

Lent in a Bag



A Family Devotional
PRAY FAST GIVE



Instructions:

“Lent in a Bag” is meant for family devotion. Select as much or as little of these materials for your Lenten journey. During Lent we focus on repentance – turning from sin, spending extra time with God, loving others, and recalling our baptismal vows. We die to sin so that we can have new life in Christ. Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving¹ are traditional spiritual practices of Lent as we reflect and prepare for Easter.

Each week in this devotion there is a new object to be removed from the bag. The object ties to a reflection on the weekly theme.

Week 1: Sand. The desert. God is with us. Deciding a Lenten fast.

Week 2: Shell. Baptism. Death to sin and new life in Christ.

Week 3: Man. Jesus is both God and man.

Week 4: Heart. Prayer.

Week 5: Candle. Almsgiving—sharing our money, food, time, and giftings. Shining Jesus’ light.

Week 6: Cross. Fasting. Holy Week.

Each week there is/are

- **a key theme.** Lent is traditionally a time for fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. These will be mentioned throughout Lent, but each will have a one week focus.
- **a key verse.** This would be great to memorize as a family. For very young children, try memorizing part of the verse. Recite it every night at dinner.
- **a daily prayer.** A collect (pronounced “CAW-licked”) or prayer is supplied from the Book of Common Prayer. It could be said during family prayer time. For the youngest of children, pray a simple sentence surrounding the weekly theme instead.
- **five Scriptures** on the theme. For the youngest of children (toddlers), repeating the key verse might be more appropriate. For older children, these Scriptures can be read as a group. Choose a time of day (like at dinner or in the morning) to read these together. After you have read the Scriptures, reflect on how they relate to the weekly theme.
- **ideas for actions** throughout the week. You don’t have to do them all! They are just ideas to help you interact with Lent as a family.

¹ Almsgiving is the act of giving to the poor. This is usually in the form of food or money. We give because God first loved us, and it is a way to share the compassionate love of God.

WEEK 1: SAND

Lent is a desert season. We make extra space for God. It is a time to reflect on our sins and on the love of God. We pray. We fast. We give alms to share the love of God. Jesus was in the desert for 40 days. Our season of Lent is 40 days. Moses, too, was with the Israelites in the desert for 40 years. Desert times are times to prepare. Jesus was preparing for His ministry. The Israelites were preparing to enter the Promised Land to minister to the world. What are you preparing for? Are you preparing for a ministry? (We all have a ministry.) Are you preparing for Easter? The desert is a difficult place to live, but no matter where we are, God is with us, even in the desert.

KEY VERSE:

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

THEMES:

God is with us.

We start our fast.

INITIAL ACTIONS:

Sand - Prepare a bowl to hold your sand. This will be your family's focal point for the season. Find a location to display it prominently, like the kitchen table. Place a purple cloth or paper under the bowl. Purple is the color of Lent. It is a serious color and the color of royalty; something is going to happen to the King.

Bury Alleluias - This week we bury the "Alleluias," where it will remain until Easter morning. During Lent we don't say "Alleluia" because it is a serious season, and we are getting ready for the great celebration of Easter. When you are ready, say or sing your last "Alleluia," then pour the sand over the paper "Alleluia." Your sand is now ready for your Lenten journey.

Spiritual disciplines -Talk about what you will do for fasting, prayer and giving this Lenten season. Ask yourselves these questions:

1. What are the distractions currently diverting my attention from God? Possibly this is what you might want to fast from.
2. What spiritual practice will help me give my attention to God?

Giving things up for Lent helps us focus and rely on God to supply our needs and to recognize He is with us. When you crave the item you are giving up, pray! Ask for God's help. Ask God to reveal His presence to you. Remind yourself (or your child) that God is present in the hard or desert times. He will never leave you; He will be with you wherever you go!

- For young children, fasting might include no sweets on a certain day of the week or ending eating at a certain time of day, restricting media or screen time, living by the motto “if you can’t say something nice, don’t say it,” or fasting from bad attitudes, hatred, pride, bitterness, and anger.
- Encourage new prayer habits during Lent.
- Model almsgiving and include your children in blessing others.

Scripture and Prayer - Say this week’s key verse. Pray as a family the weekly prayer. You have now begun your desert journey with God.

WEEK 1 REFLECTION & RESPONSE IDEAS

PRAYER:

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

For young children pray: Thank you, God, for always being with us.

