

# JOURNEY TO THE CROSS: A Higher Call



Devotions for the 2009 - Lenten Season  
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## Season of Lent

**Ash Wednesday**, the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday, is the first day of Lent. Lent is the forty (40) day period commencing with Ash Wednesday and ending at Easter, exclusive of Sundays. Lent commemorates the forty days Christ spent in the wilderness fasting and overcoming temptations. (Matthew 4:1-11). Lent is a time of introspection, prayer, self-examination, repentance, and general preparation to celebrate Easter.

The sixth Sunday in Lent is known as **Palm Sunday**. Palm Sunday is the first day of **Holy Week**, the week leading up to Easter. Palm Sunday marks Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Crowds lined the streets waving palm branches and shouting "Hosanna" "Hosanna." (Matthew 21:1-9) The days of Holy Week are associated with Jesus' last week of ministry on earth. Holy Week includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. **Maundy Thursday** was a time of intimacy with the disciples before his death. In addition to the institution of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, Jesus also washed the feet of the twelve disciples. Jesus later engaged in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was betrayed and arrested on Maundy Thursday. (Matthew 26:17-30) **Good Friday** marks the day of Christ' crucifixion. Jesus' body was placed in the tomb before sundown on Friday, the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, and remained there until sometime on Sunday morning. (Matthew 27:32-61) **Easter or Resurrection Sunday** is the principal day of the Christian Year, the day of resurrection. (Matthew 28:1-8) It is a day of joy, gratitude, praise and worship to God.

The primary color for Lent is violet or purple—the color of royalty. Through the suffering, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we have hope and live in anticipation of the coming King. Purple also symbolizes a sign of preparation, confession and forgiveness.

The teachings of Jesus form the road map for believers on the Christian journey. Many of His teachings were in the form of parables. A parable is a figurative story that is true to life and designed to convey some spiritual truth through analogy. These devotions explore the parables and teachings of Jesus as respects Money and Wealth, Spiritual Growth, God's Love, Service and Obedience, Prayer, the Kingdom of God, Humility and Honor.



*"And he said, "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever, wisdom and*

power are his. He changes times and season Daniel 2:20-21a

### ***It's Time To Focus!***

Conley Hughes, Jr., Senior Pastor

One of the great blessings God gives us is *times* and *seasons*. Within these periods there are wonderful events that can help us learn more about ourselves, and about the Heavenly Father who created us.

The season we call *Lent* in the Christian faith is really about finding the time to read the scriptures, pray about some special concerns on our mind, to have more quiet time to think about the Lord, and to come to understand more about Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Life is very precious and the time we have on earth is what God has loaned to us. When something is loaned, it is in the possession of the person who has it for a specific time. The reason the Church named this season *Lent*, is because as Christians we realize that all that we have is on loan from God.

*Lent* begins with *Ash Wednesday* and continues through *Resurrection Sunday* or *Easter*. That period of time is just over 40 days. We refer to this time as the season of *Lent*. So much happened in the life of Jesus over the *forty day* period that preceded his death, burial and Resurrection. We read the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) to get an eye witness account of our Lord's journey to the cross.

As you read this devotional you will discover that there's a special message prepared for each day. The messages have been prepared by persons of various ages, and each is designed to help you along your personal journey to *Resurrection Sunday*.

When you complete this devotional we will all be in a new season: *Spring*. The longer days, blooming flowers and warmer weather will remind us that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead. It's time now to focus on Jesus, the Dayspring!

**Ash Wednesday**

**Planting A  
Beautiful Garden**  
Conley Hughes, Jr.

February 25, 2009

**Read:** Isaiah 61: 1-3; Job 2:7-10; Job 42:1-6

**Key Verse:** "To bestow on them a crown of beauty for ashes."

Isaiah 61:3b

Some Christians will say, "What's all the fuss about these special days, isn't it enough knowing Jesus?" Perhaps, but the problem is that many of us don't spend enough time in communion with the Lord. To become better acquainted with our Savior and Lord, the Church has given us *times* and *seasons* when we can seriously focus on His message and mission.

Every Christian should mark his or her calendar with the day we call *Ash Wednesday*. This marks the beginning of the season that leads us to the celebration of *Resurrection Sunday*. Ash Wednesday begins a forty-plus day journey where we can focus on personal and group healing, renewal, reconciliation and forgiveness. Since *Resurrection Sunday* varies according to the calendar, *Ash Wednesday* also varies. The timing of Ash Wednesday assures us that we will have no fewer than forty opportunities to spend some quality time with ourselves and the Lord.

The designation of this important day as *Ash Wednesday* refers to the significance of ashes in the Scripture. In both the Old and New Testament *ashes* symbolize repentance, a solemn period, the conditions necessary for renewal. In the Old Testament Hebrew language the word *ashes* means "to wear a turban," as was customary in mourning. In the New Testament Greek language the word *ashes* means "to dry out." It is the New Testament meaning that suggests "the emptying of one's self."

In fact the wonderful azalea plant derives its name from the Greek word, *azaleos* (a-zay-lee-os), which means "very dry." Isn't it strange and wonderful that the Azalea plant produces the most colorful flowers; yet, it is one of the only plants that depend on "dry soil" to produce its flowers? It is possible for God to substitute our ashes for a garland of beautiful flowers. Let's try to empty ourselves of fears, unhealthy thoughts, anger and stress each day, so that from a dry, yet rich, ground we can see the beauty of life's flowers coming into full bloom.

**Prayer:** Lord please remove the weeds from my garden so that what remains will bloom with the beauty of your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, I pray. Amen.

Day 2

**Telling Like God Told**  
Venessa B. Rosemond

February 26, 2009

**Read:** Genesis 12: 1-9

**Key Verse:** *Abram left, as the LORD had told him*      Genesis 12:4a

When did we move to the place where we don't like to be told anything? Can you remember the last time anyone told you to do something and you simply did it? To whom should we be obedient? Sometimes we resent the telling quickly replying, "You told me that already," because we are impatient with being told and even more impatient with being retold. Other times we don't like the teller and we say, "He or she can't tell me nothin'." If we practice not being told by each other, how will we be open to being told by God?

First, start with the premise that whatever we tell must be a blessing to the person. Now go one step further and promise to be responsible for anyone to whom you give instructions or corrections. Would your instructions bless or condemn? Would you be more willing to obey? Or would your attitude cause you to miss out on God's blessing? You cannot be open to God without loving God's people.

The proper relationship between two parties has to be one of love, familial, erotic, or agape. Parents correct children because they are responsible for their long-term wellbeing. Couples build trust for the longevity of the arrangement eagerly meeting each other's needs. So in the family of God, we must accept instructions and instruct each other as God did with Abram. God told Abram, "I will bless those who bless you. . .and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."(Gen. 12:3) What better time than during Lent to tell and obey in love, so that we may heed the Lord's instructions to us.

**Thought for the day:** Practice being obedient so you can be blessed.

Day 3                      **Open to God:**                      February 27, 2009

**Moses and the Burning Bush**

Keith A. Turner

**Read:** Exodus 3: 1-10

*Key Verse: When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said here I am."*                      Exodus 3: 4

In this text, Moses, a shepherd tending his father-in-law's flock, came upon a burning bush. At first glance Moses wasn't attentive to the bush, as he traveled the land to Horeb – the Mountain of God/Mount Sinai. Moses didn't know the burning bush was meant to get his attention, to answer God's call. Eventually Moses was curious about the burning bush not burning up and went over to look.

How many of us, like Moses, have turned away from a burning bush? We have been alerted by a burning bush, the appearance by an angel of the Lord, or the voice of God speaking to our heart and have walked away ignoring God's call. God creates opportunities for us to explore even though we don't understand them at the time. When God calls upon your life; you are standing on Holy ground. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of all of mankind; He is your God.

How often have we struggled with God's direction for us that comes in an unanticipated way? We encounter struggles, suffering and hard times at the hands of our oppressors. Sometimes our dilemmas are due to our own unfavorable choices. However, God is always near to rescue and liberate us from despair. By God's grace and mercy we are restored into a place of prosperity and peace.

What does it take to be open to God, to say "yes Lord" in any circumstance? Openness to God requires faith and surrendering to His call. The Lord attempts to attract our attention through objects, messages, circumstances and people. As with Moses, we also live imperfect lives. Moses was called on two occasions. First, the angel of the Lord appeared within the burning bush, second the voice of the Lord called out Moses' name. Moses opened himself to God when he said "Here I Am."

