

Friendship with God

Friendship with our spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

IN CHRIST



THE WILDERNESS BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND JERICHO

Lent 2018

All scripture quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV) unless otherwise noted.

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Meditations by William C. Wacker, unless otherwise noted.

Cover Photo: Young man praying in the Judean Wilderness just off the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, by William C. Wacker

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Introduction:

God is pouring out his grace on marriages today. We experienced a new power and awareness of God's presence in our marriages during the Marriage in Christ Seminar. The important elements of that seminar were the structure and intimacy of praying together and having daily activities that were manageable and helped to develop and strengthen our friendship with God and our spouse. This volume is specifically designed for busy couples to stay connected during the long, solemn season of Lent.

Pattern:

All the Scripture readings are from the Catholic Lectionary for Lent. The daily readings in Lent do not change from year to year, but the Sunday readings follow a three-year cycle. We have listed all the readings for Lent of 2018 which is Year B in the lectionary cycle. We have provided one of the readings for the day.

We suggest that busy couples take the conversation starters as ways to deepen and enhance your preparation for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. But some of the conversation starters are just for fun. We have suggested actions for each week, but as always feel free to do little acts of kindness that you would like to have become new habits. Remember that these activities are designed to build friendship, deepen affection and to foster a closer connection with each other.

A Note about Lent:

Lent is a penitential season. It is a time for serious reflection and repentance. From the earliest days Lent was the preparatory time for Easter. It was during this time that the catechumens were instructed in the faith and prepared for Baptism on Holy Saturday. Penitents also prepared for reconciliation. The forty days of Lent invite us to spend forty days in the wilderness preparing to renew our baptismal vows and to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The traditional practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are ways in which we can begin to form new habits. They invite us to free ourselves from undue servitude to our appetites, time pressures and money.

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General Instructions for the Daily Activities

For couples who have attended a Marriage in Christ seminar the format will be familiar. For couples who have yet to attend the seminar here are a few things to know.

Friendship with God and with our spouse is the foundation of a strong marriage. Friendship does not just happen. It requires that we be intentional. One of the ways to be intentional about our marriage involves developing "habits of love" that protect our marriage and deepen our friendship. Along with the power of the Holy Spirit, those daily intentional actions help us resist the currents of contemporary culture. They help us to grow in unity, to express our love, and to stay connected to a larger community.

Habits of love require regular attention to sustain them; we cannot go on autopilot or cruise control. The currents of our culture will work against them—not unlike the powerful currents that erode the

banks of a river or cut new and unwanted channels. Habits of love are intentional actions, chosen for a purpose. They are repeated, coordinated, and significant actions that we do each day (or, in the case of holidays and anniversaries, annually). They are the ways in which we stay connected, express affection, deepen intimacy, and share one life together.

You may already have your own habits of love that keep you connected. You can use this Lenten season to reinforce those patterns and experiment with new ones. It may be that you have fallen into thoughtless routines or bad habits and have drifted apart. If so, these next six weeks will give you the opportunity to get back on track. We encourage you to do three things each day: pray, talk, and act. We'll give you simple daily guidelines for how you can pray together, talk to each other, and act in loving ways each day. The key is to be intentional. Ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your love and affection for each other. Don't be limited or constrained by the suggestions. Keep in mind that these actions are very personal and not all will work for every couple. But find what works for you and be intentional.

Pray

God is love, and friendship with God is the bedrock of our marriage relationship. Prayer is our way of staying connected to Jesus and his Father. One of the biggest obstacles to praying together is the lack of a format to get started. To that end, we have supplied a simple format that includes an opening and closing prayer and scripture passages (one for each day), each with a meditation. We have designed it to take about 10–12 minutes, but it can take longer if you are so inclined.

Make sure it works practically: Find a time, a place, and a posture that is conducive to prayer. Some people find it helpful to light candles. Try to be consistent.

Talk

You can know someone without loving the person, but it is not possible to love someone if you don't know him or her. Getting to know our spouse is a lifelong process of revealing our self and listening to the other. It was probably easy and exciting in the early days of your relationship, but too often the business of life and numbing routine has crowded out that delightful practice. There are numerous communication activities that couples can use to get to know more about each other. We suggest that each day, or as often as you can, you use one of the conversation starters that we offer and have a ten-minute conversation. This conversation can range from politics to religion, childhood memories to philosophy, current events to TV shows. It can also be about your hopes for the future, disappointments from the past, accomplishments you are proud of, things you are afraid of, treasured moments of laughter and fun.

The purpose of these daily conversations is to get to know your spouse better. You will be surprised by each other even after 20, 25, 40, or more years! The questions are simply suggestions, but they will help you until you get the hang of it. The important part of this exercise is to talk about anything other than your schedules, the children and their problems, or the household tasks and responsibilities (as important as these things are to talk about, at another time). Find out what causes stress; talk about your spouse's friends, his or her hopes, dreams, and disappointments; and the like. The more you know about your spouse, the more you will love him or her and your relationship will be able to weather the inevitable storms.

We have suggested a conversation starter for each day. Do not be limited by these suggestions, and feel free to be creative about getting to know your beloved.

Act

In the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love for each other, regardless of the feelings of the moment. In the Holy Spirit, we can change how we feel by acting in new and loving ways. Daily acts of love and kindness, giving and receiving forgiveness, and presuming the best of our spouse are the antidotes for “falling out of love” or letting our love grow tepid. More important, acts of love are the ways friends treat each other.

We have supplied a list of activities as a reminder to act in love each day. You can choose from that list—or make up your own loving actions. We supply new a new list of suggestions each week. The suggested actions are designed to help you express your love, practice friendship, and deepen your affection for each other. Studies show that the more you act in loving ways, the more your love and affection will grow.

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ¹⁶ "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Meditation

Expressing love and affection has its own rewards. Living in peace, joy and harmony with your intimate friend is a wonderful way to live! So, it is with God. To expect accolades from an adoring crowd for each act of charity, or each conversation we have with God our friend, or each time we fast, is to say that we love ourselves more than our friend. Lent is the time to reflect on the priorities in our life. It is a time to have our external behaviors match our internal motivations – all for the greater glory of God our friend.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter

- What Lenten disciplines do we want to embrace as a couple?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- If your church has an Ash Wednesday service, try to attend together.
- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Don't take love for granted. Tell your spouse how important he or she is to you.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you for something your spouse did for you today
- Thank the Lord for one blessing you experienced today.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Meditation

Our culture puts a huge premium on choice. We care, above all, about freedom, self-direction, and autonomy. It is all about our personal choice. However, in our culture we have so many choices that rather than bringing freedom, choice often brings paralysis. So, narrowing the options to two should be a great help. “Today, I have set before you, life and death.” But if that is so helpful, why then the command to “choose life?” Isn’t it self-evident? Unfortunately, the great lie, the false god, of our day that lures so many astray is that we are autonomous, that we can direct ourselves. The antidote to that lie is the truth that life is found in obedience to the Lord. It is found in holding fast to him and his commandments. The most fundamental and freeing choice is not “What do I want?” but rather, “What does God want?” That is to choose life!

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was your most successful experience of fasting? Was a prayer answered?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Don't take love for granted. Tell your spouse how important he or she is to you
- Tell your spouse where you experienced God's grace today.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you for something your spouse did for you today.
- Thank the Lord for one blessing you experienced today.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:14-15

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 9:14-15

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Meditation

When our children got married we had great big parties. We bought expensive clothes, made lots of food and drank plenty of wine. We invited our friends and relatives from far away. The preparations took months and the festivities lasted for days. It was a lot of work and expense, but it was worth it. The joy of watching our children start a new life with a spouse who loved them was almost beyond description. I could not imagine doing anything other than celebrating with them. Jesus couldn't imagine his disciples fasting while he was there, any more than I could imagine fasting at my children's weddings. But Jesus says something strange. It appears that his wedding is a little different than that of my children. The party began when he was here, but the bridegroom has left for a time. We know that the party will be resumed in great glory and splendor at the end of the present evil age. The party is going on, but not in its full glory. The guests come and go, we suffer and die, but always in the hope of celebrating again with Jesus the bridegroom. In Lent we fast because we know that we live in a confusing and difficult time. It is a time when it looks like two ages have overlapped. A party begun, but not finished, a groom here, but not here fully. Lent acknowledges the ambiguity of this time but celebrates the hope of promises fulfilled.

