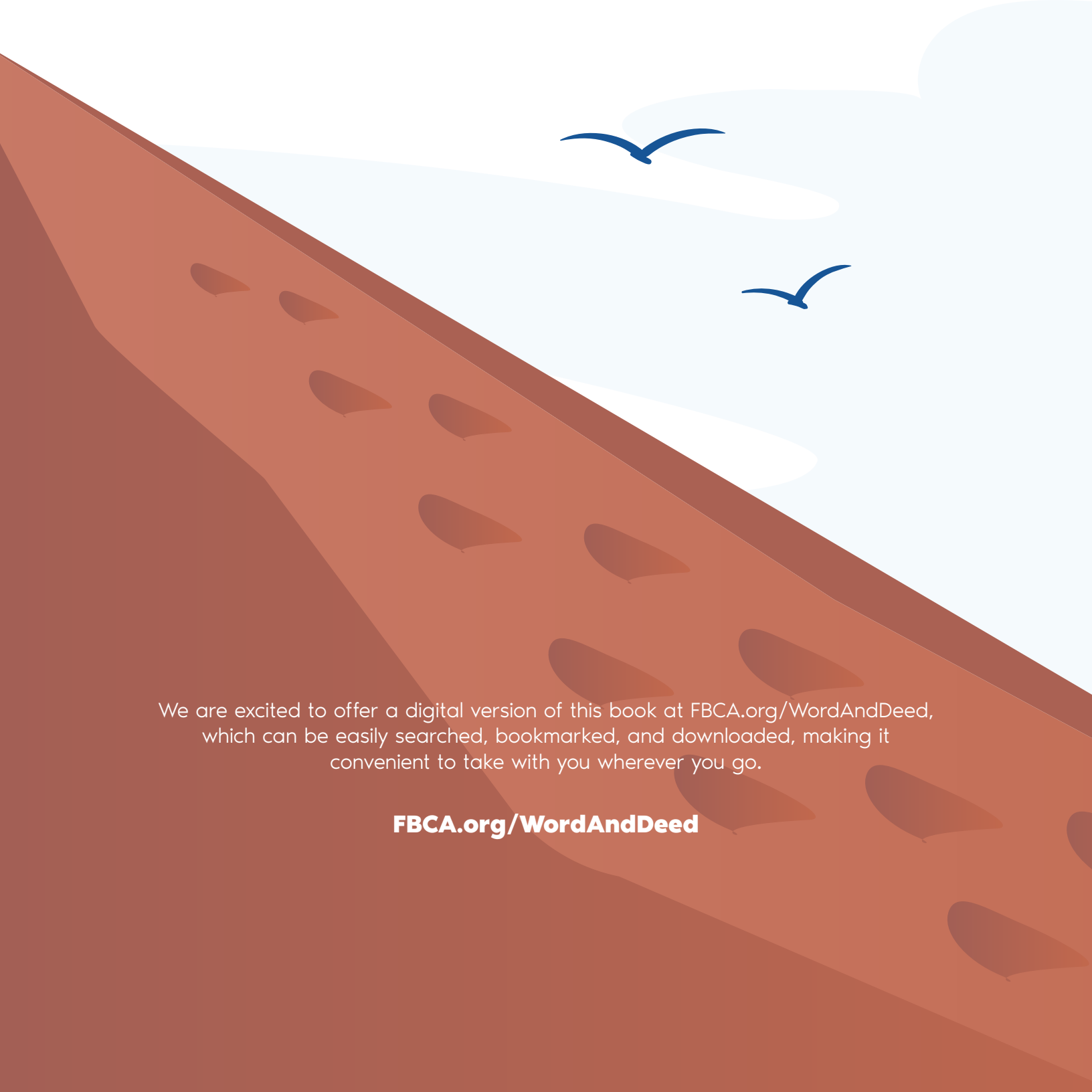


A stylized illustration of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a reddish-brown slope descends from the left, dotted with small, dark, teardrop-shaped shadows. The middle ground features dark brown, layered rock formations. A small, spiky green cactus is on the left. In the background, more brown mountains rise against a light blue sky with soft, white clouds. A single blue bird is flying in the upper right. The overall style is flat and modern.