READ:

Luke 4:1-15

Exodus 17:1-7

Hebrews 13:5-6

1 Timothy 6:17-18

Matthew 6:16-18

ACTIONS:

- Memorize this week’s key verse.
- Write in the sand your sins. Pray for forgiveness. Wipe them away, as the Father remembers them no more.
- Write in the sand names of people you are praying for to know God.
- When you are craving your fasting item, go to the sand tray. Write in the sand prayers or draw as you pray. God will give you strength.
- Listen to “Desert Song” by Hillsong or “The Love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:16-21) by Slugs & Bugs on the album *Sing the Bible 2* through an online music provider.

WEEK 2: SHELL

Hopefully you have decided on a Lenten fast, almsgiving, or prayer habit by now. If you have not, continue to pray. However, realize that this very "Lent in a Bag" IS a Lenten practice! You are carving out space to meet with God in this desert season.

This week's Lenten journey continues by looking back at what Jesus did right before His desert experience: He was baptized. The Church has a tradition of using Lent to prepare for baptism at Easter. During Lent we look at our baptisms and recall that we have put off our old lives of sin and are renewed in life through the waters that save us. This means that we put away our sinful desires and focus on living a holy life devoted to God. If you have not been baptized and wish to be, your priest and family minister are available to discuss this further with you.

KEY VERSE:

Romans 6:11 "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

THEMES:

We remember our baptismal vows.
We are dead to sin but alive in Christ.

INITIAL ACTION:

Shell - Remove the shell from the bag. Look at it. Reflect on it. Say the key verse as a family. Place the shell in the sand. Pray the weekly prayer.

WEEK 2 REFLECTION & RESPONSE IDEAS:

PRAYER:

Grant, Lord God, to all who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, that, as we have put away the old life of sin, so we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

For young children pray: Thank you, God, that I am your child.

READ:

Matthew 3:3-17

Romans 6:1-14

Romans 6:15-23

1 Peter 3:14-22

Ezekiel 36 24-28

ACTIONS:

- Memorize this week's key verse.
- If you have been baptized, look at photos or cards from your baptism. Tell stories.
- If you have a candle from your baptism, light it.
- Remember and restate your baptismal vows.
- Take a long bath or shower. Remember your baptismal vows and know that Christ is renewing you daily. Take extra time with God.
- When you wash your hands, ask God to wash away your sins. Receive His forgiveness and recite this week's key verse.
- At baptisms the priest takes anointing oil and puts it on the forehead of the one being baptized and says, "You are sealed with the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." When you wake up in the morning, mark yourself with the sign of the cross, and remember that you are a child of God.
- Hold the shell in your hand as you pray a daily confession. Hold onto the promise of new life in Christ.
- Listen to the song "Christ Lives in Me" by Rend Collective through an online music provider.
- Can you remember last week's memory verse?

Baptismal Vows—PROFESSION OF FAITH BCP

Question Do you renounce the devil and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

Answer **I renounce them.**

Question Do you renounce the empty promises and deadly deceits of this world that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

Answer **I renounce them.**

Question Do you renounce the sinful desires of the flesh that draw you from the love of God?

Answer **I renounce them.**

The Celebrant prays over the Candidate(s) and may anoint each Candidate with the Oil of Exorcism, saying
Almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness and evil and lead you into the light and obedience of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Celebrant continues

Question Do you turn to Jesus Christ and confess him as your Lord and Savior?

Answer **I do.**

Question Do you joyfully receive the Christian Faith, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

Answer **I do.**

Question Will you obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in them all the days of your life?

Answer **I will, the Lord being my helper.**

WEEK 3: MAN

This third week we look at Christ's humanity and divinity. He is fully God and fully man. This is a great mystery. Because God came to dwell in human form, He understands us. Jesus was like a new Adam—one who was created without earthly father yet did not sin like Adam did. Because He did not sin, He conquered sin and death. He was the pure and spotless lamb that paid for the sins of the world. Jesus really did suffer. He had feelings and emotions. He went through the same things we do. This week let us focus on how Jesus acted as He walked upon this earth and pray that we would be daily transformed into the likeness of Christ.

KEY VERSE:

2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God."

THEMES:

Jesus was fully God and fully man. He became like us and understands us.
WWJD—What Would Jesus Do?

INITIAL ACTION:

Peg Doll - Take the man peg doll from the bag. Place it in the sand. Imagine Jesus in the desert with the devil. Imagine how hungry he was. Think about times when you have been tempted. What has helped you during temptation? Jesus turned to the Scriptures to help Him in temptation. Recite this week's memory verse. Pray the Lord's Prayer as a family and ask God to deliver you from evil.