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite book of the Bible? Why?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
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- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Don't take love for granted. Tell your spouse how important he or she is to you
- Tell your spouse where you experienced God's grace today.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you for something your spouse did for you today.
- Thank the Lord for one blessing you experienced today.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 5:27-32

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 5:25-32

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸ And he got up, left everything, and followed him. ²⁹ Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. ³⁰ The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹ Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; ³² I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Meditation

Tax collectors were despised by all the Jews, but especially by the zealously nationalistic Jews who lived in Galilee. Tax collectors were traitors and extortionists. They collected money for the hated Romans and the equally hated Herod. Roman soldiers and Herod's troops enforced not only the "lawful" tax, but the exorbitant collector's fees Levi and his collaborators would have charged. In addition, tax collectors dealt with gentiles. They were unclean and thoroughly despised. Jesus would have passed by Levi's booth on the main road to Capernaum frequently. It was not far from Jesus' headquarters. What about Levi would have caught Jesus' eye and moved him to love Levi so? What was Levi's response? He threw a big party and invited all of his friends – the only friends a tax collector had were other tax collectors. There in the midst of that great banquet, sitting at the table as an intimate friend, was Jesus. What is it about sinners that moves Jesus to take such a great risk? What moves Jesus to love without limits? Lent is the season in which we have to make a choice. Are we like Levi and his friends at the banquet with Jesus or are we like the Pharisees and the scribes standing outside the banquet room, unwilling to enter?

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What should we do for the poor this season?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
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- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Don't take love for granted. Tell your spouse how important he or she is to you
- Tell your spouse where you experienced God's grace today.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say thank you for something your spouse did for you today.
- Thank the Lord for one blessing you experienced today.

First Sunday of Lent

Gen 9:8-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Mark 1:12-15

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news¹ of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Meditation

The hiker set up camp for the night in a little clearing near a cave just off one of the paths that pilgrims and hikers take as they explore the harsh Judean wilderness between Jericho and Jerusalem. The low flat spots that are ideal for camping are off limits because they are dry river beds that could flood without warning, if it rains in Jerusalem about 10 miles away. The caves present other dangers. The hiker was a little disturbed by the foul smell in the area, but he had decided that he could tolerate it for one night. As he was getting settled, a park ranger came by and said, "You might want to find another spot to camp tonight." "Why?" the hiker asked. "That smell is the remnants of a leopard's kill, and we think that cave is his den." In Jesus' day leopards were only one of the many wild beasts he would have encountered in the dangerous wilderness. The caves were also the hideouts of bandits who preyed on travelers and hideouts for violent revolutionaries. Jesus would have suffered from the temperature extremes, lack of food, threat of floods, encounters with dangerous wild animals and humans. He went into the wilderness as Israel's king, in Israel's place and, as Israel, he was tempted. This time Israel, in the person of her king, was faithful to the call of the Father. In Lent we hear Jesus invite us to join him in the wilderness for a time. We need not fear. Because Jesus has been faithful and poured his Holy Spirit out on us, we too can be faithful. That is Good News!

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your most powerful memory of being alone and/or in a wilderness?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be affectionate.

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Hold hands.

Be kind to each other.

- Empty the dishwasher or do another small task.
- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together.

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

Build relationships with other couples.

- Go to church with another family and have brunch together.

First Week of Lent: Monday

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 25:31-40 (excerpt)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another. . . ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Meditation

Two devastating epidemics hit the Roman Empire. One lasted from A.D. 165 – A.D. 180 and another occurred in A.D. 251. The first plague, which lasted for 15 years and killed between a quarter and a third of the population, was possibly small pox and the second, equally as devastating may have been measles. Imagine being in a city stinking of death, piles of dead bodies all around, homes abandoned, the sick left to fend for themselves. All around you, your family and friends are dropping. You can never be sure if or when you will fall sick too. Your most famous physician is coping with the epidemic by leaving Rome and hiding out at his country estate. But Christians have hope. And, they have love. They do not appear to fear death. Rather, they act as if giving their life for the sake of caring for their sick brethren is the equivalent of martyrdom. They often died as they lived out Matthew 25:34-40. But because they give basic nursing care to the sick, both to their own and to their pagan neighbors, they don't die as often. Many even recovered! Conscientious nursing care, as simple as providing food and water, even without any medications, cuts the mortality rate by 2/3 or even more. Although many Christians died, the believers survived at a much higher rate than their pagan neighbors. And their pagan neighbors survived at a much higher rate than those who did not have Christian neighbors or relatives. The Christians did not fear death and put into practice our Lord's command to love one another.

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your most powerful memory of God's presence in the Lent/Easter season?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
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- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together.

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

First Week of Lent: Tuesday

Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 6:7-15

“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ “Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Meditation

The Gentiles are aware of at least 12 major gods, not counting the “divine Caesar,” and over 150 minor gods that have some responsibility for every aspect of their life, from birth to death. After death there is even a god responsible for separating their soul and body. There are at least two gods for their thresholds and one for their door hinges! It is hard to manage that many gods and to keep track of how to please them or cajole them to help out. So it’s not surprising that it takes a lot of words, said over and over, louder and louder. The Gentiles are never sure if the gods are even paying attention. The gods can be like unruly children that need to be bribed and treated just so. One has to use just the right words and just the right sacrifices. But that’s the problem. There aren’t many gods. There is only one, and He can’t be managed. Rather He is like a father who loves us very much and listens to us when we pray. He knows that we need bread each day, forgiveness for our debts and our sins. He knows that to be free we need to forgive those who hurt us and that we need protection from the evil one. He knows too that we will be happiest if we live in his kingdom and make his will our will. Lent is the time we approach Our Father as one of His children not as one of the Gentiles who are trying to control a batch of unruly children.

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What do you do when a homeless person asks you for money?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be affectionate.

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Hold hands.

Be kind to each other.

- Empty the dishwasher or do another small task.
- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together.

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

Build relationships with other couples.

- Go to church with another family and have brunch together.

First Week of Lent: Wednesday

Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 11:29-32

When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! ³² The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!

Meditation

Ouch! Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the nation that destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C and nearly destroyed Jerusalem. They were a truly hated enemy, yet even they repented when Jonah, the reluctant prophet, a man who had made the whale sick, preached to them. The Queen of the South, another foreigner, will experience the resurrection on the Day of Judgment because she came to listen to Solomon and get wisdom from him. Foreigners repented and listened to Jonah and Solomon. Jesus' own people would not listen to someone much greater than either Jonah or Solomon, ouch! Lent is the time when we decide what role we are playing in this little drama. Do we listen to the one greater than Jonah and Solomon or not?

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What made you happy/sad/excited/angry in the news today? Why?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be affectionate.

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Hold hands.

Be kind to each other.

- Empty the dishwasher or do another small task.
- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

Build relationships with other couples.

- Go to church with another family and have brunch together.

First Week of Lent: Thursday

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 7:7-12

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.

⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? ¹⁰ Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! ¹² "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Meditation

She and her husband had risked everything to start a business. It started very slowly and finally grew into a very successful company. They were very generous, even when things were difficult. Unfortunately, he passed away and she was left to manage the business and eventually sell it. When she sold the company, she became a very wealthy widow. She had always been very generous, but she had never been asked for a really large gift. That was until she was out for lunch with the headmaster of the school she and her husband had supported over the years. The school was just beginning a capital campaign and she expected to be asked for about \$50,000 – a large gift by anyone's standards. But the headmaster instead asked her to consider making the lead donation for their campaign. He asked her for a gift of \$3,000,000. After she recovered from her surprise, she said she would think about the request. A few days later, they were at lunch again and she agreed to make the lead gift. Just before they left the restaurant, she said to the headmaster, "Thank you for not asking for \$50,000, this is much better." Our Father in heaven is like that too.

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was the hardest thing you ever did for the sake of someone else?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be affectionate.

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Hold hands.

Be kind to each other.

- Empty the dishwasher or do another small task.
- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

Build relationships with other couples.

- Go to church with another family and have brunch together.

First Week of Lent: Friday

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 5:20-26

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ²¹ You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Meditation

You are on one of the natural amphitheaters that are on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. You have made the trip to Jerusalem many times in your life and you know that it takes about three days to get there. Why is that important? Well, Jesus has just said that the next time you are in the courts of the Temple with the live animal you have just purchased for the sacrifice, and you remember that you have an issue with your brother that needs to be settled, you are to leave the animal there for the next week while you return to Galilee and reconcile. You may return to Jerusalem after you reconcile. Really? Does he mean that? Or is it a bit of an exaggeration that demonstrates how important and radical his teaching is? In either case, it would be best and easiest if you were to nip your anger in the bud before it causes damage to your relationships. Little hurts become big hurts and if an entire people can't manage their anger, it leads nations to war. Lent is a time for us to repent, that is, change the way we think about anger. It is a time to root it out of our lives before it does damage.

