

Discussion Starters for Families For the Forty Days of Lent

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This season of Lent begins Wednesday, February 12. In these 40 days before Easter, Christians the world around will be engaged in prayer and private reflection about the meaning of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Here is a series of discussion starters for families to use during Lent. They are listed by dates on the calendar. (Sundays are not included in the 40 days.)

Traditionally, this season has been linked with the account of Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, immediately following his baptism at the hand of John the Baptist. At the end of those days, Jesus experienced three temptations, all of which he resisted. He refused to let his Messianic role be corrupted with a cheapened concept of power and authority.

The suggestions for the first 33 days are based on Luke, Chapter 4. We will spend nearly five weeks pondering lines from that chapter over and over again! The last seven days of suggestions are based on the final week of Jesus' life (Holy Week).

Note that the suggestions focus on KEY WORDS (in caps in the text). Let your study and discussions focus on these words. Listed below are the key words. CHECK THEM OFF as you progress through the season of Lent.

Click on the Keywords to skip to their corresponding section

1. [repentance](#)
2. [wilderness](#)
3. [tempted](#)
4. [fasting](#)
5. [bread](#)
6. [hunger](#)
7. [authority](#)
8. [worship](#)
9. [spectacular](#)
10. [Holy Spirit](#)
11. [power](#)
12. [good news](#)
13. [poor](#)
14. [release](#)
15. [captives](#)
16. [sight](#)
17. [blindness](#)
18. [liberty](#)
19. [oppression](#)
20. [Scripture](#)
21. [fulfillment](#)
22. [graciousness](#)
23. [physician](#)
24. [prophet](#)
25. [wrath](#)
26. [teaching](#)
27. [healing](#)
28. [preaching](#)
29. [titles](#)
30. [roots](#)
31. [identify](#)
32. [acceptance](#)
33. [rejection](#)
34. [triumph](#)
35. [prayer](#)
36. [controversy](#)
37. [supper](#)
38. [servant](#)
39. [death](#)
40. [sacrifice](#)

THINGS TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

February 12. ASH WEDNESDAY: The use of ashes is a symbol of humility and REPENTANCE. Talk about the beginning of Lent as a time of quiet reflection in which we remember our own smallness in the presence of a great God. Look up the word "repent" in the dictionary. How can we repent and be sincere about it?

February 13. Jesus went into the WILDERNESS for a forty-day period. See if you can find a picture of the most rugged Palestinian wilderness (the same today as it was in Jesus' day). What would it be like to be alone there?

February 14. Jesus was TEMPTED while alone in the wilderness. What does it mean to be tempted? In what places are we tempted today? What are some of the figurative "wildernesses" we experience? (This last question is for youth/adults.)

February 15. Jesus went without food during his wilderness experience. What does it mean to "fast"? What are some of the reasons for FASTING? What are the benefits, physically and spiritually? (Note that breakfast is "breaking fast".) How could fasting help us to remember all the hungry people in the world today?

February 16. FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 17. Jesus was tempted to turn stones into BREAD. How did the devil express this temptation? (See Luke 4:3.) What did Jesus answer? What do you think is meant by the words, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'? (What do we need that is more than just food for our bodies? Make a list.)

February 18. What are some of the kinds of HUNGER people experience today? Make a list of places in the world where people do not have enough to eat. Think of spiritual hungers in an affluent society. Are there simple solutions to these problems of hunger? Why, or why not?

February 19. Jesus was tempted to assume AUTHORITY over all the kingdoms of the world. The devil asked only that he (Jesus) bow down and worship him (the devil). What is meant by "authority"? Who has authority in kingdoms today? In our communities? In families?

February 20. Jesus answered the second temptation by saying again, 'You

shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." Are we tempted to WORSHIP something different from the one God? If so, what? (We may not use the word "worship" to express a level of deepest commitment or interest. Today we tend to use terms like "first priority". What has priority in our lives.)

February 21. The last of Jesus' temptations was to do a SPECTACULAR thing, to jump off the top of the Jerusalem temple to show people he could do it without suffering physical harm. He refused, saying that he would not 'tempt the Lord'. (He would not stoop to such a cheap display. It would be unfitting of God's Son.) In a time of prayer, thank God that he does not choose to work through spectacular, showy demonstrations.

