

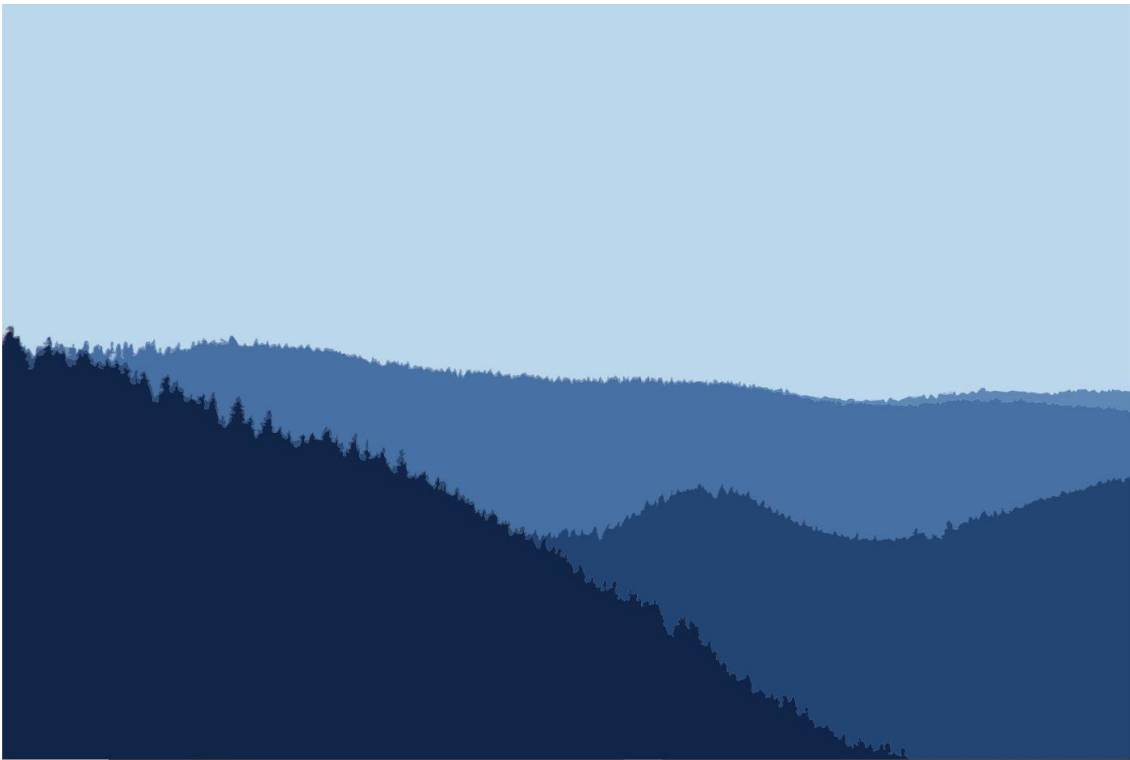
Wilderness Reflections



A Lenten Journal

Lent

Lent is said to be inspired by the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness before he began his ministry of teaching and healing.



40 days in the wilderness

Matthew 4:1-11 (New International Version)

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

*"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

What are your thoughts on the 40 days in the wilderness and the testing of Jesus?

One way to look at the temptations of Jesus is to see his refusing to turn stones to food as refusing to take short cuts to only satisfy his hunger and not consider others needs alongside his own. We see Jesus refusing to test God by asking for amazing signs and instead relying on his own ability and making wise choices to bring about the kingdom of God and lastly not taking up a position of power over others, but instead choosing to work alongside others as an equal.

We see moments where Jesus could choose the obvious answer, but decides to act intentionally instead of habitually.

Take a moment to think about the shortcuts you take in your day-to-day lives, habits and actions that make life simpler for you. In what ways might these habits and routines separate you from others and separate us from the kingdom of God? For example, by putting our own needs over others.

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Lenten Challenges

Lent is often thought of as a time of *abstinence*, as a time to give things up. This Lent, why not think of it as a *formative* time, a time to change and grow, instead? It could be a time to cut back on things that are not helpful and to focus on things that change your life and empower you to change the world around you for the better.

Lent lasts 40 days or roughly 6 weeks. Why not try one new thing a week to reconnect with the world around you? You might want to reconnect with family, friends or community, with the present moment, or with the inherent beauty and value in all you see and experience.

To inspire you and your actions consider the ideas below. Pick what feels right for you, even adding to the list as you go:

Sustenance

- Consider your choices around food. Perhaps look at where the food you are purchasing comes from this week, or have a meatless week, or prepare fresh food from scratch for a whole week.
- Think about your commute and habitual travel. We tend to focus on getting places as fast as we can. This lent could you travel at a slower pace, maybe make time for a more scenic route to work or school? Could you walk or cycle? Are you smiling at those you pass? Are you giving enough time to stop for a brief chat if you see someone you know?

