



Winfree Church

**Lent Devotional  
Guide**

Share Christ | Serve Others

**Section One:**  
*Invitation*

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# PREFACE

A note from Rev. Joshua Roberts

Greetings Winfree Church,

Lent is a strange thing to be discussing as a Baptist. Some of you may have grown up in theological traditions that observed the Lenten season and for others, this is strange to hear a Baptist church mention it at all!

Growing up in Ohio, I lived in a community that was heavy with second, third and fourth generations of German immigrants. My great-great grandmother, Mrs. Kuhnheim, came to America from Germany. I remember as a child and into my teens listening to my great grandmother, Mrs. Wooley, talk of her mother speaking German to her dad and then English to the kids. Mrs. Kuhnheim was Catholic, Mrs. Wooley was raised Lutheran, my grandmother was raised Reformed Church of America, my mother was raised Baptist. To me, Lent was something the Catholic, Lutherans and Reformed Church of America did. Not us though.

It wasn't until high school that I started to ask what Lent was really all about. My friends would say that it's about giving something up, or it's about adding something to your life. One friend said the pope makes him do it. These conversations were sometimes helpful, other times not, but it caused me to really examine what this season was about.

# PREFACE

A note from Rev. Joshua Roberts

**LENT IS A SEASON OF REAL REFLECTION IN OUR LIFE. LENT CALLS US TO EXAMINE OURSELVES, OUR SOULS, AND ASK THE QUESTION THAT OUR LORD POSED TO HIS DISCIPLES: "BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?" (MATTHEW 16:15).**

Lent calls us to remember who we are really. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, a day when ashes are placed on our head, and we are reminded that we are dust and to dust we will one day return. As tough as that is to be reminded of, it also points us to the hope we have in resurrection in Jesus! Death is not the end for in Christ we have life.

**This season of reflection and examination calls us to ask ourselves:**

1. Do I truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of humanity?
2. Do I truly live out that belief?
3. Are there things in my life that are causing me to look away from my Savior, or distract me from His calling in my life?
4. Am I following His teachings and learning from Him?
5. Do I need to make more time in my life to listen to His words and spend time in communion with Him?
6. Am I living in His resurrection daily?



# PREFACE

A note from Rev. Joshua Roberts

So, my friends growing up may have had some good points. Is there something that is distracting you from your Savior or something that you may love more than him? Then this Lenten season may you seek to correct and realign your passions. Maybe there is something you are missing in your walk with Jesus, add that and make time. Are you living or just existing? May this Lenten season be one of life!

In Christ's Service

Rev. Joshua P, Roberts



I used to say, “I love to clean,” but I’ve come to realize that a more honest statement is, “I love the results of cleaning—what it brings to my home and my life.” My love for organization and order stems from a deeper desire to have everything in its rightful place, ready for when I need it again.

But what about my spiritual home? It, too, is in need of cleaning! Some of our spiritual homes may be in better shape than others, but this devotion isn’t about comparing ourselves to anyone else. The truth is, all of our spiritual homes—where we ask God to dwell—are a little messy. Sin is messy, dirty, and sometimes even foul. There have been times in my life when I’ve managed to bring some order to my spiritual home. Yet, there always seems to be that one dark, stinking closet tucked away in the back of a room—hidden but still affecting everything.

**I’VE LEARNED THAT UNTIL I OPEN THAT DOOR, LET THE LIGHT IN, AND CONFRONT WHATEVER IS INSIDE, MY ENTIRE HOME REMAINS UNSTEADY, TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF COLLAPSE.**

Just as I must tend to my physical home, God calls me to tend to my spiritual home as well. He wants me to be prepared for life’s challenges by helping me bring my spiritual house into order. God sees what lies ahead, while I do not. I do know that my life has been filled with difficult obstacles and painful decisions. And in every instance, I’ve had to call on Him—because I didn’t have the strength or understanding to navigate those dark valleys on my own.