TOGETHER IN

ASCENT

FIRST BAPTIST ARLINGTON



We are excited to offer a digital version of this book at FBCA.org/WordAndDeed, which can be easily searched, bookmarked, and downloaded, making it convenient to take with you wherever you go.

FBCA.org/WordAndDeed



LENT... A JOURNEY TO EASTER

From ancient times, Christians have paused to reflect on the events of that first Holy Week when our Lord suffered, died, and rose again. It became the custom of Christ-followers to prepare for Easter each year with a 40-day period of godly sorrow and repentance.

In English, this season became known as “lent” which is derived from the word for springtime. In the early Church, Lent was the time when new converts were prepared for baptism, and those who had experienced church discipline were restored to full fellowship.

Lent focuses our attention on the incredible mercy and forgiveness found only in the Lord Jesus Christ and his shed blood for us. The season begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Easter Sunday. It’s a time for self-examination and repentance... prayer and self-denial... and reading and meditating on the Word of God.

Our hope and prayer is that during this Lenten season, you will experience “unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).



Curt Grice

Curt Grice
Associate Pastor of Spiritual Formation

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Mark 1:1-8

Our Gospel reading this week is taken from the opening of Mark's account of the life of Jesus. Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four Gospels. It is a quick-hitting, action-packed account of the life and teachings of Jesus. In fact, Mark actually invented this genre of literature. There is no other example of this kind of religious document that put forth both the teachings of a religious figure and an account of the life of a religious figure. Notice that in the beginning of his account, he declares Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. And, he connects the ministry of John the Baptist directly to the Messiah Jesus. Finally, notice the message of John the Baptist was one of repentance and confession. Our theme for the beginning of the Lenten/Easter Season is just that---repentance and confession.

Devotional: Psalm 32

The marking of the Easter Season dates back at least to the 4th century when the ancient church settled on how to calculate the actual date of Easter each year. A 40-day journey was set aside to help each believer prepare for the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In the early 600's, Gregory the Great, pastor of the church at Rome established Ash Wednesday as the official beginning of the Easter Season. Eventually, Christians across the ancient world began to celebrate Ash Wednesday with a time of confession and repentance. The church selected 7 Psalms to be sung at the Ash Wednesday services: Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. These are known as the Seven Penitential Psalms.

We have chosen Psalm 32 to serve as our text for our devotional emphasis for the beginning of our Lenten/Easter journey. This Psalm was quoted by Paul in Romans 4:7-8. It sets forth the value of acknowledging our sin to God. It proclaims the blessing that comes from asking God for forgiveness and receiving His grace. Let's begin our journey in humility and seek the cleansing of sin that comes only from our loving and gracious God.

Parent Spotlight

The concept of Lent may need to be clarified to your child. "Why should I give up something I enjoy just because Easter is coming up?" This is an excellent time to remind your child that discipleship involves action. Spiritual formation isn't magic. We participate in our growth. Setting aside time in our yearly routine to reevaluate the condition of our hearts and prepare for a new season of growth is a necessary part of following Jesus. God prepares the world for Jesus's birth. John prepares the people for Jesus's ministry. Jesus even prepares himself in the wilderness. Think about it this way: if your favorite celebrity were coming to visit you, would you clean your room? You bet you would! Lent is a time to clean our hearts for the king and the kingdom.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Since this is only a half week, we're providing only a couple of suggestions for you to choose. As we embark on this journey towards the cross, we start by remembering our own sin and the death that it brings to us all. Many of the practices suggested in this section are practices that can be great routines to adopt throughout this journey towards Holy Week.

Choose a Practice

- Pray a prayer of confession. If you're not sure where to begin, this Prayer of Confession has been used in various Christian traditions through the centuries:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Pray this prayer out loud, and if possible, with others. Consider kneeling while you pray this prayer.

- Fast from food for a day if medically advisable (for adults only, do not fast if pregnant, have a history of eating disorders, or another medical condition). If you're new to fasting from food, begin after dinner on one day. As you begin your fast, ask God to fill you with a hunger for Him and for his righteousness. You can (and should) drink water throughout your fast. Continue your fast into the next day, skipping breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Break your fast at dinner. As you feel pangs of hunger, turn your attention to God and ask him to fill you with His presence. Consider beginning your fast after dinner on February 13th, and breaking your fast after the Ash Wednesday service on February 14th.
- Attend the Ash Wednesday service at 6pm, and receive ashes. If you have children, bring them with you.

