



TAKE UP YOUR CROSS
LENT 2015

Take Up Your Cross

Lent 2015 (Year B)

February 18-April 4

A Lenten Devotional for Families

Although this booklet will help anyone interested in walking with Jesus during Lent, it is especially designed to help parents provide spiritual guidance for their children. For each of the 7 weeks of Lent there is a different reading from Scripture with questions, activities and exercises that are based on the scripture readings as found in the Revised Common Lectionary.

Season of Lent

The seven weeks before Holy Week are called the season of Lent. Lent is a season of reflection and repentance that begins on Ash Wednesday (February 18th) and continues on all weekdays and Saturdays until Easter (April 5th). Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent. The number 40 is connected with many biblical events, but especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling.

How to use this guide

This Lent Guide follows a format called Take 5. Take 5 is about taking a break from the fast pace of our lives; like a basketball coach calling time out to focus their team at a crucial point in the game. Take 5 is simple and yet deeply profound. While there are five steps to follow, the power lies in simply being together listening to God and one another. It is an opportunity to re-orient ourselves around what really matters. T.S. Elliot once asked, "What life have we, if not life together?" Take 5 is about helping families live life together.

Take 5 is more like a dance than a march. Here is a summary of the five movements you will go through each time you Take 5 as a family.

Share highs and lows. Begin by giving each family member a chance to share a story of what happened in his or her life that day. It is often helpful to think about your story in terms of a high point and a low point. Anyone who wants to is free to pass and not share.

Listen to scripture. Listen as one member of the family reads a story or text from the Bible.

Talk together about the scripture and how it relates to everyone's highs and lows. The goal of this step is to help one another be aware of God's presence and activity in our lives. We are asking ourselves, "Where did God's story and my story meet today?" Beware; this may be the hardest step. Don't force it. Be patient and give the eyes of your heart time to adjust to God's light.

When we see the story of our lives fitting into or aligning with God's bigger story we should give thanks and be encouraged. At other times when we notice that our lives have gone "off script" we need to re-think how we have been living and talk with God and others about necessary changes.

Perhaps a simpler way to think about this is to ask, "How is my life looking like Jesus' life? How is it not?"

Pray for one another and the world. Take time to give God thanks and ask for His help.

Bless. Wrap up your time together by reminding your children how much you love them, how special they are and who they are in God's eyes. Your

children also need to know that they have been “blessed to be a blessing.” In other words, their life has a divine purpose and how they live matters. Make physical contact with your child by placing a hand on their head or shoulder as you speak to them.

In addition to following the Take 5 format, each weekly devotional includes a Word to Parents. Typically this will be a brief commentary on the scripture. Each devotion also contains a Family Activity. Some of these require some thought or set-up before hand, so you are encouraged to read through each of them before you meet together.

Find a time once a week when your family can gather together for 15-30 minutes to listen to God’s Word and one another. One suggestion is to go through each week’s material as a part of dinner on Sunday night. Maybe you could order pizza from your favorite pizza shop. Those who can, should help with setting the table or cleaning up afterward. Learning to serve one another in the home is one of the best ways we learn to serve in our larger church family and the world. Plan to adapt the material in this booklet to fit the needs of your family. The younger your children are, the shorter the discussion may need to be. For each weekly reading, a couple of verses have been highlighted to read instead of reading the whole passage. Also, keep in mind that answering all the questions correctly is not the point. Gathering together around the Word of God as a family is. Being a parent does not mean you are expected to be the expert. Be yourself, have fun, don’t feel any pressure, grow and laugh together and trust the Holy Spirit to do the work of transforming your family into a community of love.

Feb 18: Ash Wednesday

Word to Parents

You are encouraged to attend your church’s Ash Wednesday service together as a family. There are a few questions provided below for you to use with your family to reflect on the experience.

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Showy religion

“Be careful that you don’t practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² “Whenever you give to the poor, don’t blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. ³ But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing ⁴ so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

Showy prayer

⁵ “When you pray, don’t be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. ⁶ But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

Showy fasting

¹⁶ “And when you fast, don’t put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. ¹⁷ When you fast, brush your hair and wash your

face. ¹⁸ Then you won't look like you are fasting to people, but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Earthly and heavenly treasures

¹⁹ "Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. ²⁰ Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. ²¹ Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows.

During this season of Lent how might you practice "giving to the poor"?

During this season of Lent how might you practice praying to God?

During this season of Lent from what might God be calling you to fast?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Decide if you or any member of your family wants to make a 40-day commitment to any specific practice. If you do, share it with one another.

Pray for one another and the world

God, thank you for loving us today and for always being with us, especially when we feel alone. God, help us to live our lives for you alone, without feeling the need or desire to please and impress others.

Bless your children

Your heavenly Father sees you and loves you and I see you and love you too.

Family Activity: Attending and reflecting on the Ash Wednesday Service

Who did you talk with at the Ash Wednesday service?

How did it feel having the ashes put on your forehead?

Why do we put ashes on our forehead?

How many days until Easter?

