



# Family Devotions for Lent

by Kimberlee Conway Ireton

## Introduction

Lent is the season of preparation for Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday (February 25 this year) and lasts through Holy Saturday (the day before Easter). Traditionally, Christians have observed Lent by fasting, repenting, and almsgiving (an archaic term that just means generosity toward those who have substantially less than we do). It is a rich season, and a dark one, leading inexorably to the cross and Jesus' death and burial. Lent invites us to live with and in this darkness.

And we can invite our children to join us as we observe this season, as we prepare our hearts and our lives for Easter. With that in mind, I have created this family devotion for Lent. It can be used with children as young as four and as old as 12, though you will want to adjust the words of the prayers and questions to be age-appropriate and add (or omit) explanations as needed.

Ideally, the devotion would be done during a shared meal. In my house, we begin each meal with the lighting of a candle (during Lent, the candle is purple, the liturgical color of repentance) and a short litany, which you'll find on the next page. After the candle lighting, there is a Scripture passage and a short prayer for each day as well as a question or two to ask your children (and yourself!).

Don't feel obligated to press your children to answer the questions for the day. Give them space and silence to think, and let them choose not to respond sometimes if they'd rather not. (My son would almost always rather not, so he only gets this option a couple times a week.) Don't worry if your children sometimes get silly with their answers; we don't want them to think God is serious and boring! And always feel free to ask why they said what they did: when my children explain what they're thinking, it gives me a window into their souls.

My prayer is that as you embrace this season, your family's life with Christ will grow deeper and richer. I also pray that you will have grace for yourself and your children as you embark on this road from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday and, especially, that you will know the loving presence of Christ during your journey through Lent.

Kimberlee Conway Ireton  
February 2009

## **Candle Lighting Litany for Lent**

Candle lighter: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Everyone else: And renew a right spirit within me.

## **Ash Wednesday and the days that follow**

---

Since Lent begins on a Wednesday, the first week of Lent begins on the following Sunday. For this half-week following Ash Wednesday, the questions explain the traditional Lenten practices of fasting, repenting, and almsgiving and then ask for your family to decide how you want to interact with those practices. If you start the devotion after Ash Wednesday and you'd like to embrace some or all of those practices, just start with the devotions for this half-week and then jump to whatever day of whatever week it really is.

### **Ash Wednesday**

**Scripture:** Joel 2:15-16

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, as we enter into Lent, may we be mindful of You, remembering Your great gift of life for us. Amen.

**Question:** Today is the first day of Lent, the season when we prepare for Easter. Many Christians fast during Lent. Fasting is when we choose not to eat a certain food or participate in a certain activity, so that we can focus on Jesus instead. What might our family fast from during Lent?

### **Thursday**

**Scripture:** Joel 2: 12-13

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are a God of steadfast love. May we turn to you whenever we do something wrong and seek your forgiveness. Amen.

**Question:** Today is the second day of Lent, the season when we prepare for Easter. One of the things that many Christians do during Lent is repent. “Repent” means to turn around from doing wrong things and to go in a different direction—toward what is right. Let’s think of one thing that each of us can repent of during Lent.

### **Friday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:2-4

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are a generous God. Help us to be generous with others. Amen.

**Question:** Today is the third day of Lent, the season when we prepare for Easter. One of the things that many Christians do during Lent is give to people who have less than they do. Who can we give to? What can we give?

### **Saturday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:19-21

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help us this Lent to learn to love You more, so that we might lay up treasure in Heaven. Amen.

**Question:** Today is the fourth day of Lent, the season when we prepare for Easter. During Lent, Christians fast, repent, and give to people who have less than they do. Let’s remind each other: What is our Lenten fast? What are each of us repenting of? Who are we giving to? What are we giving?

## **First Week of Lent: Into the Wilderness**

---

The stories for the first week of Lent are of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and His calling of the first disciples. Though the passages may not seem related at first glance, the theme of faithfulness to God's call unites them. As you ask the questions for each day, you may also want to encourage one another in your chosen Lenten disciplines.