Will you join me on this journey of inviting God into your spiritual home, cleaning it out one room at a time? Isaiah 30:18 tells us that God is waiting for us to come to Him. As we begin this season of Lent and walk the road to the cross, let's open our hearts and submit ourselves to His calling. As sinners, we cannot fully comprehend the depth of God's infinite love for us. Yet, Ephesians 3:19 reminds us, "to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge," and Romans 8:39 assures us that "nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God." His grace is always available, inviting us into a deeper relationship with Him. But we must take the first step—reaching out, taking His hand, and allowing Him to lead us. He is waiting...

**Reflection Questions:**

1. Do you have a room or closet in your spiritual home that needs cleaning?
2. As Lent begins, can you commit to praying and asking God to guide you on this journey?
3. What three specific areas of your life do you need His guidance in during this season?
4. Would it be helpful to keep a journal throughout Lent, recording your reflections and prayers each day?
5. Can you set aside a quiet time each day—not only to speak with the Lord but also to listen?
6. Can you make it a habit to praise God for even the smallest blessings? I know I need to grow in this area—thanking Him for the many ways He intervenes in my daily life. Would you pray for me in this, as I commit to praying for you?

## **“JOHN THE BAPTIST APPEARED IN THE WILDERNESS, PREACHING A BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE.”**

Today’s reading was written by the well-known pulpiteer, prolific author, professor, and former Methodist bishop William Willimon. Today Willimon is known and loved for his provocative, insightful, and often witty scriptural insights. (Many a Baptist preacher has gleaned valuable, new, Biblical insights from this Methodist! So it is with today’s reading and text.)

### **Reflect on these thought-provoking quotes from today’s reading:**

- “The church of today lives in an ethically debilitating climate.”
- “Everybody must descend into the (baptismal) waters, especially the religious secure and the morally sophisticated.”
- Referring to Jesus’ baptism by John: The early church “struggled with ‘why must our Lord be in this repenting bath?’” (Stated simply – if Jesus was perfect and John’s baptism was for sinners, why should Jesus be baptized? What explanations does today’s reading give? Do you agree?)
- Recognizing that Jesus referred to his death as a “baptism” (Mark 10:38). Willimon insightfully notes: “Jesus’ baptism ‘began in the Jordan and completed on Golgotha.”
- “Jesus’ whole life was caught up in this single sign. Our baptism does the same.”
- “To be baptized ‘into Christ’... means to be incorporated into the way of life which characterized his life, the life of the empty one, the servant, the humble one, the obedient one, obedient even unto death.” (Phil 2:6-11).
- Carefully reread Willimon’s article to glean interesting and important insights into the many meanings of baptism for Jesus and for us today.



In today's religious landscape, Lent is observed, not only by Catholics, but by most Protestants as well. In more recent years, many Baptists have begun to observe Lent, not so much from a strictly Catholic perspective, but as an opportunity for an additional forty-days of concentrated, focused spiritual renewal. This is accomplished through worship, prayer and reflecting on the Scriptures that describe Jesus' life, message and mission on His way to the cross and ultimately to His resurrection. Additionally, because Jesus began His public ministry with His baptism, during lent we too "recall the waters of baptism in which we were also baptized into Christ's death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ."

With this background on Lent in mind, we begin Lent by focusing on the need for personal confession and repentance. However seldom, except after egregious actions, do most of us think we have much of anything to confess. Would you agree? While we admit to not being perfect, most of us have a hard time thinking of sins we should confess right now, today. Yet, confession is needed to begin the renewal journey. The petition from the Book of Common Prayer can help us to reflect on our current need for confession:

**“Lord, forgive me not only for the things I have done  
but for the things I have not done.”**

With this in mind, what might you want and need to confess today?

The idea of looking at ourselves in a mirror occurs in multiple places in both the Old and New Testaments, and is a common theme during lent. It sounds so simple, just look! Yet there are actually three important phases to looking in a mirror – 1) understanding what I should look like, 2) looking & seeing (what do I actually look like), 3) the transforming response (what do I do as a result). Consider these steps as you reflect on today's devotion.

