



less is more

A 40-DAY LENT DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

LeaderTreks®
YOUTH MINISTRY

less is more

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Less Is More: A 40-Day Lent Devotional Journal

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WHAT ARE YOU GIVING UP FOR LENT?

During the weeks before Easter, lots of people see if they can give up a small luxury. Chocolate. Dessert. Caffeine. Sometimes, it seems like the purpose behind all this sacrifice is a weird diet plan or bragging rights. But what if there's more to it?

Lent is a time to reflect on Christ's sacrifice and how we can follow his example in our own lives. Jesus sacrificed his will when he came to earth as a human, he sacrificed his comfort for the sake of his ministry, and he sacrificed his life on the cross. He gave up everything for us.

When we focus on all that Jesus Christ has done, it makes sacrifice in our own lives easier. **And spiritual sacrifice always leads to spiritual growth.** Practicing sacrifice isn't easy, but it's through committing ourselves to disciplines like prayer, studying the Bible, and worship that we truly gain—eternal life, contentment, and a thriving relationship with our Savior Jesus. This Lent, you can experience growth through sacrifice and discover that less truly is more.

HOW IT WORKS:

This book is designed to help you grow deeper in your relationship with Christ. It will introduce you to six spiritual disciplines or practices to master as you experience the connection between sacrifice and spiritual growth. Each day is different than the last and no two days are the same; no matter how you're wired, there will be something for you!

In this journal, you'll encounter over six weeks of challenges, hard questions, and Bible studies to help you focus on Christ from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday. As you follow the traditional journey through Lent, you'll start with a few devotions and activities to prepare your heart to receive Christ's sacrifice and connect more deeply with God in the following six weeks. At the beginning of every week, you'll find a FAMILY DAY that introduces a different spiritual discipline and includes an activity designed for you to share with your family or friends every Sunday. Each week contains six more days of devotions and activities, to help you discover and put into practice these spiritual disciplines. To help you better understand and explore the connection between sacrifice and spiritual growth, we've incorporated weekly Fasting Days with activities that are designed to work for all Christ-followers and that occur each Friday during Lent. We've also included a special Family Devotion for you to go through together on Easter Sunday.

But what if it's not Lent? Don't worry! This journal will help you master spiritual disciplines and grow in your relationship with God no matter what. You can start any time of year!

Remember, you'll get out of this book what you put into it. The challenges you'll encounter won't always be easy—they're designed to stretch you! Take a risk and use this journal to run hard toward God. When we make ourselves available to him, he'll transform us and use us in ways that will blow our minds!



**JESUS IS LORD.
FIND TRUE LIFE
BY LOSING EVERYTHING
TO GAIN HIM. DIE TO
YOURSELF SO YOU
CAN LIVE IN AND
THROUGH CHRIST.**

– CLAYTON KING¹





What is Lent? Maybe you've grown up observing Lent every year. Maybe you've never heard of it before picking up this journal. Maybe you've heard of it, but don't actually know what it is. Lent is the period starting on Ash Wednesday and leading up to Easter where Christ-followers anticipate and look forward to Jesus' death and resurrection. It's a time to remember Christ's sacrifice, and often people will fast from—sacrifice—something in their own life. While there are many traditions and practices associated with Lent, the main point is that we reflect on Christ's work on the Cross and praise him for his sacrifice.

Sacrifice will be a key theme throughout this journal. We're called to be like Jesus, do what he did. Well, he sacrificed everything in order to provide a way for us to have eternal life. If he did that, we can surely practice sacrifice in our daily lives. Let's dig in to Scripture and discover what the Bible has to say about sacrifice.

Look up the following verses and make a note of what each says about sacrifice:

ROMANS 12:1-2

JONAH 2:9

HEBREWS 13:15-16

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

PSALM 51:16-17

LUKE 9:23-24

You are just beginning a journey through this season of Lent. Throughout this journal, you'll study Scripture, learn about and practice spiritual disciplines, be challenged to step out of your comfort zone, and discover more about who God is and who he has made you to be. If you're committed to this process, you are going to grow!

Take some time today to think about how you want to grow during Lent. There are questions below to help you set a few goals for yourself. After you answer the questions, spend time in prayer, asking God to give you commitment, discipline, and a desire to learn and grow throughout this journal. God loves to answer prayer and make his children more like him!

Reflect on the following questions:

What are you most looking forward to during Lent?

How do you hope to grow over the next several weeks while using this journal?

What is something you'd like to learn more about through this journal?

What is a goal you have for this season of Lent?

Is there someone who can encourage you and pray for you as you work through this journal? Who?

We all have things that keep us from God. It could be a distraction, an obstacle, or a temptation. Maybe it's excessive worry, a deep fear, or a hidden sin. Sometimes even good things keep us from God! Maybe it's obsessing about your grades, your popularity, your image, or your friends. None of those are inherently bad, but they become a problem when they become more important to you than your walk with God.