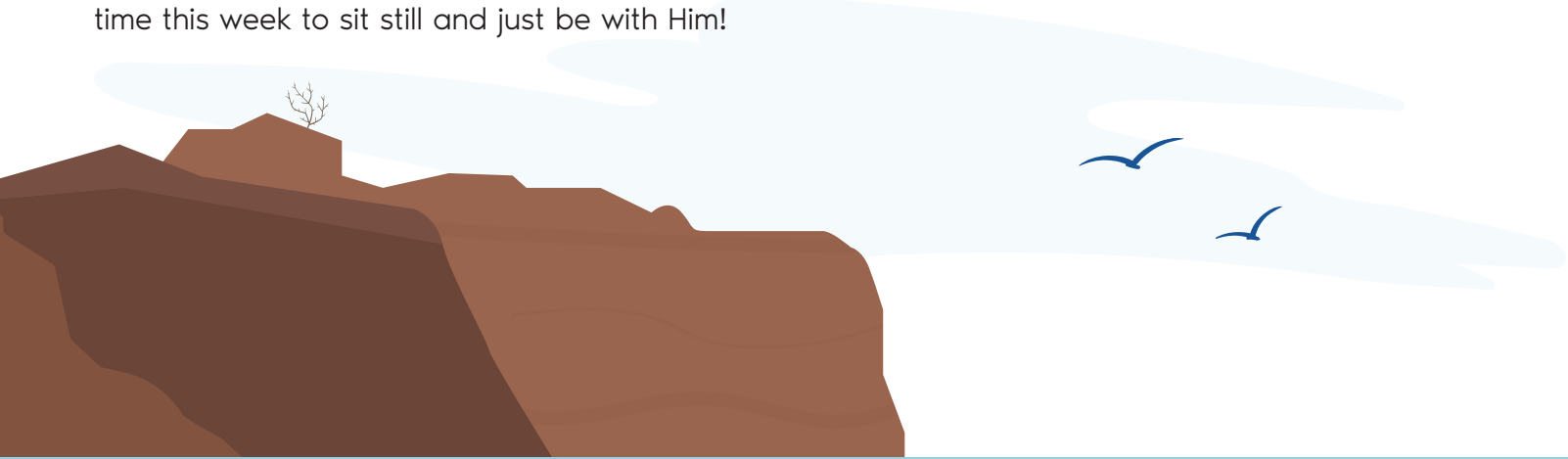
TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Mark 1:9-13

This week, we read where Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, anointed by the Spirit of God, blessed by the Father, and led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to battle with Satan. Jesus serves as a great example for us today. He lived His life “in the Spirit” – in other words, from an earthly perspective, the human Jesus lifted up His eyes to the Father and received His help!

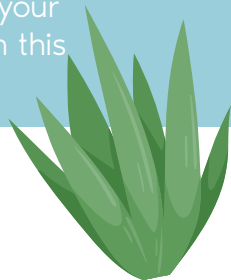
Devotional: Psalm 46

We don't know the historical setting of this Psalm. Some scholars point to the story of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18-19. Regardless of the original setting of the Psalm, God has used Psalm 46 in the lives of countless readers through the centuries. The Psalmist describes the power of God's presence when His people place their trust in Him. We are reminded that He is both a refuge, a strength, and an ever-present help in times of trouble. As you reflect upon the truths from this Psalm, remind yourself of times where you have found God to be all of that to you! Also, take the time this week to sit still and just be with Him!



Parent Spotlight

This season is a great time to teach our children about spiritual practices. Young families, use this time to talk to your kids about some habits they could learn that would honor God (e.g., prayer before mealtimes or before bedtime). Parents of teenagers, you might use this time to help your preteen/teenager moderate their screen time, or take up a commitment to read Scripture in this Lenten season.



TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Listening prayer is a way of praying that helps us cultivate an awareness of God's presence and voice in our lives. Find ten to twenty minutes where you can sit in silence and be in God's presence this week. It might be after you've pulled into the parking lot at work or before you go in to run an errand. It could be in the stillness of your house. As you sit, ask God to help you be aware of God's presence. Choose a word or phrase from Scripture to help re-orient your focus on God when your thoughts race (Father, Spirit, Son, Lord have mercy, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening"). You may feel that God is leading you to something; you may feel like nothing happened. Both are normal. Learning to listen to God is a great way to cultivate a dynamic life in the Spirit.
- Reflect on your baptism. What has happened in your life since then? How have you grown into Christ-likeness over time? If you haven't been baptized by immersion, consider this an invitation to do so! Connect with a minister to start a conversation. If you're a parent, have a conversation with your children about baptism. If they've been baptized, guide them through the two questions above. If they haven't, tell them what your baptism means to you.
- How has God been a refuge for you? Think and reflect on how God has been the one you turn to when life gets hard then pray for an opportunity to have a conversation about that with someone who isn't a Jesus follower this week. Look for the opportunity, and when it comes, share how God has been the one you turn to when things get hard.
- What do you wake up to in the morning? Is the first thing you see your phone's blue glare? This week, commit to opening a paper copy of Scripture before looking at any screens. If you need Scripture to read, read Psalm 46 every day this week. Invite your kids into the practice - if they have screens, invite them to do this with you. You might consider putting your phones to bed in a common place with enough chargers for everyone. If your kids are smaller, read the passage of Scripture with them as they get ready or as you eat breakfast.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Mark 1:21-28

Mark wastes no time in describing the ministry of Jesus. In this text, Jesus is in Capernaum (where he will choose to establish a home-base for ministry and perform many miracles) and He encounters a man possessed by an evil spirit. This man was tormented by the impure spirit. Jesus commanded the spirit to depart, and he was at peace. Jesus truly brought peace to many through His ministry.

Devotional: Psalm 91

This Psalm contains both a reflection from the Psalmist (vv. 1-13) and a divine oracle from God (vv. 14-16). It is connected to both Psalms 90 and 92 since it contains some similar phrases. At the heart of this Psalm is the conviction that God is a shelter in the face of the difficulties of life. We cannot necessarily plan for our challenges - because we don't always know how or when they will arise. However, we can depend on the powerful presence of our Lord in the midst of the storms of our lives. And it is during those turbulent times that we most need the peace the Lord provides!



Parent Spotlight

Life can often seem overwhelming for our kids. Between the morning rush to get to daycare or school, after-school activities, youth sports, church events, and then back home for dinner, homework, and bed, life can feel anything but peaceful. But one of the things God promises His followers is peace. You may not be able to stop all the weekly events you are running around to, but what would it look like to demonstrate peace even amid a busy life?

Consider playing calming music in the car while you hop from place to place. You could also use those moments to talk to your child. Remind them that the most important thing in life is not baseball, dance, or even grades but a life lived for Jesus. Consider taking time to reevaluate your family commitments. A "yes" to something will mean a "no" to something else. Are you saying "yes" and "no" to the right things?



TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- In a world full of conflict we don't always acknowledge that we may have contributed to the problems through our own anger, ignorance, or carelessness. Spend some time examining the conflicts in your life – large or small. Ask God to reveal to you how you might have contributed to the problem, and ask for forgiveness (the Prayer of Confession on page 3 is a great prayer to pray in this process). Ask God to inspire you on how to work toward reconciliation, and follow through.
- The Old Testament word used for peace is shalom, and it's an all encompassing idea that moves beyond the mere absence of conflict; it's a fullness and wholeness that we find only through God's presence – and when God dwells in us, we can share the shalom of God with others. Prayerfully ask, "Where in my life do I experience God's peace?" Then consider and make a plan to share that peace with others. How can the hospitality of your home, your family, your office, classroom or cubicle become a place of shalom for others?
- Sometimes parenting is anything but peaceful, especially with children as bedtime comes. Frustrations rise, kids experience anxiety about the day to come, and sometimes they just won't settle down. Parents, consider praying this in your heart before you put kids to bed, "Lord help me. May I be parented by your grace, and in turn give them the same. Amen." Then pray with your children. Wrap them up in a big hug and pray, "Dear Lord, may this child feel your love wrap around them, all of his/her days. Amen."
- Pray for the peace of your neighborhood, workplace, school, or wherever you live, work, study, or play. Consider walking around that place as you pray, praying for the peace of the people you know. If you live with others, invite them to join as you prayer walk – prayer walking is a great way to involve children and teens. As Jesus cast out evil spirits in Capernaum, ask God to cast out evil spirits from the place where you are praying.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Mark 1:40-45