Trust

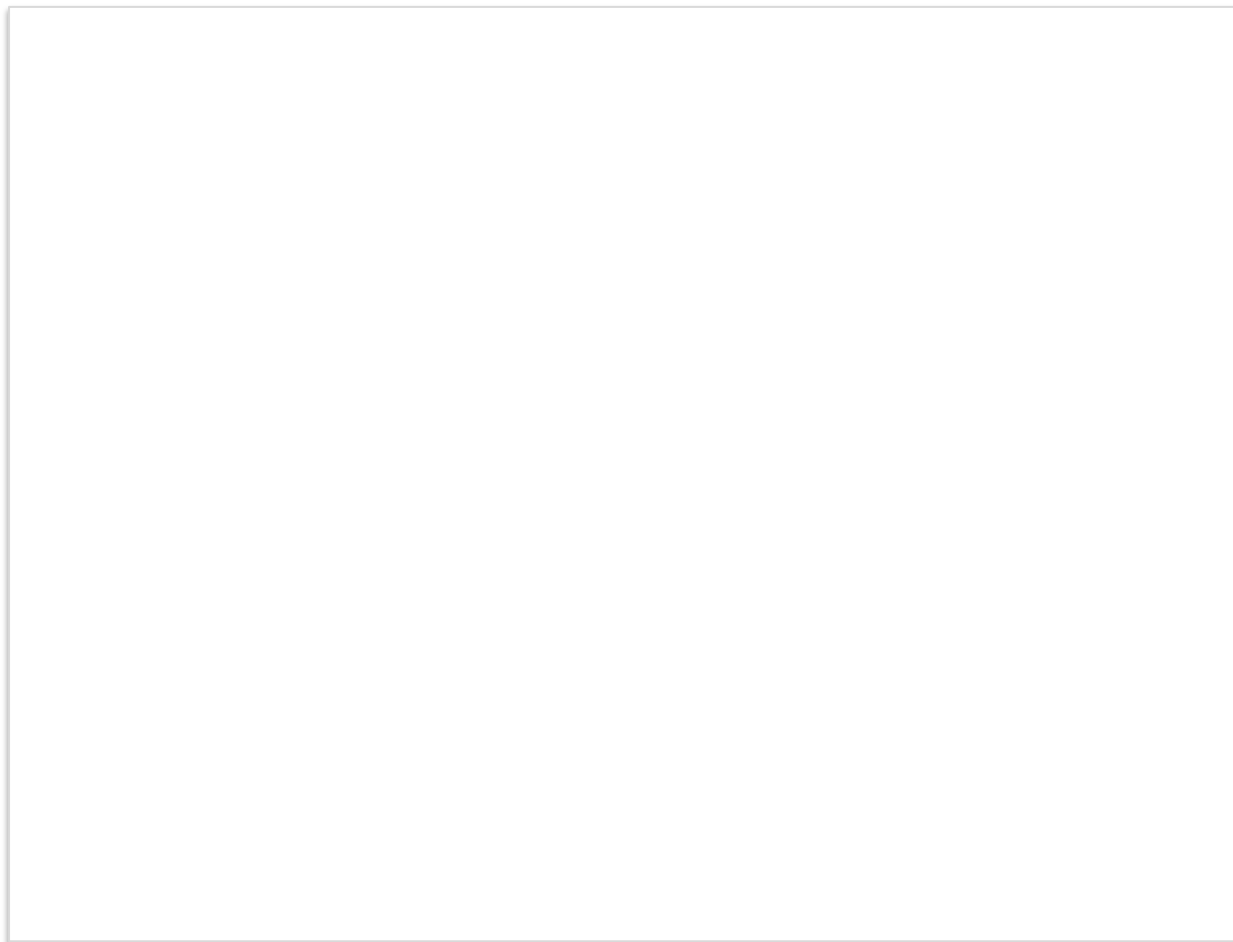
- Think about reconnecting to God and creativity and your inner power to make changes. Think about whether you are spending your time feeling connected or if you are just passively absorbing media.
- Do you want to change your balance of creating vs. consuming, by drawing, writing, keeping a journal?
- Spending time on mindfulness such as listening and breathing can be a way to rest in God. When you walk, are you listening and smelling and seeing what is around you?

Power

- Think about the activities and groups you are involved with in your life. Where do you take the lead? Are you giving time to what you care about? Are there tasks that are taking up too much time that you need to put a boundary? Why not set aside half an hour daily on what you enjoy.
- Do you sense a need to go into your activities with more compassion for others, or rethink how you are asking for feedback or whether you get feedback at all?

Take time to sit with these ideas and come up with the six changes you want to make over Lent or perhaps choose 4 things that you will do for 10 days each. You could try something for a week, and then keep doing it if you like it, but try to be open and honest about what is realistic and what you can commit to.

What changes have you chosen to make in your life for Lent?

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Alongside making a new habit for every week in Lent, why not come back to the story of Jesus in the Wilderness once a week, reread it and note if anything strikes you a new way.

The following pages provide you with questions to think about each week and opportunities to reflect on your journey through Lent. These are just for guidance and you might want to think about your own questions. However you choose to use this journal, we hope you find it useful.