Take 10 minutes right now to be honest with yourself and with God about what gets in the way of your relationship with him. Ask him to make it clear to you what one or two things are most keeping you from him, and how can you use this season of Lent to intentionally sacrifice those things in order to allow you to grow closer to God.

Once you've identified what's keeping you from God, write out a short prayer asking for God's help to remove this thing from your life. Commit to praying this prayer every day of Lent. See how God works in your life and makes you more like him!

DAY 04 FOCUS ON FASTING

Throughout this journal, you're going to encounter a variety of experiences. Some days will be focused on Bible study, some days will encourage you to think deeply about a topic, some days will explore a song or a quote, some days will challenge you, and some days are fasting days. Fasting has traditionally been an important part of Lent, but it's not something we do a whole lot anymore. In Matthew 6, Jesus gives instructions for when we fast, not if we fast. So if we want to obey Jesus' commands, we need to practice fasting.

Fasting is the denying of physical needs or wants, in order to heighten the needs of the spirit. When we fast, we recognize our need for God, and we hear his voice more clearly. Fasting eliminates distraction and gives us focus. While fasting is traditionally done with food, we can also fast from things that distract us. Each week in this journal will include a fasting day where you'll be challenged to fast from and sacrifice something relating to the week's theme. This is a chance to put Jesus' command into action!

You'll be going through six different spiritual disciplines throughout this journal. Flip through to the start of each chapter and write down the six themes below, then answer the questions:



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE #1:

What do you know?

What do you want to learn?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE #4:

What do you know?

What do you want to learn?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE #2:

What do you know?

What do you want to learn?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE #5:

What do you know?

What do you want to learn?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE #3:

What do you know?

What do you want to learn?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE #6:

What do you know?

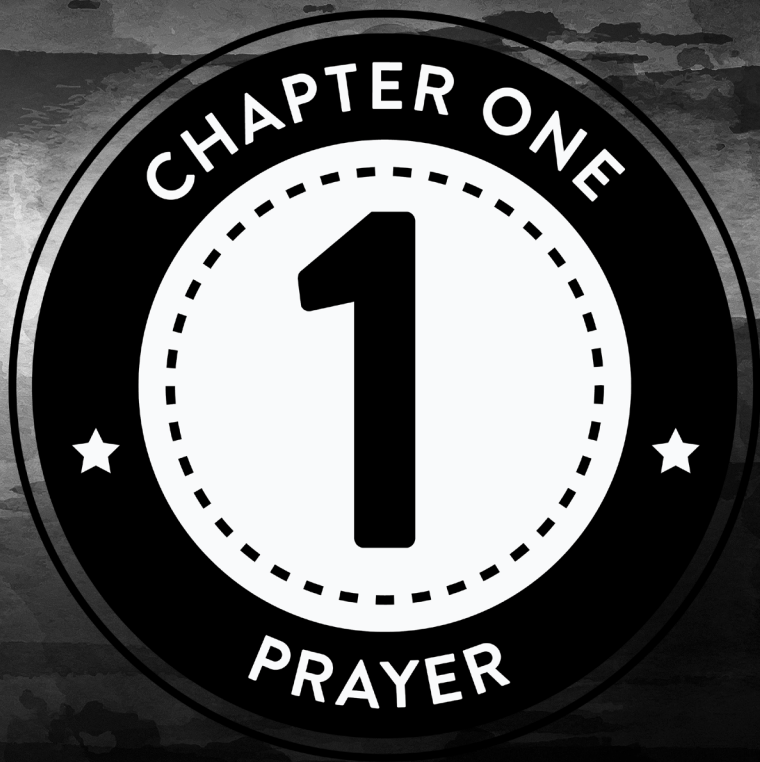
What do you want to learn?



**True prayer is neither
a mere mental exercise
nor a vocal performance.
It is far deeper than that.
It is a spiritual transaction
with the creator of
Heaven and Earth.**

– Charles Spurgeon²





FAMILY DAY

The Powerful Practice of Prayer

Prayer is a powerful part of the Christian life. It's our direct line of communication to God, our Creator, Sustainer, and Life-Giver! Think about that for a second—the God who created everything and everyone so badly wanted to have a personal relationship with you that he gave us the incredible gift of prayer. God loves his people, and he wants to hear from us!

Here's what prayer is *not*: It's not just our chance to tell God all the things we want and ask him to make our lives perfect in every way. It's not the number we call only when we're feeling low or in a desperate situation.