February 22. The devil departed from Jesus "until an opportune time." That is, the tempting character of the Evil One is always lurking in the background. Jesus has resisted the temptations because he was full of the HOLY SPIRIT. Jesus returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit." Spend some time thinking of what we mean when we speak of God's Spirit.

February 23. SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

February 24. Jesus overcame his temptations after the wilderness sojourn because he has received POWER from God. The power was not physical but spiritual. Think of a list of "powerful" influences in the world today. What is the evidence that people receive power from God?

February 25. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah. Jesus knows that the words refer to himself. He has "GOOD NEWS" to offer. The word "gospel" means good news. Talk of how it feels to hear good news. What was good about Jesus' message?

February 26. Jesus' good news was for the POOR. There were many poor people in Jesus' day. What are the poor in the world now? What kinds of poverty do people experience? (Think not only of the physical poverty, which is serious indeed. Consider also the poverty of mind and soul.) Did Jesus exclude the rich from his message?

February 27. Jesus came to proclaim "RELEASE" for persons held in captivity. Think about the word "release." When have you experienced it, if ever? How does Jesus bring release to persons? (A word often heard today is "liberation." Is it the same or different from "release?")

February 28. Think again about CAPTIVES to whom Jesus came. What

does it mean to be a "captive?" We have heard people say that they are "captivated" by something. What does that mean? Is there some kind of captivity besides being held physically in prison or some other place of restraint? What about captivity to drugs or other harmful influences?

March 1. Jesus was concerned about the recovery of SIGHT for persons who could not see. Close your eyes and ask, "What's important about being able to see?" What would it be like to be totally blind? Think, too, about a word we use so much these days, "insight." What does it mean to have in-sight? Can we really "see in" (have inward sight)?

March 2. THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

March 3. Ponder again the idea of BLINDNESS. Jesus healed blind persons and showed special care for them. What do we do today for blind persons? Why? What are some of the kinds of blindness that are different from physical blindness? (Have you heard someone say, "He/she is 'blind' to what is happening?" Can such blindness be healed? How?"

March 4. Jesus' ministry would "set at LIBERTY" the oppressed people of the world. To have liberty is to be a free person. We speak a lot about freedom and liberty, especially in America. Where does liberty come from? In what way has Jesus brought liberty to persons? (Think of his fearless followers who have felt free to speak the truth even in hard circumstances.)

March 5. Return to the idea of OPPRESSION. What causes it? Why is God opposed to human oppression? What does God desire for the world's people? Give some honest thought to the history of the Christian church. Has it ever included instances of oppression? Why? What can be done about some episodes?

March 6. Jesus' words about his own life and work were chosen from SCRIPTURE. He answered the Tempter (all three times) with lines from Deuteronomy (Chs. 6 and 8). He read in the synagogue from Isaiah, ch. 61. Turn to the Old Testament and see if you can find these lines without knowing the exact verse numbers. Where did Jesus obtain his good knowledge of Hebrew Scripture?

March 7. Jesus spoke of his ministry as the FULFILLMENT of Scripture. It was as if the words of the prophets were now taking on a meaning they had never had before! People would eventually be enabled to see that Jesus was the One of whom the prophets had spoken long ago. He would be more than a

"law." In his own person he would enable people to see what God is like. In what ways is this true for us?

March 8. The people who heard Jesus in Nazareth marveled at the GRACIOUSNESS of his words. They did not understand his role and could not believe he was more than just "Joseph's son." What does it mean to speak and act graciously? Who are some of the most gracious persons you know? Why do you think so? Make a list of gracious qualities, then see if Jesus truly exhibits these.

March 9. FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 10. Jesus knows himself to be a PHYSICIAN, but he can only work his healing ministry at times and places where God wills it. His "own country" is not likely to believe in him enough to permit such a ministry. When do you think Jesus' power of healing is present among people? Why?

March 11. Jesus also refers to himself as a PROPHET, noting again that he cannot gain ready acceptance in his own country. What is the meaning of the word "prophet?" If a prophet is primarily a "forthteller of the will of God," what was it that Jesus came to tell? Is Jesus only a prophet? What more does he do?

March 12. Jesus experienced the WRATH of the people in his hometown synagogue. They wanted to cast him down headlong from a hill. But Jesus passed "through the midst of them" and "went away." (Remember how he had refused to cast himself down from the temple spectacularly? Now, quietly, he avoids disaster. Are we given the power to do the same?)