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What brought you the most joy this week?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be affectionate.

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Hold hands.

Be kind to each other.

- Empty the dishwasher or do another small task.
- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together.

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

Build relationships with other couples.

- Go to church with another family and have brunch together.

First Week of Lent: Saturday

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Meditation

What is God really like and how would we know it? It appears that God the creator of the whole world loves all human beings enough that he sends sun and rain on all of them – good and bad alike. He is unconditional in pouring out his love. How might the world know that about God? Well, first they could see it in Jesus. He turned the other cheek and refused to be angry, he carried the Roman cross an extra mile, he forgave those who crucified him with his last breaths. The world would know that about God, if they were to watch God's children do the same things that Jesus did. Then we would be perfect like our Father is perfect. I know, I can't be perfect either. So what does perfect mean? The Greek word here is related to the word that describes God's work in creation. Genesis 2:1 says that creation was finished, complete or whole. We are to be like the Creator, whole and complete, shining our light on the good and bad just like he does. That is how the world will know him.

Quiet Reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

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Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was the moment when it was hardest for you to turn the other cheek and forgo expressing your anger?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Do Lenten practices together.

- Plan this week's Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
- Offer a simple prayer of committing your marriage to Christ this season.
- Fridays in Lent are good days to reflect on the way of the Cross. Many of our churches have special services on Fridays. Consider attending one together.
- Consider skipping your favorite form of media entertainment, (a T.V. show, surfing the web, podcasts, etc.) today and use that time to talk to a friend or loved one.

Be affectionate.

- When you kiss your spouse goodbye for the day—hold the kiss for the count of ten!
- Hold hands.

Be kind to each other.

- Empty the dishwasher or do another small task.
- Occasionally run errands together. Resist the temptation to always save time. Love is willing to spend time extravagantly!

Make time to be together.

- Clean up after dinner together.
- Do a simple household chore together.
- Go on an inexpensive date, e.g., high school or college game, play or concert.

Make time to laugh together.

- Read a funny story out loud to each other.
- Remember, no negative jokes.

Build relationships with other couples.

- Go to church with another family and have brunch together.

Friendship with God

Friendship with our spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

IN CHRIST



Second Week of Lent 2018

Second Sunday of Lent

Gen 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Rom 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

--Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

--As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them,³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.¹⁰ So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

Mediation

Compare the Transfiguration and *The Crucifixion*.

(one read regular text, *the other read italics*)

On a mountain top in Galilee: *On a hill top outside of Jerusalem*

Jesus revealed in his human glory: *Jesus revealed in shame*

Clothes shining bright: *clothes stripped off and gambled for*

Jesus flanked by Moses and Elijah: *flanked by two brigands*

Peter, "How wonderful this is": *Peter, "I know him not."*

God declares, "This is my Son": *A pagan soldier declares, "This truly is the Son of God."*

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What would you do, if you were present at the Transfiguration?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Make time to be together.

- Go to bed at the same time.
- Go for a long walk.
- Read a book together.

Second Week of Lent: Monday

Daniel 9:4b-10; Luke 6:36-38

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 6:36-38

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. ³⁷ "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Meditation

Look at the cross. That is how merciful your Father is. Look at the cross and be honest with yourself, do you deserve to be forgiven? No, it is a gift, unlooked for, unwarranted, undeserved. Can you be like the Father? Can you possibly out give him? Try it and see what happens. I'll bet that what you get back will be what you gave plus so much more. It will be like a giant waffle cone filled with your favorite ice cream, pressed all the way down and with so many scoops on top that the ice cream falls on to the table and into your lap as you laugh with pure delight. Don't worry about your outfit; he is planning to give you new clothes! That is what you might see and who you might become, if you look at the cross through the Father's eyes.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was the most memorable moment of mercy you have ever experienced?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Make time to be together.

- Go to bed at the same time.
- Go for a long walk.
- Read a book together.

Second Week of Lent: Tuesday

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Matthew 23:1-12

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 1:10; 1:16-20

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. ¹⁸ Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Meditation

In 701 B.C. the mighty Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem. Their king boasted that he had Judah's king, Hezekiah, shut up like a bird in a cage. Twenty years before that, they had destroyed Israel and dispersed the 10 northern tribes all over the world, never to be heard of again. This oracle was delivered when there was still time for Judah to avoid that terrible fate. But they didn't. The leadership was corrupt, and the people followed them. The whole nation was reminded that God cares about justice. He cares about doing good, defending the poor and needy. Lent is the season in which we should hear the prophets' warning echoing in our day. We should align our priorities to match those of the Lord. If we do, if we are obedient we will eat the good of the land, but if we don't . . .

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was the biggest surprise you ever pulled off?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
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- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Make time to be together.

- Go to bed at the same time.
- Go for a long walk.
- Read a book together.

Second Week of Lent: Wednesday
Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 20:17-28 (Excerpt)

While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, ¹⁸ "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; ¹⁹ then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised." ²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. ²¹ And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." ²² But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." ²³ He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." ²⁴ When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ²⁶ It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Meditation

James and John must not have recognized that Jesus was speaking in riddles. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that Jesus meant that his throne was the cross! He was actually going to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes who would condemn him to death. Then he would actually be mocked, flogged and crucified, but on the third day he would rise. Perhaps James and John thought it was simply a grizzly metaphor for how difficult it would be for him to accomplish his takeover of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Romans. Why else would their mother ask for them to have places of honor when he came into his kingdom? What was she thinking? What were the other ten thinking when they were angry at the brothers? Were they hoping for those spots themselves? We so want power and places of honor. Lent is the season in which we come to understand that real power flows from self-emptying love. That is not a riddle, but it is a great paradox.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.
Try this conversation starter.

- What burdens would you like the Lord to carry for you this season?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Make time to be together.

- Go to bed at the same time.
- Go for a long walk.

Second Week of Lent: Thursday

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 16:19-31

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' ²⁷ He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house-- ²⁸ for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' ³⁰ He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Meditation

The unnamed rich man daily passed by the only person in Jesus' parables with a name – the poor man Lazarus. Too proud, too greedy, or too busy to give even the scraps from his table to poor Lazarus he ignored him day after day, even though he was right outside his gate. He probably had to walk around him each day. Jesus' story is the same as that told by Moses and the prophets: God is deeply concerned about justice for the poor and the down trodden. Lent is the season when we hear Jesus say that true repentance and true belief includes seeing and caring for those that God cares for – the poor.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- How does our marriage invite others to love God more deeply?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Make time to be together.

- Go to bed at the same time.
- Go for a long walk.
- Read a book together.

Second Week of Lent: Friday

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 21:33-46

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴ When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? ⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." ⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Meditation

I must confess that I have never read the Scriptures as well as Jesus. He presumed that his audience was familiar with Isaiah 5; Psalm 118:22-23 and the allusions to Daniel 2:45 and Jeremiah 6:21. He presumed that they were so familiar with the story of Israel that they would recognize that the version of the story of Israel he was telling had a startling and unexpected ending. The vineyard was being given to outsiders (Gentiles). The rejected stone was Jesus. **He** was the new Temple, the place where Israel's God dwelt. Finally, **they** were unfaithful Israel. **They** were the enemies of the kingdom of God. No wonder the chief priests and Pharisees made common cause to arrest him. In Lent we are invited to read the Scriptures and find ourselves in the story. What part are we playing?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was your most interesting experience when you were learning how to drive?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, “Good morning” and “Good night.”
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, “I’m thinking of you,” or “I love you.”
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, “I’m so glad you are my best friend.”
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Make time to be together.

- Go to bed at the same time.
- Go for a long walk.

Second Week of Lent: Saturday

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 *Excerpt*

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." ³ So he told them this parable: ¹¹ Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴ When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" ²⁰ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe-- the best one-- and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Meditation

Jesus is having a meal with all the "wrong people." The tax collectors were collaborators and traitors! Sinners were the law breakers and people of low moral character. This would include adulterers, gentiles and anyone considered unclean: including the blind, deaf, lame, lepers and anyone unfortunate enough to have a physical deformity that made them unclean and thus outcast. The traitors and unclean were drawn to Jesus and he welcomed them. To eat with a person is to invite them into fellowship and accept them as a friend. Jesus was eating with these people as if they were his friends. The Pharisees and Scribes stood outside, like the elder brother. So, Jesus told them this parable about a Father's broken heart and his incredible love for his two sons.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- If you were one of those standing outside the room where Jesus was eating with the tax collectors and sinners, would this story have moved you to go in and eat with him?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Try fasting from a meal one night.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit a sick friend or relative.
- Read a Psalm together.