Jesus has begun His public ministry in Galilee. He was engaging in acts that demonstrated the reality of the presence of the Kingdom of God. In the ancient world, leprosy was both a physical malady and a social plague. Lepers were judged and avoided. Jesus engaged this leper on multiple levels. He actually touched him! The healing power of Jesus restored this man's health and restored him into the community.

Devotional: Psalm 28

In this Psalm of David, he cries out to God for mercy in the midst of his troubling situation. As was customary in his day, David calls on God to exert His hand of judgment on the unrighteous. This call for justice is common in the Wisdom literature of the Bible. At the heart of this perspective is the notion that God and God alone can truly mete out justice. As we read this text this week, we know that we live in an unjust world. We know there is all manner of injustice at work in the world. We should be instruments of restoration and redemption in this world. One way to counteract injustice is to overwhelm the presence of evil with acts of righteousness and goodness. As we reflect on this text, let's remind ourselves that God is the true Judge of this world. We can trust Him to make everything right one day. In the meantime, may we be instruments of hope and healing in His hands!

Parent Spotlight

Sometimes the world's heaviness can weigh on a child, especially our teenagers. The older they get, the more they notice a big gap between what the church teaches and the reality of life. Age and experience provoke the age-old dilemma, "Why does a good God allow so much evil and injustice in the world?" This question can confuse our children and, left unanswered, can hurt their faith. However, it's also a question that can lead to a strengthening of faith.

Read Psalm 28 with your child and help them see they are not the first to wrestle with this question. The authors of the Bible did, too. At the end of their questioning, they found God to be the solution, not the problem. Help teach your child to pray like they did. "Lord, I'm concerned by _____. Will you intervene to help?"



TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Jesus kicks off his public ministry with healing. What would beginning your public ministry look like – not your ministry in church, but your ministry among people out in the world? Is there a place where your gifts (both supernatural and natural) align with a people you have a passion for? Is there a place of need or pain that you notice in the community? How could you align those gifts, passions, and pain points and begin ministering there? Talk with someone else about your vision, make a plan, and follow through.
- What would it look like for right-living and justice to flow in your life? How can you become an instrument of hope and healing where you live, work, study, or play? This week, make an effort to serve someone else this week and lighten their load in life. Invite your kids to join in this act of service!
- Identify an area of injustice in your world – pray that God will bring justice, healing, and restoration in that place. Confess to God the ways that you may have knowingly or unknowingly contributed to injustice.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Mark 2:18-22

In this reading from Mark, we discover that Jesus came to transform every area of our lives. Some of the people in Jesus's day wondered about the daily practices of Jesus and his disciples. In this text, they asked Him about fasting—presumably wondering about how He observed some of the normal rituals of everyday faith in the first century. Jesus issued a revelation that He had inaugurated a new day. His ministry marked a new beginning for the people of God. You can't just sew this new revelation from God onto an old garment. He came to make all things new!

Devotional: Psalm 1

This Psalm serves as the Introduction to the entire collection of Psalms. The Psalmist announces the blessing of God upon the person who makes daily decisions about life that are pleasing to God. This blessed person does not take counsel from the wicked, the sinners, or the mockers. Rather, this blessed person takes counsel from a daily encounter with God through engaging with Scripture and meditating on God's truths. This blessed person becomes like a deeply rooted tree that is prosperous and fruitful. In fact, that blessed person follows the righteous way that leads to eternal life. Don't you want to be that person? Give time each day to hear God's voice through His Word! Over time, these daily practices will bear fruit in your life!

Parent Spotlight

Children and adolescents are not concrete thinkers. When it comes to God, they tend to see the church building as the place of God's activity. In other words, they may believe that the church building is the primary place we encounter God. In truth, God is active everywhere! God is in the everyday.