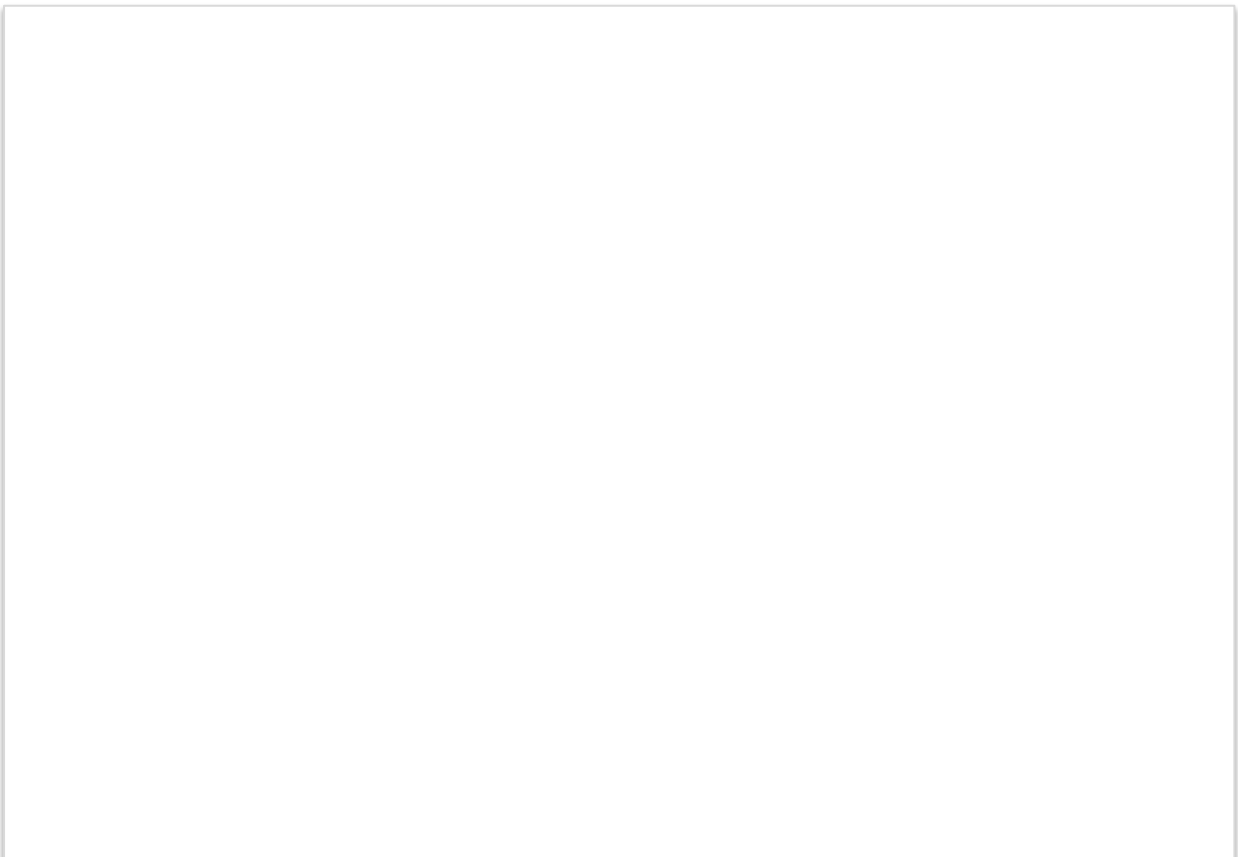
Week 1 or First Ten Days

Reflect on the scripture account of Jesus' time in the wilderness: Is there a word that sticks out to you or a question you have?

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Reflect on your choice of action for the week:

What have you learned about yourself, others or the world?