Be kind.

- Be sure to say, "Good morning" and "Good night."
- Listen attentively to your spouse.
- Help your spouse with his/her chores.
- Honor each other for a good action today.

Be affectionate.

- Call or text your spouse and say, "I'm thinking of you," or "I love you."
- Flirt with each other.
- Give your spouse a foot rub.
- Say to your spouse, "I'm so glad you are my best friend."
- Put your phone away when you are talking to each other.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Tell your spouse that you appreciate his/her creativity, gentleness, friendship, etc.
- Thank each other for an act of kindness.

Friendship with God

Friendship with our spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

IN CHRIST



A DESERTED PLACE WHERE JESUS WENT TO PRAY

Third Week of Lent 2018

Third Week of Lent: Sunday

Exodus 20:1-17 or 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17; 1 Cor 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 2:13-25

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. ²³ When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

Meditation

The Temple was the unique dwelling place of God on earth. It was a central symbol in the life of every Jew of Jesus' day. But it had become corrupt and its leaders were wicked. In one of the most disruptive actions of Jesus' public life, he brought the sacrificial system to a temporary halt. It was a prophetic action that announced that there would be no more sacrifices when the Temple was destroyed. More than that, Jesus was replacing the Temple, as the unique dwelling place of God on earth, with himself. In his own death and resurrection Jesus would do for Israel and the world what only God could do, that is rescue humanity as he had promised long ago. Lent reminds us that our symbols are important, but not as important as the one toward whom those symbols point!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- How many times did you move when you were growing up? How did it affect you?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God's best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say "thank you."
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Express your love for who your spouse is, not just what he/she does.
- Go out of your way to compliment or encourage a coworker today. Tell your spouse about it.

Third Week of Lent: Monday

2 Kings 5:1-15a; Luke 4:24-30

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 4:24-30

And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. ²⁵ But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷ There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Meditation

Nazareth was a small settlement in a hostile environment. Jews had moved in to take back the land from the hated Gentiles. They believed that God would act and when he did, he would bless Israel and take vengeance on the Gentiles – he would smite the unclean and all of their enemies. But Jesus had skipped that line when he quoted Isaiah 61. He omitted “a day of vengeance for our God.” They shouted, “Isn’t he Joseph’s son? Didn’t he grow up here? Doesn’t he know how we think here in Nazareth?” Jesus had indicated that not only will God not smite the Gentiles but he actually came for them and not for the true believers in Nazareth! “Grab him,” they shouted, “throw him off the cliff!” Not yet. It was not time for Jesus to die at their hands, but it was a dark foreshadowing of the type of reception he would receive from the equally zealous Jews in Jerusalem at a Passover in the near future. Lent is the season in which we try to grasp the extraordinary love of Jesus for all human beings – even the ones we are at odds with.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Do you like to share the television remote?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God's best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say "thank you."
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Express your love for who your spouse is, not just what he/she does.
- Go out of your way to compliment or encourage a coworker today. Tell your spouse about it.

Third Week of Lent: Tuesday

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Meditation

Translations differ about how many times Jesus said we were to forgive. Some say 70 times 7, others say 77 times. We can assume that from the parable of the servant who owed his master a debt of 10,000 talents that it's a big number, and maybe we shouldn't be counting at all. A typical day's wage for a servant was one denarius. Subtracting for holidays, festivals and sabbaths, he would earn about 300 denarii each year. If he gave it all to repay his debt, in twenty years he would have paid back about 6,000 denarii which would equal 1 talent. He would only owe 9,999 more talents and at this rate would be free of his debt in a mere 200,000 years! The scandal is that the ungrateful servant who was owed by his fellow servant 100 denarii, was unwilling to forgive a debt worth four-month's wages. If we are to forgive according to the measure we have been forgiven, compare 200,000 years' worth of wages to four months' worth of wages. Lent is the season when we are humbled by the debt we have been forgiven and encouraged to forgive those who owe us much less.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the funniest thing you heard or did this week?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God's best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say "thank you."
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.

Third Week of Lent: Wednesday

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 5:17-19

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Meditation

Jesus summed up the story of Israel when he said, "the Law and the Prophets." Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured and standing with Moses and Elijah. The disciples were given a glimpse of who Jesus really was and the vital importance of the whole story of Israel. That story included the promises made to Abraham and the covenant God made with Moses (the Law) and the heartfelt, passionate love of God for Israel, along with his fierce demands for justice, his unwavering commitment to his promises and the stupidity of idolatry (all in the Prophets). That was the story in which Jesus was living and that was the story that he was fulfilling in his own person. The law and the prophets, Moses and Elijah all point to Jesus the messiah and fulfillment of God's promises. We live in that same story.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- If love does not control the other person, what kind of power does love have?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God's best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say "thank you."
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Express your love for who your spouse is, not just what he/she does.
- Go out of your way to compliment or encourage a coworker today. Tell your spouse about it.

Third Week of Lent: Thursday

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 11:14-23

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." ¹⁶ Others, to test him, kept demanding from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. ¹⁸ If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?-- for you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ Now if I cast out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. ²² But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his plunder. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Meditation

There is a beautiful mosaic on the ceiling of the baptistery of the main church in Florence, Italy. Of the many images that are depicted, one of the most striking is a hideous picture of the devil with the legs of a man sticking out of his mouth. It evokes 1 Peter 5:8, "Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour." I was looking at it with a friend who was doing doctoral work in moral theology at one of the prestigious universities in Rome. He turned to me and said, "I'm glad we don't think like that anymore." I said, "Like what?" He replied, "You know, the devil devouring people. No one believes there is a devil anymore." I felt a little old fashioned because I did and do believe that he exists. What is at stake? If there is no devil, then Jesus is very mistaken about the real enemy of humankind. And if Jesus is casting out demons by the power of the devil, then he is in league with our mortal enemy. But believing that Jesus has defeated our enemy and established his kingdom means that we are saved. It also means we must change to enter his kingdom. The really good news is that change is possible because Jesus has defeated our enemy.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- A “bright spot” is a sign that God is at work in your marriage and things are changing. What “bright spots” have you seen recently?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord’s Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God’s best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say “thank you.”
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Express your love for who your spouse is, not just what he/she does.
- Go out of your way to compliment or encourage a coworker today. Tell your spouse about it.

Third Week of Lent: Friday
Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28b-34

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; ³³ and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'-- this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Meditation

Imagine what it would look like if we lived and acted like the most important thing in our lives was the love of God. Let's reread that sentence with a couple of small changes. Imagine what it would look like if the most important thing in our life was our love **for** God. Now imagine the second most important thing in our life is our love **for** our spouse. That would look like the kingdom of God had burst into this world. Jesus seems to think that it is possible for this to happen. Lent is the season in which we turn that wonderful thought into practical action. It is the season in which we consciously invite the Holy Spirit to deepen our friendship with God and our friendship with our spouse

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

- If a stranger observed us this week, noting how much time we spent on our various activities, what would he or she say are our priorities?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God's best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say "thank you."
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Express your love for who your spouse is, not just what he/she does.
- Go out of your way to compliment or encourage a coworker today. Tell your spouse about it.

Third Week of Lent: Saturday

Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Meditation

My home town had the second biggest stockyard in the country – it was just a little less busy than the stockyards in Chicago. My father was a college educated engineer and inventor. He worked for one of the major meat producing companies in the country. His father, my grandfather, was the superintendent of the other major meat producer in town. So, I thought of my dad as important and well connected. One of the perks of working at the yards was getting meat at a reasonable cost. Since we had nine children that was quite a perk! Every Friday he would come home with a big package wrapped in brown butcher paper. In the package were roasts, hamburger and sometimes steaks. One day I heard my friend, whose father worked for the same company, say that my dad always got the best cuts of meat. He went on to say that the butchers really took care of my dad. I thought it was because they felt sorry for him having so many kids. I asked him one day why they gave him the best cuts of meat. My dad said that it was because he believed and always acted like the butchers, the janitors and secretaries were as important as the engineers and superintendents. All who humble themselves will be exalted!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who are the most “important” people in your lives? How do you define “important?”

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider using your alms to donate mittens, gloves or foot care products to a homeless shelter.
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Visit an elderly friend or relative.