Feb 22: First Sunday of Lent

Word to Parents:

- *God's Kingdom* is perhaps best understood as the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. Wherever Jesus is allowed to reign, there you find God's Kingdom.
- *Good news* or *gospel* was used in two ways during the life of Jesus. The first had its roots in the Old Testament and was understood to refer to the news of God's victory over evil and His rescue of His people. The second was used by the Romans to refer to the birthday of the Emperor.

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

Mark 1:9-15

Jesus is baptized and tempted

⁹ About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. ¹¹ **And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."**

¹² At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

Jesus' message

¹⁴ After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, ¹⁵ saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows.

Why do your parents love you?

Why does God the Father love Jesus?

What is the last good news you remember hearing?

What from this text stands out to you?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Pray for one another and the world

God, may the good news of your kingdom invade not only our hearts and home but the whole world as well. Make right those things that are wrong, help the weak, feed the hungry, be with the lonely and use us to do so.

Bless your children

As you allow Jesus to be in control of your life, may God's Kingdom come in your heart just as it is in heaven.

Family Activity

Have each of your children pick three words from the list below (or come up with their own) that describe who they are as a child of God. Then use those three words to fill in the blanks below. Have them write them on a card. Use these words daily to remind your children of who they are!

Worthy	Trustworthy	Good	Blessed
Dependable	Reliable	Enough	Accepted
Loved	Honest	Courageous	Beautiful
Delightful	Authentic	Daring	Known
Special	Confident	Inspired	Protected
Creative	Bold	Original	Fearless
Strong	Brave	Secure	Kind

As God's child, (child's name) you are _____,

_____ and _____.

March 1: Second Sunday of Lent

Word to Parents:

- The Romans were in charge during the life of Jesus. One of the ways they maintained control was through intimidation and fear. They would often hang people on crosses at busy intersections to remind everyone how Rome dealt with people who did not follow their rules. It was their version of the death penalty.
- Being Christian is not as much about agreeing to a set of doctrines as much as it is about learning to live your life the way Jesus would if he were you.
- *Human One* is a title that most other English Bibles translate as "the Son of Man."

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

Mark 8:31-38

³¹ Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: "The Human One must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead." ³² He said this plainly. But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him. ³³ Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: "Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts."

³⁴ **After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me."** ³⁵ All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. ³⁶ Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? ³⁷ What will people give in exchange for their

lives? ³⁸ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father's glory with the holy angels."

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows

What does it mean to "say no" to yourself? How is that like "taking up your cross?"

What does this text have to say about suffering?

What in this text stands out to you?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Pray for one another and the world

God, may the good news of your kingdom invade not only our hearts and home but the whole world as well. Make right those things that are wrong, help the weak, feed the hungry, be with the lonely and use us to do so.

Bless your children

May God's Kingdom come in your heart just as it is in heaven as you allow Jesus to be in control of your life.

Family Activity:

Play a fun but simple game of follow the leader. Tell your children you are the leader and they must do exactly what you do. Then proceed to move throughout your house walking, doing cartwheels, hopping on one foot, zigzagging, skipping, doing summersaults, hopping on the furniture, etc. Afterwards talk with your children about how being a Christian is like playing "Follow the Leader." A couple questions to get you started might be, As Christians who are we following? What kinds of things did Jesus do as an example for us to follow?

March 8: Third Sunday of Lent

Word to Parents:

- *The temple* was a place where God's presence dwelt on earth. However, in Jesus Christ, God came to dwell on earth in a person. Jesus became the new "temple." When he ascended into heaven he breathed His Spirit onto the church and passed on to us the job of being God's dwelling place on earth.
- *Passover* was and is a festival to celebrate the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt.
- *The reason for Jesus' anger was the fact that the people doing business were taking advantage of the weak and the poor.*

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

John 2:13-22

Jesus in Jerusalem at Passover

13 It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 He found in the temple those who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves, as well as those involved in exchanging currency sitting there. 15 He made a whip from ropes and chased them all out of the temple, including the cattle and the sheep. He scattered the coins and overturned the tables of those who exchanged currency. 16 He said to the dove sellers, "Get these things out of here! Don't make my Father's house a place of business." 17 His disciples remembered that it is written, *Passion for your house consumes me.*

18 Then the Jewish leaders asked him, "By what authority are you doing these things? What miraculous sign will you show us?"

19 Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up."

20 The Jewish leaders replied, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?" 21 But the temple Jesus was talking about was his body. 22 After he was raised from the

dead, his disciples remembered what he had said, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows

Who do you know who is poor or under resourced?

Where do you tend to find God's presence on earth?

What from this text stands out to you?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Pray for one another and the world

God, we thank you that you live in our hearts. Help us to be a family and church where people can come to find you. Help us to remember that we are loved and help us love one another.

Bless your children

May you know God lives in you and loves you.

Family Activity (Option #1):

Build a house together out of blocks, playing cards, or whatever you have lying around the house and then knock it down. Talk to your children about a house being the place you live. Here are some questions for discussion: Where did God live in the Old Testament (Before Jesus was born)? Where did God live in the New Testament (after Jesus was born)? Where does God live today?