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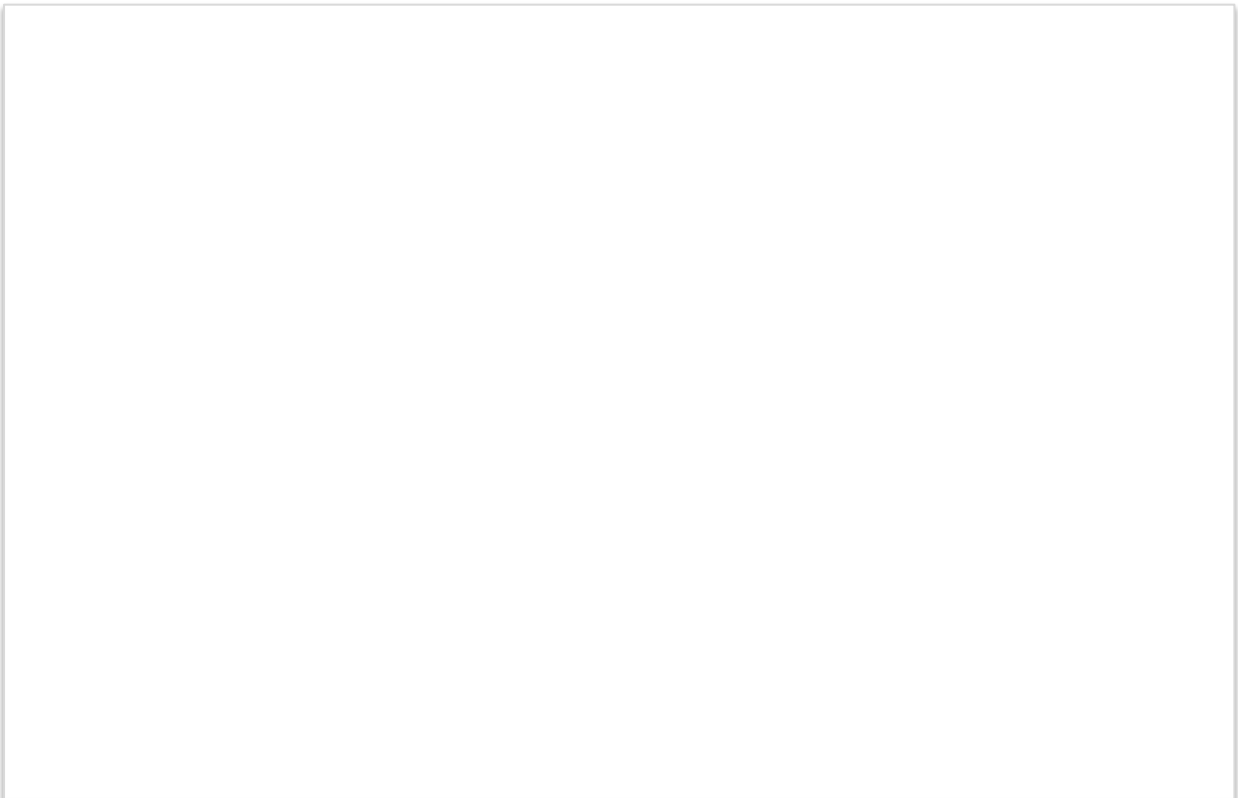
Week 1 or Second Ten Days

Reflect on the scripture, focusing just on the idea of turning stones to food. Is there anything you have come across in following your Lenten choices that links with this test?

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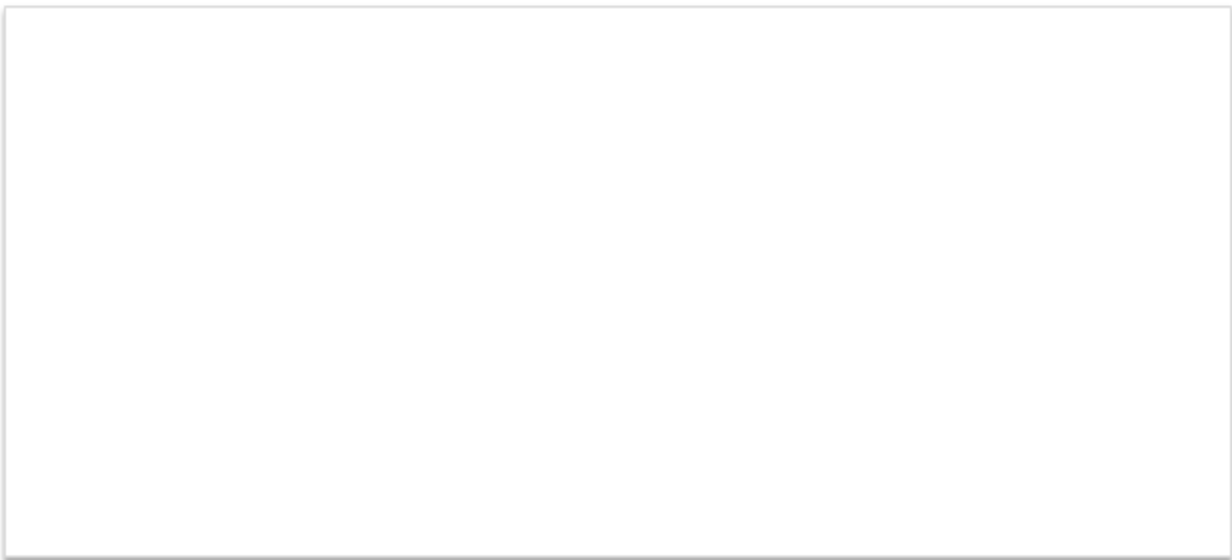
Reflect on your choice of action for the week:

Where is God meeting you in this practice?