**Prayer:** Lord God, I am ready to answer your call upon my life. Here I Am! Lord. I will say "yes Lord" when you call my name. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Day 4                      **Mary: Wholly Surrendered to God**                      February 28, 2009

Moreen P. Hughes

**Read:** Luke 1: 26-38

**Key Verse:** *“I am the Lord’s servant.” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.”*

Luke 1: 38

Countless Christians memorize and repeat the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6: 9-13), but how many in actuality are open and committed to following its example. When we say, “No matter what I want Lord, Your will be done,” we are acknowledging His right to be in control of our lives and that we will follow even if He leads us where we don’t want to go. We are not resigning ourselves to fate, but wholly surrendering to God in order that His purpose will be accomplished in our lives and in the world.

Luke’s account of the virgin birth shows Mary, as a young, poor, female, yet one chosen by God for a major task. In humility she was willing to exercise faith and perform one of the greatest acts of obedience ever required or demanded of anyone. Yes, she questioned the angel, but nevertheless was open and trusted God to make the impossible possible. She realized that as a servant, her responsibility was not to self but to God in order that His purpose might be fulfilled through her. Saying “yes” when God’s plan sounds crazy is, indeed, the basis of faith.

Too wholly surrender means that as God’s servants, we are open to His leading, willing to relinquish our independence, self-determination and personal preference to do what God will have us to do. By doing so, we position ourselves for an outpouring of His blessings, for usefulness in His service, “to be highly favored” and to be in deep and constant fellowship with Him.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to be open to your will. May I wholly surrender myself and live as your servant. In Jesus’ Name, Amen

First Sunday in Lent

**Joseph not Divorce:** March 1, 2009  
**Listening to God’s Promise**  
Angela E. Hedley

**Read:** Matthew 1: 18-22

**Key Verse:** *An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”* Matthew 1: 20

In these early verses of the book of Matthew we are introduced to the engagement of Mary to Joseph. Before they were to be married, Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit. In the Jewish culture, for a woman to become pregnant before she married and to not be pregnant by her husband, meant a great shame upon the woman and could result in a public trial and stoning.

Joseph knew it was necessary to save Mary from ridicule, so he chose to “divorce her quietly”. As Joseph makes this gallant decision which shows us the love and respect he had for Mary, the Holy Spirit appears to him in a dream and tells Joseph, that Mary carries a child conceived by the Holy Spirit, Joseph will name him Jesus and He will save mankind from their sins.

This story reveals how God will have us choose between two worlds: one rooted in familiarity and the other rooted in faith. Joseph is placed in a predicament of whether to yield to years of Jewish tradition or heed to the word of the Holy Spirit. Joseph stepped out on faith, heeded to the Word of God and helped to carry out the prophecy. Joseph allowed the Holy Spirit to guide him to a higher calling.

The Holy Spirit has a divine purpose to reveal to us, but we have to be willing to step out on faith, leave what is comfortable and listen. During our Christian walk, we must understand, what the Holy Spirit is saying to us will not always be easy to accept; it might seem uncharacteristic of where we see ourselves, but God’s plan is to move us towards a greater purpose.

**Thought of the Day:** Are we listening to what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do?

Day 5

**Joshua To Lead**  
James N. Fripp

March 2, 2009

**Read:** Joshua 1:1-9

**Key Verse:** *Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.* Joshua 1:7

My sixth grade school teacher was the last of the Yankee school marms. She was insistent that her students achieve success. She believed like the commander at Houston control in the Apollo 13 film that “Failure is not an option.” Academics were not her only criteria for success. Students were expected to have good behavior at all times. We had to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sit hands folded and say the Lord’s Prayer. If you didn’t know the pledge you got detention. If you were looking out the window or being irreverent during the Lord’s Prayer Mrs. Powell had after school chores that made you wish you had detention. It didn’t matter who you were, from first bell until the end of the day, civility, manners and respect were expected. Scholarship was also expected, and produced. You could be the worst kid on the block but in Mrs. Powell’s class that same kid would win all the weekly spelling bees. She had such high expectations for her students that the materials she taught us were used right into college. We learned to choose success. Because we knew this woman, who only had 3 dresses and a pair of black shoes, loved her students.

God loved Joshua and wanted him to be successful. Thus, God gave him the formula: “Be careful to obey all the laws my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left.” Study and apply the Book of the Law day and night. God wanted Joshua, as leader, to be careful to do everything written. For God knew that the Israelites were a stiff-necked people, and many obstacles lay in their path to the Land of Promise. Joshua was open to God’s leading and knew that he had to be strong and courageous for the time of testing and trial would come and come often. Where did his strength come from? He heard and trusted God’s promise: “I will never leave nor forsake you.”

**Scripture:** Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. (Eccl. 12:13)

Day 6      **Deborah: The Best Person for the Job**      March 3, 2009  
Moreen P. Hughes

Read: Judges 4: 4-9

**Key Verse:** *Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.” Very well,” Deborah said, “I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman.”* Judg. 4: 8-9

Men in biblical history and throughout ancient times had a profound effect and impact upon culture, religion and society. But when looking closely, the Bible records several women who stand as exceptional leaders and are described as having great impact as well. One such woman is Deborah.

Deborah a prophetess, a judge, a godly leader, a woman of the Word with impeccable character, stands as one of the outstanding women in the Old Testament and in biblical history. A woman who had a remarkable relationship with God, Deborah was responsible for leading Israel into battle during a critical and tumultuous period. This woman with great wisdom, proved to be the best person for the job when Barak was at the crossroad of indecisiveness; reluctant to exercise his faith as commanded by God, shirking his ability to lead Israel’s army before Sisera, commander of Jaban’s army.

In her authority Deborah did not nag Barak for what seemed to be a cowardly act, but showed her strength by giving support and encouragement to Barak. She led with dignity and honor knowing the battle was not hers, or Barak’s, but the Lord’s. Deborah was not fearful of man or military strength, but trusted in God’s power and His Word, proving that she was best person for the job.

**Thought:** God is no respecter of person. He can choose whom He will to accomplish His task. Whether male or female, young or old, red, yellow, black or white be open to God; never let the prejudices of this world dictate where God is leading you.

Day 7      **Fishermen to Disciples:  
Giving Up Is So Hard to Do!**      March 4, 2009

Jerry L. Womack

**Read:** Matthew 4:18-22

**Key Verse:** *“Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.”* Matt. 4: 19, 20

A famous secular singer, Donny Hathaway wrote and performed a song called, “Giving Up Is Hard To Do”. In this song he goes on to explain how hard it is to give up when you really love something. Indicating a dependency so great that after all of his trying, he goes on to proclaim, “it just ain’t no use”.

Our scripture today is about when Jesus was choosing his disciples. As he began his ministry, he chose two sets of brothers (Simon and Andrew, James and John). As Jesus is traveling along the seashore ministering, He came upon men doing something that they loved, fishing. These men not only had a love for what they were doing, and it was their source of provision for themselves and their families.

Well, if “giving up something you love is really hard to do”, then why did these fishermen give up so easily and quickly and follow Jesus? We could ask; did they really love what they were doing? Some writers have concluded that the disciples’ choice wasn’t that difficult because Jesus’ miracles had preceded his encounter with them. So why did the chosen disciples “**immediately**” follow Jesus? Is it because they anticipated what they were going to was greater than what they were giving up? If either of the last two reasons is why the disciples acted without haste in response to Jesus call, then why is “giving up so hard to do” for us?

I believe that our answer lies in our perception of the benefits we are being led to when weighed against what we are giving up. We surmise that where we are going must be perceived as better than where we are now in order to move us out of the “comfort zone” of our lives.

**Challenge:** Think about what God may be asking you to do and weigh it on the basis of the ultimate benefit, following Jesus.

**Prayer:** Lord may our love and desire to follow you be greater than any thing else in our life. We want to be diligent in our response to your call to be disciples. Amen.

Day 8

**Listening With Faith**  
Roscoe Mills

March 5, 2009

**Read:** 1 Samuel 3:1-10

**Key Verse:** *The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said. “Speak, for your servant is listening.”* 1 Samuel 3:10

It is in quiet time that we can focus on our self, listen to our inner spirit and most of all listen to what God has to say to us. We are always in a hurry to get things accomplished. Most of the time we are reacting to our own thoughts and feelings instead of listening to God for directions. Many mistakes are made because we do not take the time to listen to what God is saying to us. I am a living witness to this, but I thank God for his loving kindness, forgiveness and restoration power.

In quiet time you can find peace, power and strength to endure these tough economic times. Often my quiet time is spent alone by a body of water where I can witness nature and the power of the ocean. It is there that I reflect and listen to God. During this season of Lent I encourage you to find your special place where you can be alone and listen to Gods’ call. As you hear Him trust Him and have faith that He will direct your path.

The boy Samuel learned that God often speaks to his children when they are quiet before Him. Sometime before dawn, asleep in the temple, Samuel heard a voice. He thought the elderly priest needed him so he rushed to Eli. Once Eli realized that God was trying to get Samuel’s attention, he told him to simply “listen.” Samuel remained a faithful listener to God’s directions throughout the rest of his life, and God used him mightily as prophet, priest, and judge.