Here's what prayer *is*: Prayer is a discipline that we should practice regularly. It's about getting to know God on a personal level. Prayer is transformative. It makes us more like Christ and challenges us to deepen our faith. This week, we're going to be thinking a lot about prayer and how it draws us closer to the God who loves us, died for us, and gives us life.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: Family Prayer Chain

Gather as a family and do this simple prayer practice. One family member will begin by saying one line of a prayer—a praise, something you're thankful for, a prayer request, an attribute of God, etc. Just one line! The next family member will follow with their own one-line prayer. Go around the circle giving everyone the chance to offer a line of the prayer. You can even go for a few rounds.

Think about one of your closest friends. How did you get to be so close? It's probably because you communicate regularly—you share life stories, talk about your struggles, your likes and dislikes, your hopes, your dreams, and everything in between. You know them and they know you. It's a safe space, and that safety draws you closer to one another and forges a powerful connection.

Do you think you and that friend would have such a close relationship if you never communicated? Probably not! This is why God gave us prayer. He wants us to draw close to him, a safe space where we can be vulnerable and authentic and truly connect with him. Prayer should be like conversations with your friend—it happens often, sometimes it's difficult, sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's joyful and fun, sometimes it's serious, but it's always worth it.

As we begin the week, take some time to reflect on these questions:

What role does prayer play in your life?

When you pray, how do you talk to God?

(like he's a friend, formal, serious, follows a basic pattern, etc.)

In what situations are you most likely to pray?

How can you use prayer to draw closer to God?

Jesus knew that prayer is an important part of living a life connected with God, so he took time to tell us exactly how to do it. Some people like to pray just so other people can hear them. That's not really prayer. Or they pray with so many words and ramble on and on because they think God might be impressed with the amount of words they say. That's not really the point, either.

Prayer isn't about what others think or saying the exact right words. Prayer is about an authentic connection with God. You can only do that by praying honestly. It's a conversation between you and God, sharing your life and honoring the relationship you have with him. He's not going to think less of you because your prayer doesn't sound exactly like the nice prayer you may have heard in church. Just be real and talk to God.

Read **Matthew 6:5–15** and use the **OPA method** for Bible study: Observation, Principles, and Application. *Helpful tip: the more effort you put in to making observations, the easier the principles and application will be to see.*

OBSERVATION: Compile all the facts found in these passages. Try to make 15–20 observations about what you read.

PRINCIPLES: Draw a few principles from the observations you made. What is God trying to teach you in this passage?

APPLICATION: How will you apply these principles to your life? Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

We usually follow a pretty set schedule when it comes to socially accepted times to pray. We pray at church, we might pray before bed, and we might pray before meals. Those are the times it's "okay" to pray. But Paul says to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Sometimes we get in the habit of thinking we're only supposed to pray with others when it's socially acceptable. Prayer shouldn't be set to a schedule or specific circumstances. We should pray all the time! Praying with other people can help us (and them!) as we seek to follow the command to "pray without ceasing."

Today's challenge is for you to be bolder with your prayer time. It might get awkward or uncomfortable but bringing more prayer opportunities into your life is an invitation for God to be more involved in your life! Here's the challenge: Be on the lookout for prayer opportunities throughout your day. Maybe you'll hear a concerning story in the news or see a homeless person on the street or hear about a struggle your friend is going through. Those are all great reasons to pray! When you see that opportunity, take a minute and pray about it. But don't just pray alone—if you're with someone, invite them to pray with you, or if no one is around, call or text a friend and pray together. It doesn't have to be long or complicated, just bring that thing, whatever it is, before God in prayer.

Challenge yourself to find **three new prayer opportunities** in your life today. When you open your eyes to look for things to pray about, you'll be surprised at how many you find.

Use this space to record what happened and keep track of any prayer requests you want to remember.

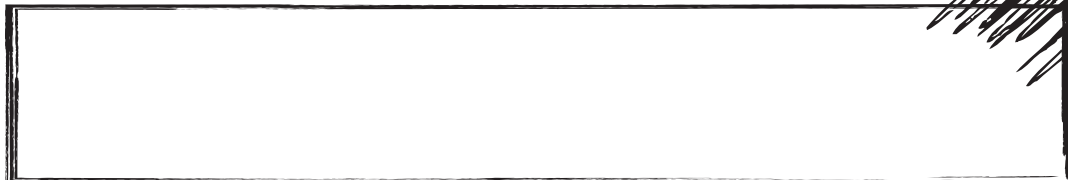


The hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”⁴ covers pretty much everything we’ve learned this week about prayer. Read the lyrics or listen to the song and think about all the ways it describes prayer. One of the best lines says, “What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.” Have you ever thought about prayer as a privilege? We so often take it for granted that we don’t think about what an incredible privilege it is that we can talk to God—and that he wants to listen! God doesn’t just want us to keep quiet about our lives and only spout off nice things about him. He wants us to share everything. That means the stuff that’s important to us—sin we need help with, things we’re struggling with, grief, joy, anger, hopes, dreams, and fears. God wants us to connect with him, flaws and all.

