

# Lent 2017 Immanuel Lutheran Church

## Weekly Home Devotion for Families

### TIPS for Home Devotions

- Parents are the #1 influence on their child's faith through the teenage years. Sharing your own faith during the 40 days of Lent will make a HUGE difference to your own child's faith.
- There is one home devotion for each week of Lent (5 weeks, beginning the week of March 5).
- It's best to select a specific day and time each week when you will do these devotions together.
- Feel free to choose do as much or as little of the devotions presented here. Adjust as needed for different ages. You know yourself and your family best, and what will work best for your different ages & busy lives.
- Consider lighting a candle or doing something to make the space and time special from other time together. Set the candle on a purple piece of cloth or a napkin or placemat. (The church color for Lent is purple: a sign of royalty (Jesus our risen king) and repentance (turning from our brokenness & sin to God.)
- If you don't have time to fit in a specific day or week, do parts of the devotion in the car as you drive from place to place.
- If you have time, glance through the devotion; especially the "Act & Serve" section in case you want to plan ahead.
- It's ok to not have all the answers and to say "I don't know."
- Read the Bible verses out of your family Bible or your children's Bible. Look verses up together.

### Introduction to Lent

Lent means "lengthen and last 40 days. Lent is 40 days to mark Jesus' journey to the cross and his Passover from death to life. In the Bible:

- Noah and the animals were on the ark 40 days and 40 nights.
- Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights when God gave the 10 commandments.
- The Israelites wandered in the wilderness desert 40 years before reaching the promised land.
- After his baptism, Jesus prayed, fasted, and was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days.

During Lent Christians do more things than we usually do to grow in faith including:

Bible Study, home devotions, prayer, worship, fasting, sacrificial giving, and works of love.

### Brinner?

Start the week of Lent by having a pancake supper. This marks the ancient tradition of eating all the fat, sweet things in the house before the more simplified life and food habits of Lent. Usually this is the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (Feb. 28), but it could be done any time in the first week of Lent (March 5-11), perhaps even the night you start your family devotions.

### Introduction to Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent (March 1, 2017). Our church has a worship service to mark each person's forehead with a sign of the cross made in ashes. In the Bible, ashes are a sign of frailty, humility, repentance, sorrow, mourning, cleansing and renewal. In ancient cultures, a mixture of ash and water was a cleanser. As ashes we are marked with ashes, we hear, "*remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.*" These words echo words from the service for the burial of the dead and final committal "*earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.*" We are also marked with the cross & oil at our baptisms. We are marked with the cross for all our beginnings and endings in life.

### **3 Ways to observe Ash Wednesday**

1. Ash Wednesday worship with your family. (March 1 at 6:30 p.m.)
2. If the hour long worship is too long for your young family, you could leave after everyone is marked with ashes which happens at the very beginning of the worship.
3. Mark each other with sign of ashes at home & do the devotion below.

*(Use ashes from a plant mixed with a **LITTLE BIT** of oil. Do not mix ashes with water as it will become acidic.)*

### **Ash Wednesday at Home**

Light a candle and have a bowl of water on the table.

Share with your children points from the above “Introduction to Lent” & “Introduction to Ash Wednesday.”

If you will not attend Ash Wednesday Worship at church, start by marking each other with ashes and a cross saying, “remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” (If you don’t have ashes, simply make a sign of the cross and say the words.) Let the children mark the adult’s foreheads. *(Use ashes from a plant mixed with a **LITTLE BIT** of oil. Do **not** mix ashes with water as it will become acidic.)*

**Share Bible Reading** *Encourage family members to look up the verses in the family’s Bible.*

GOD formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. (Romans 14:8)

**Share with your children what these Bible verses mean to you.**

**Share What Ash Wednesday and the sign of the cross (in ashes) means to you.**

*If you need ideas, use one or two of the ideas about ashes from the Introduction to Ash Wednesday.*

*For more ideas, consider using pieces of the Home Devotion for week 5th Week of Lent, April 2-8, Theme: Death & Life.*

### **Prayer**

Idea: Use the Pray Acronym

**Praise:** Thank God for whatever you want.

**Repent:** Confess to God your sins & mistakes. Ask for Forgiveness.

**Another:** Pray for the needs of others: people you know, the world.

**Yourself & your family:** Pray for what you need & your family need.

Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

**Weekly Devotions Start on the Next Page.**

## 1<sup>st</sup> Week of Lent, March 5-11, Theme: Wilderness

Light a candle and have a bowl of water on the table. Explain to your family that you will set aside time once a week to share your faith for the next 5 weeks (40 days of Lent) before you celebrate Easter/Jesus resurrection.

### **Check-in: Highs & Lows** *(if you only get this step done each week, consider it a success!)*

Each person shares his/her highs & lows for the week, and where you saw God this week.