**What should I look like?: God created us in His image, endowing us with His goodness, creativity and imagination, and intending us to walk in close relationship with Him.**

- Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;..." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)
- ... In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. (Genesis 5:1-2)

**Be transformed in response: Looking in a mirror is intentional and purposeful. If we don't respond to what we have seen, if we don't allow ourselves to be transformed by it, then it's wasted effort. Accept Christ's sacrifice for your sin, His forgiveness; be transformed by His grace, learn His ways and walk in them, and be blessed as He intended from creation.**

- And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)
  - But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)
1. Do you truly believe that God created you in His image? What does that mean to you?
  2. Looking at yourself in the mirror of God's word, in the light of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, what do you see? Are there things you need to confess? Are there things that need to change to be conformed to God's will?
  3. How has the forgiveness and grace of Christ's sacrifice for you on the cross transformed you?
  4. How are you living out that continuing transformation in your daily life? Are you being an effectual doer? Is the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; Galatians 5:22-23) being manifest in your life?
  5. Are you recognizing God's blessing as you walk in His way?

Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, in her meditation on Lent, points out how we can become so intense in our everyday lives that we can lose sight of the battle between our appetites and the needs of our souls.

We may recall that many times we jokingly state that “We are giving something up for Lent!” What is Lent? Lent is the 40-day period leading up to Easter that starts on Ash Wednesday and ends on the day before Easter. The 40 days of Lent involve fasting, prayer, repentance, and ways to connect deeper with God.

**It is important to remember the primary purpose of Lent is meant to be a time of repentance. It is an awareness that something is separating us from God and what Christ endured to save us from sin. It can be activities, events, or even our attitudes that fades the focus on the life and sacrifice of Jesus.**



As we enter into the Lenten season why not take time to read the New Testament book of Galatians 5:16-26 to spend some time learning about the Fruit of the Spirit. They are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” By employing those values into our everyday lives our focus will take on a new transformation in the ways we build relationships with others and with the Lord God. Be mindful that all these values are not due to our abilities, but because of the Spirit who lives within us. The manner in which we conduct our lives is a sign of authentic faith. Christian character and conduct is a gift of God’s spirit. Dr. Mike Clingenpeel, the interim Preaching Pastor at Winfree Church in Midlothian, Virginia stated in one of his messages, “To bear fruit in our lives God’s way comes naturally for a Christian if we are connected to the Lord.”

For many of us, the choice may not be to give something up, but to add something to our daily lives during Lent. Whether fasting, abstaining, or doing other acts of penance, the whole desire we should have is to use these means to help us grow closer to our Lord. Then we can prepare for the transformation of minds and actions whereby the Holy Spirit may help us to live with Lent every day with joy.

### **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:**

- As you read Galatians 5:16-26 what is the Fruit of the Spirit and how does it grow in me?
- How are the things in your everyday life preventing you from opening up to the leading of the Holy Spirit to enjoy the Fruit of the Spirit?
- How will this season of Lent be different for you from past years ?

I grew up in a community where many families were Catholic and Lutheran. Most of my friends were Baptist and Methodists. We ate fish on Friday at school. Some kids went straight to “religious training” when the school day was over. Come late winter I heard kids make statements that went like this: “I am going to give up \_\_\_\_\_ for Lent” followed by the question “What are you giving up?”

Lent? This Baptist girl hadn’t a clue what Lent was or why kids were giving up chocolate, particular toys, or drinking Coca-Cola. Some kids planned to give up watching their favorite tv show or going to the movies. But why? What was this all about? What did this emphasis on giving up stuff have to do with Easter... or God, for that matter? What was Lent? What was I missing out on?