Take some time this week to help them observe all the different places where God is present (e.g., in nature, the classroom, car line, baseball field, auditorium, gym, and at home). As you eat dinner around the table, ask them, "Where did you see God today?" If they can't answer, encourage them to look for God in unexpected places tomorrow.

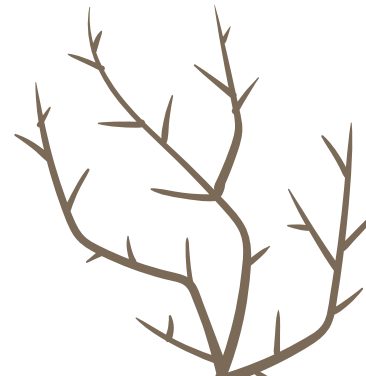
TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- March 10th begins the period of fasting for Muslims known as Ramadan. During Ramadan, Muslims cannot put anything into their bodies from sun up to sun down. Approximately 1 in 8 people in Arlington are Muslim. Pray for the Muslims in our community to encounter Jesus during this period of time, which lasts until April 8th.
- Fast from food and water from sun up to sun down alongside Muslims in our community. When you experience hunger and thirst while fasting, pray for Muslims here and around the world, that they will come to know Jesus and begin a journey of discipleship.
- Eat at a Middle Eastern restaurant this week. Local favorites vary from Fattoush to Prince Lebanese. Explore the culture of the people that God has made and loves deeply. Be aware, many local Muslim-owned restaurants close around dinner time to prepare for large buffet style meals for Muslims breaking their daily fast – going for lunch is a wise plan. As you eat and taste food from another culture, pray! Take your kids along if you can.
- Has your child ever awkwardly pointed at a woman in a hijab in Target and loudly said, “Why is she wearing that!?” **Scan the code below for a video helpfully explains some basics of Islam for children. Watch this video with your child and pray together that people will know Jesus and learn to make Him their King.**



Discuss with your child the hope that we find in Jesus!



TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Mark 7:1-23

In our Gospel reading, Mark recounts an interesting exchange between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day. In this instance, these leaders wanted to know why Jesus seemed to ignore the defilement practices of Judaism. Jesus led them to a greater insight. Defilement actually emerges from the inside out! That which comes from within us actually defiles us! This truth points us to the focal issue of this week – forgiveness!

Devotional: Psalm 6

This is the first of the Penitential Psalms in the collection of Psalms. This is a very personal appeal from David to Yahweh. He uses the covenantal name of God 8 times in this Psalm. He also uses the Hebrew word for “faint” or “troubled” 3 times. There is even the sense that David had physical manifestations from his anguish. This all points to the despair we can experience if we live in a perpetual state of unforgiveness! This week, as you reflect on this Psalm, notice how deeply David feels this moment in his life. Can you relate to that? How often do you reflect upon sin that may be unforgiven or rebellion that may have just become routine in your life? Perhaps this week is an opportunity for you to come into the Lord’s presence with a humble spirit and a contrite heart and genuinely seek His forgiveness.

Parent Spotlight

Forgiveness is one of the most challenging parts of following Jesus, and not only for our children. It is difficult for many adults as well. One of the best ways to teach your child how to forgive others is to establish it as a value in your home. When you fight with your spouse, let your child see you asking for and giving forgiveness to each other. When you mess up, ask your child for forgiveness. When those moments occur, talk to your children about why we forgive one another. For younger families, remind your child that forgiveness is more than saying, “Sorry.” True repentance involves changing our behavior so that we are not a repeat offender of our sins. Consider reading Psalm 130 with your family from a version they can understand (New International Reader’s Version or International Children’s Bible).

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- You may have already chosen to pray the written Prayer of Confession at the beginning of this season, but this week, with our emphasis on repentance and confession, we'd like to invite you to pray it again, kneeling if you are able.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

- Parents, have you considered the relationship between discipline and discipleship? Author Justin Whitmel Earley suggests that before you enter into disciplining your children this week, pause and pray, "Lord, I am also [insert heart condition of child in trouble]. Help me to see that we both need to be parented by you." For example, if you're disciplining a child who has hit a sibling, we use prayer to ask God to remind us that we're also angry people who try to control the world through force.
- In Mark 7:6-7, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13 to point out that the Pharisees have adhered to the letter of Moses' law but not the spirit behind it. Can you name a time when you've been more concerned about keeping human traditions than worshipping God? What did you have to do to overcome that? If you have yet to overcome that, what will you have to do to overcome that?