God is still searching for faithful, listening people. It does not matter if you are a child, a teenager, a young adult, middle age, or a senior citizen. God desires to use those that have a humble spirit and are willing to listen to him. He will speak, if we listen.

**Prayer:** Lord, grant me enough faith to quiet myself and listen to you.

**Day 9**

**God Uses Ordinary People  
to do the Extraordinary**

March 6, 2009

Renee Taylor

**Read:** Jeremiah 29:11-13; Luke 1:26-38

**Key Verse:** “For nothing is impossible with God.” Luke 1:37

Did you know that God wants to use you do the extraordinary? Throughout the Bible, God has used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. God used Joseph who was a dreamer and sold into slavery by his brothers to save Egypt and the nation of Israel from starvation and becoming obsolete. God used Queen Esther’s influence and intervention to save her people.

The work of God is not done by great people but by ordinary people who are committed to Him. Often times we make every excuse to God why we cannot complete the assignment he needs us to accomplished. “I am nothing. My friends will think that I am whack. I have no gifts. I often fail miserably. Do you really want to use me?”

When we ask, “Does God really want to use me?” the answer is clear. God chooses “the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27)

God has been using ordinary people like you and me for thousands of years. God sent Jesus into the world to become our savior. He was born of young virgin women by the name of Mary. Mary realized the potential problems that she could have by being a virgin who is now with child. Mary lived in a time when she could be put away or condemn to death for this. But the angel of Lord informed how she shall become pregnant he states “For nothing is impossible with God.” Luke 1:37. An ordinary peasant girl carries out an extraordinary assignment bringing forth our Lord Savior Jesus Christ. It’s time to stop making excuse and let God use your ordinary life to something extraordinary. With Faith nothing is impossible to those who believe.

**Thought for the Day:** Are you ready to let God do the extraordinary through you?

Day 10

**Divine Assignment**  
Gloria Johnson

March 7, 2009

**Read:** Exodus 3:11-15; Acts 7:20-36; 2 Timothy 1:7

**Key Verse:** *And Moses said unto God, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the Children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee; when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon the mountain.* Exodus 3:11-12 (KJV)

Have you ever been asked to do something in which you have felt inadequate or unprepared? Were you able to complete it and if so, how did you feel afterwards? This text tells us just how Moses felt, when commissioned by God to leave his home in the wilderness, to deliver his people from the oppressive hands of the Egyptians. Do you think that we would have felt just like Moses? A bush is burning and not being consumed and a voice from the bush saying, “Moses, Moses come closer and take off your shoes”? Well, I don’t know about you, I consider myself as being one curious person but not enough to take off my shoes and move closer. I would probably stand in awe and become fearful. I would probably try to reason things out to explain my next action.

This was not a secular call from just anyone; this was a divine call from the Almighty God who called him by his name. God knew Moses’ limitations just as he knows all there is to know about us and calls us by our names. Even though Moses at 80 years old felt unworthy of such an enormous assignment, he did not willfully disobey God. God moved right into his comfort zone of solitude and isolation and empowered him to do a supernatural assignment. God’s promise to be with him should have been sufficient for him. Mark 3:12

What about us today? Just like Moses, God is still calling us to a higher calling to rescue those who are in the bondage of sin. Mark 16:15; 1Peter 2:9-10. It is truly through our obedience to the Holy Spirit’s call that we are able to maintain peace and share in a loving relationship with God. He uses our lives as living testimonies; we are called to be his servants. Fear and doubt often come to rob us of this relationship.

**Thought for the Day:** Jesus is asking us to hear, obey and accept the task assigned to us. His Grace is sufficient.

**Second Sunday in Lent** **Regardless of What Others Think**

March 8, 2009

Sharon Bryant

**Read:** Exodus 4:1

**Key verse:** *Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, The Lord did not appear to you?"* Exodus 4:1

When God reveals His plan to you for what you are to do, everyone is not going to take you seriously. If there is anything about this Christian journey that is hard, it is doing your given assignment after you share it with an unbelieving Saint. This is why you must at all times, keep God in the forefront of you and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if He sends you on this journey, success is up the road. Following Christ' plan for you is a job not everyone can perform; it takes a willingness to go on, in spite of the discouraging comments, thoughts and gestures of others around you. Only God knows the outcome of your faithfulness to the assignment He has given you.

In our focus text, God used an ordinary staff in the hand of Moses, turned it into a snake and back into a staff. One key outcome in God showing Moses this simple test of how even his enemy can be placed in his hands and used to do the will of God, was Moses' faith to pick the snake up by the tail when at first he ran from it. God has control over the enemy that may set themselves up in the plan God has shown you.

Your faith to stand and do your assignment will come forward despite the presence of those who otherwise may laugh or doubt that God has given you anything to do. Even they will be amazed and will know that God appeared to you to empower, impact and build up the body of Christ.

So if I can encourage you in any way, I would say to you, do what God has given you to do. Do it with power, do it with confidence and do it alone if you have to. Just be obedient to God and He will send someone to come to your aide to get the job done as he did with Moses and Aaron. He or she may be the very one that did not believe in you to begin with.

**Prayer of the Day:** Lord it is my prayer that the Saints of God would be more supportive of one another and that they may build up those that are afraid to step out on the things you have given them to do. Lord give us all the courage to stand, the belief to build and the peace in knowing that you are in control. Amen

Day 11

**Our Limitations  
and God's Unlimited Power**

March 9, 2009

Michelle K. Taylor

**Read:** Exodus 6:28-30

**Key Verse:** *But Moses said to the LORD, "Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?"* Exodus 6:30

In this Exodus story, we find God giving Moses another commission and Moses attempting to get out of it. The text reveals to us that God told Moses to deliver Pharaoh a message and Moses responded by telling the Creator that he has a speech problem. Moses is just like most of us. God calls us to do something and we make excuses as to why we cannot do it. Why is that? It's generally because of fear and insecurities. Most of us have something that could be called a shortcoming, an impediment or an imperfection. It could be physical attributes that tarnish our appearance, or something we believe might cause inadequacy or failure in our lives. We focus so much on our limitations that we lose sight of what God commissions us to do.

Moses had a problem. He was insecure about his ability to do what God told him to do—speak. He doubted his capability to clearly articulate God's message so Pharaoh would understand. Moses wondered why God would want to use a speech impaired man to communicate a message to a king. We as humans struggle with why God would want to use us—yet He does. Our impairments are not accidents; they are God-designed limitations. God uses every one of our flaws for His glory. God's way of dealing with our "limitations" is not to remove them but to endow them with strength and use them for good. All we have to do is believe that His power is limitless.

Moses viewed his speech as a flaw with limitation. Dealing with our limitations is crucial to avoiding mental, spiritual or physical breakdowns. What limitations do you face? What are the things that you feel restrain you or keep you back? What are the areas of your life that you repeatedly fail in, sins you repeat, or problems that won't go away?

**Meditation of the Day:** Think about what you could achieve if you exercise faith in God's unlimited power above your human limitations.

Day 12

**Spiritual over Physical**  
Katrina Kyle

March 10, 2009

**Read:** Mark 2: 1-12

**Key Verse:** *When Jesus saw their faith ...* Mark 2:5

In Mark chapter 2, we meet a man who is paralyzed and has not been able to walk for quite some time. Because God knew the heart of the man and saw his faith, Jesus healed him. While many sat around witnessing the miracle, others began to doubt in their hearts that this man was of God. They questioned internally, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7b) Jesus knew, without them speaking, that they doubted the powers that he possessed. Yes, He was an average looking man walking along the streets as a normal person, but He also understood that He was God's child. Jesus healed the paralyzed man and forgave his sins.

In this passage we see Jesus for who He is: a teacher, healer and the Son of God. People crowded into a house to hear Him teach them the things of God. Four men came carrying a paralyzed friend. They intended to get him to Jesus, fully believing that Jesus would heal their friend. When they could not get through the crowd, they went to the roof of the house, dug out a hole, and lowered their friend through the roof to Jesus. This was a risky act but because of the love of their friend and their faith in Jesus they did what they had to do. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." (v 5). Although the man wants to be healed from his paralysis, Jesus bypasses the obvious physical need and heals the main problem of the man's heart.

The most important lesson we can take from this passage is that Jesus is Savior and Lord. We learn that our greatest needs are met when we go to Him. He forgives us of our sins when we are willing to admit that we have done wrong. Although the paralyzed man was looking for physical healing, he learned that healing starts on the inside and works its way out. He could not physically be healed without first dealing with his internal issues. Once his heart (spiritual self) was in the right place, God saw fit to heal his body (physical self).

