN YOUR JOURNEY

From the bottom of our hearts — thank you for joining us on this journey in the footsteps of Jesus! We hope the time you've spent in scripture, prayer, reflection and action during this season has been a blessing to you and your community.

Throughout, we hope you've been moved and inspired by Jesus' deep care for those in vulnerable situations around the world, not only during his time on earth but also today.

Maybe, you've even felt God calling you to engage more deeply with the needs of your neighbors near and far.

At World Relief, our mission is to empower the global church — including Jesus followers like you — to serve others in vulnerable situations. If you're wondering what's next, we'd love for you to consider joining us in creating Christ-inspired change around the world.

Here are just some of the ways you can get involved at World Relief:

- Giving to support our work in the U.S. and around the world
- Volunteering with World Relief in your local community
- Advocating on behalf of others
- Getting your church involved
- Joining our monthly emails to stay informed and up-to-date on opportunities



To connect with these opportunities and more,
scan the QR code or visit

worldrelief.org/make-an-impact



MAKE AN
IMPACT

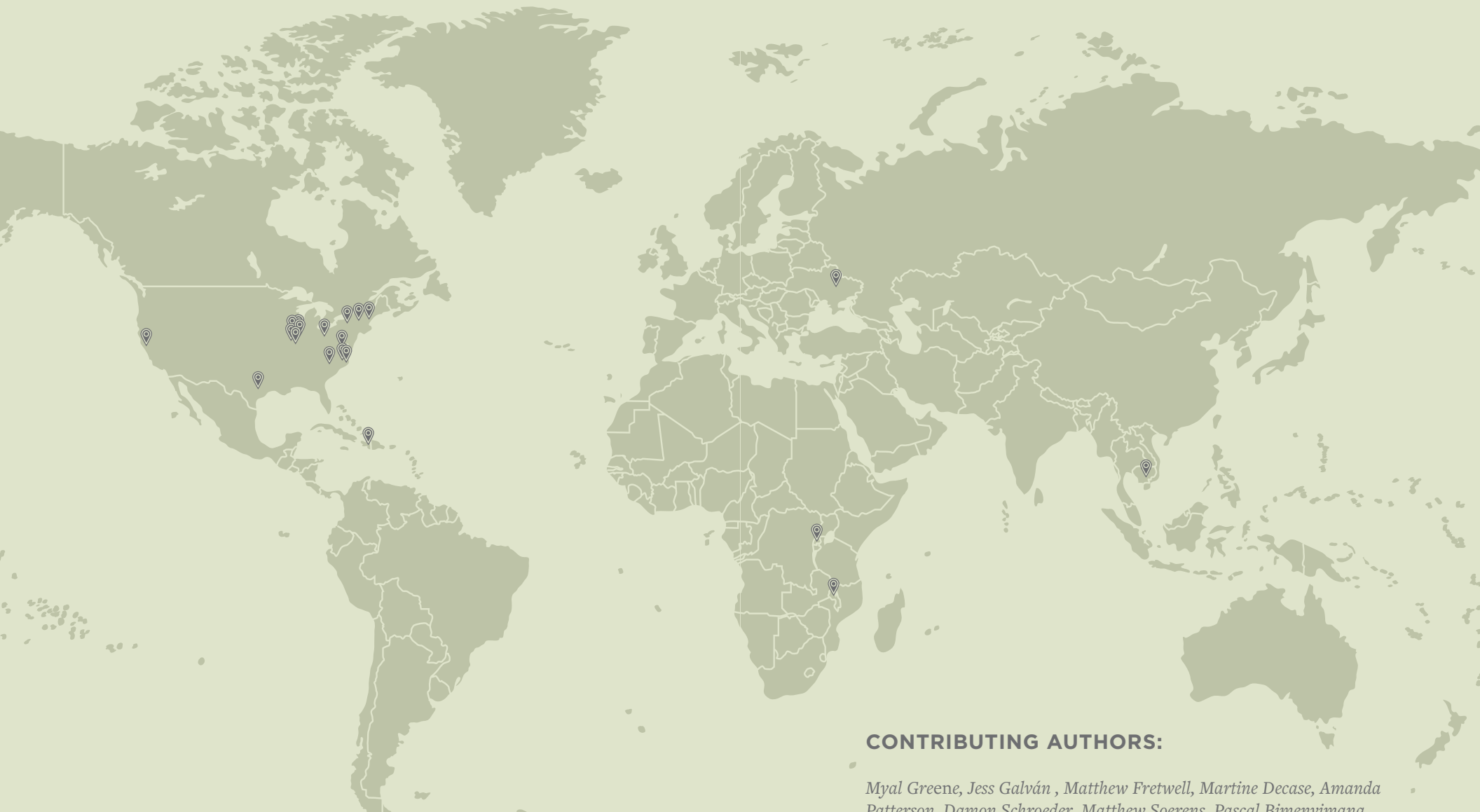


FREE COURSES ON THE WORLD RELIEF WORKSHOP

We want to equip you to serve your neighbors near and far. Use code **WRLENT** at check-out to get free access to these courses on the World Relief Workshop, our e-learning platform for individuals and churches:

- Welcoming the Stranger
- Navigating Friendships
- Navigating Religious Differences
- Intro to Resettlement.

Visit worldrelief.thinkific.com to learn more and access your free courses today!



CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:

Myal Greene, Jess Galván , Matthew Fretwell, Martine Decase, Amanda Patterson, Damon Schroeder, Matthew Soerens, Pascal Bimenyimana, Todun Afolabi, Raymond Trembath, Robyn Brown, Sivan Oun, Yamikani Mawaya Binali, Denise Kersey, Jack Curham, Heritage Munyakuri, Emily Kankindi, Kelly Hill, Shreya Shukla Thornton