TOGETHER IN WORD:

HOLY WEEK

This week, we will reflect on a different passage each day from the Gospel of Mark. We will journey together through the events of Holy Week. Let's all take the time to reflect upon the suffering and the passion of Christ Jesus. The final week of His earthly life is marked by meaningful teachings and symbolic actions. Let's walk with Him each day in the hopes of attaining a deeper appreciation of His life, death, and resurrection.

Parent Spotlight

Holy Week is an excellent opportunity to talk to your child about the significance of Easter. For a child, Christmas is typically the favored holiday. Consider doing some things this season to help them understand the importance of Easter. Walk through the passages for Holy Week with your child in a version they can understand (New International Reader's Version or International Children's Bible). What concrete activities can you do with your family to help them envision Jesus's week (e.g., on Monday, build the temple out of Legos; on Maundy Thursday, wash your child's feet; on Saturday, spend 30 minutes in silence)? Be creative! How can you help your child or teenager experience Holy Week?

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Attend our Good Friday service at 6:30pm in our Sanctuary.
- Pray about who you or your family should invite to join you for worship on Easter Sunday. After praying, invite them to join you and your family! Take ownership for their experience when they come to church, and make sure that they feel welcomed and loved.
- Similar to how we began this season, fast from food for a day if medically advisable.* If you're new to fasting from food, begin after dinner on one day. As you begin your fast, ask God to fill you with a hunger for Him and for his righteousness. You can (and should) drink water throughout your fast. Continue your fast into the next day, skipping breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Break your fast at dinner. As you feel pangs of hunger, turn your attention to God and ask him to fill you with His presence. Consider beginning your fast after dinner on Thursday, March 28th, and breaking your fast after dinner on Friday, March 29th.
- Take time this week to read through the narrative of Holy Week with your children from a children's Bible, such as the Jesus Storybook Bible, or read along with your older children and teens from the daily readings for this week from an easy-to-read translation like the Message or the Voice.

**For adults only, do not fast if pregnant or nursing, have a history of eating disorders, or another medical condition. For alternative methods on fasting, contact luke.stehr@fbca.org*

HOLY

Holy Monday: Mark 11:12-19

Jesus uses two powerful symbolic acts on Monday of Holy Week to signal the significance of the new era launched by the Incarnation. He did not really “cleanse” the Temple - He actually is denouncing it as no longer needed. The false security that the Temple had provided Israel’s leaders is called out by Jesus. By the end of the week, the veil of the Temple shielding the Holy of Holies will be rent from top to bottom. There is no longer a need for sacrifices to be made on behalf of the people of God. The Lamb of God will be slain to atone for the sins of the world. The condemnation of the fig tree is another symbolic act that represents the emptiness of the sacrificial system in the face of the new Messianic era launched by the appearance of the Son of God.

Holy Tuesday: Mark 12:28-34

Jesus spent this week engaged in dialogue with some of Israel’s religious leaders. They had all manner of questions for Him. Often, they simply wanted to trap Him or trick Him. Occasionally, there was a legitimate question. In our text today, the request seems to be genuine. The question centered on the greatest commandment in all of the Jewish Law. Jesus famously quotes two texts from the Law as He reveals His interpretation of God’s desire for all of us: Love God and Love Each Other. Jesus addressed the two foundational relationships for all human beings. Once again, Jesus gave insight to understanding the things of God with authority and wisdom.

Holy Wednesday: Mark 13

This famous text is known as the Olivet Discourse. Here Jesus leads His disciples to lift their gaze from the events of Holy Week and scan the horizon of the future. He weaves the threads of the impending destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (which happened in AD 70) and the ultimate end of time consummated by the return of the Son of Man. On the one hand, the persecution to be faced by the disciples should not come as a surprise, according to Jesus. On the other hand, the end of time will come as a surprise! No one knows when Christ will return. However, He will return! He will bring history to His desired end. You and I live in an era when much of what Jesus spoke about has already been fulfilled. But we need to keep watch - the Son of Man will come on the clouds with great power and glory.