**Thought for the Day:** Seek Jesus for the Spiritual and be blessed with the Physical.

Day 13

**He Knows**  
Sharon Bryant

March 11, 2009

**Read:** Mark 14:29-31

**Key Verse:** *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today-yes, tonight-before the rooster crows, you yourself will disown me three times."*

Mark 14:30

All the times we are in worship at church or other venues and all the times that we continue to be in the presence of others with excitement and joy about the Lord, we still have times when we think no one sees us or no one knows what we are up to or truly about. We forget that there is One that knows all and sees all.

Christ is in the Upper Room with His disciples at the Last Supper. He emphatically told them one of them had made a deal with the enemy to betray Him. After all they have been through together, the things He taught them, the miracles He performed before their very eyes and His unceasing love for each of them, another will deny Him. Yes, even before the rooster can make the sound come out of its mouth, one will deny Him and not just once or twice but three times. It was at that moment that they all looked in disbelief at one another and at Christ to deny His statement, trying to assure Him that they would never do that. Again He is all knowing and for that brief moment, they forgot about that.

The question that I ponder is how long does it take before we deny Him. How many times do we put our fellowship with Him on the back burner? We know that Peter, the one whom Christ calls the rock, denied Him and Judas betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. What did the enemy promise you to deny the Lord? It is time to be real with the Lord and to cast your cares, desires and sins at His feet so that true worship may flow from your heart. The Word of God says in the book of James that we are lead astray by our own evil desires and every time we give into those desires, we deny the Lord. Let the Word of God penetrate your life such that you are able to hold fast to His teachings, His encouragement and His love so that you will deny Him before no one.

**Prayer of the Day:** Lord God, it is my prayer that we come to a place in our fellowship with you that no matter what is around us or who is around us, it is only you that will influence us to be the followers you called us to be. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 14

**The Lord is Great**  
Walker Farrar

March 12, 2009

**Read:** 2 Samuel 7:18-22

**Key Verse:** *“Wherefore you are great, O Lord God: for there is no one like you, neither is there any God beside you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”*  
2 Samuel 7:22 KJV

David's prayer is full of the statements of devout affection toward God. Although he had depressed thoughts of his own merits, he still speaks very highly and honorably of the Lord's favor to him.

We too may be amazed at God's favor towards us. In spite of our shortcoming He continues to provide for us according to His promises. Since He knows us better than we know ourselves, we can be assured that everything He blesses us with is for our betterment and according to His will for our lives. Too often when we pray, we seek only *our* desires. But David's heart was fixed; in other words entirely engaged on giving God the honor He desires.

Any prayer, which is from the tongue only, will not please God. Genuine prayer must be from the heart and must be lifted up and poured out before God. David prays for the performance of the promise. With God, saying and doing are not two things, as they often are with men because God will do as he has said.

**Thought for the Day:** The promises of God belong to all who believe in Jesus Christ and beseech them in his name.

Day 15    **Gideon: Letting go of doubt and fear**    March 13, 2009  
R. Helen Davison

**Read:** Judges 6:11-17

The people of Israel did evil things in the sight of God. The Lord gave them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. Then God sent his angel to Gideon under an oak tree in Ophrah. The angel told Gideon that the Lord wanted him to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Gideon questioned the angel. If the Lord is with us, why are so many bad things happening to us? Why are we having so many problems? Where are all of God's wonders? He brought us out of Egypt but now the Lord has abandoned us and put us in the hands of the Midianites. Although God sent an angel to tell Gideon that he will be with him, Gideon doubted God and he made excuses, seeing only his own limitations and weaknesses.

Gideon failed to understand that the Israelites disobeyed and neglected God. It is easy to overlook personal accountability and to blame our problems others. Blaming God and others for our problems causes us to rebel, backslide, and have doubts and fears. When problems arise in our lives we should first look within. We should then get closer to God by confessing to him the sins or broken promises that may have created the problems.

Gideon failed to see how God could work through him. Instead of putting his faith to work, he put fear, doubt and disbelief in front of faith. Like Gideon, we too make excuses as to why we cannot do what God asks of us. We are quick to tell God about our problems and the reasons why we cannot do the task that he has given us. We try to do everything that we want to do first and God's task last.

We should not factor doubt and fear to stop us from serving God, but put our faith to work. The way may not always be easy but he will never leave you. If God sends you He will equip you and go with you. All you have to do is do your Father's business.

**Meditation:** Lord please help us to do your will without doubt, fear, excuses, and disbelief. Help us to know that if you send us you will be there with us. We do not want to doubt you like Gideon nor like Thomas doubted Jesus. (John 20:25-29) Please bless us Lord. Amen

Day 16    **Open to God**    March 14, 2009  
Brenda A. Fluker

**Read:** Ephesians 2:1-10

**Key Verse:** *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

Ephesians 2:10

What is God calling me to do? Why me? Do I have the right talents and skills? Will I succeed? Is this really mine to do? We see that biblical giants like Moses, Samuel, Mary the mother of Jesus and others asking these very questions. All were challenged to be open to God, to let go of doubt and fear.

Some of us may be quite clear as to what God is calling us to do. Others may still have questions and fears. If we wait for all of our fears to go away, we may never fulfill God's purpose for our lives. We must find the strength to take a step in the right direction. Peter gathered enough courage to take a step towards Jesus. Mary submitted to God's purpose in spite of potential adverse consequences.

Change is almost always accompanied by uncertainty. Know that when God created us, he gave us gifts and abilities to fulfill his purpose for our lives. Regardless of your circumstances, you can be assured that God is ever present, guiding you, encouraging you to step outside your comfort zone, to yield to His call.

We gain strength to follow Christ through the commands found in Scripture. In the coming weeks, we will practice various spiritual disciplines that will encourage us to be open to God.

**Thought for the Day:** I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

**Third Sunday in Lent**

**Esther:** March 15, 2009  
**Disciplined to Fast & Prayer**  
Moreen P. Hughes

**Read:** Esther 4: 7-17

**Key Verse:** *“Go, gather together all the Jews who are at Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do.”*  
Esther 4:15

Fasting can be the most misunderstood of the spiritual disciplines. It is not done for self or to satisfy self, it should not be done out of ritual or habit, but in obedience to God, for spiritual growth and for the sake of others. (Esther 4:16; Isaiah 58: 3-12; Daniel 10:3) Fasting should allow believers to shift dependency from food and nourishment and focus attention on doing the will of God. (John 4:34) Throughout Scripture, fasting refers to the abstaining of food or drink, though not exclusively, and involves spiritual intensity and intercession. In his book *Disciplines of the Spirit*, (New York: Harper Row Pub. 1963, p. 96), Howard Thurman believes that the true purpose of all spiritual disciplines is to clear away whatever may block our awareness of that which is God in us.

As queen, Esther had a life of wealth, ease and power. As a Jew, she was caught in the middle of a scheme by Haman, the annihilation of the Jews in Persia. Even though Esther was Queen, she also knew that her position could not bring deliverance from Haman; what lay ahead was bigger than her. The Jews needed Divine protection and God's intervention. Esther could have tried to save herself, but realized that she was placed in the king's palace not by coincidence, but “for such a time as this” (v14).

The Jews knew that fasting always accompanied prayer (Ezra 8:21). They had been called on to do so previously, in seeking God's direction. By calling for a three day fast, Esther showed her faith, commitment and dependency on God; a faith that transcended the enemy allowing her people to be victorious.

**Prayer:** Lord, discipline my life. Help me to fast, watch and pray so that I may be open to the mission for which I have been called.

**Day 17**

**Fasting as Spin Control**  
Venessa B. Rosemond

March 16, 2009

**Read:** Daniel 1:8-17

**Key Verse:** *“Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.”*  
Daniel 1:12



**Key Verse:** *“In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord”*  
1 Samuel 1: 10

As I read about Hannah, I was blown away by her faithfulness to prayer. Hannah -one of Elkanah’s two wives- wanted children desperately but she was unable to conceive. (1 Samuel 1:5) However Elkanah’s other wife – Peninnah had given him many children and would taunt Hannah for being barren. Annually Elkanah would take his family up to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord, where Penninah would taunt Hannah to tears. (1 Samuel 1: 5-7) This happened year after year and seemingly grief became apart of the annual trip to Shiloh for Hannah.

One year, unable to conceal her bitterness, grief and pain, Hannah prayed to the Lord. She prayed from her heart, praying in such a way the priest Eli thought she was drunk. Though she was disappointed, hurting and severely depressed Hannah never walked away from God. She never refused to go up to Shiloh or cursed Penninah for the taunting. Hannah chose to stay in prayer, knowing that even through her suffering, God could improve her situation.