March 13. Jesus became well known for his authoritative TEACHING. He chose to attend the synagogues wherever he went, and his teaching was the explication of Scripture. What is the source of effective teaching in the churches today? Who should do it? What is the best way to assure that teaching is carried on in each generation?

March 14. Jesus' teaching is followed closely by acts of HEALING, which added to His fame. Healing has always been a concern of Christians. How is it carried on in our own time? When are some times when you have felt truly "healed?" Why? Who was the healer? What was the source of the healing power?

March 15. Jesus was also given to PREACHING. How is preaching different from teaching? (Preaching is "proclamation" or "announcing" the good

news of God. Teaching is explaining and providing background needed in order to understand the preaching. While Jesus does both, He spends more time in teaching.)

March 16. FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 17. How many TITLES can you think of to describe Jesus and his ministry? In Luke, ch. 4, he is called "Jesus of Nazareth," "Holy One of God," "Son of God," and "the Christ." Those who know his true nature best are the "demons" that he opposed. What do you make of this mystery?

March 18. Jesus' personal ROOTS were very deep. He knew who he was, as a member of the people of God, as a descendent of the house and lineage of David. The history of the Jewish people was his own deeply felt history, and he "came to his own" (people) in his Messianic role. He could resist temptation and stay close to God because of his spiritual "roots." Would you agree or disagree with that statement? How deep are our own roots these days?

March 19. A modern way of speaking about Jesus' early ministry would be to say that he found his IDENTITY as the Christ. We all struggle with questions about our own roles in this life; sometimes we have "identity crises." What is the best way to discover one's identity as a child of God? (Or do we have to "re-discover" it?)

March 20. From the poor, the blind, the maimed, the sick, and the gentle in spirit, Jesus received the welcome and ACCEPTANCE that gave him a certain amount of fame. Sometimes we speak of "accepting" Christ; an important step in acknowledging our dependence upon him. When is acceptance more difficult? Easier?

March 21. Jesus also suffered REJECTION. Most often, the rejecting spirit was present among the religious leaders, the truly "good" leaders of the communities he visited. Why? When are we in danger of rejecting Jesus as the Christ? How do we discern which is accepting and which is rejecting behavior, on our own part?

March 22. We come to the closing days of Lent. Tomorrow will be the celebration of Jesus' TRIUMPH as he entered into Jerusalem in an act that fulfilled Scripture. It was to be a short-lived triumph, however. How can we best prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ? Will we be like the crowds that soon fell away? Or will we stay with Jesus in his hours of trial?

March 23. PALM SUNDAY

March 24. Jesus drove the money-changers from the temple, declaring it to be a "house of PRAYER." Throughout his three years of ministry, Jesus has relied on prayer to sustain him and to make possible his teaching, healing, and preaching. How important is prayer for us? When are the times that prayer has its greatest meaning? Why?

March 25. Jesus became the center of CONTROVERSY in his last week of life, in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. It has been said that the most important question in the world is still this one: "Who is Jesus Christ?" How we answer that question determines not only our stance about religion, but also about the nature of humanity. How do you answer the question?

March 26. In the week of Passover, Jesus has a final SUPPER with his special followers, the apostles. It was in the breaking of bread and drinking of wine that Jesus revealed the outcome of His Messianic ministry. The apostles could not grasp the meal's full significance. Why? As we come to the Lord's Table, how ready are we to accept the great work Jesus has done for us?

March 27. Jesus took the role of SERVANT. He washed the disciples' feet as a symbol of his serving ministry. Peter protested. Are we willing accept Jesus as our servant? What does he do for us? How, indeed, can we emulate his role as servant? What are some forms of service that are open to us at this very time? (Do we resist them?)

March 28. Jesus experiences a painful DEATH. It is not a pale imitation of death. At the age of only 33, in the prime of his life, he passes "through the valley of the shadow" and knows the agony of crucifixion. His prayer to be able to accept what happened as the will of God in heaven was answered. All Christians must face death. How will we do it?

March 29. Jesus paid the supreme SACRIFICE. He is sometimes called the "Lamb of God" (Agnus Dei). As a lamb would be slaughtered as a sacrifice upon an altar in Hebrew worship, so Jesus was slain as the final offering on our behalf. The mystery of it is full of pathos and sorrow. But that is not the end of the story. Tomorrow, on Easter Day, we shall hear what happened.

March 30. EASTER SUNDAY

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