As I matured in the faith, I learned about the practice of Lent. I realized, as Mrs. Hong points out, that

**Lent isn’t so much about denying ourselves a sweet treat or an entertaining show; but rather Lent is about self-examination.**

Lent is a 40 day period of fasting and devotion that gives us an opportunity to “look inside” ourselves. Perhaps to see who we are and who we are not... where we fall short of Christ’s Ideal for us... perhaps to see the “logs in our eyes” that need to be removed... perhaps to identify the sins in need of confession and for which we need Divine forgiveness.

At Lent I feel challenged to dig deeply... examine my thoughts, attitudes, actions, and words in the Light of God's Mercy and Grace. Does the Spirit need to renew my thoughts and attitudes? (See Ephesians 4:20-31?) How about you? Do you find spiritual worth in serious introspection? Join me in embracing the Lenten journey with vigor, allowing it to take us to the foot of the Cross where we will "stand in the white light of a new beginning" (page 25).

### **USE THESE QUESTIONS AS YOU CONTEMPLATE TODAY'S DEVOTION:**

1. What understanding do you have of the Lenten season – its purpose and its practice?
2. Jesus said as recorded in Luke 9:23-27:: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Do you think Jesus is asking that we make self-denial a way of life? What sorts of things or activities might we deny ourselves routinely in order to be better followers of Christ?
3. Ephesians 5:8-14 challenges us to be people of the Light. The passage reads like this " 8 In the past you were full of darkness, but now you are full of light in the Lord. So live like children who belong to the Light. 9 Light brings every kind of goodness, right living, and truth. 10 Try to learn what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the things done in darkness, which are not worth anything. But show that they are wrong. 12 It is shameful even to talk about what those people do in secret. 13 But the light makes all things easy to see, 14 and everything that is made easy to see can become light."(NCV) Reflect on how these verses relate to the self-examination inherent in your Lenten observance. Notice particularly the "do's and don'ts" given by the Apostle Paul.
4. Mrs. Hong writes (page 24) "...a guilty suffering spirit is more open to grace than an apathetic or smug soul." What truth do you find in this statement? Are you approaching Lent apathetically or with eagerness?

When we think of the word surrender, we can often attach a negative meaning to it. Surrender means quitting or maybe even showing weakness. But when we look at the word surrender through God's eyes, we can see something different. When God asks us to surrender, we may not know it yet, but he is going to use us in a mighty way; He wants to use surrender as a tool to craft great things out of us and through us.

A great example of this is the story of Abraham and Isaac. (Genesis 22:1-14) In this passage, God tests Abraham by asking him to surrender his son, Isaac, to Him. This might seem like an unreasonable request, but because Abraham listened to God and surrendered, He used Abraham and Isaac in a mighty way. Similarly, Jesus surrendered to his Father's will to be turned over to Pilot and crucified so that all of God's children may have eternal life.

Sometimes, surrendering to God's will is not an easy task. It requires sacrifice, a death to oneself, and obedience even when the task seems too much. However, the reward is something so much greater. As it says in James 1:12,

**"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."**



When we surrender to our Heavenly Father, it is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. It shows you are strong in your faith and in your obedience to the One who created you; The One who is going to do good things in and through you.

We must remember that the Father is good, and he wants good things for his children. As it says in Psalm 34:8, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" When we trust in the Father's will, and we surrender to Him, it allow His good works to be done in and through us. Yes, there are times where there can be pain in the process of surrendering, and it causes you to be in uncomfortable places you don't wish to be in. But, the Lord is working all things out for the good of heaven, and in you.

### **PONDER AND PRAY ON SURRENDER:**

1. Where in your life do you have trouble surrendering to the Lord?
2. Where is God calling you to be obedient to his will?
3. What things do you try to control that you need to let go of so God can work in your life?
4. How can you encourage others in obedience to what God is calling them to?
5. The Winfree Covenant says, "I will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believing that the Holy Spirit may come to me directly or through scripture, persons, history, the arts, nature, current events or other sources." How can you better seek and surrender to the spirit's guidance in your life?