WEEK

Maundy Thursday: Mark 14:1-26

Two great scenes are before us today in our reading. Jesus is anointed in Bethany with pure nard. This act of generosity actually was preparing His body for burial. Then, Jesus celebrated His final meal with His disciples, and He chose to establish what we know today as The Lord's Supper. Both of these events are significant and memorable.

The anointing of Jesus was a gesture of love and adoration. An alabaster vial of pure nard was certainly the most valuable possession of this woman. It was probably an heirloom that provided security for the future of her family. She was willing to give this extravagant gift to her Lord in this moment. Her generosity should serve as an example to all of us. There are appropriate times for us to be extravagant in our giving to our Lord as well!

Jesus then transformed the celebration of the Passover Meal to become the first Lord's Supper. Since this evening, followers of Jesus have gathered together and eaten this meal in remembrance of Him. To this day, we proclaim the Lord's death, and we point ourselves toward the future each time we celebrate this commemorative meal. The symbolism of the Body and Blood of Christ is profound and powerful. One day we will celebrate fully when Jesus finally consummates the Kingdom of God!

Good Friday: Mark 15

After a hasty trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders decided to hand Jesus over to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. These leaders had reached the end of their authority. They had to solicit the help of pagan Rome to enact their desires. In this trial, the Son of God stands before the representative of Imperial Rome to hear His fate. Pilate did not know that he was being written into the script of a divine narrative that would ultimately result in the death of God's Son and the accomplishment of atonement for the sins of humanity.

Today as we read this story, let's read it slowly and deliberately. Here in this text, we come face to face with the consequences of our own sin. The Son of God is handed over to a pagan ruler to be sentenced to die. For us. In our place. On our behalf. Take this in.

Silent Saturday: Isaiah 53

Today we read this ancient prophecy as we mourn the death of our Savior. We grieve. And we wait.

The background is a solid reddish-brown color. It is decorated with various tropical leaves and foliage. In the top left, there are green palm fronds and a large teal leaf. In the top right, there are two large, dark green leaves with prominent veins. In the bottom left, there is a large, dark green monstera leaf and a blue circular shape. In the bottom right, there are green palm fronds and a purple circular shape.

HAPPY

EASTER

The week of March 31, 2024 (Easter!)

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Narrative: Philippians 3:4-17

We have journeyed together from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. It has been meaningful and significant. This week we focus on this passage from the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. In this text, Paul expresses his desire to both know Christ, participate in His sufferings, and know more fully the power of His resurrection. As you contemplate this year's Lenten/Easter journey, take some time to reflect on how the resurrection of Jesus has impacted your life. What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ lives? What does it mean to you that the power of His resurrection is available to you today in 2024? How do you communicate the reality of His resurrection to others?

Parent Spotlight

Today is Easter! The resurrection means living forever in Heaven with God and others we love. Your child needs to understand that the resurrection has changed everything. We are to live a life in light of Jesus's resurrection. It is a day to celebrate! Consider doing something this week that helps your child understand the joy of Easter. Here are a few ideas to help you think about it. Host a dinner party and invite other families for an Easter Egg Hunt. Go around the table and let everyone share how the resurrection has changed their life. You could also take your family to a park for an Easter picnic. Point out to your child the beauty of nature and remind them that Heaven will be ten times as beautiful. Lead your child to express gratitude to God for providing us eternal hope in Jesus.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Jesus is not dead! He is alive! Missionary Lesslie Newbigin wrote, "What seemed to be the end is the new beginning. The tomb is empty, Jesus is risen, death is conquered, God does reign after all. There is an explosion of joy, news that cannot be kept secret. Everyone must hear it. A new creation has begun. One does not have to be summoned to the 'task' of evangelism. If these things are really true, they have to be told." Pray for an explosion of joy in your heart that compels you to share Jesus with someone this week. Since these things are really true, they have to be told.
- Celebration is a spiritual practice, and Easter is most worthy of celebration. Share a meal, a really great meal, with others. Invite people from church and invite people who don't yet know Jesus to join in your celebration! Let your joy in the Risen Lord compel you to lavish hospitality and celebration.