### **First Sunday of Lent**

**Scripture:** Matthew 3: 13, 16-17

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the beloved Son of the Father. Please help us to know that we are God's beloved children, too. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think Jesus needed to hear the voice of God telling him he was God's beloved Son?

### **Monday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:1-2

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You know what it feels like to fast. When our Lenten fast becomes difficult, help us to be strong as you were. Amen.

**Question:** Lent is 40 days long. Based on today's reading, why do you think we fast for 40 days to get ready for Easter? Why do you think Jesus fasted for 40 days?

## Tuesday

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:3-4 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, even though you were hungry, you did not give in to the devil's temptation. When we are tempted to do something we know we shouldn't, help us to resist the temptation as you did. Amen.

**Question:** What is something you were tempted to do today that you knew you shouldn't do? Did you give in to the temptation or did you say no to it? How do you feel about that decision? (If it seems appropriate, you could pray with your child for forgiveness if he or she did give in to this temptation and then assure him or her of Jesus' love and pardon.)

## Wednesday

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:5-7 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when we wonder whether the Father loves us, remind us that He does love us, and that You love us—always and forever. Amen.

**Question:** What do you think would have happened if Jesus had listened to the devil and thrown Himself off of the temple? Why?

## Thursday

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:8-11 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You refused to worship anyone but God alone. Help us to worship only God, too. Amen.

**Question:** Why is it a bad idea to worship the devil? What about other things—why is it bad to worship them? How do you think Jesus felt after He told the devil to get lost?

## **Friday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:18-20

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You call us to follow You, just as You called Peter and Andrew. Help us to listen to You and do what You ask us to do. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think Peter and Andrew just left their nets and followed Jesus? Do you think that was a good idea? Why (not)?

## **Saturday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:21-22

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You called Peter and Andrew and James and John, and You call us, too. Help us to be willing to follow You wherever You lead us. Amen.

**Question:** How do you think James and John felt when Jesus called them? How did their father feel when they left him sitting in the boat?

## **Second Week of Lent: Upside Down**

---

The passages for the second week of Lent remind us of the upside-down nature of God's kingdom: the last are first; the first are last; what people reject is what God chooses; humility and gentleness are the marks of the true King; and the weak and the small are God's guests of honor. In order to appreciate the upside-down kingdom, we need to see the King for who He is, which is why we begin this week with the story of the Transfiguration.

## **Second Sunday of Lent**

**Scripture:** Luke 9:28-29

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help us to be people who pray and keep our focus on You, just as You were a person who prayed and kept Your eyes on Your Father. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think Jesus went to the mountain to pray? Why did his clothes turn such a bright white?

## **Monday**

**Scripture:** Luke 9:30-32 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

Also, Moses and Elijah are mentioned in this story. If you need to refresh your memory, Moses's story is found in Exodus 2-20; Elijah's, in 1 Kings 17-19.

**Prayer:** Jesus, sometimes we are like the disciples. We forget You are with us. We forget to pray. We fall asleep. Wake us up when we forget You and remind us who You really are, that You are God. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think the disciples were falling asleep while they prayed? What do you think it would look like to see Jesus' glory?

## **Tuesday**

**Scripture:** Luke 9:33-35 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Jesus, You are God's beloved Son. Help us to listen to You and do as You ask us. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think Peter wanted to build houses for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah? How do you think the disciples felt when they heard God's voice speaking from the cloud?



### Wednesday

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:16 (preface this verse with “Jesus said...”)

**Prayer:** Jesus, You are from the beginning, the Firstborn of all creation, and You became last for our sakes. Help us to be like you, seeking the good of others, putting them ahead of ourselves. Amen.

**Question:** What do you think Jesus means when he says the first shall be last? Can you think of a time when the first became last? What about when the last became first?

### Thursday

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:42

**Prayer:** Jesus, You are the stone the builders rejected. Help us to not be like those builders. Help us to listen to You and build our lives on You. Amen.