Oswald Chambers' *The Relinquished Life* is a powerful call to complete surrender to God. Chambers emphasizes that true discipleship requires letting go of personal ambitions, desires, and control, and trusting fully in God's will. He challenges believers to relinquish their lives not just in theory but in daily practice—through obedience, faith, and self-denial.

One of the key themes is the idea that true freedom comes through surrender, relinquishing all that we have to God. While the world teaches self-assertion and independence, Chambers argues that spiritual fulfillment is found in yielding to Christ. In Luke 22:42,

**“Not my will, but Yours be done.”**



Jesus Himself modeled this kind of life.

As believers, we are encouraged to examine our hearts and make a conscious choice to give everything over to God. “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) Christ was crucified for our sin. By faith, we trust that His death paid for our own personal sin. In that way, we are crucified with Him, our sin with him on the cross. That sinful "us" dies, replaced by the resurrected Christ "in us." We continue to live in the flesh, of course, but our lives are now directed not by our sinful selves but by our faith in Christ.

Ultimately, Chambers is encouraging all of us to live in total dependence on God, where our identity, purpose, and security are found in Him alone. It's a difficult but deeply rewarding path, leading to a life of peace, joy, and divine purpose.

### QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

- What areas of my life am I holding onto that God is asking me to surrender?
- Am I willing to trust Him completely, even when I don't understand His plan?
- What freedom might be available to you by surrendering this area of your life?

Think and pray about the area in your life you are reluctant to surrender. If you don't know, pray that God will reveal that in your life. We all have something. Once you have identified it, pray for trust in God.



**“At the Day of Judgement, we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done.”**

– The Imitation of Christ, Book I, chapter 3

Author Thomas à Kempis was a member of the Modern Devotion, a spiritual movement during the late medieval period. He was a prolific copyist and writer before becoming a priest. He gained recognition as a writer of devotional literature, with *The Imitation of Christ* widely regarded as one of his most important works. Kempis’s writings reflect his historical context.

**Summary:** The Royal Road emphasizes the reality and challenge of living our lives as Jesus did—bearing our cross as He did—and genuinely seeking God’s will rather than succumbing to the selfish desires of the flesh. Perhaps the title should be “The Suffering Servant.” He employs “the cross” symbolically to represent the challenges of self-denial and sacrifice. He boldly asserts, “There is no escaping the cross,” and, “There is no salvation or hope of everlasting life except through the cross.” Suffering with Christ is a central theme for him and reflects his belief that anyone who wishes to please and honor God must bear the same cross that Jesus did. He contends, “Realize that to know Christ, you must lead a dying life. The more you die to yourself, the more you will live unto God.”



The Royal Road presents a challenging message to anyone who seeks Jesus. In Luke 9:23, Jesus stated,

**“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”**

Thomas à Kempis interprets this statement literally, allowing for no compromise.

**Reflection:** Ponder and pray about Jesus' life on earth and His gift of life eternal to us...

- Is living as a Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:3) an attractive model?
- What is the significance of suffering in spiritual growth (Romans 5:3-5)?
- Does this verse from Galatians 2:20 fit with Thomas à Kempis' concept about the cross:
- I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Is there hope for eliminating suffering and restoring life (Revelation 21:4)?

Whenever we think or hear about suffering, whether our own, those around us or of those we do not know in other parts of the world, we more often than not recoil at those thoughts and feelings. Many theologians and philosophers have pondered about the meaning and purpose of suffering. Why do we suffer? What am I supposed to do with it? What am I supposed to learn from it? Is there any meaning to suffering at all? These are questions we have or will, at some point in our life, wrestle with.

Thomas Merton points out that suffering is meaningless unless you are offering your suffering to God. To do this means to humble ourselves and to acknowledge that it is only by God's strength and mercy that we not only overcome our suffering but are brought closer to Him. To know the cross of Christ is to know that suffering is overcome. Our Lord Jesus suffered on the cross, a suffering that led to death.