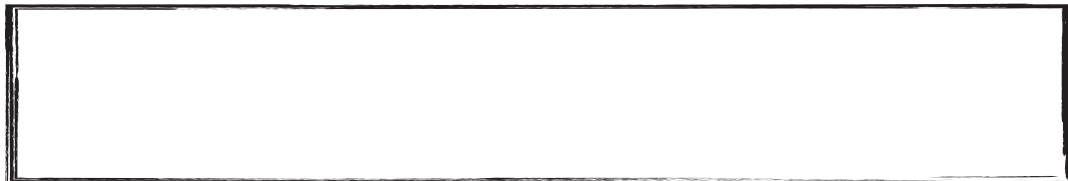
Prayer is an incredible privilege! It’s the most powerful tool you have at your disposal. Never take it for granted. Practice prayer regularly so that you can grow closer to God and become more like Christ!

Answer the following questions as you reflect on this hymn:

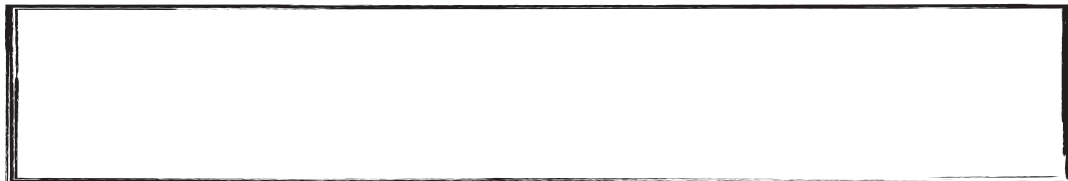
Do you think of Jesus as a friend? Why or why not?



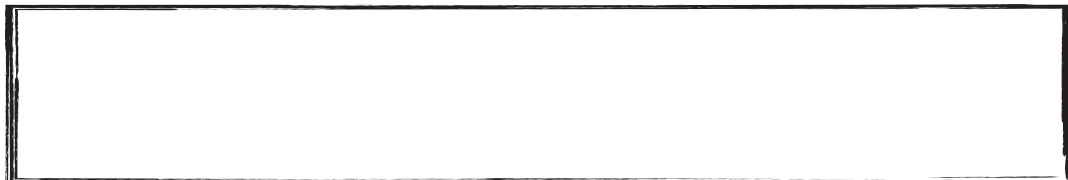
When you're praying, are you more likely to talk to God about the good stuff in your life or the hard stuff? Why?



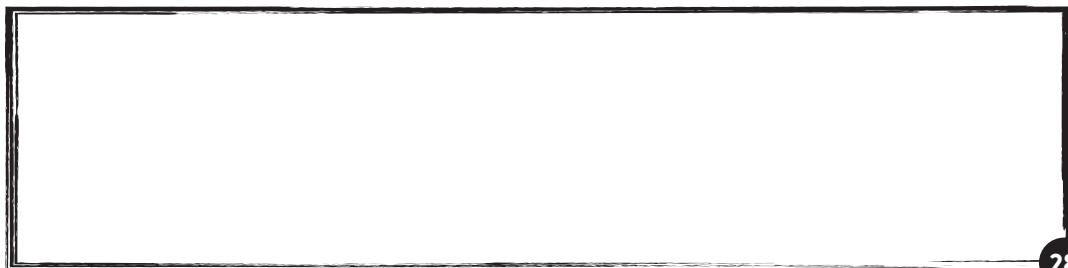
Why is prayer a privilege?



What's going on in your life right now that you need to take to God in prayer?



What steps do you need to take to get rid of idols in your life and worship only God?

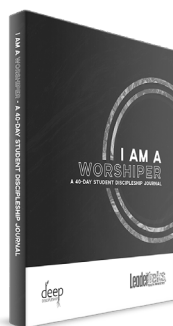


KEEP GOING!

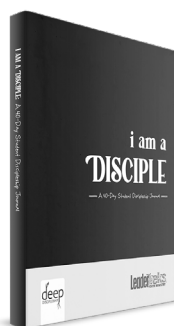
Check out these other journals made just for you:
(Go to Leadertreks.org for more info.)



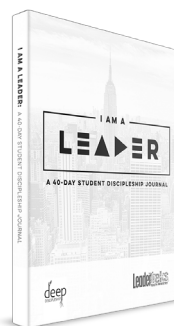
**I AM
NEW**



**I AM A
WORSHIPER**



**I AM A
DISCIPLE**



**I AM A
LEADER**

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Less Is More contains:

- + Devotions and Bible studies to prepare your heart for Easter
- + Interactive hymn and worship experiences
- + Challenges that focus on growing through spiritual disciplines
- + Fasting Days to help you commemorate Christ's sacrifice during Lent
- + Family Activities to help you share your experience with loved ones

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