**Question:** Why would builders reject a stone? Why do you think people rejected Jesus? When do we reject Jesus, by choosing to do things that would not be pleasing to Him?

### Friday

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:29-30 (preface this verse with “Jesus said...”)

**Prayer:** Jesus, help us learn from You how to be gentle. Amen.

**Question:** What does it look like to be gentle? How have you been gentle today (or, this week)?

## **Saturday**

**Scripture:** Mark 10:13-16

**Prayer:** Jesus, help us to know how much You love us and how much You enjoy being with us. We want to be with You, too, even though we sometimes forget. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think the disciples told the people to stop bringing the children to Jesus? Why do you think Jesus wanted to be with the children?

## **Third Week of Lent: Forgiveness**

---

This week's passages focus on forgiving and loving others, even when they hurt us, even when they hate us. These are hard passages for many (maybe most!) people, and justice-loving, fairness-seeking children may find them especially difficult to swallow. Allow for enough time to talk with your kids about their questions.

### **Third Sunday of Lent**

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:21-22

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are faithful to forgive us when we hurt You and when we hurt others. Help us to forgive others as you forgive us. Amen.

**Question:** Jesus said we need to forgive people when they hurt us. When is it easy to forgive someone? When is it hard?

## **Monday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:23-27 (preface this verse with “Jesus said...”)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help us to know that You are merciful and kind, like the master in this story, and that You always forgive us. Amen.

**Question:** How do you think the man who owed his master a lot of money felt when he was asked to pay back his debt? How do you think he felt when the master forgave that debt?

## **Tuesday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:28-30 (This is a continuation of yesterday’s story, so you’ll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Jesus, help us to forgive other people, even when we don’t want to. Amen.

**Question:** Why should the man have shown mercy to his fellow servant? Why do you think he didn’t?

## **Wednesday**

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:31-34 (This is a continuation of yesterday’s story, so you’ll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Jesus, help us to forgive other people the way You forgive us. Amen.

**Question:** Why was the master angry with the servant? How do you think the servant felt when the master put him in prison?

### **Thursday**

**Scripture:** Luke 6:27-28 (preface this verse with “Jesus said...”)

**Prayer:** Jesus, sometimes it is very, very hard to forgive other people, and we need You to help us love them. Please help us to want to forgive and to love. Amen.

**Question:** Who is unkind to you? How do you feel when Jesus says to love that person? Is there something you could do (or stop doing) to show love to that person?

### **Friday**

**Scripture:** Luke 6:32-35 (preface this verse with “Jesus said...”)

**Prayer:** Jesus, some people are very hard to love, but You love them anyway. Help us to be like You and to love even the people we don’t like very much. Amen.

**Question:** When have you given something without expecting anything in return? How can we do that now, during Lent?

### **Saturday**

**Scripture:** Luke 15:8-10 (preface this verse with “Jesus said...”)

**Prayer:** Jesus, sometimes we are lost. Help us to rejoice when You find us. Amen.

**Question:** When have you lost something important to you? If you found it, how did that make you feel? How do you think God feels when people repent? (Repentance is when someone turns away from doing wrong things and turns toward God.)

## **Fourth Week of Lent: Refreshment**

---

This week's Scriptures focus on images of water and God's loving nurture. The emphasis on refreshment and care provides a respite from the darkness of Lent and reminds us that God cares for us even in that darkness, that He is with us always, everywhere, and that the darkness is actually not dark to Him.

### **Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**Scripture:** John 4:7-10 (or 4:7-15)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the living water. Help us to come to You whenever we feel tired and in need of rest and refreshment. Amen.

**Question:** Do you think Jesus is talking about water, like water in a glass? What is the living water that He will give the woman? How is Jesus like water?

### **Monday**

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 17:7-8

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help us to trust You more and more so we can grow strong and fruitful like that tree planted by water. Amen.

**Question:** What do trees need to grow strong? What do these verses say we need to grow strong?

## **Tuesday**

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 47:7-9, 12

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the water of life. Help us plant our lives deep in Your love. Amen.

