

2008 Confirmation Prayer Journal for Lent and Small Group Leader's Guide

What is this?

A light Bible study and prayer guide for 6th-8th graders. Through each day of Lent, students read the psalm and gospel texts of the lectionary for Year A and reflect. The texts prepare them to for worship on Sunday. The prayer guide invites mediation in the spirit of the particular readings.

The Prayer Journal includes the next 20 pages.

The Leader's Guide is the following 19 pages.

What's the Leader's Guide for?

Should you use this as part of a Confirmation curriculum, small group leaders may use these notes to direct conversation and add sidetrip discussions.

On what date does it begin?

Ash Wednesday (February 6, 2008), running through Holy Week.

Where'd this come from?

Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, author of the Psalm Project material, created this with fellow staffer Brian Middleswarth, Director of Teen Ministry, at First Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

2008 Psalm-Gospel Lenten Prayer Journal

Lent is a 40-day season of the church year. It's a time of quietness. Not sadness exactly, but pretty solemn as we consider what it means to belong to Christ.

Your **prayer journal** is a way to track the Psalm and Gospel readings that most Christians will hear week by week during Lent all over the world. In this journal, you are invited to spend time with the readings for each week. Think of it as a way to lightly study the Scriptures through Lent, recording your thoughts and prayers as you go.

May God bless us and hold us as we journey together through Lent.

Week 1 (a shorty): February 6-9

Ash Wednesday, February 6

Ash Wednesday begins the journey of Lent. In worship tonight, as the ashes are placed on our foreheads in the sign of the cross, we will hear the words, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return," God's words to Adam in Genesis 3:19.

What was it like to receive ashes on your forehead? What do they represent? Is this a helpful ritual? Why or why not?

Thursday, February 7

Read Psalm 32.1-7 and fill in the blanks:

Verse 1: “_____ are those whose sins are forgiven.”

Verse 3: “While I kept _____, I wasted away.”

Verse 5: “Then I _____ my sin to you, and I did not _____ my iniquity; I said, ‘I will _____ my transgressions to the LORD, and you _____ the guilt of my sin.’”

Read verse 5 again and think about what this means. Write it out using your own words.

Please pray today for anything you feel guilty or stressed about.

Friday, February 8

Read Matthew 4.1-11. In the space below, make a picture of what you imagine this wilderness looks like.

Most Christians have questions about faith, and doubts, too, from time to time. This is a normal part of a rich life of faith. Circle one: Are you in a period of **questioning** or **trusting** right now? Or both?

Pray for someone you know (even yourself) that might feel alone today.

Saturday, February 9

Read Matthew 4.1-11 again today. (You are doing great, by the way.) The story says that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. When we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation" or "save us from the time of trial", we know God never gives us more than we can handle. In a community, we have friends to help us make our way through or around temptation.

Name three people that are examples of honesty and honor for you:

Pray for these people today, that they would know God is with them. Ask God if these would be people you could go to with a struggle or a problem.

Sunday, February 10

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week Two: February 11-17

Psalm 121 & John 3.1-17

Monday, February 11

Read Psalm 121. This is a great song to read at night. Consider doing your meditations at bedtime this week.

In prayer, thank God for the promise that God holds you and the whole world in love.

Can you think of any people you know that might need to be reminded of God's love?

List their names here, and pray for them tonight.

Tuesday, February 12

Read Psalm 121 at bedtime. What do you think it means that God "keeps" our lives?

According to Psalm 121, what are some ways God is with God's people?

Verse 2: _____

Verse 5: _____

Verse 7: _____

In prayer, make a bowl with your hands and imagine placing any concerns or worries into God's loving hands to hold and keep.

Wednesday, February 13

Psalm 121 says that God never sleeps. Read John 3.1-17. What happens at night with Jesus?

Thursday, February 14

Read John 3.1-17. Who are the two main characters in the scene?

_____ and _____

What's most interesting to you about this story?

Did you ever pray just because you thought you were supposed to do it? Many young Christians have. But practicing prayer even if you do it because parents or teachers urge you to can be leading to a rich spiritual life.

Consider making prayers today as conversations you might have with Jesus in prayer. "Jesus, I want to talk with you about..." No need to write notes about this, just let your imagination go for about 5 minutes and see what happens.

Friday, February 15

Read John 3.1-17.

Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? (circle one)

- a) Nic was a vampire.
- b) Nic didn't want to be seen.
- c) Nic was light-sensitive.
- d) Jesus was only available at night.

Write about a time you felt afraid of God, or worried about what God thought of you.

Fill in the blanks about God's purpose in Jesus Christ:

Verse 16: "For God so _____ the world that He gave his only Son..."

Verse 17: Jesus came not to _____ the world, but to _____ it.

Pray for the people in your family today, whatever that looks like in your home and in your friendships.