**It is the resurrection of Christ from death that provides hope through suffering.**

To know the cross is to know love. The love of God is shown in the giving of our Lord Jesus who gave his life that we might have eternal life in him. We see this love of Jesus and it calls and inspires us to love Him and those around us. When we encounter times of suffering, we lean into Christ and we can find his tender mercy. These moments help remove the things that keep us away from our Lord and draw us closer to Him. St. Peter speaks of suffering, the compassion of Christ and even those who seek to separate us from

**21** Jesus in his first epistle. Take comfort, for after we suffer but only a little while, God will restore, establish and strengthen you.

**1 Peter 5:6-11**

**6** Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. **7** Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. **8** Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. **10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. **11** To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

**Reflection:**

1. When you think of suffering, what are your immediate thoughts? Are they good or are they bad?
2. When you encounter times that are very trying and difficult, when do you really first go to God? Do you try to carry it all by yourself? Why?
3. How often do you really think about what the cross fully means to your life and your salvation?
4. Take a moment to pray for those around you, or yourself who might be suffering.

Bonhoeffer's reflection on Mark 8:31-34 challenges us to look afresh at the reality of Christ's suffering and rejection. Peter, after declaring "You are the Christ" rebukes Jesus for saying He would suffer, be rejected, and be killed and after three days rise again. The suffering, rejection and death of Jesus was too much for Peter, but it is too much for us also. When we meditate on what Jesus experienced so that our sins could be forgiven, it is difficult to imagine. Isaiah 53:1-6 is a prophecy regarding what Christ experienced, but it does not convey the cold, cruel reality of what was required for our salvation.

Like our Savior and Lord, we should not be offended or surprised by our own suffering and rejection for the sake of obeying everything Christ commanded. It begins when Christ calls us to accept Him as Savior and Lord and continues as we follow Him in all the paths where he leads us. As we are transformed by the Holy Spirit, we become new creations no longer controlled by the world or our sinful flesh. Romans 8:1 (HCSB) "I Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus,"

**"I Therefore, no condemnation now exists for  
those in Christ Jesus,"**

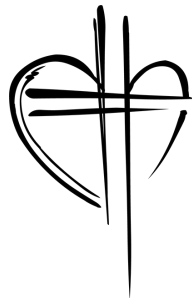
ROMANS 8:1 (HCSB)

Now transformed, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit for suffering and rejection. We are equipped to “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2. In the previous verse Paul wrote “if someone is caught in wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit.” We must love our brothers and sisters in the Lord, bearing with them through suffering and rejection and all the ills of a fallen world, caring for them in a variety of ways. In so doing, we fulfill the law of Christ, which is “the whole tradition of Jesus’ ethical teaching, confirmed by his character and conduct and reproduced within his people by the power of the Spirit” (New American Commentary - Volume 30: Galatians.p415.)

**Philippians 4:7 (HCSB)** “7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” With God’s peace we are capable of suffering and experiencing tribulation and loving it. Then we like Paul can say: “we also rejoice in our afflictions.” **Rom 5:3**

**Questions from Bonhoeffer's reflection:**

1. Is the suffering of Christ an offense to you? Is it an offense to your church?
2. Has suffering and rejection for Christ's sake become alien to the Christian life?
3. Do you agree with Bonhoeffer that, "Those not prepared to take up the cross, those who are not prepared to give their life to suffering and rejection by others, lose community with Christ and are not disciples? Why or why not?"
4. Are you troubled by suffering and tribulation in your own life? Have you used the cross, but not loved it?
5. Are you bearing the burdens of your brothers and sisters in Christ?
6. Please read James 1:2-3. Meditate on what these verses mean for your life in Christ.