*(Also known as Joy, Junk, Jesus. It's ok if you or your child doesn't have a response for all 3 every week.)*

After each high say, "thanks be to God." (for younger kids ask, what are you thankful for today?)

After each low say, "Lord have mercy." After where you saw God say "Thanks be to God."

### **Bible Reading** *Encourage family members to look up the verses in the family's Bible.*

**Matthew 4:1-2** Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was starving.

### **Make Connections**

1. Do you think you could start or stop something for 40 days in a row? *(Exercise, not watch TV, not play video games, not eat pizza, etc, think of other things.)*

**The POINT IS:** 40 days is a long time to do anything. After he was baptized, Jesus spent 40 days & nights praying for God's guidance and help. We want to be like Jesus, so we are taking time away from our daily routine to pray to God and talk about our faith.

2. When you hear the word "wilderness" what do you think? *Wilderness in Jesus day meant desert, not rivers, green trees, soft grass; it was a dangerous, scary place to be.*

3. What kinds of things live in the desert? *Scorpions, snakes, biting flies, sand, no water, food.*

**The POINT IS:** The desert can be a scary & hard place to be. In the desert and on the cross, Jesus lived in the hard places of our lives, so we know that we are not alone when have hard places, or scary times in our lives. When we follow Jesus, we know we will not stay in the desert or the hard, scary places forever because Jesus died & rose again. Jesus lives even though he had hard times, and so will we.

4. What has been a scary time or a hard place in your life? Where did you see God helping you through it?

### **Act & Serve**

**Idea 1:** Plant seeds in a pot; watch them grow over the next 40 days. Say, "we grow in our faith in God like the plant" or "God gives life to things buried in the ground" (makes death/life connection with Jesus death & resurrection). Make an extra seed pot and give it away to someone your going through a "hard place" in life.

**Idea 2:** Do 40 good deeds. Make a list together as a family *(for ideas google 40 ideas lent nadia bolz weber)*. Write on separate pieces of paper, put in a jar. Each day pick one to focus on as a family. Tell why you do it & how it deepens your relationship with God

**Pray** Share as family anyone they would like to pray for, especially anyone going through a "hard place." Be sure to name yourself in need of prayer for the "hard place" in your life, too. One person could pray or you could take turns. Perhaps close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Bless** Each person places fingers in the water and marks the person next to them with the sign of the cross. Say, "God is with you" or "You are God's child" or "God is with you even when things are hard or scary."

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Lent, March 12-18, Theme: Baptism

Light a candle and have a bowl of water on the table.

### **Check-in: Highs & Lows** *(if you only get this step done each week, consider it a success!)*

Each person shares his/her highs & lows for the week, and where you saw God this week.

*(Also known as Joy, Junk, Jesus. It's ok if you or your child doesn't have a response for all 3 every week.)*

After each high say, "thanks be to God." (for younger kids ask, what are you thankful for today?)

After each low say, "Lord have mercy." After where you saw God say "Thanks be to God."

### **Bible Reading** *Encourage family members to look up the verses in the family's Bible.*

**John 3:3-5.** Jesus said, "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."

### **Make Connections**

1. Share pictures or tell stories about your own baptism and your children's baptism. \* Why did you have your kids baptized? What does baptism mean to you?
2. List all the places you can think where you see water.
3. The POINT IS: Water is everywhere. We baptize with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is everywhere around & within in us, just like water is everywhere around and within us. When you see water think, "God."
4. The POINT IS: "Being born from above" or "born again" are both ways that we talk about baptism. Whether baptized as a baby, child, or adult. We are all "born again" and it can only come "from above," from God. When are baptized, God promises to forgive us and give us eternal life.

*\*(If you or your children or you are not baptized, talk about baptism and consider getting baptized together. Talk to your pastor. Historically, Lent has been the time to prepare people for baptism. It's a popular idea that children should "decide for themselves" about religion/faith when they grow up. We do not follow this opinion in relation to values, education, manners, reading, etc. Why in faith? We want the children to be shaped by the story of Jesus Christ, and to give them this gift as soon as possible.)*

**Act** Collect brass or silver jewelry that is tarnished. Show the children how it's dirty and covered in stains. Ask them if they can think of ways to clean it. Show them how to clean it with silver polish. They can wash their hands after they get dirty cleaning the silver. This is what Baptism is about. Our lives are messy. We get dirty. We always have a chance to wipe away and start again. No matter how dirty or dark it seems. God sees the bright and shiny thing inside of us.

**Serve** Write a card to your children's Godparents/sponsors. Share a favorite Bible verse or have your child(ren) write them a prayer.

**Pray** Share as family anyone they would like to pray for. Pray for Godparents. One person could pray or you could take turns. Perhaps close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Bless** Each person places fingers in the water and marks the person next to them with the sign of the cross. Say, "You are God's child, forever."