Saturday, February 16

Read John 3.1-17.

People of great faith usually also have great questions about their lives, and have plenty they don't understand about faith in God.

Nicodemus had a private conversation with Jesus. If you could sit next to Jesus who loves you, what would you talk about? Make a prayer with your imagination, closing your eyes for focus: Imagine Jesus smiling at you, eager to hear anything you want to tell him or ask him. With every sentence you say, Jesus accepts your words and nods to support you. After you make your imagination-conversation prayer today, describe in words or pictures what it was like.

Sunday, February 17

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week Three: February 18-March 24

Psalm 95.1-7 & John 4.5-42

Monday, February 18

Read Psalm 95.1-7. This is a psalm of:

- a) sadness and disappointment
- b) questioning and wondering
- c) nacho recipes
- d) praise and joy

Begin this week with prayer in the spirit of this Psalm: What are three things you can give God thanks for today?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Tuesday, February 19

Read Psalm 95.1-7. God is named in several ways in this song of ancient Israel:

Verse 1: "The _____ of our salvation."

Verse 3 "A great _____ above all gods."

Verse 4: "Let us kneel before the Lord, our _____."

Verse 7: "For he is our _____."

Which of these names do you like the best?

Part of this psalm's teaching is that God is the one that both creates us and cares for us. In a nutshell, we belong to God. And everything we have. What areas of your life are difficult to accept as belonging to God? Consider your possessions, relationships, everything. Make a list here:

All of these belong to God. In your prayers, talk to God about your most important relationships and possessions, and after each, speak, “God, this belongs to you.” (After all, they belong to God anyway.)

Wednesday, February 20

Think about names for God in the Bible. There are many, many ways we talk about God and engage God in prayer. Make a list of as many names, images, metaphors and titles for God as you can think of, including names for the Holy Spirit and names for Jesus.

Thursday, February 21

Read John 4.5-42. What’s the most interesting part of the story to you?

If you were the woman Jesus talked with, how do you think you would feel about this conversation?

Friday, February 22

Read John 4.5-42. Fill in the blanks and reflect on the questions:

Verse 27: “They were astonished that he was speaking to a _____”

Why do you think this was a big deal?

Verse 31: “The disciples were urging him, ‘Rabbi, _____ something!’”

What does Jesus say about his food in verse 32-34?

For prayer, name three things that are praise-worthy in your world today:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Saturday, February 23

Read both the psalm (Psalm 95.1-7) and the gospel (John 4.5-42). If you were preaching the sermon in worship tomorrow, what would you say about how these two readings are connected to each other?

Sunday, February 24

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week 4: February 25- March 2

Psalm 23 & John 9.1-41

Monday, February 25

Read Psalm 23. According to verse 1, God is our _____.

This would make us God's _____.

Write down one verse of Psalm 23 most meaningful to you today:

Read verse 4 of Psalm 23 again. With this in mind, pray for any fears you have or scary things happening in the world. Fears are very real things and important to feel, and God holds them all. Write anything you want to pray for here.

Tuesday, February 26

Read Psalm 23. Focus on verse 6 and fill in:

“Surely _____ and _____ shall follow me...”

What do you think most people expect more from God-- gentleness or judgment? Why?

There are people in your classes at school who probably don't know they are loved by God. Pray and ask God who you can pray for.

Wednesday, February 27

Read Psalm 23 again. The Psalms are songs from ancient Israel, so it's best to read them as if they were song lyrics.

If you were the Psalm-writer, what style of music would you put to Psalm 23? Why?

From this psalm, what are three things you can say about David who wrote it?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Thursday, February 28

Read the gospel, John 9.1-41. This is kind of a long story. Okay, really long. But it's one of the most important stories in the Bible about Jesus, and you'll hear it hundreds of times through your lifetime as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

How did Jesus heal the blind man? (Verses 6-7)

Why do you think he chose to do it this way?

How did the blind man spend most of his time? (verse 8)

How do you think he felt about his life?

Pray for someone you know with a physical ailment or disease, someone in recovery from alcohol or other drugs, or someone discouraged about their body. What words come to mind as you pray for them?

Friday, February 29 (Happy Leap Day)

Read John 9.1-41, and fill in the blanks. How did people respond to the healing?

Neighbors (verses 8-12): _____

The Pharisees (verse 16): _____

‘The Jews’ (verse 18 and 34): _____

His parents (verses 20-23): _____

The man himself (verses 25-33): _____

Pray for our country’s leaders today, and the candidates running for president. Thank you for being willing to pray as a way of serving the needs of the world.

Saturday, March 1

The Pharisees were religious leaders of Jesus’ day, the ones most dedicated to knowing the Bible. Read John 9.1-41, this time thinking about the Pharisees.

What do you think the Pharisees think about Jesus?

Read verses 39-41 again. In your own words, what do you think Jesus means?

