

TEMPTED

2024 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL



HOLY TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

40 DAYS OF PREPARATION

2024 Lenten Devotional

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Dear Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Community,

The word “Lent” historically refers to the lengthening of days. It is a season designed to focus on our faith in anticipation and preparation for the hope of new life on Easter.

Matthew 4:1, “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”

Traditionally, Lent is a time to consider fasting from something to allow you to focus on faith. Over these 40 days, you are encouraged to participate in three faith practices:

Daily Devotional: In the pages to follow, you will find 40 devotionals written by 40 Holy Trinity friends, largely reflecting on the theme “Temptation.” Use this booklet to take up the practice of a daily devotional.

Small Groups: At the end of this devotional booklet, you will find discussion guides for four weeks of small group discussions. Sign up for a Lent Small Group on the website, holyltrinityonline.org or use the bulletin board by the Welcome Center.

Worship Regularly: Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, as we remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. All are welcome to begin this holy season with a special Ash Wednesday service on February 14 at 6 pm, with supper at 5 pm. Throughout Lent, the liturgy transitions to Gather: Morning Praise on Sundays at 9 am, and Holden Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 6 pm.

God’s peace to you in this season of Lent, as the days lengthen and we prepare for the hope of new life at Easter,

Pastors Alicia and Ben

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. – Proverbs 3:5-6

How many times have we experienced difficult times or unexpected circumstances in our lives? During these times of difficulty, how often are we tempted to lean on ourselves and our own guidance to try to solve life's problems instead of looking to God for answers? After many years of the daily and yearly struggles of raising a family and my own health struggles the last few years, Shelly and I were looking forward to finally slowing down and checking a few things off our "bucket list", then an unexpected circumstance befell us yet again and left us asking God why? As we tried to navigate the new situation with our own strength and understanding we became overwhelmed and filled with anxiety and fear. Satan wants us to feel this way and to believe God does not care for or about us, this is simply not true! Through prayer and surrendering the problem to God we were able to lose the anxiety and fear and walk hand in hand into this new reality with love and faith. Pastors Ben and Alicia, and our faith family here at Holy Trinity and friends within our community have reached out with love and kindness and inspired us to remain faithful and strong.

Heavenly Father, We know that you love us and that a life lived through you and for you and your glory has meaning and purpose. Please forgive us when we sometimes fail to remember this and are tempted to lean on ourselves and question your plan for us. Father, you are the Alpha and the Omega and it is not for us to question your plans, but for us to just believe. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Jim Nading

Day 1, February 14



**Kathleen
Schafer**

Day 2, February 15

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich. - 1 Corinthians 8:9

Today I was reminded of the sacrificial giving of Jesus. Because of God's great love for us, Jesus gave up everything – his will, his power. He came to earth and lived here with next to nothing. And then gave up his life on the bloody cross. I truly can't imagine. I'm tempted to forget just how great God's love is for me in such a sacrifice. But I am loved indeed. We are called to be a sacrificial giver like Jesus – I am not that way. I put stipulations around giving and my pride definitely gets in the way.

Lord, I humble myself before You and ask that You lead me in the path of sacrificial giving – whatever that looks like – as You desire my life would reflect Your goodness and love for others. Amen.

Be still, and know that I am God. - Psalm 46:10

The first thing that came to our minds when asked what temptations make us stray away from God and helping others, was our phones. The habit of constant scrolling draws us out from what and who is around us, sucks us in, and brings us down with negativity. Social media feeds tempt us to have unrealistic expectations and sucks us into a bubble where we fail to recognize how grateful we are. Often with one earbud in, and captivated by “a tiny glowing screen,” we acknowledge that Gen Z comes across as disconnected and uninterested in those around us. We also feel tempted to be always doing something; we feel over-stimulated and too busy. On the flip side, when we have experienced times of being “unplugged,” we feel absolute happiness.

Dear God, You are the Creator of this beautiful world. Please forgive us for giving in to the temptation to be sucked into meaningless distractions. Thank you so much for the gifts in ordinary moments of stillness. We ask that you renew our outlook that has been warped by the temptations and help us notice everyday blessings and the world around us. Amen.



Agape

**Nina, Jake,
Emmy, Grace,
Anna, Macy,
Charlie, Elliot**

Day 3, February 16

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. - Luke 6:45

I sometimes find myself seeking to help others and be a 'knight in shining armor' to them, to be well-liked for my good qualities and loved for my goodness. This is a temptation, and the Devil always wiggles his way into any space he can -- even when I'm 'trying to do good.' Recently I was helping another with the best of intentions -- from everyone's perspective on the outside. However, in the deep recesses of my own heart, I was harboring a secret agenda; I was desiring something from them -- praise, honor, respect, and to be well-loved and liked by others. This is not the real fruit of the spirit of God, but the small insecurity that seeks to grow pride and self-righteousness within me instead of peace and real righteousness. God always knows the true intention in my heart, it cannot be hidden.