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent, March 19-25, Theme: Thirst

Light a candle and have a bowl of water on the table.

### **Check-in: Highs & Lows** *(if you only get this step done each week, consider it a success!)*

Each person shares his/her highs & lows for the week, and where you saw God this week.

*(Also known as Joy, Junk, Jesus. It's ok if you or your child doesn't have a response for all 3 every week.)*

After each high say, "thanks be to God." (for younger kids ask, what are you thankful for today?)

After each low say, "Lord have mercy." After where you saw God say "Thanks be to God."

### **Bible Reading** *Encourage family members to look up the verses in the family's Bible.*

**John 4:13-14** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

### **Make Connections**

1. Everyone share, "what is your favorite drink?" (Maybe even have it there to drink!).
2. When you drink your favorite drink, are you thirsty later?
3. The **POINT IS:** We can live a week without food, but only 3 days without water. Even though we get thirsty, again and again, and even though we will die, when Jesus lives in us, we will live forever with him.
4. Share a funny story about a bathtub, toilet or sink overflowing with water. What happened?
5. The **POINT IS:** God loves us so much through Jesus that God gives us even more love than we need. God gives us too much love because God wants us to overflow with love for our family, our friends, strangers, and even those who make us mad.
6. Who do you know that could use more of God's love this week? How could you help them?

### **Act & Serve**

- **Idea One:** Practice saving water this week: don't run water while brushing teeth, in the shower, turn off the water while you soap up, brainstorm other ideas. Say, "We use less water to remember people who live without clean water or running water."
- **Idea Two:** Give bottled water to homeless people on the street. "Because Jesus is our living water, we make sure that everyone has safe, clean water to drink."
- **Idea Three:** Go to a river or lake shore and clean up the trash. "Because Jesus is our living water, we make sure all water is healthy and well cared for."
- **Idea Four:** Learn about people who don't have water access. Give a gift to help build a well or irrigation system. <https://community.elca.org/elca-good-gifts/water>.

**Pray** Share as family anyone they would like to pray for. One person could pray or you could take turns. Perhaps close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Bless** Each person places fingers in the water and marks the person next to them with the sign of the cross. Say, "God loves for you is deeper than the ocean."

## 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent, March 26-April 1, Theme: Sight

Light a candle and have a bowl of water on the table.

### Check-in: Highs & Lows *(if you only get this step done each week, consider it a success!)*

Each person shares his/her highs & lows for the week, and where you saw God this week.

*(Also known as Joy, Junk, Jesus. It's ok if you or your child doesn't have a response for all 3 every week.)*

After each high say, "thanks be to God." (for younger kids ask, what are you thankful for today?)

After each low say, "Lord have mercy." After where you saw God say "Thanks be to God."

### Bible Reading *Encourage family members to look up the verses in the family's Bible.*

**John 9:15** They asked the blind man how he could now see. He said to them, "Jesus put mud on my eyes. Then I washed it away, and now I see."

### Make Connections

1. Does anyone in your family wear glasses or contacts; how bad/good is your eyesight?
2. What would it be like to have mud on your eyes?
3. The **POINT IS:** We mess up a lot. Sometimes it's hard to trust that God loves and forgives us. Sometimes it's hard to see God with us when we are hurting or sick or scared. Faith promises that God is with us, even though we can't always see God. Jesus shows us who God is and what God does. Where do you see Jesus in your life & in the world today?
4. Sing "Amazing Grace" together. Why do you think this song is so popular? What do you like about it?

### Act

1. Watch the movie "Amazing Grace" (2006) together as a family.
2. (Optical Illusion)

Concentrate on the 4 dots in the middle of the picture for 30 seconds. Then close your eyes & tilt your head back. Keep them closed, see a circle of light...what do you see?



**Serve Idea One:** Change one light in your house to a compact florescent. **Idea Two:** Look out the window until you find something of beauty you had not noticed before. **Idea Three:** Take a walk around your house; what you are thankful for? Have each person pick a room or spot of the home that is special to them. Take a candle to each place and pray together for what is important about that room and then pray for those who need a room or space of their own. Take a second walk around your house and find 10 things you can give away.

**Idea Four:** Think up your own idea around light/sight!

**Pray** Pray for people who are sick or need healing. Perhaps close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Bless** Each person places fingers in the water and marks the person next to them with the sign of the cross. Say, "God sees light in you."

## 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent, April 2-8, Theme: Death & Life

Light a candle and have a bowl of water on the table.

### **Check-in: Highs & Lows** *(if you only get this step done each week, consider it a success!)*

Each person shares his/her highs & lows for the week, and where you saw God this week.