Pray for kindness to grow in your heart. For open-mindedness.

Sunday, March 2

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week 5: March 3-9

Psalm 130 & John 11.1-45

Monday, March 3

Read Psalm 130.

Use your imagination:

How do you think the Psalm-writer is feeling in verses 1-2?

How do you think the Psalm-writer is feeling in verses 7-8?

For most Christians, there are times in faith-life when we are confused, or wonder what God is doing. Or wonder if there even is a God. Maybe the Psalmist is feeling a couple different things at the same time about faith, or maybe these two parts of the psalm (verses 1-2 and verses 7-8) were written at different times.

Today, pray for your faith. Ask God to give you what you need to grow in trusting God (having faith).

Tuesday, March 4

Read Psalm 130.

Verse 3 seems to say God expects a lot from us. Write this verse in your own words.

Verse 4 says, "But there is _____ with you.

Verse 8 says that God will redeem Israel "from all its _____."

Give an example of a time you were forgiven by someone.

Were you expecting that person would forgive you, or were you surprised?

Give an example of a time you forgave someone.

Was it easy or difficult? Why?

Pray for anything you need forgiveness for, confident that God has done everything necessary for you to be right with God. Remember the story of the prodigal son that Jesus tells? God always welcomes us back home if we've taken off for awhile.

Wednesday, March 5

Forgiveness is not always easy, and it sometimes takes a long time. Please pray for someone you are working at forgiving. Pray for yourself, too.

Thursday, March 6.

Read Psalm 130. In verses 5-6, what is the Psalmist doing?

Now read John 11.1-45. In verse 21, why is Martha upset with Jesus?

What does Thomas say about going to Bethany?

How would you feel if you were watching the scene at Bethany?

Pray for the leaders of the world today.

Friday, March 7

Read the gospel, John 11.28-36. Just one question to explore today, an important one:

Why do you think Jesus is crying?

Saturday, March 8

Read John 11.28-36.

Jesus had a way of screwing up funerals. This is one of them. After all, Lazarus was good and dead and Jesus called him back to life after four days. Write about three memories you have of a funeral you've attended.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The second funeral Jesus disrupted was his own. After being hanged to death on a cross and buried in a cave, God raised Jesus from the dead after three days. How do you think Jesus best friends felt after Jesus died? (Check John 19.16-42 if you want to.)

The third funeral Jesus totally messed up was yours. Faith (trust) in God's love means we will share in Jesus' resurrection. Strange as it may seem, death is not the last word of our lives. Your funeral will be a celebration of your full life on earth shared with Jesus Christ, full of praise to God for your life continuing with God forever.

How would it feel to be at a funeral where, along with the sadness of saying goodbye, was a celebration of the persons' life?

Pray for those who are sad because of a recent death.

Sunday, March 9

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week 6: March 10-16

Psalm 31.9-16 & Matthew 26.14-27.66

Monday, March 10

Read Psalm 31.9-16.

In verses 9-10, how is the Psalmist feeling?

In verses 11-13, who seems to be the source of the trouble?

In verses 14-16, how does the Psalmist feel now?

At the end of this passage, the Psalmist prays:

Verse 14: “But I _____ in You, O Lord...”

Verse 15: “My times are in _____”

Verse 16: “Save me in your _____.”

These three verses can be ways of praying.

Even in moments of trouble, we can turn our attention to trusting God.

Is there anything in your life right now you'd like to entrust to God more fully? Write them down here:

What would happen if you prayed for God to be known to you in a special way this week?

Pray for any of these important things, and write out any words or images that come to mind for you.

Tuesday, March 11

Read Psalm 31.9-16.

In verse 16, God's love is called "steadfast." What does this mean?

We all need examples of human love to help us understand God's perfect love for us.

Knowing that no one is perfect like God, name some people in your life who love you well.

Make prayers of thanks today for these people's love and for God's love.

Wednesday, March 12

Think about what worship has been like the past few weeks. How have the worship services been different in this season of Lent? Think about the mood, the music, the preaching, the Bible readings, the lighting, the banners and decorations at church.

Bonus section!

Preparation for Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday

Thursday, March 13

Simply read Mathew 26.36-27.66 and pray with this important story. What is most interesting to you about the passage?

Friday, March 14

Read Matthew 26.17-36. Jesus was betrayed by his friend _____.

At the Last Supper, what do you think the disciples were thinking and feeling?

Jesus said he would meet them in _____ (verse 32)

Did the disciples believe Jesus' words about their deserting him? (verses 31-35) Using your imagination, why or why not?

Think about about the ways Jesus spent time with his friends and disciples. In prayer today, imagine Jesus being with you as you go about your regular routine: to school, to lessons or meetings, doing homework, being with your friends, being with your family.

What is it like to have Jesus with you all the time?