Dear Heavenly Father, shine your radiant light upon my heart to reveal it to myself, so I may not deceive myself and instead be your will, be your love, be your Good. Amen.



**Paul
Friendshuh**

Day 4, February 17



I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. - Philippians 4:13

I used to struggle with the temptation of procrastination, particularly in college. Instead of standing up and rolling up my sleeves, I would snuggle with that laziness and comfort until the stress would force me to confront what I wouldn't do otherwise. In my freshman year of college, I didn't start studying until 2 days before the finals -- the FINALS. I failed my first year of college because of procrastination. All I wanted to do was sleep. I ended up not even attending the finals.

I realized laziness is a temptation. A temptation to be less than you are, to do less and be less. If one's faith is strong enough, you won't be tempted by procrastination or laziness. If you know God is on your side, there's no reason to be lazy. I was weak, I was faithless. Now I'm better because I have faith. I know I can work hard.

Dear God, I know your divine power is with me all the time, keep me from forgetting that you are with me. Everything is possible with your power, for there is no fear within you, but only power and strength. Amen.

Meriem

El Masbahi

Day 5, February 18

O Lord, throughout These Forty Days, ELW Hymn #319

O Lord, throughout these forty days
you prayed and kept the fast;
inspire repentance for our sin,
and free us from our past.

You strove with Satan, and you won;
your faithfulness endured;
lend us your nerve, your skill and trust
in God's eternal word.

Though parched and hungry, yet you prayed
and fixed your mind above;
so teach us to deny ourselves
that we may know God's love.

Be with us through this season, Lord,
and all our earthly days,
that when the final Easter dawns,
we join in heaven's praise.



Day 6, February 19



Jamie Bisek

Day 7, February 20

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. - Psalm 85:8

I have faced many temptations in my life. Have I ever caved into those temptations? Of course! Do I regret it? Yes! Growing up as a young child, I never had strong parental support. My mom got very sick when I was 12 years old and passed away when I was 35. My dad was never really there for my brother and me during those years. He had chosen a path that was more for himself and not his family. There were many days I would cry and think why me God, why me? As I continue to hear my dad's lies repeated by other people. I'm tempted to believe them. You think to yourself, "Well this must be true" when they sound so real. I was tempted to believe his lies and sometimes it was easier just to believe them and move on. It has been a long journey to not be tempted to allow this type of behavior or person in my life. Throughout my life, my brother and I have continued to stick together and support each other. Being married to a wonderful husband, and having two amazing children, the temptation to believe the lies diminishes as I know in my heart what is true!

Loving God, You know what's on my heart. Please help me trust You as I await Your answer. Amen.

Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested. - Hebrews 2:18

As we go through life and we choose our influences, we may not be able to control and trust that we will be free from temptation. We need to trust that our faith in God will give us the strength and tools to avoid temptation.

Dear God, help us avoid temptation and bad influences. Give us the strength to not tempt others when we have fallen, and to pick each other up. Amen.

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. - Matthew 7:21

It is easy to say, "Lord, Lord". It is easy to say "I will do better" or "I'm sorry, forgive me." It's harder to do the work. Maybe that is part of the point of a big universe with gravity and time and death and loss and pain and grief. It separates those willing to put in the hard work from those who won't. The faint hearts from the brave. The strong from the weak.

Our Lord promised that not all will enter, but only those who do the will of the Father. Because of this, temptation, practically, is how He tests and purifies us.

Blessed are you, oh LORD, teach me your commandments. You who did fashion me of old, out of nothingness and with Your image Divine did honor me. But because I transgressed, Your commandments returned me again to the earth from whence I was taken. Lead me back, oh LORD, to be refashioned into the ancient beauty of Your likeness. Amen.



7th Grade Grp 2
Ella, Eric, Everett
Isla, Taylor, Will
Day 8, February 21



Brent
Friendshuh
Day 9, February 22



Amber Kahnke

Day 10, February 23

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. - Philippians 4:8-9

Admittedly, I struggle with being in the present moment. As a busy mom, who works full-time and is also in graduate school, the 'to-do' list is forever growing. My mind seems to be in a constant state of thinking about what I need to do next, worries I may have, and guilt about things I maybe didn't get accomplished. This swirl causes me to not be in the moment and really value that present gift God has given to me. When I am in this state of mind, I am focused on the future or the past. I realize this about myself and have been working on being more intentional with being present. One opportunity I happily engage in each season of Lent is taking a break from Facebook. Removing this distraction from my daily habit allows me to focus on other aspects of my life and be more intentional about being present.

Dear Lord, Help us to be where our feet are. Amen.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. - Psalm 139:14

As eighth graders, we are tempted to compare ourselves to others. At a time when we see other people all day long, both in person and online, it is easy to make comparisons about our appearance, our possessions, our skills, and our achievements.

We see pictures and videos of people with the 'perfect' hair/bodies/clothes. We see teammates with expensive shoes. We hear of classmates going on cool vacations. We get tests back, and everyone asks each other, "What'd ya get?" It can feel like other people have it so easy and that we're not enough.

But God loves us just as we are. Our job is to work on loving ourselves -- to know that we are "wonderfully made" and loved by God.

Dear God, Please help us to feel your love, especially, during the times when we face the temptation to compare ourselves to others. Please help us to know that we are enough just the way you made us. In your name, we pray, Amen.



8th Grade Grp 2

**Alaina, Carter,
Dylan, Isla, Levin,
Lily, Tyler, Will**

Day 11, February 24



Day 12, February 25

The Glory of These Forty Days, ELW #320

The glory of these forty days
we celebrate with songs of praise;
for Christ, through whom all things were made,
himself has fasted and has prayed.

Alone and fasting Moses saw
the loving God who gave the law;
and to Elijah, fasting, came
the steeds and chariots of flame.

So Daniel trained his mystic sight,
delivered from the lions' might;
and John, the Bridegroom's friend, became
the herald of Messiah's name.

Then grant, O God, that we may, too,
return in fast and prayer to you.
Our spirits strengthen with your grace,
and give us joy to see your face.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. - I Corinthians 13:8-13

The Grand Canyon, for many, is a “must-see” destination. My husband and I ventured to the North rim on a cool, rainy, cloudy September day. We never saw the canyon. Fog was thick. Rain was constant. The sun was hidden. But we knew the Grand Canyon was near.

We walked a narrow path that took us to the canyon’s overlook. The fog lifted briefly for us to glimpse the depth, but quickly moved in as thick as pea soup. We couldn’t see each other nor our hands that grasped the railing separating us from the plunge. I was disoriented as the fog covered us like a thick blanket. Vision was gone. Hearing was altered. My hands’ grasp on the cold metal bar was all that seemed real.

As quickly as the dense fog descended, it lifted slightly to a mist. Sight was restored. Hearing returned. We knew the grand spectacle was before us, but it remained hidden as the dense fog settled down the canyon.

When we are caught in life’s temptations, we can find ourselves blind and deaf to what is beautiful before us. We grasp something solid to stay steady and safe, as the fog of desire tries to disorient us. For me, that grasp is holding onto the promise of Christ to be with me. That promise keeps me steady and safe, even when my sight is blurred; my hearing is compromised.

Dear Lord, I know the fog will lift for Christ’s love is the grandest. Amen.



Mary Keen

Day 13, February 26



6th Grade Grp 3
Eldon, Ellie,
Finnegan, Lyla,
Max, Violet
Day 14, February 27

Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. - 2 Timothy 2:22

Temptation is something that can stress you out and may make you want to do something that is wrong. Sometimes we get tempted by junk food or technology. We are tempted to exclude people we are not friends with. We are tempted to do things we know are wrong just so people like us. It is good to get into a routine, like doing homework when you get home, so you aren't tempted to do something else. You should think about the consequences before you choose what you need or want to do.

Dear God, we pray for the people who get tempted by bad things and make bad decisions. We pray that they can start making better decisions and start choosing the right ones. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Sande
Schoenecker
Day 15, February 28

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. - Mark 14: 38

I'm a news junkie! I love reading all sorts of news on my phone, but this really is time-consuming. Once I start reading, there are several more items I find to read. Before I know it, it's been over an hour. Later I will click on a notification and start reading all sorts of news sources again. Often, the news I read overlaps with what I've already read. Another hour gone! There are definitely better uses of my time. During this time of Lent, I want to use my time wiser in hopes my daily routine will be less consumed with this.

Dear Lord, Please help me to use my time wisely. Help me to set a realistic goal of reading news for an hour daily rather than letting it consume me throughout the day. My spirit is willing, but my flesh is weak. I pray for your guidance to not fall into this temptation. In your name, I pray, Amen.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13

One of the strongest temptations for me is the temptation to hurt others when I am hurt. There was a long period of difficulty in my marriage where there was much hurt happening on both sides. In my hurt, I often fell into the temptation to say that hurtful “dagger” that feels so satisfying at the time. However, it only caused more hurt and drove the marriage further from God. The temptation was not beyond our ability to resist and the hurt was not beyond our ability to heal. It became a lesson from God in forgiveness, maturity, and growth. The forgiveness to heal the wounds we gave each other. The maturity to sacrifice the satisfaction of the hurtful dagger for the freedom of peace and love in the home. The growth in letting go and acceptance, allowing us to become partners in God for our family.

Dear Lord, Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Amen.



**Jordan
Friendshuh**

Day 16, February 29



Liz Nelson
Day 17, March 1

Be Still and Know That I Am God. - Psalms 46:10

These words from Psalms strike a meaningful cord with me and a verse I chose to share for today's daily devotion. This verse embraces stillness or calmness - defined as "A mental state of tranquility where our senses are hushed."

How quickly, it is tempting for all of us to be caught up in the "business of life" - such as: our work, families, events, school work, social media etc and neglect being still and listening to God. When I find myself neglecting to be still, the outdoors and nature lend themselves as a place of stillness and listening. Thanks be to God for the natural beauty of Creation and always being present with us. May this verse be with you daily as you take time for stillness and listening.

Dear God, We are grateful for these words from the Psalms. We ask for your blessing and help us be still and listen to you today and every day. Amen.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. - Romans 12:21

When you're tempted, you might feel fine in the moment, but later you might feel bad or guilty. If you see people getting bullied, try to stand up to them and tell the bully it's not right. Sometimes you might feel tempted to not do something or not to go somewhere because you don't want to fail. Be brave and know that God is with you.

Dear God, please help us not feel tempted by peers and others. Help us to be ourselves. Amen.



6th Grade Grp 1
Adley, Alexander,
Elianna, Emma,
Finley, Morgan,
Vincent
Day 18, March 2

***For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so you are not to do whatever you want.
- Galatians 5:17***

I know in my heart I stand before the God the Father a sinner.

What is left for me to do when I have not resisted temptation? Identify and feel remorse (which is a good start). Reflection. Confession followed by a desire to not repeat.

My flesh desires to be fed – it's unquenchable – the Spirit fights back – not willing to lose its host. This is one of the battles that can wear me down. My will or the way of the Spirit which was given to us by the Father, taught and lived flawlessly by Jesus.

It's been a slow grinding process – the shaping and molding of me, a child of God, to be more what God desires us to be. Some days are good, some fair and some days are a complete failure. Each new day has a new beginning. Thank you for each new day Father!

Father,

I pray for the knowledge of your will for me today and the power to carry that out.

Thank you for your love, patience, and forgiveness through your Son Jesus Christ. Forgive me Lord when I offend you and others with my selfish desires that can at times, rule my words, thoughts, and actions. Thank you for the rest and comfort received through your Holy Word and Sacraments. Finally, thank you for the days I do succeed in doing your will over mine – these are the best days. Amen.



Jim Niemeyer

Day 19, March 3



Maggie Arko

Day 20, March 4

***By waiting and calm you shall be saved, in quiet and trust your strength lies.
- Isaiah 30:15***

I fall prey to so many temptations. I want it all, easy, and right now, and can be difficult if I don't get my way. My grandson would tell me I have entitlement issues, Issues he recognizes in himself because he is a smart, tall white boy from an upper-middle-class family. I think he's right but I call it pride. Not the real pride in doing a job well done, like the French onion soup we shared with friends last night that took three days to make and was better than I could have ever hoped for. No, pride in my very creation and lucky circumstance.

Ten years ago the Lord led me to centering prayer and I begin my prayer time with this verse from Isaiah. It is through this daily practice that I came to appreciate that I am a child of God, and so is everybody else. We all have talents and faults. We are all capable of awesome good and awful bad. We can comfort and terrorize. We are the children of the great God of Israel. So I am not special because of my own innate greatness as my ego would like me to believe. I am special because I am part of the family.

This piece of wisdom helps me to do a better job of living. I still can get cranky when I don't get my way and angry over actual or perceived slights but sometimes I stop, take a deep breath, remember who I am and I don't just react. In those times, I take pride.

Lord help us to remember we are each part of your family. Bless all my brothers and sisters in this world. Please, teach us of your great patience and love and how to reflect it to, and see it in, each other. Amen.

Bless Now, O God, the Journey, ELW #326

Bless now, O God, the journey that all your people make,
the path through noise and silence, the way of give and take.
The trail is found in desert and winds the mountain round,
then leads beside still waters, the road where faith is found.

Bless, sojourners and pilgrims who share this winding way;
your hope burns through the terrors, your love sustains the day.
We yearn for holy freedom while often we are bound;
together we are seeking the road where faith is found.

Divine eternal lover, you meet us on the road.
We wait for lands of promise where milk and honey flow,
but waiting not for places, you meet us all around.
Our covenant is written on roads, as faith is found.



Day 21, March 5



LuAnn Leach

Day 22, March 6

Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart. - Proverbs 3:3

I read obituaries. I think about how that person's life unfolded, the relationships, and what was important. The verse from Proverbs was printed in one of those obituaries. It is one of many reminders I have taped to my bathroom mirror that are read daily.

Another mirror tag is a message Pastor Ben wrote in May 2018, entitled "Navigating Change." Retired ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson explained the difference between memory and nostalgia. Memory is fruitful, foundational, and propels us forward. Nostalgia is dangerous. It traps us in a distorted perception of reality.

How do these relate to "Tempted?" When I am tempted to be negative, judgmental, or unkind, I ask myself, "Is that who I am?" If I am resisting a change that stirs anxiety, worry, or fear, why am I feeling this way?

Thank you, God, for showing me human virtues and realities to resist temptations in my life. Amen.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. - James 1:14

When I think of the trials Jesus encountered as a human among us, I don't think the temptations that I face in everyday life can compare. I haven't been starving in the desert while tempted by Satan's lure of bread. But am I tempted by a second cupcake? Do I want to couch surf instead of doing chores? Do I want to honk my horn at the slow driver ahead of me? Yes, yes and yes. These are minor temptations, motivated by my own short-term desires. Through his ultimate sacrifice, Jesus teaches that we should strive to set aside our own desires in service of others. While a little couch-surfing doesn't hurt, there are many ways I can do better and be more Jesus-like.

Dear Lord, grant me the resilience to resist short-term temptations and the strength to stay steadfast in service to others. Amen.

Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him. - James 1:12

We face temptations every day. Some of them are small, like wanting to open Christmas presents early, or maybe sneaking a piece of candy from the jar when nobody is watching. Other temptations can be more intense like the urge to cheat on a test, or wanting to pick a fight with siblings or friends.

But as it says in James, God blesses those who resist temptation. It doesn't matter whether the temptation is big or small. God rewards all who endure.

Dear Lord, please hear our prayer to help us avoid temptation, even when it is hard. Help us pass the test and receive the crown of life. In your name, we pray, Amen.



**Sharon
Steinhoff
Smith**

Day 23, March 7



6th Grade Grp 2

**Abby, Grayden,
Jackson, Lizzie,
Nicholas, William**

Day 24, March 8



Ann Gengel

Day 25, March 9

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. - Ephesians 4:31

Temptation is relatively easy to feel and when fulfilled, can be satisfying and savory-for a while. Like that third glass of chardonnay, you shouldn't have had at Book Club or the thoughts you had when you saw the Kansas City Chief's new cheerleader, Ms. Swift, modeling a jersey.

On the last coherent days my wise mother had before she passed in November, the hospice nurses administered a dose of morphine. When the drug relented her pain, she had a series of discussions with me. Some were outrageously humorous, while others were blunt and incredibly wise. I affectionately refer to them as "The Morphine Talks."

One that stood out was a forecasted warning of malice that I would not have predicted.

She stared at me and asked, "What is the opposite of Light?" I made a smart aleck comment about the Minnesota Wild never hoisting the Stanley Cup.

My Mom continued, "The answer is 'dark'- in the form of temptation that will come your way. I am leaving you and your brothers some money. Not a fortune, but enough to tempt you to perhaps spend it foolishly. Don't use it for greed or to fight amongst the family. If you do, then it will not be a gift any longer."

Grace's gift of wisdom was spot on the money- all pun intended, Mom!

Let us pray. Please remind us frequently, Lord, that YOU can deliver us from temptation. Amen.

Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested. - Hebrews 2:18

It may be hard to believe for those who know me, but I have had and still have many temptations in my life. Now, just what could they be, you ask?

Well, one might be when I'm driving, someone driving in front of me might just not be driving correctly (according to me), and instead of getting upset and angry, I'll ask God to keep me calm.

Another temptation would be to overeat.

Another would be to think less of someone who may not be living the life I think they should.

These may seem like trivial temptations to some, but they could be just the tip of the iceberg if not taken care of promptly. 🐟

So each morning I pray: Dear God, please help me be humble and grateful for today. Amen.

At night, I take inventory of my day, and if I was humble and grateful throughout the day, I pray: Dear Lord, Thank you for the wonderful day without temptations. Amen.



**Larry
Schoenecker**
Day 26, March 10



**Anna
Winzenburg**
Day 27, March 11

***Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
- Psalm 34:8***

Our family recently watched a movie called Greater that reminded me of the importance of turning to God in all circumstances. The highest of highs and the lowest of lows, God is with us. Do not be tempted to turn to negativity, instead, turn to God. The mother in the movie loses her son at the age of 22; her son lived his life with God at the forefront and even after his tragic death, her faithfulness did not waver. This movie was so inspiring to my family and reminded us that even when we're feeling down, discouraged, or defeated, God is with us every step of the way.

Here is a quote from the movie as my prayer:

Dear God, help us "trust that something greater sees things from a higher perspective where everything makes sense." Amen.

***Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written,
"It is mine to avenge; I will repay." says the Lord. - Romans 12:19***

We will not be tempted to lash out or get back at others. Instead, we will respond with kindness, even if others are not kind. We will trust in God to help us resist other temptations. We are often tempted by distractions that can get in the way and prevent us from living the lives that God wants for us.

Dear God, please help us as we do our best to resist temptation. Help us avoid distractions like video games, social media, and the busyness of daily life. Help us live the lives that we are meant to live in service to others. Amen.



7th Grade Grp 1
**Elise, Harry,
Lauren, Sam G.,
Sam M., Schaefer,
Trevor**
Day 28, March 12

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. - Galatians 6:1

When we do fail and sin, we should treat others and ourselves with some gentleness. God understands we are human and gifts us grace and love. Let's not forget to extend that to our neighbors. When we talk with others about sin, let's keep words soft, sweet, and grounded in love. As the old saying goes, it's easier to catch flies with honey than vinegar. It's also more persuasive to appeal to one's better tendencies than to point out flaws. Temptation is all around us and can be hard to resist. But when we are tempted, what can we do? Ask God if this is a good choice. We can walk away. We can stop and recognize the powers of persuasion. We can resist temptation when we think about the ramifications. "Is this something I would be proud of? Is this something my parents would approve of? Is this something my God would approve of?"

Dear God, help us to be gentle with ourselves and others when we fall into temptation. When faced with temptation, help us to think if it is something God, our parents, or ourselves would be proud of. Thank you for giving us grace and love. Amen.



6th Grade Grp 4
Ainsley, Brody,
Hunter, Ingrid,
Jude, Quinn,
Summer
Day 29, March 13



Nikki Sames

Day 30, March 14

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. - Ephesians 4:31-32

I recently decided to work through some unresolved trauma with a professional. I came to realize that I was in a constant state of panic and anxiety. Thankfully, I found the right people to turn to and I have loving support. One of my struggles is turning away from anger and bitterness. When someone's actions or inactions cause so much harm, it's tempting to hold onto those feelings. Facing them and working them out is certainly harder than just living with them. But eventually, they consume too much of who we are, leaving less of us to give to the people we love. There are lessons that Christ teaches us that feel impossible to follow. But with prayer, a lot of faith, and finding the right resources for help, it gets a little less difficult. We have to remember that we're human and the important lessons are usually the hardest. But they have the greatest reward.

Healing God, We thank you for the people in our lives who love and support us and those who give us the tools to heal. Help us to recognize when we need help to put down the burdens from pain. Lead us away from anger and bitterness so that we can better offer ourselves to the people around us and glorify your name. Amen.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. - Matthew 6:13

Tempt is a verb that means to entice. Are we “tempted”? We are, constantly! It would be absolutely ridiculous to say we are not. Jesus knew all about temptation, remember the 40 days and nights Jesus spent in the wilderness, being tempted by the devil without succumbing to him? The above verse is part of the “Lord’s Prayer” that Jesus used to teach the Disciples and us how to pray. He knew the temptations they and all of us would experience in our lives. No way would He team up with the devil!

It’s a fact that temptations may happen between us and the devil. Who is to blame? “Not us!” Your answer? Remember the TV star Flip Wilson, who constantly repeated the phrase, “The devil made me do it!” Is it really all the devil’s fault? No way, he just “teams up” with you and me, all of us together. How do we respond to these threats? Remember ‘evil’ is the word, ‘devil’, without the “d.” The devil is always in need of teammates.

Heavenly Father, We cannot resist temptation on our own. Help us remember You are always with us. Strengthen our resistance to the devil and his teammates who have no power or effect over us in Your presence and shelter. Thank you for always answering our prayers. Amen.



George Winn

Day 31, March 15



**Pastor
Ben Hilding**
Day 32, March 16

Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested. - Hebrews 2:18

The Greek word for temptation is πειράζω. Sometimes, English Bibles translate this word as “test” or even “attempt.” I find it interesting that in the Gospels, the primary use of this word has to do with the tests/temptations that Jesus faced himself, not tests that he gave others.

Besides his most well-known temptation story that began his ministry, the Pharisees and Sadducees tested Jesus for signs (Mt. 16:1, Mk 8:11). He was tested on matters of marriage and divorce (Mt 19:3, Mk 10:2). Jesus was tested about whether or not to pay taxes to the emperor (Mt. 22:18, Mk 12:15). Jesus was tested about the greatest commandment (Mt. 22:35). Jesus was tested by the crowds to perform signs and wonders (Lk 11:16). Jesus was tested with how to handle the situation with the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:6).

When we face temptations in our lives, the Bible is clear: we do not have a God who is “unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin (He 4:15).”

Gracious God, hear our prayers for help during our lives. Give us courage to resist temptation, faith to call on you, and discipline to follow your example. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. - Proverbs 28:13

Have you ever done something wrong or hurtful and you had to decide whether or not to confess and tell the truth? You might weigh telling the truth and getting in trouble against not saying anything and no one ever finding out and getting away with it. You might feel better at first, but eventually, you will feel terrible and guilty. If you tell the truth, it allows someone to forgive you and give you a second chance. Even though everyone sins and we all have done something we regret or feel bad about, by confessing these sins, we receive forgiveness from God. We believe when you put good into the world by being honest and truthful, the same will come back to you.

Dear Lord, we pray in this season of Lent that we may find a closeness to you that gives us the courage to confess all of our sins and wrongdoings to you. Knowing you are a loving and forgiving God and standing up to our sins will give us renewed strength and wisdom to help us avoid sin and temptation in the future. We ask this in the name of the Risen Christ. Amen.



8th Grade Grp 3
Everett, Jacob,
Josh, Nolan,
Peyton, Sophia
Day 33, March 17



Kate Kienow
Day 34, March 18

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- Philippians 4:6-7

In a season of life where a significant part of my time is spent in the car running the boys to and from hockey or waiting for them in the pick-up line, having worship music playing in the car keeps me sane. The other day, while sitting in the pick-up line, I was thinking about the theme for Lent and what I would write for my devotion. Matthew West's new song "Don't Stop Praying" came on and I knew what I needed to share!

His lyrics say, "When you've cried and you've cried 'til your tears run dry, the answer won't come and you don't know why, and you wonder if you can bow your head even one more time, don't stop praying."

I am often tempted to worry and try to control the situation myself. I am tempted to stop believing in myself and believe that I'm not enough. I am tempted to question why and let my faith be shaken. When I am tempted to think these thoughts and feel these feelings I have always found it is a reminder to pray. Even if the prayers are small or I don't know what to pray for, I have to remember, "Don't stop praying."

When we face temptations in our lives, the Bible is clear: we do not have a God who is "unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin (He 4:15)."

Heavenly Father, We are often tempted by thoughts and feelings that can turn us from you. Help us to remember in these moments to turn to you in prayer. May we always remember, "Don't stop praying!"

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him and be strong in your faith. - 1 Peter 5: 8-9

A temptation I face is to compare my life to others on social media and to give most of my spare time to different online characters and worlds that do not truly exist instead of God and others. I also am tempted to spend most of my free time watching shows or movies. Only God, friends, and family can help me resist these temptations. My friends and family may spend time in other activities with me, like a fun visit to the Mall of America or a camping trip with my dad. God can strengthen me with his written words from the Bible, which may come from the pastor's sermon, Christian worship songs, or wise devotionals. Prayer can aid me in concentrating on God, and it's a good way to share my time with him. Faith, however, is an answer to both of my temptations because through faith, I believe that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and I know that I am wonderfully and fearfully made, so I do not need to compare myself to others. Yes, the devil will always be out there trying to consume us through temptation, but through faith, I know that God is always there, and I will never face my temptations alone.

Dear God, help us to remember that we are all your beloved children, fearfully and wonderfully made. There is no need to compare ourselves to others as you have a plan for every one of us. Please help us to remember that when temptation comes our way, we do not face it alone. You hear us when we call your name, and we can move mountains through faith. For that, we say, thanks be to God. Amen.



**Kayla
Fredrickson**
Day 35, March 19



8th Grade Grp 1
Charlie, Evan,
Kytana, Parker,
Olivia E., Olivia J.
Day 36, March 20

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with testing, he will also provide you the way out so that you may be able to endure it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13

We know that we are constantly surrounded by temptation. We know what we should do, the things that God wants us to do, but we can easily be tempted to not do them. It is easy not to do our homework or to skip studying to hang out with friends or to lie to avoid getting in trouble. But even when we make mistakes, there is always a way back to God, who is always with us.

Dear God, Thank you for helping us through life and for testing us so we can learn from our mistakes. Forgive us for the times we've given into temptation. Please help us and guide us during times of testing and help us overcome temptation. We know that you go before us, behind us, beside us, above us, and within us. Amen.

On My Heart Imprint Your Image, LBW #102

On my heart imprint your image, Blessed Jesus, king of grace,
That life's troubles nor its pleasures ever may your work erase;
Let the clear inscription be: Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation, all my glory and salvation!



Day 37, March 21

But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' - Luke 10:40

The story of Martha is very relatable to me. I am Martha. I pride myself on multitasking as many tasks as possible. Nothing makes me feel more accomplished than a completed "to-do" list. Now that my kids are grown and flown, and the need to multitask has diminished, I have frequent random thoughts. Ironically, they happen most when I'm brushing my teeth. I have an electric toothbrush that runs for two minutes, and the most random thoughts will pop into my head. The Holy Trinity team has heard the words, "I had a random thought while brushing my teeth," come from my mouth more than once during a staff meeting. Are these really random thoughts or whispers from God? Can I finally hear God's message because I'm not multitasking? What other random thoughts (messages from God) would I have if I made more time for intentional listening or prayer?

Dear Lord, Thank you for whispering random thoughts during the quiet moments in my life. Help me to find more quietness and make space for hearing more messages from God in my day. In your name, we pray. Amen.



Karen Taylor

Day 38, March 22



Anonymous

Day 39, March 23

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. - Matthew 11:28

In the hustle and bustle of life, it's easy to become ensnared in the trap of busyness. Our calendars overflow, our minds race, and our souls yearn for rest. Yet, amidst the chaos, we risk losing sight of what truly matters. Being too busy can cloud our vision, obscuring the beauty of the present moment and distancing us from God.

Jesus himself withdrew to solitary places to pray, demonstrating the importance of carving out moments of stillness amid the clamor of life. In the quietude, we find renewal and clarity. It's in these moments that we reconnect with our purpose, realigning our priorities with God's will.