WEEK 3 REFLECTION & RESPONSE IDEAS:

PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

For young children pray: God, help me to know how to obey.

READ:

John 1:1-14

Isaiah 53:1-7

Philippians 2:5-11

Colossians 1:12-20

1 Corinthians 15:21-26

ACT:

- Continue in your Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. If you have not met your goals, give yourself grace to restart. Our God is merciful.
- Memorize this week's key verse.
- Recall the mnemonic WWJD. What Would Jesus Do? Make that a common phrase around the house this week. How can you act more like Jesus?
- Listen to the Chris Tomlin songs "Jesus Messiah" and "Our God" or "Do You Not Know" (Isaiah 40:28-31) by Slugs & Bugs on the album *Sing the Bible 2*. You can download it from an online music provider.
- When you take communion next, it is a tangible moment of receiving the humanity and divinity of Christ. Pray that you would become more like Christ as you partake.
- Can you remember the last two week's memory verses?

WEEK 4: HEART

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians says that we should "pray continuously" (1 Thess. 5:17). This week we practice the Lenten tradition of prayer. Jesus often withdrew to solitary places to pray. He spent time with His Father in Heaven. As we quiet ourselves this week, we will spend time with our Father in Heaven, as well.

KEY VERSE:

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."

THEMES:

Pray.

INITIAL ACTION:

Heart - This week take the heart out of the bag. The heart reminds us of love: God's love for us and our love for God. When you love someone, you like to talk with that person. This week's theme is prayer. Prayer is an act of love toward God. We take the time to be with God. Also, if you turn the heart upside down, it looks like arms crossed in prayer. Place the heart in the sand (right side up or upside down) and pray the Lord's Prayer as a family.

WEEK 4 REFLECTION & RESPONSE IDEAS:

PRAY:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

For young children, try to help them to memorize parts of The Lord's Prayer.

READ:

Matthew 6:5-15

Isaiah 44:21-23

Hebrews 5:7-10

Psalm 63

Matthew 26:36-46

ACT:

- Continue in your Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. If you have not met your goals, give yourself grace to restart. Our God is merciful.
- Memorize this week's key verse.
- Listen to "Stop (Listen to the Lord!)" by Slugs & Bugs or Chris McClarney's song "I'm Listening." You can watch it on YouTube or download it from an online music provider.
- Can you remember the last three week's memory verses?
- This week pray The Lord's Prayer daily as a family.
- Pretzels are a common Lenten food. They remind us of arms crossed on our chest—a posture of prayer. This week eat or make pretzels as a family. If your child goes to school, pack pretzels in his or her lunch as a reminder to pray.
- When saying prayers as a family, pray for people who don't know God.
- The prophet Daniel prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10). Challenge your family to pray at least three times a day. Try times like before meals, after meals, before stepping out of bed in the morning, and while laying down for bed at night.
- Challenge your family to have individual quiet prayer time by using the sand tray. Write prayers in the sand, make patterns in the sand, or hold the heart to help focus on prayer.
- Dust the house this week. As you dust, pray that as you clean the house, God would also purify your heart. (This is great for both kids and adults!) This could also be done with cleaning windows and mirrors.
- At the end of the day, take time in silence as a family and ask: Where did you see God moving today? The more you do this, the more you'll recognize God's hand in your lives.
- Encourage a rhythm of prayer, such as by using the A.C.T.S.-L. mnemonic.
 - A) Adore. Say "God you are..." prayers.
 - C) Confess. Confess your sins.
 - T) Thank. Thank God for all He does and all He is.
 - S) Supplicate. Supplication is a fancy word for ask. These are asking prayers.
 - L) Listen. Listen to God in silence.

WEEK 5: CANDLE

This week take the candle out of the bag. It reminds us that we are the light of the world to those living in darkness. We are called to spread God's love and light. This week we also focus on almsgiving. Almsgiving is giving food, money, other items, or help to the needy. Jesus said that true fasting involves helping people. Light your candle at each family meal and talk about how you can help others and spread the love of Jesus. Jesus said in John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

KEY VERSE:

Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

THEMES:

Let your light shine.
Use your giftings.
Give alms.

INITIAL ACTION:

Candle - Take the candle out of the bag. Place it in the sand. Light it. Recall that Jesus is the light of the world and that you are to spread the light of His love. Say this week's memory verse. Pray the weekly prayer as a family today and each day this week:

WEEK 5 REFLECTION & RESPONSE IDEAS:

PRAY:

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate² Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

For young children pray: Jesus, You are the light of the world.

