

## Season of Lent

As I searched for ministry and devotional Presbyterian resources this year, a couple of books caught my attention this Lenten season. One is *Turning Over Tables: A Lenten Call for Disrupting Power* by Kathy Escobar, and the other is *From Wilderness to Glory: Lent and Easter for Everyone* by N.T. Wright. Both are new releases for Lent 2025, published by Westminster John Knox Press and promoted by the PC(USA). Each book offers daily reflections on Lenten themes, accompanied by questions and practices that can be engaged in individually or collectively in groups.

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For those grappling with the current political realities—both at home and abroad—Escobar’s work offers a timely exploration of power and the liberating, healing, and transformative (even “empire-subverting”) way of Jesus. Escobar, who was once part of a megachurch ministry, lost her place after confronting what she describes as “unhealthy power”—power rooted in control, domination, and the diminishing of others. She contrasts this with *healthy* power, which Jesus embodies through radical humility, even to the point of death.

Escobar acknowledges that her book interacts with scripture less than a traditional Lenten devotional, but she is upfront about its unconventional approach. The book is designed for individuals and groups of all ages, genders, life experiences, and backgrounds, with sections centered on themes such as lament, repentance, disruption, and embodiment. She challenges readers to sit with any discomfort that may arise from the reflections, emphasizing that this discomfort is meant to empower and strengthen, regardless of where one is in their faith journey. According to Escobar, “*Wrestling, struggling, revelation—that is not only the story of Lent but also the story of progress, change, and social transformation. We need wrestling, struggle, and revelation to get to a new place in our own story, in the world’s story.*”

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N.T. Wright’s work, by contrast, follows a more traditional Lenten devotional format. As with his other devotional works, readers will find scholarly, historical, and cultural insights presented in an accessible and personal way. Wright argues that the early Christian practice of observing Lent—not just celebrating Christmas and Easter—was meant “*to remind themselves, in the weeks either side of Easter, that world history divides into two: the time before Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the time afterwards. New creation has been launched in the midst of old.*” He contends that for Christians to fully embrace this reality of new creation, they must adopt the ancient rhythm of lament followed by celebration—precisely what Lent embodies.

According to Wright, “*Being a Christian doesn’t mean pretending that everything is ‘all right really’ when actually it isn’t. To lament is to recognize that things still are out of joint, and that we can and should bring our puzzled sorrow and frustration into God’s presence.*” At the same time, he underscores the necessity of genuine celebration: “*This is about opening our eyes to the light—and, in astonished gratitude, determining day by day to live in that light.*” Wright asserts that observing Lent properly means both lamenting deeply and then rejoicing fully, praising God

for the new creation into which we have been brought. His devotional guides readers through six weeks of daily reflections, culminating in a seventh week of extended Easter celebration. He invites readers to think, pray, and reflect on the stories of Jesus while engaging with the questions he provides for individual and group study.

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Of course, you may already have your own devotional resources for Lent. However, if you or someone you know is looking to deepen their faith journey during this sacred season—especially in light of all that has transpired in our lives, our families, our nation, and the world—perhaps these two books could offer much-needed comfort and strength.

May God bless us as we walk through this season of Lent together!

**Peter Tan-Gatue**