

DWELLING IN THE WORD: LENT 2015 SPIRITUAL GROWTH STUDY

Introduction to Dwelling in the Word

Why a Lenten study on spiritual growth? Lent is the church season when we journey with Jesus to his suffering and death on the cross and beyond to his resurrection. We ponder the depth of God's love for us and God's healing power for redemption. It is a time of personal reflection, repentance, and renewal. This Lenten study, "Dwelling in the Word," gives us the opportunity to allow God to speak to us through the scripture passages chosen for Lent. We are each on spiritual journeys, and God promises to meet us wherever we are to encourage, inspire, teach, and guide us to a deeper awareness of God and God's gifts, and a deeper understanding of our calling to live as God's children in our world. As we listen to God speaking to us through God's Word, we grow in relationship with God, other people, and all of God's creation.

For this study, we will use the ancient Christian practice of reading scripture called *lectio divina*, or "divine reading." We will call it, "**Dwelling in the Word.**" It is a process of reflecting on scripture in a contemplative way. The idea is to read a passage of scripture slowly and chew on the words, quietly reflecting on it, allowing it to quietly work on you, as leaven in the bread, as you ponder how God is ministering to you through God's Word. Below are instructions on this process, and you will receive a "Spiritual Journey" journal to write your reflections. During each week in Lent, you're invited to read back through the scripture passages and your journal reflections for a richer experience.

The scripture passages provided come from the Revised Common Lectionary, Series B, for Lent 2015, which runs from Ash Wednesday February 18 through Easter Sunday April 5. You may decide to follow this process of "Dwelling in the Word" once a week during Lent, choosing one of the scripture readings from that week, or you may decide to follow it multiple times per week, each time choosing a new scripture reading.

This study may be used by you alone or you may choose to meet with others, which may deepen the experience. If meeting with others, invite different voices to read aloud the scriptures, share reflections out loud as you feel led (and as the instructions invite you), and write your reflections in your journal on how God is speaking to you not only through scripture but also through the voices of God's people listening to scripture with you.

May God bless our listening to and dwelling in God's Word this Lent!

Suggested Process for Dwelling in the Word

1. Opening Prayer

Gracious God, open me up to your presence today. Clear away any distractions and clutter, worries and fears that get in the way as I prepare to encounter you through your Word. Open my ears to hear your Word as you speak through scripture. Open my mind to reflect on the meaning of your Word in my life. Open my heart to receive your love, encouragement, and challenge. Open my eyes to see more clearly your grace in my life and in the world. Help me to dwell in your Word. Speak to me, teach me, guide me, in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

2. Dwelling in the Word

Choose a scripture reading from the list of readings provided. Read the passage three different times, each with a different question to hold in your mind and heart during the reading. Allow the following three steps to guide you as you dwell in the Word:

Step 1 – First Reading: As you read aloud the passage the first time, listen for God’s Word as it touches your life and notice a word, a phrase, or image that “shimmers” – that jumps out at you or sticks with you.

- a. Write your word, phrase, or image in your journal.
- b. If you are together with others, share your selection with them without commenting on it.

Step 2 – Second Reading: As you read the scripture passage aloud a second time, notice some feeling or experience that is evoked from this passage for you.

- a. Write your feeling or experience in your journal.
- b. If you are together with others, share your feeling or experience with them if you desire. Accept sharing without discussion; use “I” and “me” language – avoid we, us, and you. Be comfortable with silence. Listen and receive another’s story as a gift.

Step 3 – Third Reading: As you read the scripture passage aloud a third time, ask yourself, “What is God inviting me to do, be, or change through this reading? Am I being called to some action—now in this setting, in my relationships with family, community, work, leisure?”

- a. Using your journal, take 10 minutes or more to reflect on these questions through writing, art, or prayer.
- b. If you are together with others, share any beckonings to action or decision if you desire.

3. Closing Prayer

Reflect again on the ways God has spoken to you through scripture today. Using the acronym TRIP, write a prayer to God in your journal including petitions in each of these four areas:

T = Thanksgiving – a prayer of gratitude for God’s gifts

R = Regret – a prayer confessing the sin and brokenness in yourself and the community, and seeking forgiveness and wholeness

I = Intercession – a prayer lifting up to God a need in yourself, your family, the community, the world, and listening for God’s response

P = Purpose – a prayer asking God to reveal to you God’s purpose, direction, meaning, calling for your life

Read to yourself the following prayer, and know that you’re in the prayers of your church...

Ephesians 1:17-19: “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.”

Scripture Passages for Lent 2015

Ash Wednesday, February 18:

Joel 2:1-2,12-17 (fast of repentance)
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 (be reconciled to God)

Psalms 51:1-17 (confession of sin)
Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 (3 Lenten disciplines)

First Sunday in Lent, February 22:

Genesis 9:8-17 (Noah's covenant)
1 Peter 3:18-22 (power of baptism)

Psalms 25:1-10 (prayer of trust)
Mark 1:9-15 (Jesus baptized, tempted)

Second Sunday in Lent, March 1:

Genesis 17:1-7,15-16 (covenant with Abraham)
Romans 4:13-25 (justified by faith)

Psalms 22:23-31 (prayer of praise)
Mark 8:31-38 (cost of discipleship)

Third Sunday in Lent, March 8:

Exodus 20:1-17 (covenant of the Law)
1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (God's foolish wisdom)

Psalms 19 (celebrating God's Law)
John 2:13-22 (Jesus angry in the Temple)

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15:

Numbers 21:4-9 (serpent on a pole that saves)
Ephesians 2:1-10 (saved by grace)

Psalms 107:1-3,17-22 (prayer of thanks)
John 3:14-21 (for God so loved the world)

Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 22:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (the new covenant)
Hebrews 5:5-10 (Jesus our high priest)

Psalms 51:1-12 (confession of sin)
John 12:20-33 (cost of discipleship)

Palm/Passion Sunday, March 29:

Mark 11:1-11 (Jesus entering Jerusalem as king)
Isaiah 50:4-9a (suffering servant)
Philippians 2:5-11 (mind of Christ)

Psalms 31:9-16 (prayer seeking deliverance)
Mark 14:1-15:47 (Jesus' passion story)

Maundy Thursday, April 2:

Exodus 12:1-14 (the Passover story)
1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (institution of Communion)

Psalms 116:1-2,12-19 (prayer of praise)
John 13:1-17,31b-35 (Jesus washes feet)

Good Friday, April 3:

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (suffering servant)
Hebrews 10:16-25 (God's forgiveness)

Psalms 22 (prayer of lament)
John 18:1-19:42 (Jesus arrested, crucified)

Holy Saturday, April 4:

Job 14:1-14 (promise of new life from death)
1 Peter 4:1-8 (love one another)

Psalms 31:1-4,15-16 (hope in God's love)
John 19:38-42 (Jesus buried in tomb)

Easter Sunday, April 5:

Acts 10:34-43 (Christ was raised to new life!)
1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (Christ alive and present)

Psalms 118:1-2,14-24 (prayer of praise!)
John 20:1-18 (Mary meets the risen Jesus)