Saturday, March 15

Read Mathew 26.36-27.66. This passage is a bit long, but it is the story of the last hours of Jesus' life, and it can have great impact if read all in one sitting.

Journal about your experience of this passage. You may choose to meditate on any of these questions:

What seems most important to you about these last days of Jesus' life?

What strikes you about how Jesus spoke to people?

How did people respond to Jesus?

What emotions of the people do you imagine in these scenes? How is Jesus feeling?

Put yourself in the story as one of these characters and imagine their perspective of what's happening: Judas, Peter, Caiaphas the high priest, governor Pilate, Barabbas the prisoner, a soldier at the cross, Simon of Cyrene, Mary Magdalene, Mary Jesus' mom, one of the bandits, the tomb guard.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, write out your insights.

It takes a big team of people to lead worship on Sundays. Please pray for the worship leaders that preach, lead music, prepare the bread and wine and juice for Holy Communion, serve communion, usher, read the scriptures, do child care in the nursery, and greet people at worship tomorrow. Thank you.

Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday, March 16

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

2008 Psalm-Gospel Lenten Prayer Journal [Small Group Leader's Guide]

Week 1 (a shorty): February 6-9

Ash Wednesday, February 6

Ash Wednesday begins the journey of Lent. In worship tonight, as the ashes are placed on our foreheads in the sign of the cross, we will hear the words, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return," God's words to Adam in Genesis 3:19.

What was it like to receive ashes on your forehead? What do they represent? Is this a helpful ritual? Why or why not?

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, with worship leading us to consider both our mortality and repentance in the light of God's great love. The "imposition of ashes" on the forehead is an ancient Christian practice, going back to the 10th century. Biblically, ashes are a symbol of purification and penitence (see Numbers 19:9, 17; Hebrews 9:13; Jonah 3:6; Matthew 11:21, and Luke 10:13).

What is Lent?

Good question.

Lent is the forty-day liturgical season beginning at Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter. The term Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means "Spring." Lent began as a time of preparation for converts to Christianity, a season of conversion of heart and renewal of faith.

During Lent, our focus is primarily on the person of Jesus Christ. In fact, the season is forty days to mirror Jesus' temptation in the wilderness that lasted forty days. The forty days, by the way, do not include Sundays because each Sunday represents a "little Easter". It's not necessarily a somber season, Lent, but certainly an intense one. You will notice in worship that we "bury" the Alleluias that we typically sing in the liturgy until Easter day.

Thursday, February 7

Read Psalm 32.1-7 and fill in the blanks:

Verse 1: “**HAPPY** or **BLESSED** are those whose sins are forgiven.”

Verse 3: “While I kept **QUIET** or **SILENCE**, I wasted away.”

Verse 5: “Then I **ACKNOWLEDGED** my sin to you, and I did not **HIDE** my iniquity; I said, ‘I will **CONFESS** my transgressions to the LORD, and you **FORGAVE** the guilt of my sin.’”

Read verse 5 again and think about what this means. Write it out using your own words.

“I admitted all my mistakes to God, and God forgave me completely.”

Something like that.

The point here is that there is no need to hide from God because God is always ready, willing and able to forgive us and help us move on with our lives.

True or False: God does not want us to feel guilty. (True. God is always wanting us to live free from the weight of bad choices, mistakes, ways we hurt other people)

Discuss: Do you think most people see God this way, as wanting to forgive and not have people feel guilty? Why or why not?

Please pray today for anything you feel guilty or stressed about.

**School stuff.
Friend stuff.
Family stuff.
Money stuff.**

Play the song, “Unfailing Love” from “Sharing the Road” CD and discuss Psalm 32.

Friday, February 8

Read Matthew 4.1-11. In the space below, make a picture of what you imagine this wilderness looks like.

Could be elements of desert, loneliness, rugged terrain. Could also be a contemporary 'desert' at the mall without anyone to hang out with. Encourage and affirm imagination and creativity!

Most Christians have questions about faith, and doubts, too, from time to time. This is a normal part of a rich life of faith. Circle one: Are you in a period of **questioning** or **trusting** right now? Or both?

As you feel comfortable, leaders, share a time when you were full of questions about God, faith, church. Model for the youth a faith-full imagination that isn't afraid to acknowledge uncertainty or doubt.

Pray for someone you know (even yourself) that might feel alone today.

Saturday, February 9

Read Matthew 4.1-11 again today. (You are doing great, by the way.) The story says that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. When we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation" or "save us from the time of trial", we know God never gives us more than we can handle. In a community, we have friends to help us make our way through or around temptation.

Name three people that are examples of honesty and honor for you:

These could be adults at church or in the neighborhood, teachers, parents, public figures, peers.

Pray for these people today, that they would know God is with them. Ask God if these would be people you could go to with a struggle or a problem.