Prayer is powerful! After her prayer Hannah was no longer troubled, she ate and arose the next day praising the Lord before heading back home. Hannah was able to conceive Samuel shortly after her prayer at Shiloh. Living a life of prayer is both challenging and rewarding. The story of Hannah should encourage us to remain diligent in our prayer life.

**Thought for the Day:** When you are angry or deeply hurt, and bitterness may have crept into your soul, what is your first reaction? The next time you are angry or hurt, take a moment, be silent and just pray on it.

Day 20                    **From Disobedience to Obedience:**                    March 19, 2009  
                                 **Praying Your Way Out**  
                                 Joseph L. Smith

Read: Jonah 2:1-10

**Key Verse:** *From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.*  
Jonah 2:1

Jonah was called by God to go to the city of Nineveh and preach against the wickedness there. Instead, Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD (Jonah 1:1-3). Have you ever tried to run away from something that God gave you to do? If so, then you should be a witness to the fact that “you can run but you can’t hide”. When Jonah tried to run and hide he forgot something very important. “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there” (Ps 139:7-8).

When we try to do things our way instead of listening to God; we will find ourselves facing some unforeseen circumstances. Though Jonah was a Prophet of the Lord, his disobedience caused him to miss what was coming his way until it was too late. God will allow us to disobey Him and think that we can escape the call that He placed on our lives. When we don’t follow God’s plan, just like Jonah we will sometimes find ourselves thrown overboard into the raging sea. God had a fish waiting for Jonah. What will He have waiting for us?

As a consequence of our disobedience, we are sometimes cornered and can’t see our way out. But be of good courage; I have some good news for you. The opportunity for prayer just knocked on your door. Although disobedience gets us into these situations, honest and sincere prayer will get us out. Isn’t it wonderful to know that God hears the prayers of His people? When we pray, whatever swallows us (like the fish that swallowed Jonah) can be used by God to accomplish His will in us.

**Thought of the Day:** “Much Prayer”, “Much Power,” Prayer will help you in your time of trouble. Never cease from praying.

Day 21                    **Ruth: Called to Service**                    March 20, 2009  
                                 Moreen P. Hughes

Read: Ruth 1: 16-18

**Key Verse:** *But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people will be my people and your God my God.”*

Ruth 1: 16

Tragedy often leaves us alone. It isolates. If we are not careful we might easily build up a wall around ourselves in response to tragedy. This is where Naomi was. She had survived the move from her home. She had survived being a widow and a single parent. She had seen her sons get married. She had handled every challenge that came her way and then came the final straw. Her sons died. She gave up. No one could possibly know how she felt. But through her grief God was nurturing a relationship that would prove to have a new twist.

When looking at the Story of Ruth and Naomi, we often think of “mentorship” or “friendship” but there is another theme that runs through this book, that of “service.” It was pivotal for Naomi when Ruth, one of her daughters-in-law, refused to abandon her. Ruth realized that she could not leave Naomi who felt isolated, rejected and grief stricken, but felt her mission was to be of service to her mother-in-law.

Ruth would leave her people, her homeland, her gods and return to Bethlehem with Naomi. Ruth wasn’t kind to Naomi simply because she was married to her son. She was kind because God had touch her heart and given her a spirit of service. Little did she know that this spirit would transcend her understanding and that the events in her book and life would foreshadow the ministry of Jesus. Ruth married Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, and they became the grandparents of King David, the line through which Jesus was born.

**Prayer:** Lord, use me to be of service. Thank you for giving a model like Ruth, so that we too can listen for your call on our lives. Amen

Day 22

**Solitude**  
James Fripp

March 21, 2009

**Read:** Mark 1:35-45

**Key Verse:** *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got*

*up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”*

Mark 1:35

Very early in the morning the Master set off before dawn because he wanted to talk to God undisturbed. The disciples did not hear his early morning prayers. They preferred to sleep in. We weren’t there either. But like each of us, Jesus in his humanness did confront the dark night of the soul. When all seems lost. What did the Master pray about? Let’s use our Christian imaginations: Jesus knew and expressed that with God He could accomplish all things, but that without God His words would have no power. Jesus more than once under the burden of soon and coming crucifixion asked God where are you; where’s my heart; where’s my faith and in his humanness would complain, I can’t believe we’ve parted. In the depths of his troubled spirit he would recall that He needs no shackles to remind him to just wait for the One who is the Master of his fate. Hear his words "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus prayed this lament several times. But possibly in his solitude he also gave thanks: “Jesus, full of **joy** through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” And “So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your **joy**. Or in earnest self-reflection ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the **joy** of your **lord**.’ Yes Jesus’ prayers had laments He would soon face death. But I believe Scripture demonstrates that the Master during his solitude sought reassurance that everything would be alright. Consequently Jesus in His prayers/His ministry/His teaching experienced Psalm 28:7: The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for **joy** and I will give thanks to him in song.

**Prayer:** Ask the Savior to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you; He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through.

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**Sitting**  
**At Jesus’ Feet**  
Walker Farrar

March 22, 2009

Read: Luke 10:38-42

**Key Verse:** *Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."* Luke 10:41-42

“Mary hath chosen that good part.” She sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Words. Her eyes were fixed upon Him; ear and heart were opened to His voice. Martha however, was concerned about much serving. How truly these two sisters present the two-fold conditions of believers. There is much service in these days and with it there is connected great danger.

When the midnight cry was heard, "Behold the Bridegroom! Go out to meet Him," the wise virgins simply arose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish went here and there for oil. They tried to make up what they lacked by activity. So it is today. There seems to be a feverish unrest everywhere and in the so-called "religious life" there is an anxiety to do something, to be busy in what is termed “The Lord's work or kingdom,” that little time for rest and meditation is left.

True service is the result of what Mary chose to do. Much of the so-called service and work for the Lord, if sifted down, is but the activity of the religious flesh. His blessing cannot be upon it. Far different is it when our first and chief aim is to worship and adore Him, and if He then gives us, in His grace, some service and we go forth fresh from His presence, there will be abundant blessing.

Day 23

**Truth and a Promise:  
Confession and Repentance**  
Deborah Barabino

March 23, 2009

**Read:** Mark 1:2-5

**Key Verse:** *“A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare a way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”* Mark 1:3

God has sent secular preparers for us over time throughout history. Some are renown, such as Dr. Vernon Johns prepared the way for Martin Luther King, who prepared the way for President Barack Obama. These are flawed but moral men interested in turning others from error to truth. As Christians we are blessed with a Savior who is Truth waiting for us to confess our errors.

In this Lenten Season two secular examples of error come to mind. We have seen Wall Street bankers who have wrecked the world's economy by selling intangibles for large sums of money and then deny their responsibility in the matter. When rescued they reacted by writing and accepting large bonuses for themselves. Do you see repentance here? On the other hand, the automakers after being forced to be contrite, apologized and were given strict terms of how their penance would work. Do you think they may be successful?

God wants us to recognize what we do wrong and acknowledge it to him and promise to refrain from doing it again. Because of Jesus' death, and resurrection we have the assurance that we can confess our sins and transgressions against Him, repent and be forgiven. Confession is the truth and repentance is the promise not to repeat the transgression.

**Challenge for the day:** Acknowledge a transgression that will make your path to the Lord straighter.

Day 24

**Fasting: Showing Strength in Private**  
Deborah Barabino

March 24, 2009

**Read:** Matthew 4:1-4

**Key Verse:** *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

Matthew 4:4

New Orleanians are well known zealots for our love of food. Even while feasting on delectable dishes there could be heard discussions on what next might tempt the taste buds. In an about face, during the Lenten season in the Crescent City people often ask, "What are you giving up for Lent?" Many people, who drink alcohol frequently during the year, choose to give it up for Lent. In the same way, chocolate lovers give up their favorite treat for Lent too. For forty days and nights people publically give up things they like most, as a custom of faith.

It was not until years later that fasting became meaningful to me. For this special time the focus is on the Creator not the creation, a private arrangement to show strength. Food is everywhere and its abundance is taken for granted by overindulging and wasting. Abstaining reminds us to be grateful. Fasting requires thoughtfulness and discipline along with prayer to strengthen you and help you resist temptation.

Another powerful weapon during fasting is studying the Word of the Lord. The Word helps you replace physical food with spiritual food. It can fill up those places where emptiness, grief, and worry persist. Fasting during the Lenten season provides a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth, mental maturation, and physical refreshment. You need only to keep your promise.

