

"The importance of gospel rhythms for liturgical observances like Lent cannot be overstated. This Lenten guide will take you into that season of preparation for Easter through readings from Scripture, confession of sin, prayers of thanksgiving, devotionals, and questions for reflection. Prepare yourself to be a sojourner on a journey to the cross."

Gregg R. Allison, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"This is the most helpful resource for Lent I have found. If you are looking for something to guide you through the Lent season—to serve as a tool of preparation and repentance as you immerse in the story of the gospel—I highly recommend this guide."

Ben Peays, Executive Director, The Gospel Coalition

"In one of my favorite hymns, Isaac Watts invites us to 'survey the wonders of the cross.' Many thanks to Kendal Haug and Will Walker, for helping us enter that graceladen exploration. *Journey to the Cross* is the newest, and now the finest, devotional resource in my library for the season of Lent. These daily meditations will help you see more of the beauty of Jesus; understand afresh the depth of your need; and marvel at the immeasurable riches of grace—freely ours, through the costly work of the cross. Thank you, my brothers, for helping me understand a little better, what 'boasting in the cross' is all about. Buy a copy for yourself, and several for friends."

Scotty Ward Smith, Teacher in Residence, West End Community Church

"If you're skeptical of Lent, if you doubt the relevance of the church calendar for gospel-loving Christians, this resource is for you. Will and Kendal helped awaken me to the richness of the Lenten season as a time for gospel renewal. This isn't stuffy, archaic liturgy; it's gospel-saturated reflection that will deepen your affection for Christ."

Bob Thune, Founding Pastor of Coram Deo Church; author of *Gospel Eldership*; coauthor of *The Gospel-Centered Life*

"Journey to the Cross makes Lent accessible and meaningful to those unfamiliar with its place in the Christian calendar. Its simple structure, biblical focus, and reflective tone make it a spiritually formative tool to anticipate the sin-forgiving, death-defeating, and evil-trouncing event of the resurrection."

Jonathan K. Dodson, Founding Pastor of City Life Church; author of Gospel-Centered Discipleship, Raised? Finding Jesus by Doubting the Resurrection, and The Unbelievable Gospel: Say Something Worth Believing

"With their Lenten devotional, Will Walker and Kendal Haug have beautifully answered questions Protestant disciples often ask: What is Lent? How should I observe Lent? *Journey to the Cross* is a wise, pastoral, and Christ-centered approach to Lent. It focuses on Jesus's journey to the cross. It points to Jesus's love, devotion, and sacrifice, and so enriches our preparation to receive his gracious redemption."

Dan Doriani, Professor and Vice President, Covenant Theological Seminary

JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

Devotions for Lent

Will Walker and Kendal Haug



New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404 Copyright © 2017 Will Walker and Kendal Haug

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.[®] Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover Design: Faceout Books, faceoutstudio.com

ISBN 978-1-945270-02-4 (Print) ISBN 978-1-945270-03-1 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Walker, Will, 1975- author.

Title: Journey to the cross : devotions for Lent / Will Walker and Kendal Haug.

Description: Greensboro, NC : New Growth Press, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016051898 | ISBN 9781945270024 (trade paper) Subjects: LCSH: Lent--Prayers and devotions.

Classification: LCC BV85 .W3155 2017 | DDC 242/.34--dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/201605189824

Printed in Canada

23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 1 2 3 4 5

Contents

Foreword	vii
Introduction	1
The First Days of Lent	5
First Sunday of Lent	21
Week One: Repentance	22
Second Sunday of Lent	46
Week Two: <i>Humility</i>	47
Third Sunday of Lent	70
Week Three: Suffering	71
Fourth Sunday of Lent	96
Week Four: <i>Lament</i>	98
Fifth Sunday of Lent	122
Week Five: Sacrifice	123
Sixth Sunday of Lent: Palm Sunday	148
Week Six: <i>Death</i>	150
Easter Sunday	175

Day 1: Ash Wednesday

Daily Readings

CALL TO WORSHIP

Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Joel 2:1-2, 12-13

CONFESSION

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Amen. Psalm 51:1–2, 6, 10–12

GOSPEL OF MARK

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Mark 8:27-30

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Father God, in your steadfast love and mercy you have not despised the broken and contrite heart. Christ Jesus, you have borne our sins in your body on the tree and healed us by your wounds. Holy Spirit, you have led us into truth and spoken words of pardon and peace. Thanks be to our gracious and merciful Triune God.

Daily Devotion

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:8-11

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season. The aim of Ash Wednesday is threefold: to meditate on our need for a Savior; to renew our commitment to daily repentance; and to remember with confidence and gratitude that Jesus has conquered sin and death. Our worship today should be filled with dependence and hope in Christ because of the power of our union with him and to the daily dying and rising with Christ that comes with this unity.

During a traditional Ash Wednesday service, ashes are applied to the worshiper's forehead (the "imposition") in the shape of a cross. In Scripture ashes or dust symbolize mortality (Genesis 18:27), mourning (Esther 4:3), judgment (Lamentations 3:16), and repentance (John 3:6). An ashen cross serves as a reminder that you come from dust and to dust you shall return one day. It is also a call to "consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).

As you begin this journey of Lent, you must start with rending your heart—tearing it from self-absorption and binding yourself (mind and devotion) to Jesus. Regardless of your current state or your proneness to wander, heed the call of the prophet Joel: "Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Joel 2:13). After all, Lent is not about your faithfulness, but rather about the faithfulness of Jesus on your behalf. He is the faithful One!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1. Spend some time being still before God, asking the Spirit to search you: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Psalm 139:23–24).
- 2. What hesitations or hindrances do you have in beginning this journey of Lent?
- 3. What habits and/or tendencies of self-absorption do you need to tear yourself from?

CLOSING PRAYER

Journey with us, O holy God, as we begin our way to the cross. Sharpen our focus, that our attention may center more on you than ourselves. Lead us through the shadows of darkness and prepare our hearts, that we might be a people of prayer, ready to perceive and respond to your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.¹

¹ *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2004), 557.