Sunday, February 10

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week Two: February 11-17

Psalm 121 & John 3.1-17

Monday, February 11

Read Psalm 121. This is a great song to read at night. Consider doing your meditations at bedtime this week.

In prayer, thank God for the promise that God holds you and the whole world in love.

Can you think of any people you know that might need to be reminded of God's love?

List their names here, and pray for them tonight.

Play the song, "God is Holding Your Life" from "Sharing the Road" CD and discuss Psalm 121.

Tuesday, February 12

Read Psalm 121 at bedtime. What do you think it means that God "keeps" our lives?

Maybe it's like a shepherd 'keeps' the sheep, feeding them, protecting them, moving them to good pastures.

Maybe like a pet owner, caring for their needs and enjoying them.

Maybe like a firewalled vault, able to hold something safe.

According to Psalm 121, what are some ways God is with God's people?

Verse 2: **HELPS.**

Verse 5: **OUR PROTECTOR; OUR SHADE.**

Verse 7: **KEEPS OUR LIVES.**

Discussion: Does God really protect us from harm? Do we depend on God to shield us from everything bad? What does this mean for faith?

Counterpoint: Though faith is a gift of God, it is not always easy in a world where bad things happen. Really bad things.

Did people expect Jesus to always be healing and forgiving and keeping evil away? Probably. Ecclesiastes says that time and chance happens to everyone, and it is pointless to try and figure God out.

In prayer, make a bowl with your hands and imagine placing any concerns or worries into God's loving hands to hold and keep.

Wednesday, February 13

Psalm 121 says that God never sleeps. Read John 3.1-17. What happens at night with Jesus?

Nicodemus the Pharisee comes to see him.

Thursday, February 14

Read John 3.1-17. Who are the two main characters in the scene?

JESUS and **NICODEMUS**

What's most interesting to you about this story?

Did you ever pray just because you thought you were supposed to do it? Many young Christians have. But practicing prayer even if you do it because parents or teachers urge you to can be leading to a rich spiritual life.

Consider making prayers today as conversations you might have with Jesus in prayer. "Jesus, I want to talk with you about..." No need to write notes about this, just let your imagination go for about 5 minutes and see what happens.

Encourage! Many young people will be thinking about prayer for the first time. Choice of words do not matter much at this stage, just some trust that God is somehow present and wants to love us all.

Friday, February 15

Read John 3.1-17.

Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? (circle one)

- a) Nic was a vampire.
- b) Nic didn't want to be seen.**
- c) Nic was light-sensitive.
- d) Jesus was only available at night.

Write about a time you felt afraid of God, or worried about what God thought of you.

Fill in the blanks about God's purpose in Jesus Christ:

Verse 16: "For God so **LOVED** the world that He gave his only Son..."

Verse 17: Jesus came not to **CONDEMN** the world, but to **SAVE** it.

Pray for the people in your family today, whatever that looks like in your home and in your friendships.

Discuss: What's this 'born again' thing about? Have you ever felt like your life is just so bad, you'd like to wreck it and start over? Maybe that's what new life in Jesus Christ is like, a brand new start where all evidence of past sins is gone, and you learn everything fresh like a baby. You might say that in Christ, we are re-created.

Saturday, February 16

Read John 3.1-17.

People of great faith usually also have great questions about their lives, and have plenty they don't understand about faith in God.

Nicodemus had a private conversation with Jesus. If you could sit next to Jesus who loves you, what would you talk about? Make a prayer with your imagination, closing your eyes for focus: Imagine Jesus smiling at you, eager to hear anything you want to tell him or ask him. With every sentence you say, Jesus accepts your words and nods to support you. After you make your imagination-conversation prayer today, describe in words or pictures what it was like.

Try this as a guided meditation by writing a script for the scene that unfolds above. Add soft instrumental music for atmosphere. Even incense, a candle, or running water can spark imagination.

Sunday, February 17

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week Three: February 18-March 24

Psalm 95.1-7 & John 4.5-42

Monday, February 18

Read Psalm 95.1-7. This is a psalm of:

- a) sadness and disappointment
- b) questioning and wondering
- c) nacho recipes
- d) praise and joy**

Begin this week with prayer in the spirit of this Psalm: What are three things you can give God thanks for today?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Play the song, “Let Us Shout For Joy” from “Sharing the Road” CD and discuss Psalm 95.

Tuesday, February 19

Read Psalm 95.1-7. God is named in several ways in this song of ancient Israel:

Verse 1: “The **ROCK** of our salvation.”

Verse 3 “A great **KING** above all gods.”

Verse 4: “Let us kneel before the Lord, our **MAKER**.”

Verse 7: “For he is our **GOD**.”