² Incarnate means that Christ "took on flesh"; He became human while still keeping His divinity.

READ:

Isaiah 58:6-12

Philippians 2:12-15

1 John 3:16-18

Romans 12:1-8

Zechariah 7:8-10

ACT:

- Continue in your Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. If you have not met your goals, give yourself grace to restart. Our God is merciful
- Memorize this week's key verse.
- Sing this week "This Little Light of Mine."
- Listen to "Let Your Light Shine", "Stars" (Philippians 2:14-15), "Above Yourself" (Philippians 2:3) from Slugs & Bugs' album *Sing the Bible 2*. You can download it from an online music provider.
- Encourage everyone in your family to do a closet cleaning. Donate clothes to the needy.
- Make small paper lunch bags filled with granola bars, a juice box or water, and a Scripture verse. Have them ready in the car for when you drive by a homeless person.
- Encourage family members to secretly bless one another or do good deeds around the home or at school. It might be to do someone else's chores or make someone's bed. It might be to leave a special note. It might be to play with a sibling for an extra amount of time.
- Speak encouraging words to your children. Tell them what they are good at.
- During dinner light the candle and set it in front of each family member one by one. When it is in front of the person, have everyone else in the family tell one thing they like about the person with the candle.
- Can you remember the last four week's memory verses?

WEEK 6, HOLY WEEK: CROSS

John 3:16 -17 says “For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.” This week we reflect on Christ’s great sacrifice for us. He made a way for us to be in a right relationship with God the Father, and He calls us to live a life of holiness with Him.

This week we also focus on fasting. In the Early Church as baptismal candidates, their sponsors, and the priest prepared for baptism on the day before Easter, they would fast to ready their hearts. Fasting helps us focus on God and rely on His strength. During Holy Week fasting also reminds us of Jesus’ suffering.

KEY VERSE:

Isaiah 43:25 “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

THEMES:

We fast. Christ died for our sins.

INITIAL ACTION:

Cross - Remove the last item from the bag—a cross. Place it in the sand. This week we solemnly remember Christ’s sacrifice for us on the cross. Recite this week’s key verse together. Pray this week’s daily collect.

WEEK 6 REFLECTION & RESPONSE IDEAS:

PRAY:

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

For young children pray: Jesus, thank you for loving me.

READ:³

Psalm 51

Luke 18:9-14

Psalm 145:8-21

Zechariah 12:10-11

Exodus 12:1-42

ACT:

- This week you might want to increase your fasting, prayer, or almsgiving. Holy Week is an even more serious week. It would be a good week for simple meals, fasting from meat, or fasting from sweets. It is hard to fast with small children but think outside of the box; try giving up a favorite toy.
- Good Friday is a traditional day of fasting. If you are not fasting from food, make space to reflect. Fast from joyful music. Fast from media. Attend church.
- Reduce non-church related activities this week in order to focus more on Christ and His work on the Cross.
- Memorize this week's key verse.
- Daily confess your sins.
- All throughout the day this week, recite this ancient "breath" prayer. It is a prayer you can say while cleaning, walking, driving, coloring, or drawing in the sand.
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God (as you inhale), have mercy on me, a sinner (as you exhale).
- Listen to "By His Wounds" (Isaiah 53:5-6) by Slugs & Bugs on the album *Sing the Bible 2* or "The Wonderful Cross" by Chris Tomlin and Matt Redman.
- As you reflect on Jesus' death, remember that there are those around the world that are dying daily for their faith. They are called martyrs. Pray for the persecuted Church. Pray for strength for martyrs to boldly proclaim the name of Jesus. Pray for the family members that the martyrs leave behind. Pray that God will give you the boldness, too.
- Can you remember the last five memory verses?
- On Easter Sunday, let your child(ren) unbury the "Alleluia." Remove the purple underneath the sand and replace it with white. Decorate the sand with flowers.

(Created by Amelia Schmotzer, Holy Spirit Anglican Church, Akron, Ohio, with contributions by Melissa Smith, Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church, Fort Worth, Texas 2021.)

³ This week's home readings do not contain the Passion of Christ. These are read on Palm Sunday and Good Friday at church. If you would like to include these readings in the home, especially with young children, using a picture Bible might be the best option. For older children, look in the four Gospels; each contain Passion accounts.

Alleluia

Alleluia

Alleluia

Alleluia

Alleluia

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