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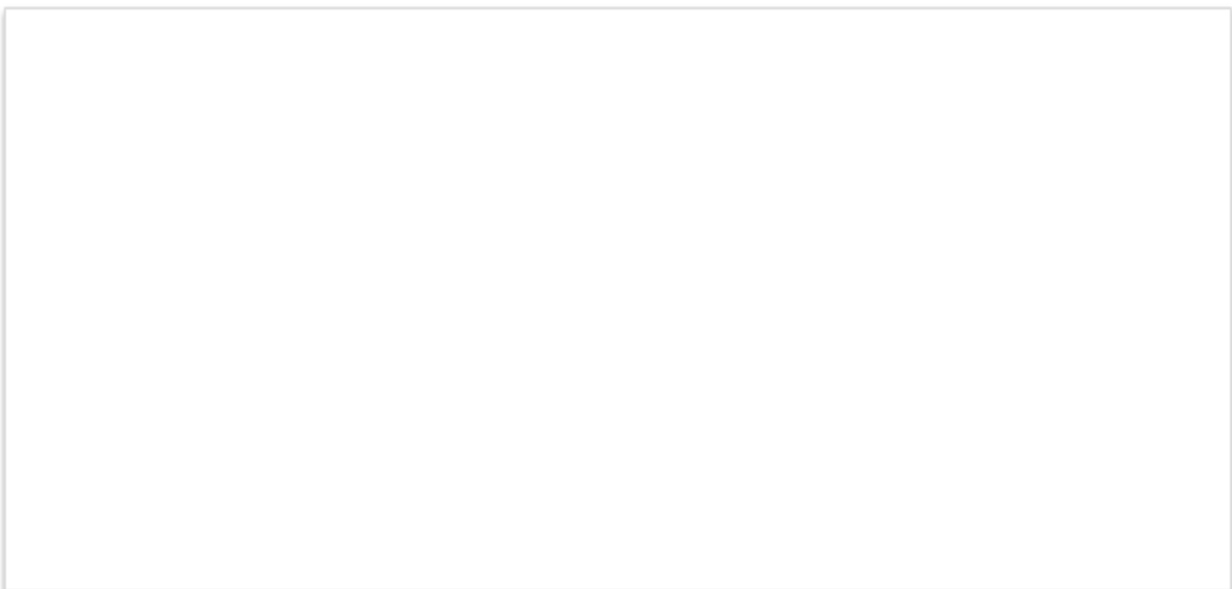
Week 3 or Third Ten Days

Reflect on the scripture where Jesus says, *“It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* What do you ask of God? Is there anywhere you are trying to test God? What are you asking of God, others, or the world?

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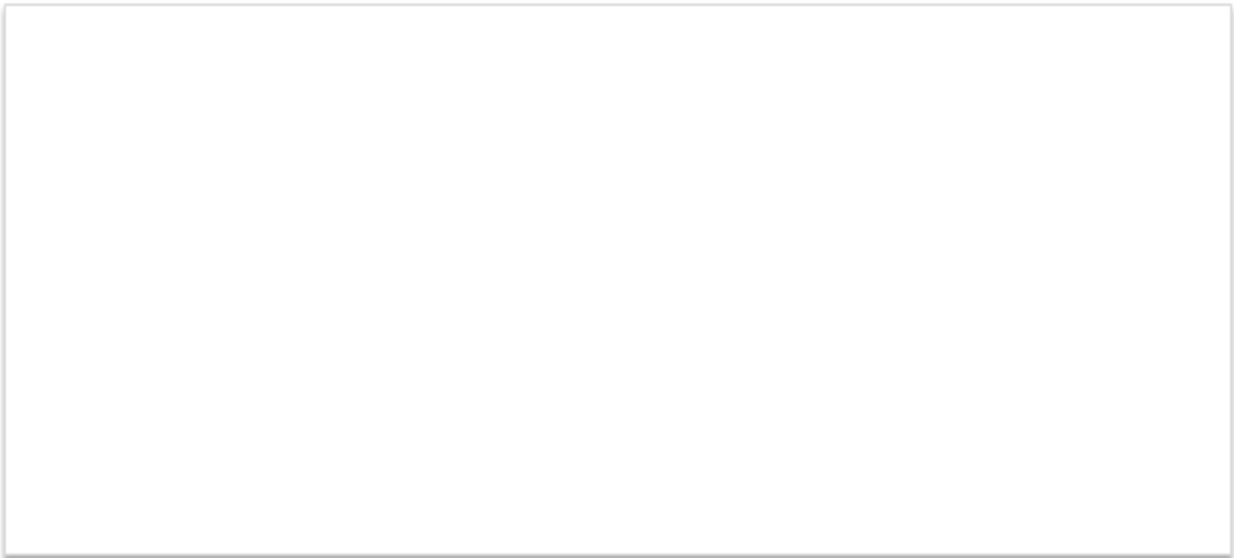
Reflect on your choice of action for the week:

Has it been challenging to maintain this action? Did it feel like a good fit?