Which of these names do you like the best? **And WHY?**

Part of this psalm’s teaching is that God is the one that both creates us and cares for us. In a nutshell, we belong to God. And everything we have. What areas of your life are difficult to accept as belonging to God? Consider your possessions, relationships, everything. Make a list here:

All of these belong to God. In your prayers, talk to God about your most important relationships and possessions, and after each, speak, “God, this belongs to you.” (After all, they belong to God anyway.)

Wednesday, February 20

Think about names for God in the Bible. There are many, many ways we talk about God and engage God in prayer. Make a list of as many names, images, metaphors and titles for God as you can think of, including names for the Holy Spirit and names for Jesus.

To name a few Biblical ones:

Creator, Redeemer, Judge, Savior, Deliverer, Messiah, Lord, Father, Fire, Wind, Dove, a Deer, Spirit, Forgiver, Shepherd, Light, the Word, Comforter, Provider, Stronghold and Refuge, My Help, Way Truth and Life, The Resurrection and the Life, Bread of Life, Living Water, King, Woman Kneading Dough, Woman Looking for a Coin, Farmer Planting Seed, huge Fishing Net, High Priest, Vine, Healer, Teacher, Lamb of God, a Door, a Gate...

Thursday, February 21

Read John 4.5-42. What's the most interesting part of the story to you?

If you were the woman Jesus talked with, how do you think you would feel about this conversation?

Friday, February 22

Read John 4.5-42. Fill in the blanks and reflect on the questions:

Verse 27: "They were astonished that he was speaking to a **WOMAN**"

Why do you think this was a big deal?

**It was not acceptable for a man to talk with a woman at mid-day.
Much less a Samaritan woman.**

Verse 31: "The disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, **EAT** something!'"

What does Jesus say about his food in verse 32-34?

"I have food that you don't know about (hiding the Cheetos, Jesus?)...My food is to the will of him who sent me and complete his work."

Sidetrack: Talk about the harvest imagery in verses 33-38. Food comes from seeds planted, grown, cared for, and harvested.

For prayer, name three things that are praise-worthy in your world today:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Saturday, February 23

Read both the psalm (Psalm 95.1-7) and the gospel (John 4.5-42). If you were preaching the sermon in worship tomorrow, what would you say about how these two readings are connected to each other?

Both texts point to God as

Sunday, February 24

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week 4: February 25- March 2

Psalm 23 & John 9.1-41

Monday, February 25

Read Psalm 23. According to verse 1, God is our **SHEPHERD**.

This would make us God's **SHEEP**. (bahh)

Write down one verse of Psalm 23 most meaningful to you today:

Read verse 4 of Psalm 23 again. With this in mind, pray for any fears you have or scary things happening in the world. Fears are very real things and important to feel, and God holds them all. Write anything you want to pray for here.

Affirm that fears can be about real things or unreal things. Fear brings emotions that must be dealt with, and fear is not bad in itself. In fact, fear can save your life because it warns you of danger. It helps us be smart about taking risks.

God is With Us in our fears. We are never alone. The cross is a symbol of ultimate "with us"-ness. God is with us in our greatest suffering, fear, sadness, poverty, loneliness.

Tuesday, February 26

Read Psalm 23. Focus on verse 6 and fill in:

“Surely **GOODNESS** and **MERCY** shall follow me...”

What do you think most people expect more from God-- gentleness or judgment? Why?

There are people in your classes at school who probably don't know they are loved by God. Pray and ask God who you can pray for.

Wednesday, February 27

Read Psalm 23 again. The Psalms are songs from ancient Israel, so it's best to read them as if they were song lyrics.

Play the song, “My Love is My Shepherd” from “Sharing the Road” CD and discuss Psalm 23.

If you were the Psalm-writer, what style of music would you put to Psalm 23? Why?

This one is rather gentle... maybe slow and soft?

From this psalm, what are three things you can say about David who wrote it?

1. **He was a shepherd himself.**
2. **He had fears sometimes.**
3. **He was a songwriter. Note the imagery and phrasing like a song.**
4. **He was confident in his faith on this day.**

Thursday, February 28

Read the gospel, John 9.1-41. This is kind of a long story. Okay, really long. But it's one of the most important stories in the Bible about Jesus, and you'll hear it hundreds of times through your lifetime as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

How did Jesus heal the blind man? (Verses 6-7)

Made mud out of dirt and spit.

Why do you think he chose to do it this way?

Who knows? He didn't have to. He could have waved a hand, said a prayer, or just sent him away to be healed like the ten lepers. Maybe he wanted to give a physical, earthy, (dirty!) sign of his work for people to talk about and remember. What significance would dirt, water, and mud have for these people?

How did the blind man spend most of his time? (verse 8)

Begging.

How do you think he felt about his life?

Probably pretty bleak. Dependent on everyone else. Couldn't move.

Pray for someone you know with a physical ailment or disease, someone in recovery from alcohol or other drugs, or someone discouraged about their body. What words come to mind as you pray for them?