**Thought for the day:** "When e'er you make a promise consider well its importance; and when made engrave it upon your heart."- From the Girl Scouts Guide

Day 25

**Solitude**  
Rita Smith Dove

March 25, 2009

Read: Mark 1:35

**Key Verse:** *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

Mark 1:35

Jesus both modeled for and commanded us to incorporate the discipline of solitude into our lives. Scripture indicates that Jesus regularly withdrew to pray. After a busy day of preaching, teaching and healing; after feeding the five thousand; upon hearing about John the Baptist's death and when facing his own and death, he found a solitary place to be with His Father. Whatever was happening, He made time to spend alone with His Father. And, while teaching his followers about prayer, he directs them, (and us), "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."(Matt.6:6) Jesus makes it clear that spending time alone with Him should be our priority.

It is difficult to follow Jesus without regularly spending time alone with Him. It is during these times of fellowship with Him that we get to know Him. As we withdraw from the world -- its noises, influences, attractions, obligations and pressures -- and listen and talk to God, we get to know Him. We come to recognize His voice, discern His ways and know His will. We see Him -- glorious, mighty, perfect and sufficient in every way. And we realize that *this God*, ever loving and faithful, desires to be with us.

We see ourselves as we spend time with God. Our sin becomes clearer and we realize we deserve death and Hell. Yet, we are also His beloved and saved by His grace. We are increasingly assured of His abiding love, forgiveness, presence, faithfulness and care each moment of every day.

Finally, by intentionally and regularly spending time alone with God, we place ourselves in His presence where He can change us--from the inside out. As we come to know Him, hear His voice, trust and obey Him, He will transform us. His thoughts, ways and will become ours, and we begin to look and act more and more like our Father.

**Prayer:** Lord, create in us the desire to spend time with you and fill us with yourself, to the glory of your name. Amen

Day 26

**The Household of Servants--  
The Church**

March 26, 2009

Venessa B. Rosemond

**Read:** Mark 10: 41-45

**Key Verse:** *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Mark 10: 45

God called me to serve Him but first I was served. I can't remember when I first heard about Him. It was probably at my christening, although I can't be sure for myself. Later when I was baptized into the faith, what I remembered most was that I didn't walk. I was lifted and passed from the Deacons to the Pastor in the baptismal pool. For a long time the church carried me as I was trained and apprenticed for service.

Serving is an art not a science. Training is rigorous. There are Bible verses to remember and Scripture to read, understand, apply and explain. To stay in service ready mode, requires conviction and commitment. A good servant knows the mission; that all should be saved. The mark of the devoted servant is to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. Within the household of faith, service surrounds us. We get it and we give it. Service never ends.

Now that it's my turn to serve, who can I carry? Who will believe my story as I put my faith to work? I can only succeed. I am surrounded by a vast array of witnesses. Even now in my period of serving, the greatest servant of all is still carrying me.

**Prayer:** Father our greatest desire is to be more like you. Help us in our unbelief and let our works reflect our faith as we serve those in the church and those who don't know you. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Day 27                      **Guided by Wisdom**                      March 27, 2009  
Brenda A. Fluker

**Read:** James 1:5, 3:13-17

**Key Verse:** *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him.”*  
James 1:5

As we mature spiritually, we must constantly seek God's wisdom in our thoughts and actions. There are two aspects of wisdom: spiritual and practical.

Spiritual wisdom gives us insight into God's' character and the genuine nature of things. It is the wisdom that helps us live, as God desires. “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17). The pursuit of spiritual wisdom helps us to be more like Christ.

Practical wisdom or practical discernment is measured by whether or not our actions conform to God's instructions. God's instructions lead to healthy living. All of us have made wrong decisions that have caused frustration in our relationship with Christ. Turn to God through studying his Word, prayer and fasting. In so doing, we will find the guidance we need to make the right decisions. Once we make a decision, we must ask God to help us follow him with single-minded devotion.

Our past weeks of study have helped us know and recognize God's will. Now we move to the assurance of God's plan and guidance.

**Thought for the Day:** When have you prayed for and received God's wisdom?

Day 28                      **Assurance of God's Plan**                      March 28, 2009  
James Fripp

**Read:** John 14:1-3, 6

**Key Verse:** *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* John 14:6

As we enter the sixth year of the Iraq war, the United States volunteer army continues to have men and women doing 2, 3 sometimes 4 tours of duty. Some are trapped by the Pentagon's policy of 'stop loss.' Where soldiers have their tours extended involuntarily, though many do voluntarily sign up for another tour to return to the war zone. I am opposed to this war as many Americans are. Yet something is noble about our troops. Why do so many re-enlist? Is it for love of country, or revenge for 911? Do they return to earn a paycheck? These comrades in arms return for their friends, who they have matured with, worked with, struggled with, seen blood and death with are still there fighting and dying. Let us pray for peace in Iraq.

Jesus took this principle of return several steps deeper. The disciples had learned much from Jesus. They had seen Jesus feed the five thousand; raise Lazarus from the grave; seen Jesus walk on water; seen and heard Him preach and teach with power and authority. Jesus accepted them as friends, ate and cooked with them, went to weddings and dinners with them, fled from the religious and civil authorities with them. The disciples had worshipped Him saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." So when Jesus told them He was going to die the disciples were upset and confused. Jesus words of comfort were: "I will come back and take you with me." (John 14:3b) Do we have to die to be at that place? No. Believing and trusting that Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE is to be present in an intimate relationship with God. Hear Jesus words: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." Accepting Jesus is to enter into the liberating and loving relationship of God and to be with God.

**Thought for the Day:** Jesus is willing to make you a joint heir in an inheritance that transcends even death!

[1.www.Kenncollins.com/Jesus-32.htm](http://www.Kenncollins.com/Jesus-32.htm)

**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**God's Plan**  
Mencilla Jacob

**March 29, 2009**

Read: Jeremiah 29:11

**Key Verse:** *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*  
Jeremiah 29:11

Have you ever reflected on a bad decision or a failed plan in your life? Prior to making this choice or going ahead with that plan, did you have a gut feeling, a premonition from God that this was not His plan for you?

God had great plans for His people. Seeing that they were going astray, He appealed to their heart through His chosen prophet. Jeremiah warned them of their imminent doom and destruction if Jerusalem did not turn from idolatry and sin. Jeremiah, The Weeping or Broken-Hearted Prophet of the latter part of the seventh century and the first part of the sixth century B.C., he preached and interceded in prayer to God, on behalf of a stiff-necked people with hardened hearts who continually served false gods and walked in sinful ways. The imminent destruction of Jerusalem, prompted an All-knowing and All-Wise God to instruct Jeremiah, "You shall not take a wife, neither have sons or daughters in this place." Jeremiah 16:2

Jeremiah obeyed God and did not take a wife, choosing instead to hold fast to God's plans for him and the fulfillment of God's covenant promise. Like Jeremiah, trust and obey Him. God's plan for you has great rewards. His plan is to prosper you, to give you hope and a future. His plan is failsafe for there is no failure in Him and His word never returns void. Like the Babylonian invasion which brought about Israel's demise, the reward of hardened hearts and stiff necks brings about God's wrath in our lives. Like faithless Israel and unfaithful Judah, are you still doing it 'your way' instead of God's way? He longs for your return! Surrender these failed areas to Him so His plans can come to fruition in your life.

**Prayer:** Jehovah Jireh, My Provider, You know the plans You have for me! Your purpose is clear ~ to prosper me and not harm me! Forgive me of past choices that were after my heart. Your Word has purpose and will not return void. It will be successful in whatever You have destined. In Jesus' name. Amen

Day 29

**The Healing**  
Iris M. Womack

March 30, 2009

**Read: 2 Chronicles 7:14**

**Key Words:** *“Forgive their sins and heal their land.”* 2 Chronicles 7 14b

There was a popular song called “What’s Going On?” In the song, the lyrics reflected war, death, pain, grief and injustice. The words to the song also made reference to love and how it could “conquer hate” during troubling and uncertain times. I believe the question is relevant today.

“What’s Going On?” Well our country is involved in two wars, many of our brothers are in prison, disease and sickness are among us, families are homeless, famine exist, substance abuse is prevalent, jobs are scarce and many of our families are broken. Nevertheless, our heavenly Father has left his people clear instructions in regarding to healing the land.

The instructions are as follows. First the people of God must humble themselves, not be boastful and proud but meek in spirit. Secondly, we must pray and seek God’s face. For through prayer we acknowledge God and all His power; therefore, we should diligently seek his presence. We are also instructed to turn from our evil habits. Once these things are done then, God will hear our plea, forgive our sins and heal the land.

What’s going on? God is waiting to heal the land.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father we your people come in your presence humbling seeking your face. We acknowledge you as King, Lord and sovereign ruler of this vast land. We ask that you forgive us for our sins and guide us to be all that you have created us to be. Please grant us strength and courage to turn from our evil ways and focus on those things that are pleasing to your sight. We pray for a healing of the land. Amen

Day 30

**In God We Trust**  
Michelle K. Taylor

March 31, 2009

Read: Proverbs 3:5,6

**Key Verse:** *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”*  
Proverbs 3:5

On July 11, 1955, Congress made the inscription of “In God We Trust” mandatory on all coins and paper currency of the United States. God, in His Word, commands that we trust in Him with all our heart. This is not something optional in our walk with God. It is expected of us. God designed us to have total dependency on Him even with the simple ordinary day-to-day decisions that we must make.

The Book of Proverbs addresses timeless issues such as wisdom, greed, violence, and our attitude toward God. In Proverbs 3: 5-6, the text starts off with three commands: trust, lean, and acknowledge, and ends with a promise: make straight. We must totally surrender our will, ideas, desires, and future into God's hands. Many of us are "control freaks." We don't want to give control of any part of our lives over to anyone. Most of us claim that we trust God, but at the first sign of any difficulty or trial, we doubt God because He allows us to experience difficulty. We must trust God with every fiber of our being. It is through trust that our relationship with God strengthens and our love for Him grows.

Leaning on someone other than ourselves is difficult. We think that we know what’s best or what’s right for our lives. This passage reminds us that we have to stop relying on our own feelings and lean on God. God wants us to draw near to Him through His Word and listen for His direction. God will never leave you or steer you in the wrong direction. Acknowledge God in every aspect of your life. Recognize Him for who He is. It is essential that we comprehend His Sovereignty and express our love and gratitude to Him.

No matter how insightful, wise, experienced or knowledgeable we may be, only God can guide our steps properly and direct our path successfully.

**Thought of the Day:** Exercise your faith! Trust God to do what only He can do. He won’t let you down.

Day 31

**Trust God**  
William L. Davison

April 1, 2009

**Read/Key Verses:** *“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such*



**Key Verse:** *“It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.”*

Luke 12: 38

This parable teaches us to be ready for Christ’s return. We learn that we should hold the same excitement for his second coming as we hold for Christ’s birth. We rejoice at this time of year because we know that the broken relationship that existed between humans and God is being healed.

What does being ready mean? Even though we don’t know when Christ is coming, it could be in a few months or a millennia, it doesn’t really matter, what matters is that we need to be prepared to meet Christ at any time. We cannot be lax.

We all have been given certain spiritual gifts such as teaching, preaching, or singing. Likewise, we’ve been given the responsibility to study the Word of God so that we can properly spread it. We need to be responsible, like the servants in this parable, and actively use these gifts to help spread The Word – the Gospel — to others. We should be constantly working to expand God’s Kingdom on Earth.

During this time of year, this time of reflection, remembrance, and celebration, we need to focus on Christ’s lessons that he taught us while on earth. What were his lessons? That all are welcome in the kingdom and that the love He has for us is unconditional. He does not discriminate based on one’s wealth or lack of it. He loves all equally. Remember, he was willing to die so that we could heal our relationships with Him.

We must be ready for his triumphant return. We must keep our lamps burning...and like in this gospel, if we are prepared for Christ, He will rejoice and take care of us...for eternity.

**Thought for the Day:** Are you prepared for Christ’s return? What must you do to prepare? What’s getting in your way of being fully ready? What might you need to change? If you are fully ready, how can you help others connect with God? What talents and skills can you use to spread His Word?

Day 34

**All That Glitters is Not God’s**

Venessa B. Rosemond

April 4, 2009

**Read:** Romans 12:2

**Key Verse:** *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Romans 12: 2

Patterns are used extensively in teaching math and science to young students. It’s a big picture way of visualizing what happens when bits of data or information is put together in such a way to reveal an expected outcome or pattern. The student learns to manipulate the pieces and create personal designs. As Christians, we understand how the patterns of the world no longer fit our sanctified lifestyle.

Before we knew Christ, we felt we were responsible for our own happiness and future plans. We sought material comfort, prestigious connections and unfettered pleasures. We were the center of our existence and sought to improve our beings with more knowledge and information. We were what we ate, wore, drove; where we worked, learned, lived, and whose friendships we gained or influenced. Some philosophers say people are motivated by either fear or greed. If we had to draw the world’s pattern it would be very shiny but the shine superficial.

Since we know Christ, it is our desire to sin less and be more righteous. We now realize that He is the center of our world. We learn that He owns the world and all that exists. He has plans to prosper us and has not given us the spirit of fear but power, love and a sound mind. There is no visual pattern to follow, as the working of Christ is within.

**Thought for the day:** Does the world see its pattern in you?

Palm Sunday

**Hosanna!**

Moreen P. Hughes

April 5, 2009

**Read:** Mark 11: 1-11

**Key Verse:** *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

Mark 11:9b

The first Sunday of Holy Week within the Lenten Season commemorates Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem preceding his passion, Palm Sunday, traditionally known in the Western Church as Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion. For the Jews this was the time of their great Passover Festival. This was a time when Jews from all over the region would come to Jerusalem for a weeklong celebration to remember the great exodus from Egypt. (Exodus 12:37-51)

Many in the crowds had heard of Jesus or were witnesses to his miraculous ministry. Many were hoping to get a glimpse of him as he came to celebrate. Palm Sunday should have been the happiest single day in Jesus’ life. After all, the crowds had gone crazy after him, waving palm branches, shouting “Hosanna” (translated save). They were looking for the King, for a Savior rising from David’s kingdom and heralding the fulfillment of prophecy (Zechariah 9:9).

In John 12:19 the Pharisees murmured, “Look! The whole world has gone after him!” It seemed that way when Palm Sunday began. It looked as though Jesus’ ministry was to be crowned with success, but he knew better. He knew how fickle the crowds were. He knew that when push came to shove, he really couldn’t count on the people. When the chips went down and the cross went up, all would forsake him and flee. The same crowds who on Palm Sunday had waved palm branches who shouted blessing heralding a King riding on a donkey, would quickly turn and shout “Crucify Him”! on Good Friday.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please live within me, and may I always have plenty of room in my life for you. Amen

Day 35

**Anointed**  
James N. Fripp

April 6, 2009

**Read:** Mark 14:3-9

**Key Verse:** *I tell you the truth, whenever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*

Mark 14:9

Preachers often preach, “Don’t let anyone get in the way of God’s blessings.” Be open to receiving the blessings of the Lord. Scripture teaches, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Heb. 13:2) All those admonishments to be open to the unexpected, to receiving the unknown, and to be accepting of God’s gifts are life-affirming teachings. Jesus’ disciples, men He called his friends, attempted to block his anointing by an unknown woman. These men, though under Jesus’ teachings, were still undergoing transformation from sinners to saints. Women in Jesus’ time were seen as property, possessions and objects not full persons. This belief still persists today.

Jesus, born of a woman, involved many women in his ministry. Yet in this verse is a woman who does not speak. She acts. Her deeds exceed any words she could say. People who observed her actions complained. Her gifts, her perfume, her actions could benefit the poor. The disciples’ own words show the weakness in their argument. It was her alabaster jar that she broke open. It was her perfume she poured on Jesus’ head. She had courageously stepped out of her marginalized social and gender class to do a beautiful thing. Was she an angel sent by God, or an ordinary woman? We do not know but we do know that Jesus said this about her and about all women of faith: “Leave her alone; she has done a beautiful thing; she did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.” I believe Jesus is telling us that those who anoint are anointed, and that women of any station in life are to be respected and not dismissed, or spoken to harshly, even when the men around them do not understand their actions. Jesus’ prophesy has come to pass and, 2,000 years later, we still preach, praise and proclaim an act of unselfishness and love by a nameless anointing woman. Praise God for the anointing.

Day 36

**The Greatest Love**  
Michelle K. Taylor

April 7, 2009

**Read:** John 3:16

**Key Verse:** *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

John 3:16 presents us with the Bible's greatest theme: God's love for us through Jesus Christ. In the twenty-six words that comprise this powerful verse, we can find God, love, mankind, sin, Christ, death, atonement and everlasting life. It shares God's absolute love for us. This is a message that the world needs to hear and that our witness must proclaim.

Everyone thinks about love or better yet craves it. That's because our souls are designed for love. As Christians, we sometimes struggle to love those who have hurt us, we have long-standing feuds with people at work and in our church, and we bear grudges and resentment that lasts for years.

God's love is more than we can truly understand. Although mankind has continually rebelled against God and His will, He decided to show love towards the world and allowed His only son to suffer the shame and pain of the cross. God loved us by giving us His son; we ought to love Him with all that we have in return. We should express our devotion by living holy and loving others with the same kind of love and compassion God has shown to us.