Be prayerful.

- Hold hands and say the Lord’s Prayer together before you go to bed.
- Go to a mid-week church service together.
- Attend a Bible study together.
- Pray for your spouse to enjoy God’s best in his/her life.

Be grateful.

- List the positive things your spouse did for you this week.
- Say “thank you.”
- Thank the Lord for the blessings in your life.

Do something you have enjoyed in the past.

- Bike, ski, or walk around a lake together.
- Have a quiet dinner.
- Go to a concert.
- Get together with old friends.

Be positive.

- Compliment your spouse in front of the children.
- Honor your spouse for his/her good qualities.
- Express your love for who your spouse is, not just what he/she does.
- Go out of your way to compliment or encourage a coworker today. Tell your spouse about it.

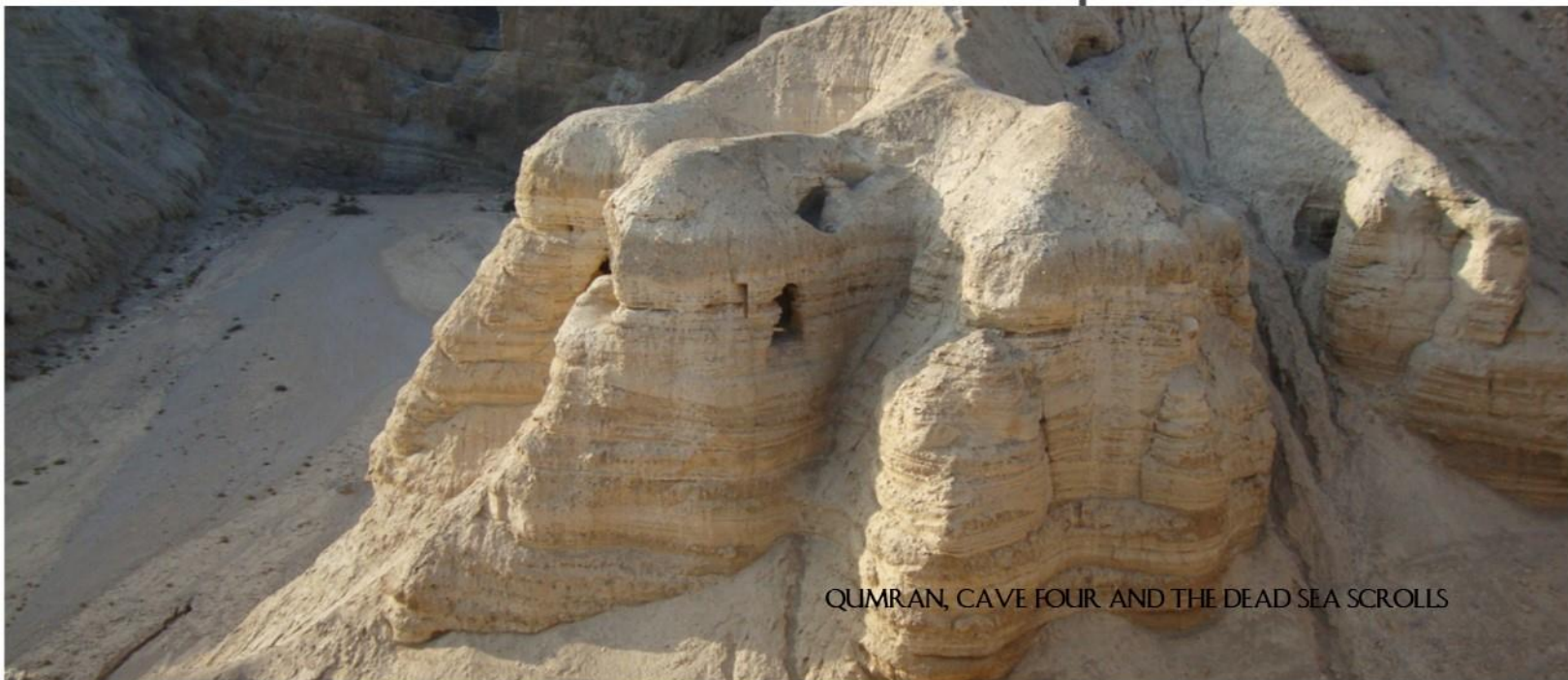
Friendship with God

Friendship with our spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

IN CHRIST



QUMRAN, CAVE FOUR, AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Fourth Week of Lent 2018

Fourth Week of Lent: Sunday

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Meditation

The story of the serpent being lifted up can be found in Numbers 21:5-9. God's own people had rebelled against him and, as punishment, poisonous snakes slithered into their camp and many people died from their bites. In response to their cries and Moses' prayer for help, God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. If a serpent bit someone, and that person looked at the bronze serpent on the pole, he or she would live. The story John is telling is not only about Israel's rebellion and salvation. It is a story about the rescue of all humanity. It is not a bronze serpent that is to be "lifted up." It is God's own son, lifted up on a cross for all to see and believe. Lent is the time when we think deeply about what it means to look at Jesus lifted up on the cross. In this great sacrifice we see the full measure of God's saving love. To trust him, to believe in him, is to come into the light, is to be saved.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What would a national television audience know about Jesus if the cameras were on us?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say “Good-bye, I love you” when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fourth Week of Lent: Monday

Isaiah 65:17-21; John 4:43-54

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 4:43-54

When the two days were over, he went from that place to Galilee ⁴⁴ (for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in the prophet's own country). ⁴⁵ When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival. ⁴⁶ Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." ⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my little boy dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him." ⁵³ The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household. ⁵⁴ Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Meditation

At a brisk pace, it probably took Herod's official a little less than five hours to walk from Capernaum to Cana. He was walking quickly because his little boy was very sick and near death. He believed that Jesus could heal his son; after all, he found Jesus in the little village where Jesus had changed the water into wine not that long ago. But Jesus was concerned that his friends and family in Galilee were only looking for miracles. They weren't looking in the direction in which the signs were pointing. And the signs were pointing to Jesus and the manifestation of God's limitless love – that is, his glory. That is why the greatest manifestation of Jesus' glory is his selfless gift of his life on the cross. However, the official is not like the others. He does not need to see the miracle; he does not even have to have Jesus make the long trek back down to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He believes Jesus' word that his son will be healed. It is interesting to note that his return trip was much more leisurely than his brisk walk from Capernaum. As a matter of fact, he must have spent the night somewhere and resumed his trip later in the day. How do we know? His servants met him at about 1:00 the next day and reported that his son was well – it was the exact same time that Jesus had said his son would live. He and his family believed in Jesus from that point on.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who is the happiest person you know?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say "Good-bye, I love you" when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Fourth Week of Lent: Tuesday

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; John 5:1-3a, 5-16

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: (excerpt) John 5:1-9

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. ³ In these lay many invalids-- blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁵ One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" ⁷ The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." ⁹ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath.

Meditation

The pool by the Sheep Gate was just north of the Temple mount in Jerusalem. The pool was revered by both Jews and pagans as a place of healing. There is evidence that the pool had magical powers and at one time had been dedicated to the pagan god Asclepius. Jewish and pagan hopes for dramatic healing were a lot like winning the Powerball, it happens but not often and not to me. The man who had been there for thirty-eight years may have grown comfortable with lying around and being taken care of – hence Jesus' question, "Do you want to be made well?" The man did actually say yes, but he made the excuse that because no one would help him, someone else always beat him to the waters when they were stirred up. Jesus then demonstrated that something new was happening in the world. At his command the lame man was healed. Jesus demonstrated the new creation was taking place. He spoke and the man was healed. But it was a Sabbath! That, as John points out, caused great problems for the Jews and they began plotting against his life.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What things do you never tire of seeing, experiencing or doing? E.g. watching a sunrise or sunset; enjoying a delicious meal etc.