Family activity (option #2)

Take your family to visit a place where people are often neglected or forgotten, such as a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, retirement home, etc.

March 15: Fourth Sunday of Lent

Word to Parents:

- *Believe* in the Gospel of John always means to trust and rely upon.
- *Lifted up a snake in the wilderness* see Numbers 21:8-9
- *Eternal life* as used in the Bible refers to a quality of life rather than just duration of time. It could be translated "full life."

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

John 3:14-21

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. ¹⁶ **God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life.** ¹⁷ God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him isn't judged; whoever doesn't believe in him is already judged, because they don't believe in the name of God's only Son. ¹⁹ "This is the basis for judgment: The light came into the world, and people loved darkness more than the light, for their actions are evil. ²⁰ All who do wicked things hate the light and don't come to the light for fear that their actions will be exposed to the light. ²¹ Whoever does the truth comes to the light so that it can be seen that their actions were done in God."

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows.

For whom did Jesus die on the cross?

What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

How would you describe the quality of life you have been experiencing the past week?

What from this text stands out to you?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Pray for one another and the world

God, thank you so much for loving us so much that you came to rescue us in the person of your only Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to trust you each and every day of our lives that we may walk in the light and have the best kind of life imaginable.

Bless your children

Remember today you are so important that Jesus chose to die so you could live.

Family Activity:

Go for a walk outside as a family and look for things in creation that appear to be dying (old leaves, brown grass, dead branches etc.) Explain how each of these things is a picture or example of what it means to "perish." Then identify things that are coming alive or blooming. Explain how these are examples of what Jesus meant by "eternal life." Eternal life is not just about time but also about quality. (The quality of life is much better in green grass or a branch with buds on it than brown grass or a branch severed from a tree). You may even hold up one example of each and ask, "Which one does your life feel like?" With Jesus we can experience "full life." Without Jesus we shrivel up and die.

March 22: Fifth Sunday of Lent

Word to Parents:

- Glory- The essence or manifestation of God's immediate presence.
- Judgment - The people of Israel continually chose to ignore God and his repeated attempts to rescue them. They were now out of time and would experience the negative consequences (death) of not listening to God.

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

John 12:20-33

Jesus teaches about his death

²⁰ Some Greeks were among those who had come up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request: "Sir, we want to see Jesus." ²² Philip told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, "The time has come for the Human One to be

glorified. ²⁴ **I assure you that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it can only be a single seed. But if it dies, it bears**

much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their lives will lose them, and those who hate their lives in this world will keep them forever. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me. Wherever I am, there my servant will also be. My Father will honor whoever serves me.

²⁷ "Now I am deeply troubled. What should I say? 'Father, save me from this time'? No, for this is the reason I have come to this time. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard and said, "It's thunder." Others said, "An angel spoke to him."

³⁰ Jesus replied, "This voice wasn't for my benefit but for yours. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment of this world. Now this world's ruler will be thrown out. ³² When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me." (³³ He said this to show how he was going to die.)

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows

What happens to a seed when it is planted into the ground?

How is Jesus' life like that seed?

What do you think it means to "follow" a Savior who chooses to die for the people he loves? What from this text stands out to you?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Pray for one another and the world

God, you chose to die that we might live. You became poor so that we could be rich. Thank you for that amazing love. Help us to love one another the same way that you love us. Help us to think of others more than we think of ourselves.

Bless your children

May you know that you are so valuable that God chose to die for you so that you would not die but have real and lasting life.

Family Activity: Plant a seed and explain how the seed goes into the soil and dies but after a time a new plant grows up out of the soil from the dead seed. How is this like what happened to Jesus? How can this occur in our lives today?

March 29: Palm Sunday Fifth Sunday of Lent

Word to Parents:

- Festival - It is Passover again
- Hosanna
- How ironic that the one the people are calling "king" is arriving in town on a young donkey, something only poor people ride. A King would typically arrive on a large, beautiful, and proud horse. Why is a young donkey more appropriate for Jesus?

Share highs and lows of the day

Listen to Scripture

John 12:12-16

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ **They took palm branches and went out to meet him. They shouted, "Hosanna!**

Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessings on the king of Israel!"

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ *Don't be afraid, Daughter Zion.*

*Look! Your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt.*

¹⁶ His disciples didn't understand these things at first. After he was glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

Talk about the scripture and how it relates to your highs and lows

How do you imagine Jesus would look riding on a very young and small donkey?

Why were the people shouting when Jesus was coming to Jerusalem?

What from this text stands out to you?

Do you see any connections between your high or low and the scripture we just read?

Pray for one another and the world

Jesus, you are the humble King. You don't use your power to control and manipulate others but to love and serve them. Help us today to worship you as King of our lives, not because someone is making us, but because we want to.

Bless your children

May Jesus arrive humbly in your heart today and may you worship Him as King.

Family Activity: Act out the triumphal entry. One person can play the part of Jesus riding in on a donkey, someone else can play the part of the donkey and everyone else can be the crowd placing their coats on the ground before Jesus and crying out "Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" Take turns letting each of your children play the part of Jesus.