Friday, February 29 (Happy Leap Day)

Read John 9.1-41, and fill in the blanks. How did people respond to the healing?

Neighbors (verses 8-12): **Confused; Curious; Not sure what to think.**

The Pharisees (verse 16): **Some were critical because he healed on the Sabbath; Some believed in Jesus' healing.**

'The Jews' (verse 18 and 34): **Some did not believe what happened until they spoke with the parents; some drove him out.**

His parents (verses 20-23): **They were afraid to talk about it; Told people to talk to their son about it.**

The man himself (verses 25-33): **Excited; He kept telling the story of how he was blind and now he could see; That Jesus did this for him.**

Pray for our country's leaders today, and the candidates running for president. Thank you for being willing to pray as a way of serving the needs of the world.

Saturday, March 1

The Pharisees were religious leaders of Jesus' day, the ones most dedicated to knowing the Bible. Read John 9.1-41, this time thinking about the Pharisees.

What do you think the Pharisees thought about Jesus?

Maybe that he was not a good religious man; that since he did work on the Sabbath (healed the man) he might be confusing people about what faith in God is about; some Pharisees believed in Jesus.

Read verses 39-41 again. In your own words, what do you think Jesus means?

Something like: I came to surprise people! If you think you know it all and understand all of God, you're wrong. Those who think they get it probably don't, because part of faith is a mystery.

Pray for kindness to grow in your heart. For open-mindedness.

Sunday, March 2

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week 5: March 3-9

Psalm 130 & John 11.1-45

Monday, March 3

Read Psalm 130.

Use your imagination:

How do you think the Psalm-writer is feeling in verses 1-2?

Desperate, lonely, afraid, in need of help.

How do you think the Psalm-writer is feeling in verses 7-8?

Hopeful, trusting, confident in faith.

For most Christians, there are times in faith-life when we are confused, or wonder what God is doing. Or wonder if there even is a God. Maybe the Psalmist is feeling a couple different things at the same time about faith, or maybe these two parts of the psalm (verses 1-2 and verses 7-8) were written at different times.

Today, pray for your faith. Ask God to give you what you need to grow in trusting God (having faith).

Tuesday, March 4

Read Psalm 130.

Verse 3 seems to say God expects a lot from us. Write this verse in your own words.

Something like: God, if I had to pay for all my sins, I'd be in big trouble.

Verse 4 says, "But there is **FORGIVENESS** with you.

Verse 8 says that God will redeem Israel "from all its **INIQUITIES**."

Give an example of a time you were forgiven by someone.

Were you expecting that person would forgive you, or were you surprised?

Give an example of a time you forgave someone.

Was it easy or difficult? Why?

Affirm for the youth that sometimes forgiveness is easy, if it is no big deal to you. Other times, it may be a personal attack or a personal attack, and these may be more difficult to forgive.

Sidetrack: People sometimes say, “Forgive and forget.” Discuss. If we forgive, do we really forget what happened?

In the Joseph story in Genesis 37-47 has Joseph being kind of sneaky as he gets to know his brothers. It takes time for him to forgive his brothers. He even tests them at the end of the story before he tells them who he is.

Pray for anything you need forgiveness for, confident that God has done everything necessary for you to be right with God. Remember the story of the prodigal son that Jesus tells? God always welcomes us back home if we’ve taken off for awhile.

Play the song, “We Wait In Hope For Your Word” from “Sharing the Road” CD and discuss Psalm 130.

Wednesday, March 5

Forgiveness is not always easy, and it sometimes takes a long time. Please pray for someone you are working at forgiving. Pray for yourself, too.

Thursday, March 6.

Read Psalm 130. In verses 5-6, what is the Psalmist doing?

Waiting.

Now read John 11.1-45. In verse 21, why is Martha upset with Jesus?

Jesus was not there in time to help Lazarus.

What does Thomas say about going to Bethany?

“If Jesus is going, let us go and die with him.” Discuss: this is “doubting Thomas”?! Sounds pretty darn sure and brave to me.

How would you feel if you were watching the scene at Bethany?

Pray for the leaders of the world today.

Friday, March 7

Read the gospel, John 11.28-36. Just one question to explore today, an important one:

Why do you think Jesus is crying?

All answers are worth discussion. Sadness at his friend's death; being overwhelmed at the prospect of his full mission; Being upset at people's doubt...

Saturday, March 8

Read John 11.28-36.

Jesus had a way of screwing up funerals. This is one of them. After all, Lazarus was good and dead and Jesus called him back to life after four days. Write about three memories you have of a funeral you've attended.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The second funeral Jesus disrupted was his own. After being hanged to death on a cross and buried in a cave, God raised Jesus from the dead after three days. How do you think Jesus best friends felt after Jesus died? (Check John 19.16-42 if you want to.)