**Question:** What is special about the river in these verses? What is special about the trees growing on the banks of the river? How do you think it would feel to live near a river like that?

## **Wednesday**

**Scripture:** Hosea 6:2-3

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, we are halfway through Lent. Help us to press on in our fasting and repentance and almsgiving as we prepare for Easter. Amen.

**Question:** How do these verses say God is going to come to His people? Where do you see God?

## **Thursday**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:1

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the water. Help us to come to you and receive all the good things You offer us. Amen.

**Question:** What are the good things offered in this verse? Do you have to pay for them? Why not?

## **Friday**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:10-13

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are like our mother; we drink deeply of Your goodness and grace, and are satisfied. Amen.

**Question:** What kinds of things do mothers do for their babies? How do you think God is like a mother?

## **Saturday**

**Scripture:** Psalm 131

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help us to be like the child resting against its mother: calm and content simply because we are with You. Amen.

**Question:** When do (or did) you sit in your mom's lap? How do you think she feels when you sit with her? Could You sit in God's lap? What would that be like?

## **Fifth Week of Lent: Touch That Heals**

---

This week's stories are of Jesus touching people and healing them and of His raising Lazarus from the dead. Children who have chronically ill or dying family members or who have recently lost someone who is dear to them may have questions about why Jesus didn't heal their loved ones. Be honest in your responses to those questions. If you wonder that, too, tell your children, but also assure them that Jesus loves them and the person who is ill or who died. Take your time with this week's devotions, especially if you anticipate that these stories will call forth your child's (or your own) questions and pain.

### **Fifth Sunday of Lent**

**Scripture:** Matthew 8:14-16

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You that You touched Peter's mother-in-law and made her well. Thank You that You are a God who heals. Amen.

**Question:** How does it feel to have a fever? How do you think Peter's mother-in-law felt when Jesus touched her hand? How do you think Jesus heals people today?

### **Monday**

**Scripture:** Mark 5:22-23, 35-42

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You took Jairus's daughter by the hand and healed her. Thank You that You are a God who heals. Amen.

**Question:** How did Jairus feel when his servants said his daughter was dead? How did he feel when Jesus healed her? How do you think Jesus heals people today?

### **Tuesday**

**Scripture:** Mark 5:25-29

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You touched the bleeding woman and made her well. Thank You that You are a God who heals. Amen.

**Question:** How does it feel to bleed a lot? What would you do if you couldn't stop bleeding? How would you feel if the doctors couldn't help you? How did this woman feel when Jesus healed her?



### Wednesday

**Scripture:** Mark 8:22-25

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You touched the blind man's eyes and he was able to see. Thank You that You are a God who heals. Amen.

**Question:** How does it feel to wake up in the dark and not be able to see? How do you think it would feel to see for the first time ever? How do you think the blind man feels about Jesus?

### Thursday

**Scripture:** John 11:17-23

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You loved Mary and Martha, and You came to be with them after the death of their brother. Thank You that You are with us, too, when we are sad and miss people we love. Amen.

**Question:** How does Martha feel in this story? How would you feel if your brother died? (If your child has lost someone they love, you could ask how they felt about that, instead of this hypothetical question.) What did Jesus promise Martha? What does Jesus promise us?

### Friday

**Scripture:** John 11:32-36 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You loved Mary and Martha, and You grieved with them after the death of their brother. Thank You that You share our sadness when we miss people we love. Amen.

**Question:** How does Mary feel in this story? How does Jesus feel? How do you know? When we lose people we love, do you think Jesus cries with us, too? Why?

## **Saturday**

**Scripture:** John 11:38-44 (This is a continuation of yesterday's story, so you'll want to review that before reading.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You raised Lazarus from the dead and restored him to his sisters. Thank You that You promise to restore our loved ones to us in Heaven. Amen.

**Question:** How do you think Mary and Martha feel at the end of this story? What will happen to us at the end of our stories? How do you think we'll feel at the end of our stories?

