

LENTEN REFLECTIONS

MARCH 2024

The days and weeks leading up to Easter Sunday provide a tremendous opportunity to heighten our focus on Jesus and his sacrifice. Just as the Advent season precedes Christmas Day, so too the Lenten season affords us additional space to reflect, remember, and respond in worship to Jesus. Of course, we live in the reality of the Resurrection, and every day is an opportunity to celebrate that Jesus is alive! But we can ready our hearts in a unique way as we prepare for Easter Sunday.

We have selected five readings from the Gospel of John to carry us through the month of March. There are five Fridays in the month of March, so perhaps you will pick one reflection each Friday, with the final reflection coinciding with Good Friday. Or perhaps you will pick another day that is convenient for your schedule. What matters most is to carve out meaningful time where you won't be rushed and can leave space to read and reflect.

Each passage is accompanied by a brief devotional thought and some questions to consider. We encourage you to share this journey with others, ideally with your Community Group and your family. These questions can become a springboard for dinnertime conversation, for a small group discussion, or on the phone with a friend. Of course, you can also leave space to write out your own answers during your personal time with God. But find someone you can share these questions with so that you can join in adoration of Christ together.

REFLECTION #1

Read John 1:1-18

The opening verses of John's Gospel give us a behind-the-curtain glimpse into God's purposes in coming to earth. Long before Bethlehem, the eternal Word was not just with God - he was (and is) God! But the Word stepped down into the story of humanity and became flesh. God moved toward us - this is the beginning of the Gospel.

Reflection Prompts

What do you learn from John 1 about God's pursuit of you? Why is this so miraculous?

Read John 1:4-5 once more. Jesus came to give us light and life in the midst of darkness and death. How have you experienced the light and life of Jesus in your salvation? Take some time to reflect upon your own story.

Look again at John 1:12-13. Because of Jesus' coming, death, and resurrection, we are born again and have been made a part of God's family. Take some time to thank the Lord for his saving work and making you his child. If you struggle to feel the joy of being God's child, ask that he would remind you of his love.

REFLECTION #2

Read John 7:27-46

Jesus made some incredible claims in his life. They would rightly be considered audacious - except they were true! This passage is no exception: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." Jesus promises to satisfy the inmost cravings of every person; more than that, he makes it clear that only he can do such a thing! The crowd is divided upon hearing this: some think he's the Messiah, others question his credibility. But even the Temple guards pick up on something: "No one ever spoke the way this man does." They were right!

Reflection Prompts

When you've had an especially hard day/week, what do you reach for at the end of the day? Said another way, when you experience soul thirst, where do you turn? How often do you accept Jesus' offer to satisfy your deepest thirst?

If you truly believed that "No one ever spoke the way this man does," what priority would you place on Jesus' words? How would you restructure your schedule to make sure you're filling up your heart and mind with the words that Jesus spoke?

REFLECTION #3

Read John 11:17-44

Jesus knows the pain of death. Like us, he has wept at the graveside of a loved one. But the Author of Life will never lose to the shadow of death. Upon arriving in the town of Bethany, Martha approaches Jesus: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise again. But Martha is only thinking of the age to come. Jesus clarifies for her: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" That question rings out to this day for all of us. Do you believe this?

Reflection Prompts

How does God bring comfort to your soul through this passage? Death always stings, always leaves its mark - but how is it different for those who are in Christ by faith? How does your perspective shift because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life?

REFLECTION #4

Read John 13:1-17

You could have heard a pin drop. The air went out of the room as Jesus took a knee. He started to wash their feet - a task that no self-respecting Jewish person would have done. After all, that was reserved for a Gentile to do. But Jesus began to wash each of their feet, one by one. Twelve men, including Judas the betrayer, all walked out of the Upper Room cleaner than when they walked in. John introduced this scene through the lens of love: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." It wouldn't be the final or even greatest act of love that they'd see from Jesus, but it would be one they'd never forget. The King of the Kingdom knelt down in service. The Master washed the servants' feet.

Reflection Prompts

What does this passage reveal about the heart of Jesus? What do you learn about true humility from Jesus' example here? In what ways does that change your own perspective towards serving others? Considering that Jesus washed the feet of Judas, who can you serve that is "undeserving"?

REFLECTION #5

Read John 19:1-42

"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Pilate made this declaration on a sign above Jesus' head. Perhaps it was mockery towards Jesus; perhaps it was a jab at the Jewish mob; perhaps it was both. But mockery or not, Jesus was the King - just not the King that people expected. He wasn't seated on a throne; he was hanging on a cross. He didn't have a crown of gold; he wore a crown of thorns. He did not hold a scepter in his hand; his hands were pierced with nails. He didn't berate his enemies; he prayed for their forgiveness. And when everyone thought they could kill this King, he did something else that they did not expect: he didn't stay dead. Long live the King!

Reflection Prompts

Because Jesus is our King, we ought to live our lives in glad submission to his rule. Take some time to pray, expressing your submission, surrender, and devotion to our King. Ask him to direct your life however he wills.

Re-read John 19:28-30. Jesus completed his redemptive work in full. What comfort does it bring to your life to know that "It is finished"?