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
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Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say “Good-bye, I love you” when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fourth Week of Lent: Wednesday

Isaiah 49:8-15; John 5:17-30

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 5:17-23 (excerpt)

But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working."¹⁸ For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.¹⁹ Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise."²⁰ The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.²¹ Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.²² The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son,²³ so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Meditation

There is a wire that circles Jerusalem today. It is called an eruv wire. An eruv is a ritual enclosure that traditionally observant Jewish communities construct in their neighborhoods as a way to permit carrying objects outdoors on the Sabbath, which they would otherwise understand to be prohibited by Jewish law. The eruv permits the traditionally observant Jews to, among other things, carry keys, tissues, medicines, or babies with them, and to use strollers and canes. The presence or absence of an *eruv* thus especially affects the lives of people with limited mobility and those responsible for taking care of babies and young children. By enclosing the whole city, mothers can carry their babies outside for a walk in the city. That is how seriously the Jews take and took the command to not work on the Sabbath. Both the formerly lame man and Jesus "worked" on the Sabbath. Jesus got into even more serious trouble when he said that he was just doing what he saw his father doing. If God the Father causes children to be born on Sabbath or if he calls them home in death, then the Father is working on Sabbath. Jesus is simply acting like a good son doing what his father is doing. They understood what he was saying and wanted to kill him.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who was your best friend in high school?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say “Good-bye, I love you” when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fourth Week of Lent: Thursday

Exodus 32:7-14; John 5:31-47

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 5:31-47

"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. ³² There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. ³³ You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent. ³⁹ "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹ I do not accept glory from human beings. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Meditation

According to Jewish law and practice it was not permitted to charge someone with a capital crime without at least two witnesses (Numbers 35:30, Deut 17:6). For that matter, two or three witnesses were required for any criminal accusation (Deut 19:15). One needed two or three witnesses to the signing of a deed (Jer. 33:10) or to verify a prophetic action (Is 8:1). So it is not surprising that Jesus said, in essence, "don't take my word for it, but I have witnesses." Who were Jesus' witnesses? John the Baptist, his Father in heaven and the Scriptures, including Moses. But as it said in the prologue to this Gospel (John 1:11), "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him." In Lent, we like the Jews, are confronted with the testimony of three witnesses. What will we do?

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What Scripture verse or other powerful instruction for living do you hope your children will always remember?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say “Good-bye, I love you” when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fourth Week of Lent: Friday

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. ² Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near. ¹⁰ But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret. ²⁵ Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill?" ²⁶ And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? ²⁷ Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from." ²⁸ Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. ²⁹ I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." ³⁰ Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Meditation

The festival of Booths was another of the great festivals that celebrated the national hope of Israel that she would be rescued from her enemies, in this case the hated Roman oppression. But it was not this fall festival that would provide the stage for Jesus' dramatic action of rescuing the nation. That was for the spring festival of Passover, when the paschal lamb was slain. But the question here is, how can you really know if someone is the Messiah? There was one tradition that said that the Messiah would almost magically or miraculously appear and no one would know where he came from. Since they knew where Jesus was from, he couldn't possibly be the Messiah. Jesus' response is filled with deep irony. Hear what he says as a statement, then as a question. "You know where I'm from, Galilee." You know where I'm from? The Father!" So you don't really know where I'm from. That means I am the Messiah. It is easy to hear what Jesus says and does at one level. But listen again, he is speaking and acting at another level altogether. Lent is the season when we listen carefully to

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What are your hopes for this Lenten season? How are you/we doing? Remember look for the “bright spots” first.

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say “Good-bye, I love you” when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fourth Week of Lent: Saturday

Jeremiah 11:18-20; John 7:40-53

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 7:40-53

When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet."⁴¹ Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?"⁴² Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?"⁴³ So there was a division in the crowd because of him.⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.⁴⁵ Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?"⁴⁶ The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!"⁴⁷ Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you?"⁴⁸ Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him?"⁴⁹ But this crowd, which does not know the law-- they are accursed."⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked,⁵¹ "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?"⁵² They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."⁵³ Then each of them went home,

Meditation

But this crowd, which does not know the law – well they are accursed.” If there was not a life at stake this would be uproariously funny. We have special knowledge that Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem and from the line of David, so we can smile. But the reaction of the Pharisees who took great pride in their knowledge of the law and took every opportunity to flaunt their superiority was, as the commercial says, “priceless.” They have just dissed everyone from Galilee as imbecilic, backward country bumpkins because they don’t know the law. You have to picture the whole scene. They were loud and obnoxious and self-righteous. Nicodemus, who was from Judea as they well knew, pointed out that anyone who knows that much about the law surely knows that “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing.” Rather than admitting their mistake, they say, “You must be from Galilee too!” Then they add, “Search the Scripture and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.” Their collection of Scriptures must not have included Jonah or Hosea!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the best class you've ever taken?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Do Lenten practices together.

- Consider donating your alms and volunteering at a food shelf or local shelter
- Attend a Lenten service together.
- Read a Psalm together.

Show affection.

- Buy a simple, inexpensive gift.
- Put aside the TV or your computer and ask your spouse how his/her day was.
- Send flowers for no apparent reason.
- Give your spouse a neck rub

Spend time together.

- Schedule a weekend for just the two of you.
- Have lunch together.
- Walk around the block together.

Remember what it was like when you were courting?

- Wink at your spouse across a crowded room.
- Leave little love notes for your spouse to find.
- Tell your spouse that you are in love with him/her.

Make acts of kindness a daily practice.

- Say "Good-bye, I love you" when leaving for the day.
- Greet your spouse with a hug and a kiss when you see him/her after a long day.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Friendship with God

Friendship with our spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

IN CHRIST



MODEL OF THE TEMPLE AT THE TIME OF JESUS

Fifth Week of Lent 2018

Fifth Week of Lent: Sunday

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. ²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say -- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 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 it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people¹ to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Meditation

"Lifted up," there it is again. We know what is about to happen. We know that to be lifted up means to be hung on the cross to die in public shame as a common criminal. And yet, Jesus indicates that this being lifted up means that finally, the "hour for the Son of Man to be gloried" has arrived. God's true nature, his "glory," is revealed in this extraordinary act of self-emptying. The great paradox of love is that you can't keep it if you hang on to it. For love to be love it must be poured out for the other. It must be given away. The greater the love, the greater the cost. To love, we must become like a seed planted and hidden for a time in the ground. But the promise is that life on the other side of suffering, death and self-emptying is a life that is as different from the old life as the mighty oak tree is from the acorn.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What has been the most enjoyable club, league, or team to which you have belonged?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
- Go to a high school or college event: a game, concert, play . . .

Express your love with simple actions.

- Honor you spouse in front of your children today.
- When your spouse tells you about something that they will be doing that day, ask how it went.
- When your spouse enters the room, greet him or her like you did when you were first dating.
- Take your spouse in your arms and dance with him/her, even if there is no music playing! Then laugh if it doesn't go so well.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fifth Week of Lent: Monday

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; John 8:1-11

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 8:1-11

Early in the morning Jesus came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵ Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Meditation

We don't know what Jesus wrote in the sand. But a more helpful question might be, who are you in this story? Are you the unfortunate woman caught in a serious sin that carries the death penalty? Are you a "righteous" Pharisee who is testing Jesus to see if he will keep the Law of Moses? Are you one of the elders slinking away in humiliation, with your face red and Jesus' words ringing in your ears – "throw the stone, if you have no sin?" Now notice that the only one who could have thrown the first stone didn't. He did not come to condemn sinners, but to rescue them. The Law of Moses is not fulfilled in punishment of sin, but in the mercy of the law giver.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the biggest obstacle to entrusting your children to the Lord?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
- Go to a high school or college event: a game, concert, play . . .

Express your love with simple actions.

- Honor you spouse in front of your children today.
- When your spouse tells you about something that they will be doing that day, ask how it went.
- When your spouse enters the room, greet him or her like you did when you were first dating.
- Take your spouse in your arms and dance with him/her, even if there is no music playing! Then laugh if it doesn't go so well.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fifth Week of Lent: Tuesday

Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 8:21-30

Again he said to them, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." ²² Then the Jews said, "Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" ²³ He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he." ²⁵ They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Why do I speak to you at all? ²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." ²⁷ They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. ²⁹ And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." ³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Meditation

Over the next three days (in the Lenten readings from John 8) the tensions will escalate to the point where the Jews will attempt to kill Jesus. But before we get to the end of chapter 8, imagine the pain and disappointment that Jesus must be experiencing. He has come to his own people. He has come to rescue them. He pleads, "You will die in your sins if you don't believe that **"I am."** Oops, what did he just say? All they need to do is believe that he is **"I am?"** That sounds suspiciously like a short form of the name of Israel's God. Hear the challenge from the crowd, this time louder, "Who are you?" "When you see the Son of Man lifted up, then you will realize that **I am."** On the cross, God who is total self-giving love will be fully revealed in all of his glory. Amazingly some of the crowd believed him. But the tension is only building

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What was the funniest thing your dad did when you were growing up?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
- Go to a high school or college event: a game, concert, play . . .

Express your love with simple actions.