The third funeral Jesus totally messed up was yours. Faith (trust) in God's love means we will share in Jesus' resurrection. Strange as it may seem, death is not the last word of our lives. Your funeral will be a celebration of your full life on earth shared with Jesus Christ, full of praise to God for your life continuing with God forever.

How would it feel to be at a funeral where, along with the sadness of saying goodbye, was a celebration of the persons' life?

Pray for those who are sad because of a recent death.

Sunday, March 9

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for:

Week 6: March 10-16

Psalm 31.9-16 & Matthew 26.14-27.66

Monday, March 10

Read Psalm 31.9-16.

In verses 9-10, how is the Psalmist feeling?

Distress, agony, sorrow, physical pain.

In verses 11-13, who seems to be the source of the trouble?

People who want him dead. He is disrought over how others see him.

In verses 14-16, how does the Psalmist feel now?

Trusting of God, secure in God's love.

At the end of this passage, the Psalmist prays:

Verse 14: "But I **TRUST** in You, O Lord..."

Verse 15: "My times are in **YOUR HANDS**."

Verse 16: "Save me in your **STEADFAST LOVE**."

These three verses can be ways of praying.

Even in moments of trouble, we can turn our attention to trusting God.

Is there anything in your life right now you'd like to entrust to God more fully? Write them down here:

What would happen if you prayed for God to be known to you in a special way this week?

Discuss: What do you think prayer is about? What do we expect to happen when we pray, after we pray

Play the song, "Into Your Hands" from "Sharing the Road" CD and discuss Psalm 31.

Pray for any of these important things, and write out any words or images that come to mind for you.

Tuesday, March 11

Read Psalm 31.9-16.

In verse 16, God's love is called "steadfast." What does this mean?

Webster's: Firm, fixed, settled, established, constant, unchanging, non-wavering.

We all need examples of human love to help us understand God's perfect love for us.

Knowing that no one is perfect like God, name some people in your life who love you well.

Make prayers of thanks today for these people's love and for God's love.

Wednesday, March 12

Think about what worship has been like the past few weeks. How have the worship services been different in this season of Lent? Think about the mood, the music, the preaching, the Bible readings, the lighting, the banners and decorations at church.

People may notice no alleluias in Lent, purple banners and raiments, themes of the earthy-ness of Jesus' life in the songs, readings that tell stories of Jesus.

Bonus section!

Preparation for Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday

Thursday, March 13

Simply read Mathew 26.36-27.66 and pray with this important story. What is most interesting to you about the passage?

Friday, March 14

Read Matthew 26.17-36. Jesus was betrayed by his friend Judas Iscariot.

At the Last Supper, what do you think the disciples were thinking and feeling?

Maybe they wondered what the betrayal thing was about; maybe wondered about the way Jesus served the bread and wine; they may have felt anxious or confused,

Discuss: In the gospel according to John, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Why isn't that scene in Matthew's story? Each of the gospels tell stories, and many of them are different among the four tellings. Some details are different. The four gospels are four different perspectives or angles on the same central thing: Jesus Christ loving the world.

Jesus said he would meet them in Gallilee. (verse 32)

Did the disciples believe Jesus' words about their deserting him? (verses 31-35) Using your imagination, why or why not?

No, they refused to think that would happen. They were his best friends, and couldn't imagine deserting him.

Think about about the ways Jesus spent time with his friends and disciples. In prayer today, imagine Jesus being with you as you go about your regular routine: to school, to lessons or meetings, doing homework, being with your friends, being with your family.

What is it like to have Jesus with you all the time?

Could be the whole range: awkward, comforting, distracting, a little annoying, confident, good...

Saturday, March 15

Read Mathew 26.36-27.66. This passage is a bit long, but it is the story of the last hours of Jesus' life, and it can have great impact if read all in one sitting.

Journal about your experience of this passage. You may choose to meditate on any of these questions:

What seems most important to you about these last days of Jesus' life?

What strikes you about how Jesus spoke to people?

How did people respond to Jesus?

What emotions of the people do you imagine in these scenes? How is Jesus feeling?

Put yourself in the story as one of these characters and imagine their perspective of what's happening: Judas, Peter, Caiaphas the high priest, governor Pilate, Barabbas the prisoner, a soldier at the cross, Simon of Cyrene, Mary Magdalene, Mary Jesus' mom, one of the bandits, the tomb guard.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, write out your insights.

Discuss: If this were a movie, how would you cast the characters? Think about popular actors to play the parts of the characters listed above. This gets the youth thinking about what the people looked like, what their voices were like, how they moved, and other details.

It takes a big team of people to lead worship on Sundays. Please pray for the worship leaders that preach, lead music, prepare the bread and wine and juice for Holy Communion, serve communion, usher, read the scriptures, do child care in the nursery, and greet people at worship tomorrow. Thank you.

Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday, March 16

Enjoy worship! Today I prayed for: