

LENT 2023 Lower Schools

WEEK 1 ROOM FOR GOD

What are you giving up for Lent? (to have room for God)

February 22 Ash Wednesday

On Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on our foreheads to remind us that we need God.

Without God, we are not our full selves. Since we cannot see God, sometimes we need to be reminded that we need God in our lives.

- With your thumb, trace a cross (+) on the palm of your other hand. Do this to remember God is with us.

February 23 Thursday

During the season of Lent, we often “give up” on eating or drinking certain things. We give up these things so we will fill up on God instead. When we do not eat our favorite treat or we stop drinking a sweet drink, we remember to instead focus on God.

- What item could you give up eating or drinking during the season of Lent?
 - Candy
 - Chips
 - Soda
 - Cookies
 - Other food or drink _____

February 24 Friday

Sometimes to get closer to God, we need to give up things that God does not want us to do or say. During Lent we can focus more on our words and actions. When our words and actions may hurt someone, we need to give those up for good.

Which of these should we give up?

- I would rather do what I want to do than listen to my parents or teacher.
- I laugh at people that look or act differently than me.
- I do not like to share with other people, especially if they are not my friend.

Let's give up all of those words and actions and love God instead.

WEEK 2 HEARING GOD'S VOICE

What is God saying to you? (among all the noise of our lives)

February 27 Monday

One of the most frustrating aspects of a relationship with God is that we cannot see or hear God in the same way we can see or hear our family, friends, and other people in our lives. But just because we do not see and hear God like we see and hear our parents, does not mean God is not always there.

Waive your hands quickly in front of your face. Do you feel the air? YES! There is air even though we cannot see it. Like air, God is all around us and in us all the time.

February 28 Tuesday (no classes)

God uses those special people in our lives to talk to us. When our Christian Ed teacher tells us Bible stories, God is speaking to us too. When our pastor or priest explains something to us, God is explaining something also. When we pray with our parents, grandparents, or friends, God is listening and speaks to us in our prayers. Listen to God speak through other people.

March 1 Wednesday

There are certain places where we feel closer to God than others. Sometimes it is a church where we always go to worship and pray. Other times it is a quiet place in our house. Many of us feel close to God when we are outside looking out at the water, at a sandy beach, or at a beautiful butterfly or other animal out in nature. God likes to speak to us when we are in our favorite places where we are peaceful and relaxed.

March 2 Thursday

God speaks through the Bible. When we read or hear Bible stories we learn about God and God's people. We learn that God's people make mistakes but that God still loves us. When we make a mistake God wants us to turn back to God and start doing the right things. Everytime we read or hear a Bible story, we learn more about God and how we can hear what God wants us to do.

March 3 Friday

Just like us, the people in the Bible do not always listen to God. Sometimes they know what God wants them to do, but they choose to do what they want. It is just like we can be with our parents sometimes. We know what our parents want us to do, but we do not like that. Still we have to make the right decision and obey our parents, even when we would rather do something else. Our parents want us to be safe and happy. God wants us to be safe and happy too.

WEEK 3 “DO JUSTICE”

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice...?”

March 6 Monday

After making room for God in our lives and hearing God’s voice, next we need to put into action what God has spoken to us. Micah 6:8 tells us that God wants us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. We will spend the next three weeks reflecting on each of these ways to put God’s desires for us into action. First, we strive to do justice in our relationships with God and with each other.

- What do you think the word “justice” means?
- Think of a time when you or someone you know did the right thing, even when it was hard.

March 7 Tuesday

Deuteronomy 6:5 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” Justice means doing the right thing in our relationships with God. Sometimes it’s hard to give God our *all* of anything, and sometimes it is hard for us to make the right decision and follow what God wants us to do.

- What is one small way you can practice loving God this week?
- Think of a time when you did something God didn’t want you to do and tell God you’re sorry. Listen in your heart for God to say, “I forgive you.”

March 8 Wednesday

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus lists this as one of the greatest commandments in the entire Bible (and there are 613 different commandments in the Bible!). Justice also means treating others as we would want to be treated. It seems simple and basic enough, but it can be surprisingly difficult to put this into practice.

- Think about who counts as your “neighbor” (hint: it’s not just people that live in the houses near yours).

March 9 Thursday

John the Baptist called people to repent of their sins and be more considerate and compassionate toward other people. He told people who have two coats to give one away to someone who doesn’t have any coats. Sometimes loving our neighbor means giving away money or things so that other people can eat, have shelter, and be more comfortable.

- Reflect on a time when you needed something and someone helped you.
- What is one thing you can give away this Lent to help other people?
 - Give away a toy or clothes you’ve grown out of
 - Give a week’s worth of your allowance to a charity
 - Share a piece of candy with a classmate who looks sad or lonely

March 10 Friday

Many years before Jesus, the prophet Amos declared, “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos wanted the people to *a/ways* pay attention to

whether or not they were doing justice. When people are not doing justice, God wants us to fix what we're doing so that we can do justice.

- Can you think of examples of people in history or in our world today not being treated the right way?
- How do you think we can begin to fix problems of injustice today?

WEEK 4 “Love Mercy”

“...and to love mercy...?”

March 13 Monday

Next, God wants us to “love mercy.” These words were originally written in Hebrew, and sometimes words in Hebrew can mean lots of different things all at once. The word for “mercy” in Hebrew can also mean “kindness,” “goodness,” and “loyalty.” So which one is it? Perhaps, like we sometimes do on tests in school, we should just check “All of the above” and practice mercy, kindness, goodness, and loyalty all at once.

- Which of these words do you want to practice most this week?
 - Mercy
 - Kindness
 - Goodness
 - Loyalty

March 14 Tuesday

Reflecting on the mistakes he made, King David wrote this prayer: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1). God shows mercy to us by forgiving us for our sins, forgiving us for the mistakes we have made and the ways we have ignored God’s voice and presence in our lives.

- Think of a time when someone in your life forgave you for something you did. How did it feel?
- Can you think of someone who needs your forgiveness? What would you say to that person?

March 15 Wednesday

In one story in Luke’s gospel, a woman shows great kindness and love to Jesus by washing, anointing, and even kissing his feet. It is because of her gratitude for God’s forgiveness of her sins that she honors Jesus in such a humble way. When we remember the ways God has forgiven us and shown kindness and love to us, we also should forgive others and show love and kindness to them as well.

- How have you experienced kindness this week?
- Do a random act of kindness for someone this week:
 - Open a door for someone with their hands full
 - Write a note of thanks or encouragement for someone who needs it
 - Do a chore at home that you don’t normally do
 - Compliment someone on something you admire about them

March 16 Thursday

Genesis describes God making the light, sky, seas, land, plants, animals, and human beings, and after God creates each thing Genesis tells us, “God saw that it was good.” Even though the choices we make, or the choices made by others, sometimes make us question or even doubt whether things are good, God’s vision for our world is goodness: for us to see the goodness of

everything around us and to use the good things God has given us to do more good things.

Let's practice:

- 1) Look around you and find something that is good.
- 2) Say – out loud or to yourself – “And God saw that it was good.”
- 3) Reflect:
 - a) Why is this thing good?
 - b) How can I see God's goodness in it?
 - c) How can I use this thing for good?
- 4) Pray for God's help to see goodness in what God has made – in the world, in its resources, in yourself and in other people.

March 17 Friday

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever.” (Psalm 136:1)

Fashions go in and out of style. Friendships change with moves to a new city or a new school. Even our interests and our personalities change and develop as we get older, but God remains constant and loyal to us. Even when we get distracted or turn away from God, God does not give up on us. Like a dog waiting patiently for their human friend to come home from school, God waits for us and rejoices when we finally get home and can spend time with God again.

- What does “loyalty” mean to you? How do you know your friends or family members are loyal to you?
- How can you be loyal to God?

WEEK 5 - Walk Humbly

March 20

We begin this new week, this first day of Spring, with the theme of Walking Humbly. As we get into the middle of Lent the temptation to fall away from intentional prayer and time with God is quite normal. As we begin this fresh week, this 5th week of Lent, let's acknowledge our desire to take the perhaps "easier" route, and instead recommit to walking alongside God as we approach Easter. In Deuteronomy 5:33 we are encouraged to "walk in the way that God has commanded us, that we may live, and that it may go well with us, and that we may live long in the land we possess." We pray today that God may show us how to walk humbly along His path.

March 21

"Take off your shoes for you are standing on Holy Ground", Exodus 3:5. Right here on this normal Tuesday God is inviting you to draw close to Him. Let's pray today that God may allow us to meet Him on Holy Ground right in the middle of a normal school day. Perhaps if we take off our "shoes" of knowing everything that will happen today, and allow our humility to be present, we can see that God is working in all things for our good.

March 22

A prayer is written, "You will be given everything you need to accomplish what you have been asked to do." God will support us with all that we are asked to do, when we humbly ask Him to be a part of our process. Which pieces of your to-do list can you humbly ask God to support you with? Or even, if you can so boldly and humbly ask God to take control of?

March 23

Professor and author Joseph Campbell wrote, "People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive." When was the last time you truly felt alive?(silent pause)

The Hebrews author writes, "Faith is confidence in what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see." (Heb 11:1) Today we meet God in awe for all that God has created.

March 24

From the book, *Love Poems from God* by translator Daniel Ladinsky:

God Would Kneel Down

I think God might be a little prejudiced.

For once He asked me to join Him on a walk

through this world, and we gazed into every heart on this earth,

and I noticed He lingered a bit longer before any face that was weeping, and before any eyes that were laughing. And sometimes when we passed a soul in worship God too would kneel down. I have come to learn: God adores His creation.

On this final day of reflecting on humility we pause and reflect on the true humility required to be fully loved and to love fully. May we let ourselves acknowledge our Creator's love for us, simply for being us, exactly we are in this very moment.

WEEK 6

MARCH 27 // Monday

This week, let's think about some hard feelings: emptiness, loneliness, anger, sadness, and confusion. It is normal to feel each of these, and Lent gives us a chance to plan for how to respond to them. For example, when I feel empty, what will fill me up in a healthy way? Emptiness can happen when someone is exhausted or hungry. It may be the absence someone feels when they have lost someone or something.

In the book of Isaiah, we hear that we don't have to bring God anything for God to love, bless, or work with us. You can show up to God with empty hands.

REFLECT: What is something that fills my life with joy?

PRAY: *Lord, if I come without a thing, I come with all I need.*

MARCH 28 // Tuesday

When loneliness passes through us, we can ask God to remind us that we belong. There are moments when we need to do something by ourselves or have time by ourselves. Still, we know someone else knows us and accepts us.

In the Bible, God says, over and over again, "I will be with you." And that is the best thing we can say to each other: "I can go with you," or "I can just sit with you."

REFLECT: When was a time you felt lonely?

PRAY: *Thank you, God, for welcoming me into your presence.*

MARCH 29 // Wednesday

When we pray, worship, and serve others during Lent, we notice that the anger inside us can turn into peace. We can learn from our anger. It can teach us about the ways we feel hurt and about our need to be heard and seen. We need safe places and safe ways to let our anger out. Then, later, we can talk about where the anger may have come from.

In prayer, you can tell God about your anger. In chapel and other places of worship, our hearts are strengthened to be able to deal with anger. In serving others, we accept that while we can't *control* everything, we can do *something*.

REFLECT: Who is someone who can let you be angry without getting angry themselves?

PRAY: *Lord, make us instruments of your peace.*

MARCH 30 // Thursday

Lent can be a time of mourning, or grief. Grief is the practice of letting ourselves adjust to changes. Feeling sad about changes doesn't necessarily mean the changes are bad, or that we aren't ready for something new. It just means we are respecting our bodies enough not to rush. Joy will arrive when it is ready.

When we are sad, we give the sadness as much time as it needs. Sometimes, it just pops in for a few minutes to say hello. Sometimes it lingers longer than you wanted it to stay. Like the other hard emotions, when we make sadness our friend, instead of our enemy, it connects us to God and to other people.

REFLECT: What is a big change you have gone through?

PRAY: *God, you are the same, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.*

MARCH 31 // Friday

Have you noticed that school is a place for questions? Did you know that churches and families can be, too? Aren't questions more fun, anyway?

What if feeling confused, as frustrating as it can be, is good for us? What if it's not good for us to always feel like we know the answer, know what's going on, or know what to do next? What if, when we really want to *understand*, what we really need is the strength and security to live without understanding? Even if I can't always know "why," can I still know God?

REFLECT: That was a lot of questions! If you could have the answer to any question today, what would you ask?

PRAY: *Thank you, God, for letting me ask anything and not making me feel bad about it.*

WEEK 7 HOLY WEEK

APRIL 3 // Monday

During Holy Week, we retell the story of Jesus' final days. It began yesterday with Palm Sunday, which is often festive and celebratory. Next Sunday, Easter Sunday, begins a new season of celebrating resurrection.

In between these two Sundays, Jesus went on a spiritual journey, and we do, too. This journey includes teachings about what God's Kingdom is like, sharing meals and special moments with loved ones, and painful experiences that are difficult to go through. Pay close attention to which of those moments makes you feel the most love: is it when you listen to Jesus' words, when you are at the table, or when you are showing courage?

REFLECT: What is your favorite story about Jesus?

PRAY: *Jesus, walk with us this week, through the ups and the downs.*

APRIL 4 // Tuesday

Think about how fast your feet grow. You go through multiple pairs of shoes each year, and you know what it's like for them to feel too tight. Is your faith and love and wisdom growing just as fast?

The Gospel of John tells the story of Jesus *washing* his disciples' feet. He served them by showing them hospitality and by doing what was probably unpleasant work. I'm not sure how much their feet had grown since Jesus met them, but certainly the disciples' faith and love and wisdom had grown. In that moment, Jesus told them, "Now, to keep growing, serve one another as I have served you."

REFLECT: Is there an unpopular task you could do for your class, friends, or family today?

PRAY: *No job is too big or too small for you, Lord.*

APRIL 5 // Wednesday

Tomorrow is Maundy Thursday, the day we remember Jesus' last meal with his disciples. He gave them a "new commandment" to love one another. And the way he did this was to share food.

Having dinner with family and sharing about the day, inviting others to join our table, or celebrating important days like birthdays with special food are all ways to communicate love and closeness. Jesus broke the bread and passed it around. At his table, we receive his love and presence.

REFLECT: What is the most enjoyable meal you remember having?

PRAY: *Give us this day our daily bread.*

APRIL 6 // *Maundy Thursday*

After celebrating the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples went to a garden to pray. Jesus was distraught, and he wanted his friends to stay nearby. “Just watch and pray with me,” he said.

It is important to develop our powers of observation. Do you notice what you notice? Watching for God means paying attention to your surroundings, your relationships, your classes, nature and wildlife, and all sorts of ordinary things and events. God can be seen and found anywhere. Prayer is observing God in any place—or observing any place *with God*.

REFLECT: Where have you noticed God this week?

PRAY: *Open our eyes, dear Lord, that we may see you.*

APRIL 7 // *Good Friday*

When we see a cross—at a church, on jewelry, maybe printed on a Bible—we are reminded that Jesus’ journey included dying. The story didn’t end there—Christians believe Jesus lived again. But it does *pause* there.

On Good Friday, we pause our own story, as if we are watching a movie or show about our own lives. We look back at all the amazing, and even boring, parts that have happened so far. We wonder about what is coming next and how the story will end. Mostly, we give thanks for where we are now.

We have walked a long way with Jesus. We are going to rise again with him. For now, we simply look at the cross.

REFLECT: If Good Friday is about Jesus’ death, why is it called “good”?

PRAY: *Pause our lives, Lord, when we are looking too far back, or too far ahead.*