- Honor you spouse in front of your children today.
- When your spouse tells you about something that they will be doing that day, ask how it went.
- When your spouse enters the room, greet him or her like you did when you were first dating.
- Take her in your arms and dance with her, even if there is no music playing! Then laugh if it doesn't go so well.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fifth Week of Lent: Wednesday

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 8:31-42

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples;³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."³³ They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."³⁵ The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever.³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.³⁷ I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word."³⁸ I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father."³⁹ They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did,⁴⁰ but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did."⁴¹ You are indeed doing what your father does." They said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself."⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me.

Meditation

Ethnic identity, that is being a child of Abraham, was one of the most important Jewish symbols after Temple and Torah and now we hear Jesus challenge that central symbol. Again this scene would be laughable if it didn't end in attempted murder. Hear the angry crowd shout, "We are not illegitimate. We know who our father is, do you Jesus? We've heard the rumors about Joseph and Mary." "Abraham is our father. We have one father, God himself." Oh the irony. They are talking to the only begotten Son of the Father and calling him illegitimate. Jesus responds that if God were really their father, they would welcome him because they would be brothers. Alas, their father is really not Abraham or God, rather their father is the devil himself, as Jesus will point out in the next few verses of this chapter. Jesus is challenging their ethnic identity. If they were legitimate children of Abraham they would be doing what their father did – they would believe in Jesus. But they are acting like their real father – the devil. This can't possibly end well for Jesus

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the most memorable road you've ever driven?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
- Go to a high school or college event: a game, concert, play . . .

Express your love with simple actions.

- Honor you spouse in front of your children today.
- When your spouse tells you about something that they will be doing that day, ask how it went.
- When your spouse enters the room, greet him or her like you did when you were first dating.
- Take your spouse in your arms and dance with him/her, even if there is no music playing! Then laugh if it doesn't go so well.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fifth Week of Lent: Thursday

Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 8:51-59

Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.”⁵² The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.'"⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?"⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,'"⁵⁵ though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word.⁵⁶ Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.”⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.”⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Meditation

“How can you promise that someone won’t die? Even Abraham and the prophets died. Who do you think you are? Do you think you are you greater than Abraham?” I suppose it is unfair to have expected the crowd to have read the prologue to the Gospel where we know that Jesus is the Word of God come to dwell with humanity. It is also not fair to expect them to have read chapters 20 and 21 where we learn about the resurrection. But it is still tragically ironic that they are looking at Abraham’s God and asking him if he thinks he is greater than Abraham. Well yes he is. But is that what Jesus is really claiming? Yes! “Before Abraham was, **I am.**” They tried to kill him, but it wasn’t time yet.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord’s Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord’s Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What does it mean to say that love is a great risk?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
- Go to a high school or college event: a game, concert, play . . .

Express your love with simple actions.

- Honor you spouse in front of your children today.
- When your spouse tells you about something that they will be doing that day, ask how it went.
- When your spouse enters the room, greet him or her like you did when you were first dating.
- Take your spouse in your arms and dance with him/her, even if there is no music playing! Then laugh if it doesn't go so well.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fifth Week of Lent: Friday
Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 10:31-42

The Jews took up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" ³³ The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'-- and the scripture cannot be annulled-- ³⁶ can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. ³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." ³⁹ Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands. ⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. ⁴¹ Many came to him, and they were saying, "John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." ⁴² And many believed in him there.

Meditation

It is winter now. This scene follows what Jesus said about being the good shepherd. He was co-opting another of their great national festivals – Hanukkah the festival that celebrates the cleansing of the Temple at the time of the Maccabean revolt. Why were they trying to kill him this time? Well he had just said that he and the Father are one. The central prayer of Judaism, the prayer they would have said every day is, “Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is **One**.” Jesus has said, before Abraham was, **I am**. And now he says that the Father and I are **One**. With his word and actions Jesus is saying that the temple is corrupt, and Yahweh has returned to make things right. Only the Temple is not a building. The Temple, the unique dwelling place of God on earth, is a person. It is Jesus. The Temple building will be judged and destroyed, but he will be vindicated as the true Temple.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite meal to cook? Who have you made it for?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
- Go to a high school or college event: a game, concert, play . . .

Express your love with simple actions.

- Honor you spouse in front of your children today.
- When your spouse tells you about something that they will be doing that day, ask how it went.
- When your spouse enters the room, greet him or her like you did when you were first dating.
- Take your spouse in your arms and dance with him/her, even if there is no music playing! Then laugh if it doesn't go so well.

Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Fifth Week of Lent: Saturday
Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 11:45-56

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." ⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. ⁵³ So from that day on they planned to put him to death. ⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples. ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he will not come to the festival, will he?"

Meditation

Prophecy is not really about revealing the future. The prophets of Israel did much more than that. They delivered God's word to their own people. It is appropriate that the high priest would prophecy. Again, the irony is that Caiaphas, the man, meant one thing and Caiaphas, the high priest/prophet, meant something else entirely. What did Caiaphas, the man, mean? He meant that Jesus had become a political nuisance and therefore he must go. Revolution was in the air and the people were expecting a Messiah. They longed for a king to lead them in a battle that would overthrow the hated Romans. The Romans were nervous because the city was being flooded by pilgrims, whose hopes for deliverance were well known to them. Whether Jesus posed a real threat to Rome was not Caiaphas' concern. He was afraid that the Romans would react as they usually do to would-be kings, with great violence. The Romans were brutal in putting down insurrection. He knew that it would be better for one man to die than to provoke the Romans' brutal reaction. He was right, but for the wrong reason. Jesus and his Father had something else entirely in mind.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Lent is nearing its climax. Are we ready for Easter?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Be generous.

- Save the best part of today's meal or dessert for your spouse (assuming he or she thinks it's the best!).
- Give your spouse that last piece of pizza.
- Offer his/her favorite part of the newspaper first.

Do something fun together.

- Make a picnic and watch the sunset at your favorite park.
- Simply lie in bed together on a Saturday morning and then go have coffee together.
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Express your love with simple actions.

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Before jumping into the after work/supper/evening activities, take five minutes alone . . .

- To embrace and kiss.
- To tell each other one good thing about the day.
- To share a laugh or a joke you heard.

Friendship with God

Friendship with our spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

IN CHRIST



ANCIENT OLIVE TREE IN THE GARDEN OF GETHESEMANE

Holy Week 2018

Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-10; Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Mark 11:1-10

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Meditation

Over 175 years before that first Palm Sunday, the Maccabees had entered the newly cleansed temple amid waving palm branches, shouts of praise, hymns and songs because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel (1 Maccabees 13:50-51). The prophet Zechariah (9:9) had proclaimed long ago that the King would arrive triumphant and victorious riding on the back of a colt. All of Israel's great hopes were expressed in and culminating in this dramatic entry into Jerusalem. As we had hoped and prayed, David was returning to the throne, and their enemies would be defeated. Can you imagine the hope, the expectation that was being lived out in that moment, in that prophetic action? We know that Jesus is acting like he is the king! More than that, in this action, God, himself, is riding into Jerusalem to claim his rightful title as king, and to defeat the great enemy of humanity, death. He is riding in to establish his kingdom on earth.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is something about you that you hope will never change?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
- Take time to quietly read the passion of Jesus together.
- Watch a Holy Week movie and discuss it.

Be affectionate.

- Make sure your kisses last at least six seconds. Every now and then go for a full minute.
- Stick a love note in a lunch box, purse or pocket.
- Give each other a funny and/or romantic card.
- Learn how to give a great foot massage.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

- Find a charming coffee shop in a small town and get away for breakfast.
- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Take time for the two of you to sit and talk calmly.

Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." ⁹ When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Meditation

Jesus did not have to come to Jerusalem to restore his friend Lazarus to life, he could have healed him from afar as he did for the royal official's son. He did not have to stay in the vicinity after he restored Lazarus' life. He could have gone back to the relative safety of the land on the other side of the Jordan River. Yet here he is, eating with his dearest friends, only a couple of miles and a few days from his death. Jesus knows what will happen and he has chosen to provoke the issue now. This is the feast where God will once again act to rescue his people from slavery. This time the blood on the door post will be that of the true Lamb of God. But today he is eating with friends. Intimate friends and one of them will betray him. Did Jesus not know about Judas? He must have. But there is one more meal with Jesus. There is one more opportunity to get to know him. Mary sees him and anoints him with perfume that is worth about a year's wage – what a gift. Judas was a thief and squandered his last chance. Jesus must have loved Judas even to the end.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What does Jesus' great sacrifice mean to you?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
- Take time to quietly read the passion of Jesus together.
- Watch a Holy Week movie and discuss it.