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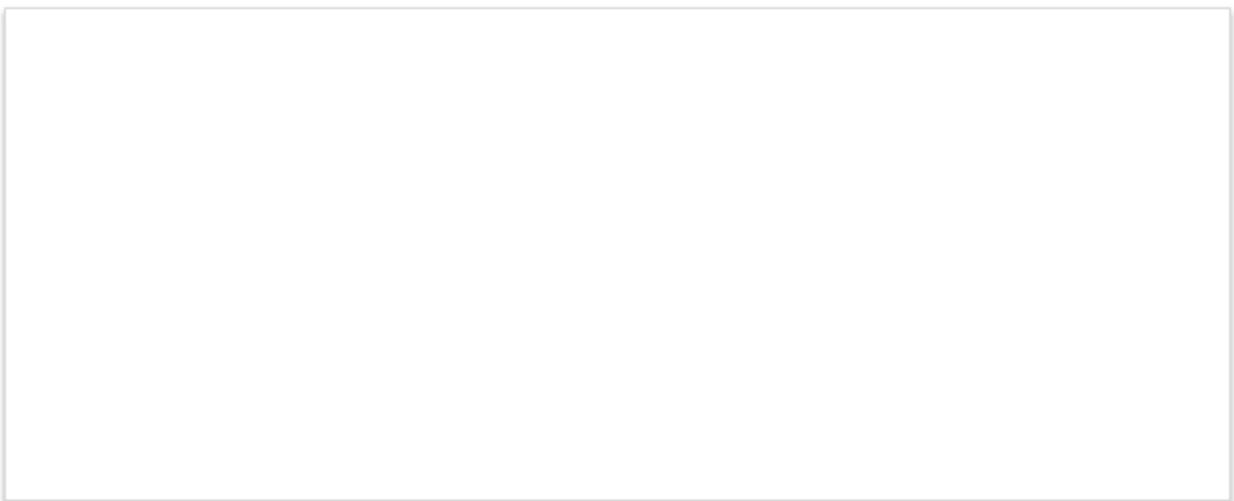
Week 4 or Last Ten Days

Focus on the ideas of power and leadership in the scripture. Where are you in control in your life? Where do you feel out of control? How does that affect how close you feel with God? Do you still act with love in all the roles you have?



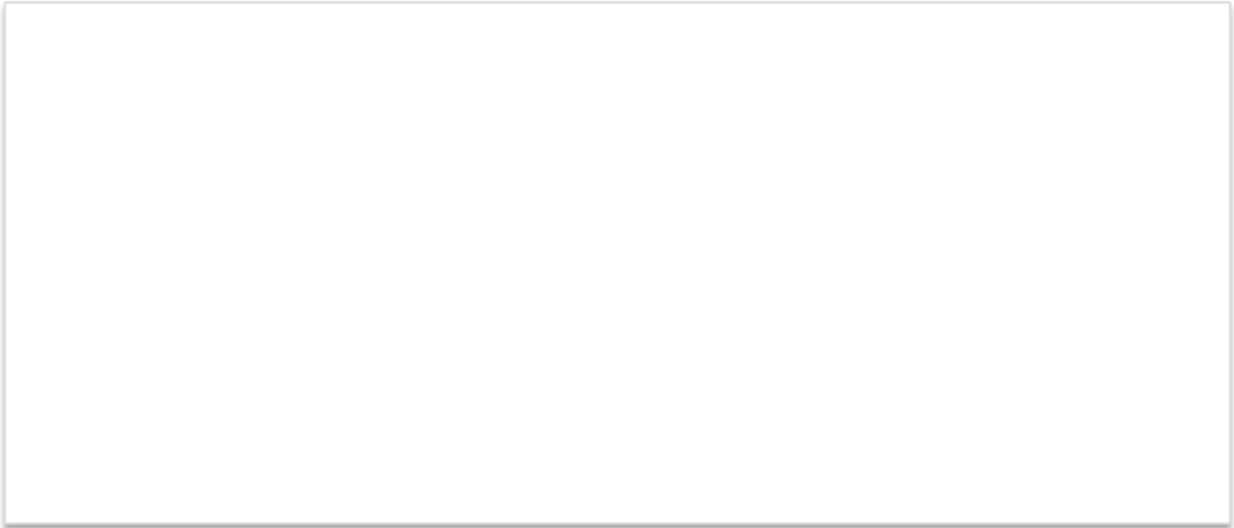
Reflect on your choice of action for the week:

What have you enjoyed about this action? What would you keep going forward?