## **Holy Week: Descent into Darkness**

---

The sixth week of Lent is Holy Week, the week before Easter. It begins with great rejoicing on Palm Sunday and ends with the three darkest days of the Christian year—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday—when we recall the betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. These three days are called the Triduum (TRID-ee-um). It is traditional not to light a fire on these three days, as a way of remembering that the Light has gone out of the world. In our house, we remember that by simply not lighting the candle at our evening meal and by saying a different litany those days, which I've printed with the Triduum devotions.

### **Palm Sunday**

**Scripture:** John 12:12-15

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the King. You are good and humble and powerful and gentle. We praise You, our King. Amen.

**Question:** Why are the people in this story so excited? What do you do when you're excited? What would you do if you knew Jesus was coming to our town/city?

## **Monday**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-4

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, are God's Son, the servant who tenderly cares for those who are lonely, sad, lost, and broken. Thank You for Your faithful love for us . Amen.

**Question:** What is a smoldering wick (use the words from verse 3 of your translation)? Why do you think the servant won't put out a smoldering wick? What kind of person do you think the servant is? Who do you think the servant is?

## **Tuesday**

**Scripture:** Psalm 31:13-16

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You trusted Your Father, even when Your life was scary and You were afraid. Help us to trust You when we are afraid. Amen.

**Question:** How does it feel to be afraid? Who can we turn to when we're afraid? What can we do?

## **Wednesday**

**Scripture:** Mark 14:1

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when You went to Jerusalem You knew You were going to be killed, but You went because You trusted Your Father and because You love Your people. We are so grateful that You love us that much. Amen.

**Question:** What do the priests want to do to Jesus? How do you think Jesus felt, knowing this?

## **Litany for the Triduum**

Leader: At the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice,

Everyone else: "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit!"

### **Maundy Thursday: Betrayed and Arrested**

**Scripture:** Mark 14:43-46

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, This is a dark day. It is the day You were betrayed and arrested. Help us to remember You today and remember what You suffered because You love us. Amen.

**Question:** Why do you think Judas, who was Jesus' friend, betrayed Him? How do you think Jesus felt when Judas betrayed Him? How did He feel when the crowd seized Him? Where do you think they will take Him?

### **Good Friday: Crucified**

**Scripture:** Luke 23:18-23, 32-33

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, This is a dark day. It is the day You were crucified and died. Help us to remember You today and to remember what You suffered because You love us. Amen.

**Question:** Why did Jesus die? (There are lots of answers here. Encourage older children especially to think beyond the rote "for our sins.")

### **Holy Saturday: Laid in the Earth**

**Scripture:** Mark 15:42-46

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, This is a dark day. It is the day You lay in the earth, dead and buried. Help us to remember You today and to remember what You suffered because You love us. Amen.

**Question:** Why did Joseph ask for Jesus' body? What did he do with it? How do you think he felt about Jesus' death? How do you feel about Jesus' death?

### **Easter Sunday**

---

On Easter morning, wake your children with these words: *Christ is risen!*

### **Candle Lighting Litany for Easter**

Candle Lighter: Christ is risen!

Everyone else: Alleluia! He is risen indeed!

(The candle for Easter is white, the liturgical color of joy and triumph. It's also the color associated with Jesus.)

### **Easter Sunday**

**Scripture:** Mark 16:1-7

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, This is a bright and glorious day. It is the day You rose from the dead. You beat death and sin and sadness and pain. Help us to remember Your amazing triumph today. We give You praise and honor and glory. Amen.

**Question:** Why did Jesus rise from the dead? How does that make you feel?

Kimberlee Conway Ireton is the author of *The Circle of Seasons: Meeting God in the Church Year*. You can read her weekly blog during Lent and Easter at [www.kimberleeconwayireton.net](http://www.kimberleeconwayireton.net).

Copies of this booklet are available for download at Kimberlee's website. If you have questions or comments about the booklet, please email her at [k@kimberleeconwayireton.net](mailto:k@kimberleeconwayireton.net).