Soren Kierkegaard grew up in a conservative, morally and religiously rigid family in Copenhagen, Denmark in the first half of the 19th century. The cultural climate in Denmark was influenced by the Church of Denmark, a Lutheran state church. It claimed to be Christian, but the established church did not excite any religious fervor in young Kierkegaard, and it was not until 1838, at age 25, that he had what he called his conversion to Christianity. While considered to be a philosopher, much of his writing centered on Christianity. Late in life he publicly attacked the Church of Denmark for its spiritual indifference, and urged that Danes boycott its services.

This background helps us understand this article in Bread and Wine. Kierkegaard believed that Christianity is not a philosophy or ethic; it is a way of life, patterned after the life of Christ. Christ calls disciples, followers of the One who is The Way (John 14:6), not admirers of a philosophical system or religious doctrine. Jesus walked in this way, and encouraged people to follow his footprints.

**BECAUSE JESUS SHOWED A WAY OF LIFE, KIERKEGAARD BELIEVED A CHRISTIAN WAS ALWAYS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING, NEVER FULLY ARRIVING.**



Admirers of Christ, according to Kierkegaard, were wrong at three points. First, admirers are detached, not personally involved in the way of Christ. Second, admirers refuse to accept the radical demands of Christ, even finding them offensive. Third, admirers play it safe. They never make the kind of sacrifices Jesus made and expected of his followers. As examples of admirers, Kierkegaard cited Judas and Nicodemus.

### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. Does Kierkegaard make his case with you? Do you think it is okay to admire Jesus if you follow his way as well?
2. Do you think of any other biblical characters who could be considered “admirers” of Jesus?
3. How does spiritual indifference affect churches in America today? Denmark in Kierkegaard’s day considered itself a Christian nation, as do many Americans consider the United States a Christian nation today. How are we Christian? As a nation where do we fail to be Christian and not follow the way of Jesus?
4. Are you a follower of Jesus, or an admirer?

Did you grow up, as I did, hearing the expression “God works in mysterious ways”? He delights in doing things the opposite of what we mere humans think because it glorifies His power. 1 Corinthians 1:18-20 speaks to this seemingly ‘foolish’ nature of the Gospel message because it highlights through the cross how God’s wisdom often contradicts human understanding:

**The message about the cross doesn’t make any sense to lost people. But for those of us who are being saved, it is God’s power at work. It is written in the scripture: “I will destroy the wisdom of all who claim to be wise, and I will confuse those who think they know so much.” (Isaiah 29:14). What happened to those wise people? What happened to those experts of the Scriptures? What happened to the ones who think they have all the answers? Didn’t God show that the wisdom of this world is foolish?**

It is not God who is foolish but the wisdom of the world. The cross appears to be weak and insignificant to worldly eyes but God used it as the key to salvation. The world often views the Christian message, particularly the idea of a crucified savior, as illogical and absurd. Despite its apparent weakness, the cross is the ultimate expression of God’s love and power to redeem humanity. As followers of Christ, we are called to set aside our own understanding and rely on God’s wisdom, which often works in mysterious, paradoxical ways. We must trust in His power even when it doesn’t align with our own weak human reasoning.

**Devotional Questions:**

1. Have you ever felt like the Gospel message was 'foolish' or incomprehensible to others? How did you navigate those conversations?
2. How does the cross challenge your understanding of power and strength?
3. Have you ever experienced a situation where the 'world' thought something was impossible but God answered your prayers in an unexpected, powerful way?
4. In what areas of your life do you need to surrender your own understanding and trust in God's wisdom?

**Applications:**

1. Share your faith with boldness - Even if the message seems 'foolish' to the world, confidently share the Gospel, knowing its true power lies in Christ's sacrifice.
2. Examine your motives - Are you relying on your own reasoning or humbly seeking God's wisdom in your decisions?
3. Reflect on the cross - Meditate on the depth of God's love demonstrated through Jesus' death on the cross.



# DATES TO REMEMBER

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Maundy Thursday

April 17, 2025

Service at 7:00PM

Palm Sunday

April 13, 2025

Services at 9:40AM & 11:00AM

Easter

April 20, 2025

Services at 9:40AM & 11:00AM