*(Also known as Joy, Junk, Jesus. It's ok if you or your child doesn't have a response for all 3 every week.)*

After each high say, "thanks be to God." (for younger kids ask, what are you thankful for today?)

After each low say, "Lord have mercy." After where you saw God say "Thanks be to God."

### **Bible Reading** *Encourage family members to look up the verses in the family's Bible.*

GOD formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. (Romans 14:8)

### **What does this mean?**

God made you and me and all that exists. This is great!

We all know things die. Insects, plants, animals, even people. You and me. It is sad when our pets die. It is sad when people die. It's ok to be sad and cry. Jesus cried when his good friend, Lazarus died.

Jesus died, but God raised him from the dead. God promises that when we die, our life is not over.

We will still belong to God and God promises that we will live again someday with Jesus Christ.

### **Make Connections\***

Share about someone who you know who has died and how you felt.

Share how you remember that person in your life or what you loved about them.

*\*See the next page for tips on dealing with children & grief.*

### **Serve & Act**

**Idea One:** Identify someone you know who recently had a loved one die. Make a card for them or plan to bring them a meal or other gift. Consider including the Bible verse from Romans 14:8 on the card.

**Idea Two:** Make pretzels or dip store bought pretzels in chocolate. The shape of the pretzel reminds us of hands crossed in prayer. Give the pretzels to people you know whose loved one recently died. Tell them that you prayed for them (and actually DO pray for them, first!)

### **Pray**

Ask children what/who they would like to pray for. Include prayers for those whom you know have died. One person could pray or you could take turns. Perhaps close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Bless** Each person places fingers in the water and marks the person next to them with the sign of the cross. Say, "In life and death, you belong to God."

## Children & Grief

For more information go to: <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/child.html>

Long before we realize it, children become aware of death. They see dead birds, insects, and animals lying by the road. They may see death at least once a day on television. They hear about it in fairy tales and act it out in their play. Death is a part of life, and children, at some level, are aware of it.

Share what you believe about death with your kids.

It's ok to be sad and to cry when someone dies. We loved them and now we miss them. That is sad.

When we avoid talking about something that is obviously upsetting, children often hesitate to bring up the subject or ask questions about it. To a child, avoidance can be a message - "If Mummy and Daddy can't talk about it, it really must be bad, so I better not talk about it either." In effect, instead of protecting our children by avoiding talk, we sometimes cause them more worry and also keep them from telling us how they feel.

It may take time for a child to understand fully the ramifications of death and its emotional implications. A child who knows that Uncle Ed has died may still ask why Aunt Susan is crying. The child needs an answer. "Aunt Susan is crying because she is sad that Uncle Ed has died. She misses him very much. We all feel sad when someone we care about dies."

There are also times when we have difficulty "hearing" what children are asking us. A question that may seem shockingly insensitive to an adult may be a child's request for reassurance. For instance, a question such as, "When will you die?" needs to be heard with the realization that the young child perceives death as temporary. While the finality of death is not fully understood, a child may realize that death means separation, and separation from parents and the loss of care involved are frightening. Being cared for is a realistic and practical concern, and a child needs to be reassured. Possibly the best way to answer such a question is by asking a clarifying question in return: "Are you worried that I won't be here to take care of you?" If that is the case, the reassuring and appropriate answer would be something like, "I don't expect to die for a long time. I expect to be here to take care of you as long as you need me, but if Mummy and Daddy did die, there are lots of people to take care of you. There's Aunt Ellen and Uncle John or Grandma."

Other problems can arise from children's misconceptions about death. Dr. R. Fulton, in Grollman's *Explaining Death to Children*, points out that some children confuse death with sleep, particularly if they hear adults refer to death with one of the many euphemisms for sleep - "eternal rest", "rest in peace." As a result of the confusion, a child may become afraid of going to bed or of taking naps. Grandma went "to sleep" and hasn't gotten up yet. Maybe I won't wake up either.

Similarly, if children are told that someone who died "went away", brief separations may begin to worry them. Grandpa "went away" and hasn't come back yet. Maybe Mummy won't come back from the shops or from work. Therefore, it is important to avoid such words as "sleep", "rest", or "went away" when talking to a child about death.

Telling children that sickness was the cause of a death can also create problems, if the truth is not tempered with reassurance. Preschoolers cannot differentiate between temporary and fatal illness, and

minor ailments may begin to cause them unnecessary concern. When talking to a child about someone who has died as a result of an illness, it might be helpful to explain that only a very serious illness may cause death, and that although we all get sick sometimes, we usually get better again. Another generalization we often make unthinkingly is relating death to old age. Statements such as, "Only old people die" or, "Aunt Hannah died because she was old" can lead to distrust when a child eventually learns that young people die, too. It might be better to say something like, "Aunt Hannah lived a long time before she died. Most people live a long time, but some don't. I expect you and I will."