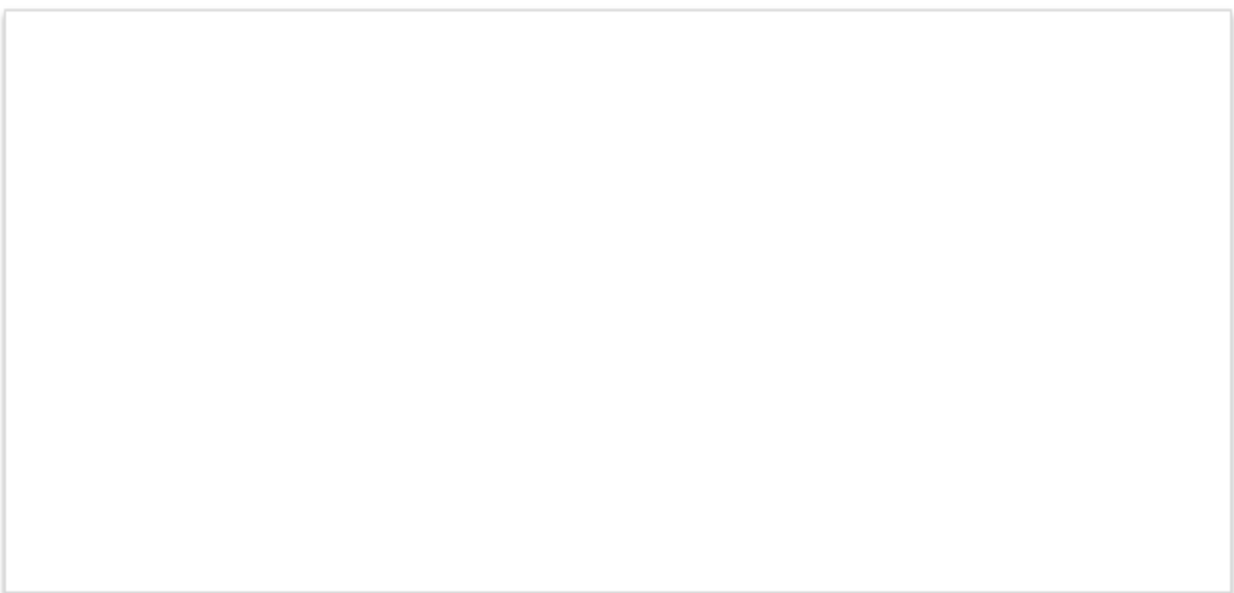
Week 5

Reflect on the scripture: Jesus' focus was very much about sharing his faith with people. Where are the opportunities in your life to share the things that are important to you and to discuss the choices you are making?

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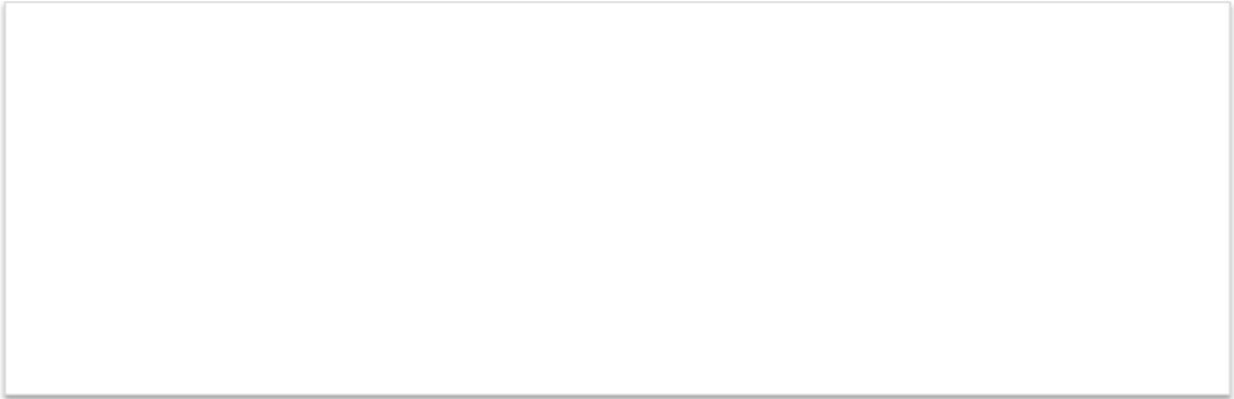
Reflect on your choice of action for the week:

How often would you want to review your habits and automatic choices in your life?