Love is the most important virtue and is indispensable for Christian relationships. This sacrificial love should beautify our marriages, family, and friendships, glorify God in the church and inspire us to passionately spread the Word of God. Love is more than simple emotional affection. It is a divine capacity to sacrifice self for others. This kind of love is at the very essence of the love of God. The death of Christ is how God demonstrated His greatest love for us. God needs nothing from anyone, yet He desires to share His love with a people who know Him as Lord and are astonished by His mercy and grace.

**Thought of the day:** God's love cannot be earned. It is a precious gift. How will you thank Him for His great love?

Day 37

**Preparation for  
Resurrection and Higher Call**  
R. Helen Davison

April 8, 2009

**Read:** Luke 22:7-20

**Key Verse:** *"This is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

Luke 22:20b

Jesus knew that his time to die was at hand; therefore he asked two of his disciples, Peter and John, to go into the city and prepare for the Passover. When his disciples got into the city, everything that Jesus told them happened. Isn't that just like Jesus to prepare the way for us? All we have to do is have faith, believe, and follow his instructions.

Jesus sat down with his disciples and he said to them, "I have desired to eat this Passover with you, before I suffer. I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." The reason why Jesus wanted to eat the Passover with his disciples was to teach them the true meaning of his suffering/death and sacrifice as God's Lamb.

Jesus took the cup and he gave thanks and said unto his disciples, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes". He then took the bread and broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

The wafer represents Jesus' body. The cup the wine represents Jesus' blood. He then said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Jesus spoke of a new covenant in which His blood is poured out for us. Jesus blood cleans and purifies because we inherited sin from Adam. In order for us to receive transforming power we must come to Jesus. He has cleansing power that will clean us up, sanctify us and save us from our sins. Nothing but Jesus' blood can cleanse us from our sins.

**Prayer:** Father we thank you for your Son Jesus, for shedding his blood, dying on the cross so that we may have eternal life. Jesus, God's sacrificial lamb was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not say a word. He did it for LOVE. Thank You, Jesus. Amen

Day 38 **Maundy Thursday**

**Trusting the Lord's Plan** April 9, 2009  
Conley Hughes, Jr.

**Read:** Luke 22: 7-23; Exodus 12: 1-28

**Key Verse:** “They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.” Luke 22:13

The Jewish Passover event is an essential part of Jesus’ journey to the cross. The Passover lamb signified that Jesus himself would become the required sacrifice for the sins of all humankind. During the Passover meal, certain parts of the lamb were observed with particular attention, along with other items on the table.

The identification of the meat, bread, the cup of wine and the bitter herbs were symbols of both the suffering and the redemption of God’s people. On the night of Jesus’ betrayal he gave particular attention to the cup, which contained the wine, and the bread, which did not contain any yeast. According to Luke’s account, Jesus blessed the cup twice. In the second blessing which occurred *after* the full meal, Jesus declared that the cup a symbol “my blood.” This “blood” cup also served as a new covenant relationship between Jesus and anyone who would receive him as Lord.

To the surprise of his disciples, Jesus made sure that *everything* he and the Twelve needed was in place. Jesus simply gave the disciples instructions and when they entered the city, everything was exactly as Jesus had said. The room was available, so the disciples were able to quickly arrange the items for the meal. There is no record of the disciples carrying any food or items with them. We merely need to understand what the disciples did: “They left and found things *just as Jesus had told them.*”

*The Lord always has a plan. As His disciples we need only to trust His promises that all will be as He has said. Julianne of Norwich, a devoted Christian saint, was fond of saying that with Jesus “all will be well.”*

The events of the day leading to the evening of Maundy Thursday, the night of the Christian’s first Lord’s Supper, remind us that because our Lord is a part of the great plan of redemption, all will be as He has said.

**Prayer:** O’ Lord, teach me to trust the Savior in all that I do and to remember that everything will be just as He has said. In His precious name, Amen.

Day 39 Good Friday      **Ultimate Good**      April 10, 2009  
**in the Hands of God**  
Conley Hughes, Jr.

**Read:** Luke 23: 26-29; Psalm 31: 1- 24

**Key Verse:** “*Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father into your hands I commit my spirit. When he had said this he breathed the last.*”

Luke 23:46

The final physical act of Jesus was the cessation of breath, but his last words were a prayer of confidence. It is possible that Jesus’ last prayer was the first prayer he was taught. Some Bible scholars believe that the last words of Jesus from the cross were one of two prayers young Jewish children were taught early in life. The prayer Luke gives us is one of confidence and assurance, the other prayer was for protection: “The Lord will watch over [my] going and coming both now and forever more.” (Psalm 121:8)

This prayer could be heard earlier as we listen to the petition of David in Psalm 31:5a. The King of Judah cries, “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” The difference however is that David pleads further in saying, “Redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.” Jesus did not have to plead for His prayer was an affirmation of *confidence*; He knew that his work of redemption on the cross had been accomplished. Jesus now was on his journey toward the glorious *Resurrection*.

The Scripture tells us that *after* Jesus uttered his prayer of confidence and assurance, “he breathed the last.” With all confidence in a heavenly Father, Jesus abandoned his hours of agony and wounded flesh by placing his own breath in the care of God. There is ultimate good in the hands of God. When we voice our complete confidence in God, all that remains is to simply release the agonizing and shallow breath that is of no use to us.

I visited a man one Friday afternoon at the old Hale hospital in Haverhill, Massachusetts. I soon learned that the agony he was suffering was not his 90 years, but the fact that within those years he had not received Christ as Savior and Lord. After a while the man said he was *now* ready to receive the Lord. As we ended prayer, the elderly man exuded with confidence; not in himself, but in his Savior. He died hours later, but only to live again. It was a very Good Friday.

**Prayer:** Oh, Lord I give my life to you. Make my day good! In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Day 40      **Look to the Future**      April 11, 2009  
Brenda A. Fluker

**Read:** “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,...*” 2 Timothy 3:16

**Key Verse:** “Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.”

Psalms 119:34

Our outlook on life often depends on our inner look. For the past 40-plus days, we have focused on our inner selves. We have been molded by God’s Word to overcome fear, doubt, anxiety and other obstacles to following God’s will for our lives. We have allowed the Word to take root in our hearts so we might be obedient to God’s will.

God wants us to grow. He wants to move us out of our comfort zone to a higher level of service. We must honestly evaluate our lives so that our course will be transformed to God’s design. During this season of Lent, we have examined our past, our accomplishments, our gains, our wrongs, our mistakes and our losses. We now hand our past to God and ask him to work it all out according to his will. Without that baggage, we are now free to answer a higher call to service.

As we look to the future, we must continue to rely on God’s word to guide us. God’s Word proclaims the truth about God, us, sin, justice, love and many other things. We are no longer dependent on mere opinion to guide our decisions and actions. God’s Word defines morality and rebukes sin. God’s word shows us how to break sinful habits and develop godly ones. God’s Word reminds us that we should perform acts of love and compassion for all including the poor and oppressed. As we eagerly anticipate the celebration of Christ’s resurrection, let us look to the future and a higher call in Christ. May God’s Word be our guide as we yield to that higher call.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for revealing your will to me. Help me to overcome all obstacles that keep me from being obedient to your will. Lord, may your Word dwell in my heart and guide all my actions. In Jesus name, Amen.

## **Resurrection Sunday    Looking Up To the Resurrection**

April 12, 2009

Conley Hughes, Jr.

**Read:** Luke 24: 1-48; Mark 16:1-8; Matthew 28:1-10

**Key Verse:** “In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee.”

Luke 24:5-6

It often is true that a fearful, doubtful or shy person may fail to provide adequate eye contact with another person. Similarly, if we have some doubts about something we are prone to seem distant or removed.

Luke is very good at describing the emotions of people in his Gospel. We get a good glimpse of this with the *Resurrection* story. The women who first appeared at the tomb where the body of Jesus had been placed were understandably *unsettled*. When the dearest person in your life is thought to be gone forever, it isn’t easy to smile or keep your emotions together. We owe Luke a great deal of appreciation for providing us with a very accurate description of what people really thought and how they felt on that first *Easter* morning.

Luke describes the women who first appeared at the cemetery as *dazed* or *confused* as they neared the tomb where Jesus had been placed. After all that had occurred several days before, could you blame them? When any of us encounters a major crisis in our lives we’re prone to be unsettled. As if this were not enough, the women saw what appeared to be two men (who were likely angels) standing beside them. At this point, Luke said the women were frightened and instantly “bowed down their faces to the ground.” This meant that the women refused to look up; they focused at all of the other graves in fear.

But at that moment the greatest words ever spoken were given. Here’s a paraphrase: “You don’t have to focus on all the death in this place. The One you seek is not here; He is risen!” So with that assurance, the women looked to the *Resurrection* and did not look down again. They ran and told the others what they had experienced. The women kept their gaze above and not below.

**Prayer:** O’ Lord, on this *Resurrection Day* I will forever look to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!



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