Be affectionate.

- Make sure your kisses last at least six seconds. Every now and then go for a full minute.
- Stick a love note in a lunch box, purse or pocket.
- Give each other a funny and/or romantic card.
- Learn how to give a great foot massage.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

- Find a charming coffee shop in a small town and get away for breakfast.
- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Take time for the two of you to sit and talk calmly.

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 13:21-33, 36-38

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me." ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³ One of his disciples-- the one whom Jesus loved-- was reclining next to him; ²⁴ Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do." ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival"; or, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. ³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." ³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

Meditation

"And it was night." Three little words in Greek bring us back to the first chapter of the Gospel of John. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not overcome/arrested/understood the light. But now it is night. Satan has had his way with Judas. Judas, an intimate companion of Jesus, will betray him. The darkness will do its best to extinguish the light. But darkness will not win in the end. In this holiest of weeks, we suffer with Jesus, but we are full of hope in the resurrection. Good Friday is part of the story, but it is not the end.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Who is the most famous person you have ever met?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
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Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

- Find a charming coffee shop in a small town and get away for breakfast.
- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Take time for the two of you to sit and talk calmly.

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 26:14-25

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. ¹⁷ On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. ²⁰ When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; ²¹ and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." ²² And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" ²³ He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." ²⁵ Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

Meditation

We know he was a thief, but is several months' pay enough money to betray a friend? Judas would probably have had to move out of town, perhaps to a foreign land and start all over. Several months' pay is not a lot of money. If it was not for the money, what could cause Judas to betray a friend? Was he angry that Jesus would really not be the kind of messiah he had hoped for? It's possible that Judas was expecting to manage the king's treasury – where he could certainly have skimmed a lot of money. Did that anger and disappointment lead to betrayal? Did Judas have nationalistic hopes that were clearly going to be disappointed? We are left with the story, greed, shattered dreams, spite and betrayal of a friend. All of which would lead to despair and two deaths, Jesus' and his own.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is your favorite day of Holy Week? Why?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
- Take time to quietly read the passion of Jesus together.
- Watch a Holy Week movie and discuss it.

Be affectionate.

- Make sure your kisses last at least six seconds. Every now and then go for a full minute.
- Stick a love note in a lunch box, purse or pocket.
- Give each other a funny and/or romantic card.
- Learn how to give a great foot massage.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

- Find a charming coffee shop in a small town and get away for breakfast.
- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.
- Take time for the two of you to sit and talk calmly.

Holy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 13:1-15

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord-- and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Meditation

Passover looked back to Exodus and the coming of the kingdom. Jesus intended this meal to symbolize a new exodus, and the arrival of the kingdom of God all wrapped up in his own fate. The stories are woven together. As the host tells the story, he links the past with the present. But Jesus is doing more than evoking the past; he is transforming the central symbols of Israel.

The bread is his body and the wine is his blood. As bread: he will die, his death will be the source of our life, it evokes the covenant meal of Exodus 24, manna in the desert, the unleavened bread of the Exodus itself. The wine: his blood of the new covenant. The blood smeared on the lintels of the homes as the angel of death spared the first born of Israel. It is the blood of the covenant that was sprinkled on the altar at Mount Sinai. The whole story of God's plan to rescue all of humanity in and through this new great Exodus is being enacted in the meal and will be sealed on the cross.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- What is the hardest thing you ever did for someone else?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
- Take time to quietly read the passion of Jesus together.
- Watch a Holy Week movie and discuss it.

Be affectionate.

- Make sure your kisses last at least six seconds. Every now and then go for a full minute.
- Stick a love note in a lunch box, purse or pocket.
- Give each other a funny and/or romantic card.
- Learn how to give a great foot massage.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

- Find a charming coffee shop in a small town and get away for breakfast.
- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: (excerpt) John 19:5, 14-22

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, **"Here is the man!"** ¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, **"Here is your King!"** ¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." ¹⁶ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; ¹⁷ and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Meditation

The chief priest had been prophetic but did not know it. Now, Pontius Pilate is prophetic, but he doesn't know it either. John began his gospel by deliberately echoing Genesis 1:1, "in the beginning..." Now, on the sixth day of the old creation, Pilate announces that Jesus is the true Man bringing to a conclusion God's act of rescuing his creation and establishing a new creation. Pilate, who is ironically the cruel representative of Caesar – the enemy king, announces to the Jews that the one they had longed for all these centuries is here. "Here is your King!" Only the Jews couldn't see it. They rejected their king and opted for Barabbas, which means "son of the father." They could have had their king, who was the true Son of the Father. We, too, can have the son of the Father as our true king.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- As you think about the passion story listen to the words of the song, “where you there when they crucified my Lord?” Were you?

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
- Take time to quietly read the passion of Jesus together.
- Watch a Holy Week movie and discuss it.

Be affectionate.

- Make sure your kisses last at least six seconds. Every now and then go for a full minute.
- Stick a love note in a lunch box, purse or pocket.
- Give each other a funny and/or romantic card.
- Learn how to give a great foot massage.

Be grateful.

- Let your spouse know how important he or she is to you.
- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

- Find a charming coffee shop in a small town and get away for breakfast.
- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.

Holy Saturday, Easter Vigil

Genesis 1:1 – 2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15—15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4; Ezekiel 26:16-17a, 18-28; Rom 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Meditation

What a strange story. This is not at all what we expected. Jesus was not a bright light. He was not shining like the radiant heavenly being we expected from Daniel 12 or Wisdom 3. He was not even dressed in the brilliant white clothes of the transfiguration story. We could not have made up the story this way. And we certainly would not have had women (sorry sisters) be the first witnesses. Why you ask? Because women did not have legal standing in court. In this strange story, Jesus is embodied but different – like a normal person, he ate fish and was solid, but not like a normal person at the same time, because he appeared in rooms as if he could walk through walls. He appeared and disappeared – not like a normal person! He was solidly physical, recognized and yet not recognized. It is like he belonged to two dimensions at once (heaven and earth) the human and divine dimensions of reality. We have the whole Easter season to contemplate the great mystery. But today, the tomb is empty! He is risen! Alleluia!

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk

The more we know about each other, the more we love; the more we love, the more we want to know.

Try this conversation starter.

- Talk about the fact that because of the resurrection, everything we do matters!

Act

Regardless of the feeling of the moment, in the Holy Spirit, we have the power to do acts of love that will become **habits** of love.

Try one of these today:

Prepare for Holy Week.

- Finish Lent well: pray and read Scripture together.
- Prepare for your Holy Week celebrations together.
- Plan your Easter menu and begin preparing the food together.
- Consider having a Seder meal with the washing of feet.
- Take time to quietly read the passion of Jesus together.
- Watch a Holy Week movie and discuss it.

Be affectionate.

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- Learn how to give a great foot massage.

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- Express how much you appreciate each other.

Take time together.

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- Find a scenic overlook and spend time enjoying the beauty together.
- Make a special breakfast for your spouse.
- Go for a long walk with your spouse.

Easter Morning!

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8; John 20:1-9

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: John 20:1-9

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Meditation

By resurrection, what the Scriptures mean is our dead physical bodies will no longer be dead. We will come out of our tombs; our bodies will be transformed, and we will never die again. The Jews at the time of Jesus believed that the general resurrection for all the righteous would happen at the end of the present evil age. God would act in a definitive way to set the world to rights. He would defeat his enemies, establish his kingdom and transform all of creation. Resurrection did not mean finally escaping this evil world. It did not mean escaping this evil physical body that is holding me back from real communion with God. It did not mean being with God in eternal bliss as a disembodied spirit – which, quite honestly, is the prevailing belief in much of modern America. To return as a disembodied spirit is to be a ghost or an angel (see Acts 12) but that is not resurrection. Resurrection is defined as the transformation of this body, never to die again. And it is as integral to the doctrine of the Incarnation as the line in John 1:14, "the word became flesh." If there is no resurrection of the body and he is somehow alive only spiritually, then Jesus did not become a real human being. The tomb has to be empty or it's not a resurrection. That was why the unlikely alliance of the Chief priests and Pharisees risked violating Sabbath to ask Pilate to put a guard on the tomb. They knew it wasn't about ghosts and disembodied spirits, it was about the body. But, people had to see him alive or it was only a cruel story. Empty tomb and appearances of the risen Jesus go together.

Quiet reflection: *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

Prayers and Intentions: *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord out loud what and who are on your mind.*

Lord's Prayer: *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen

Talk and Act!

Celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior!!!