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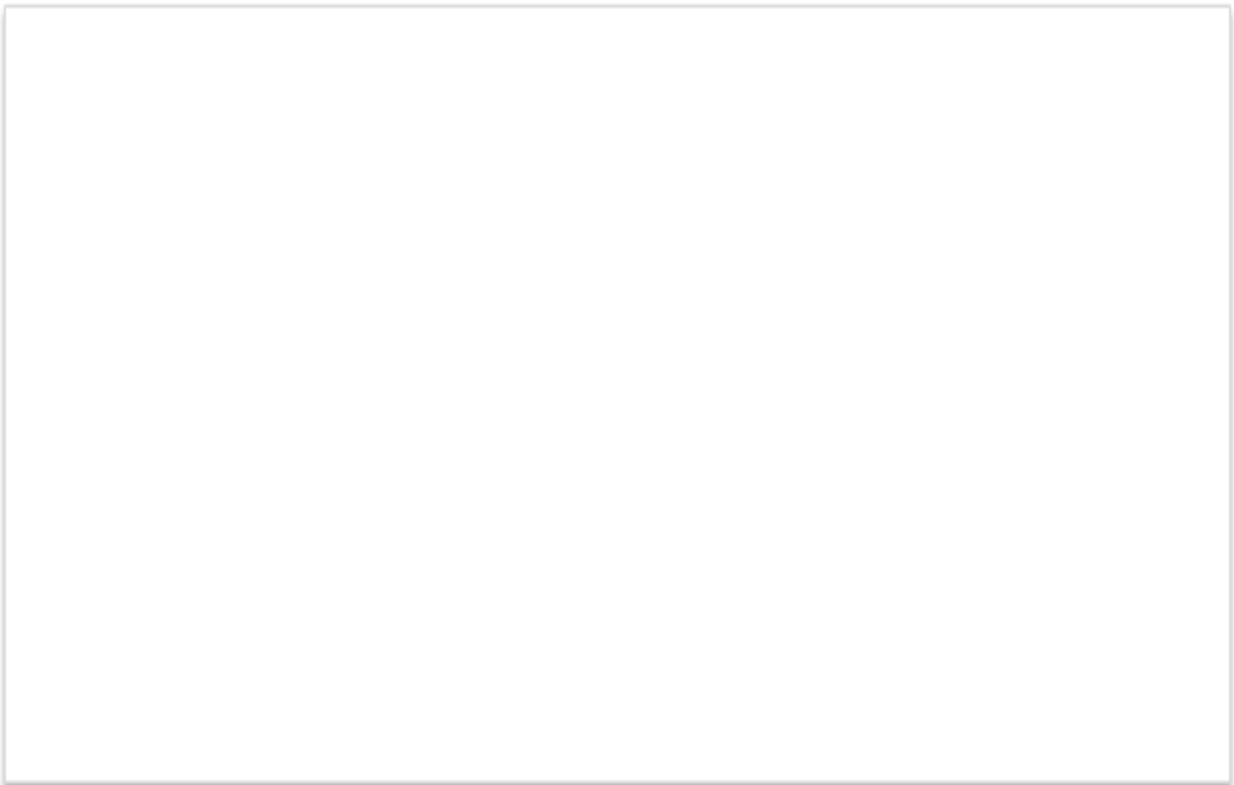
Week 6

Reflect on the scripture: Where have you ended up at the end of Lent?
What do you think this scripture is most deeply about?

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Reflect on your choice of action for the week:

What have you learned about yourself and who you want to be day-to-day?

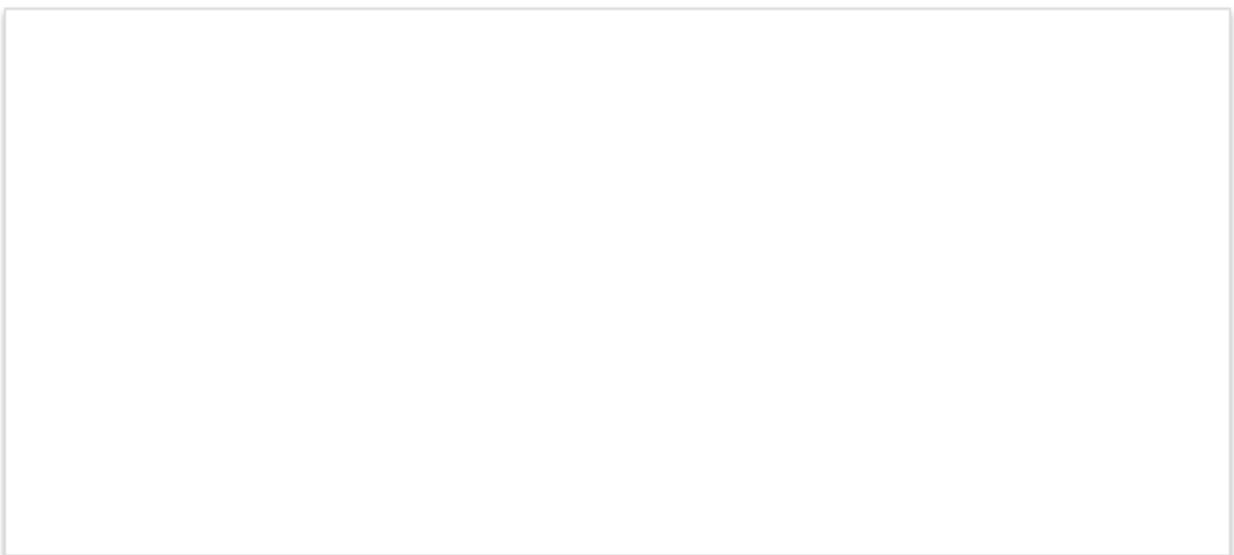
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Are there any actions or lessons from this Lent you would like to take forward into the rest of your life?

How might you do this?

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At the end of Lent, we enter into a time of death and new life at Easter. You might like to ask for God's help in continuing these actions of growth and change in the future or to say thank you for God's help so far.

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This Lenten journal is adapted from a project by **TLC Youth** in Edinburgh.

TLC Youth is an ecumenical youth group supported by The Local Church partnership of Augustine United Church, Greyfriars' Kirk, and St Columba's by the Castle.

At the time of this project our group was known as Augustine Assignments. Our stated ethos was:

"We will be challenging ourselves to tasks that are not about our individual performance, but instead about building up community and discovering where assignments that use everyone's strengths can take us."

To see where that challenge took us, visit aucassignments.tumblr.com