Let us heed the gentle call to slow down, to pause, and to be present. May we remember that our worth is not measured by our productivity, but by our capacity to love and to be present with God and one another.

Let us pray. O Lord, thank you for a life full of activities. Help us to pause in our busyness to connect with you and others. In your name, we pray. Amen.

He fasted 40 days and 40 nights...the tempter came... - Matthew 4:2-3

I left church to go to a meeting at a business fifteen minutes before it began. Those reading this from New Prague know that it takes approximately three minutes to get from one side of town to the other. Needless to say, I arrived more than ten minutes early. I could have taken a breath, paused, and prayed but instead, I defaulted to distraction...I took out my phone.

I've been convicted recently by a book that caught my attention titled, "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" by John Mark Comer. Comer offered a new perspective on Jesus' time fasting in the wilderness. He said, "It was only after a month and a half of prayer and fasting in the quiet place that he had the capacity to take on the devil himself and walk away unscathed."

How might distractions draw us away from opportunities to draw strength from God? God, I pray for breath. Instead of drowning in distraction, help me cultivate the capacity to find refuge in you. Amen.



**Pastor
Alicia Hilding**
Day 40, March 24

Session 1: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Introductions: Greet one another and share a story about something you've collected (maybe stamps, coins, special plates, records, pokemon cards, etc).

Opening Prayer

Introduction: Today's lesson involves the temptation of idolatry. King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue and threatened to throw anyone who didn't bow down and worship the golden statue into a fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Israelites, and worshipped God. They had a decision to make- be faithful to God and risk their lives? Or worship an idol and protect their safety?

Bible Reading: Daniel 3:14-25

Discussion Questions:

- In your own words, what does idolatry mean?
- What are some of the most tempting idols that we see in our world today?
- Think of a time when you were tempted with idolatry. What kinds of things were other people saying that were influential to you?
- What happens when someone isn't swayed by peer pressure? What happened to King Nebuchadnezzar?

Closing Prayer

Session 2: Zacchaeus

Introductions: Greet one another, and share something you wish you had more.

Opening Prayer

Introduction: In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is known for welcoming the marginalized, like the rag-tag shepherds, the prodigal son, the lost sheep, or the criminal on the cross. In today's story, he sees somebody who one would think should be happy; he had all the money he ever needed. It turns out this man was lonely. Jesus didn't look past him; he reached out and invited himself to his house.

Bible Reading: Luke 19:1-10

Discussion Questions:

- From the story, what do we know about Zacchaeus?
- What did the onlookers do when Jesus went to Zacchaeus's house? Why do you think they had that reaction?
- As you think about the relationship between money and happiness, can you think of a time when money has provided happiness? How about a time when money has taken away happiness?
- It's notable that Jesus says, "**Today** salvation has come to this house." What was Zacchaeus saved *from*? Furthermore, what was Zacchaeus saved *for*?

Closing Prayer

Session 3: Babel

Introductions: Greet one another, and share about different languages you've learned or your family has spoken.

Opening Prayer

Introduction: In Genesis, the first 11 chapters pertain to the story of creation (before things transition to the story of Abraham and Sarah). We hear of the beginning of the world, Cain & Abel, Noah & the ark, and then this story of the tower of Babel. These stories talk about God creating order in a world prone to disorder and disobedience. However, God's order is different from uniformity. In the tower of Babel (Babel means "confuse"), we see the temptation of self-provision that humans face and the response that God gives.

Bible Reading: Daniel Genesis 11:1-9

Discussion Questions:

- What did God do after the tower was built?
- Why might God have wanted to confuse the language of people?
- Can you think of a time when you have worked really hard on something, and then it didn't work out? Or it came crashing down?
- Think of a time when someone genuinely needed your help with something? What was it like to be able to offer yourself and respond to another's need?
 - What might the Tower of Babel teach us about the temptation to self-provision?

Closing Prayer

Session 4: Martha

Introductions: Greet one another, and share one of the best meals you've ever eaten (and be as descriptive as possible about the food served).

Opening Prayer

Introduction: In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, Jesus was tested by a lawyer about what it takes to inherit eternal life. Jesus taught him about a good Samaritan who stopped on the road to help someone in need. He contrasted the Samaritan with a priest and a Levite who were too busy to stop and offer help. As soon as Jesus left this conversation with the lawyer, he headed to the home of Mary and Martha. Like the priest or the Levite, Martha was very busy with many tasks, but her sister Mary stopped to listen to Jesus.

Bible Reading: Luke 10:38-42

Discussion Questions:

- Do you tend to be more like Mary or Martha?
- Why is busyness so tempting? What does it provide? What does it shield you from?
- Can you think of a time when you were too busy to be present for something that was really important?
- Can you think of a time when someone stopped what they were doing and gave you their full attention? What was that like for you?

Closing Prayer



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