

Lent Reflections

by Vanessa Stricker

a weekly devotional



on the side of grace . com



hello friends

Thank you for joining me in these Lent Reflections!

Lent is a season of preparation. It is a time to reflect on the life and death of Jesus and be reminded of what it means to follow him. It is a time of laying down what stands in the way of that call and embracing the new life that is found in the process. Lent recognizes that the only way to truly enter into the celebration of resurrection is to first acknowledge and grieve what is broken and lost.

As you enter into the reflections on the following pages, I pray that it will create space for you to engage with God and open yourself up to the ways that the Spirit wants to move you. I pray that as you read Jesus' words you will hear the truth that he wants to speak directly to your heart. And above all, I pray that you'll experience his love to the end and allow it to make you whole.

Vanessa Stricker

about this devotional

This Lent devotional consists of 7 reflections, one for each week of Lent. Each devotion includes a passage of Scripture, a short reflection, and a guided prayer practice.

Together, we'll be reading through and reflecting on Jesus' last words to his disciples in John 13-17 as he seeks to prepare them for his death and resurrection and the life he wants them to lead in the wake of it all. These words spoken so many years ago hold profound truth for us today as we join in with the beloved community and walk in Jesus' legacy of love.

May we become more like Jesus and more fully ourselves as we abide in his love together.

week 01

love to the end
john 13:1-20

Scripture

Read John 13:1-20

Reflection

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. – John 13:1b (ESV)

It was for love that God sent his only Son. It was for love that Jesus entered into our broken world clothed in flesh. It was for love that Jesus humbled himself and took on the nature of a servant as he walked throughout his life on earth. And finally, it was for love that Jesus prepared to endure the cross.

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In one sentence we read that Jesus loved his own to the end, and in the next we read that one of his own was preparing to betray him. And yet, his love remained. As Jesus took off his outer garments, he knew his disciple would take on a treasonous plot. As he stooped to wash his feet, he knew his friend would rise to turn him in. As Jesus gave out the bread that symbolized his own body, he knew his companion would give up his soul for some silver. Still, he loved him to the end.

In Western Christianity, we often think of Jesus' sacrifice in a very personal way. We think of him dying for those of us who profess to believe in him. But John's gospel makes it clear that Jesus came to rescue a world who had turned against him. He came to his own who were created through him, yet his own did not receive him (John 1:10-11). He poured out his life for those who would deny and destroy him. Jesus came to save humanity from both the powers of evil and our own selfish ambition that leads to destruction.

Jesus didn't just love when it was convenient or comfortable for him. He loved to the very end of himself. He loved when he knelt to wash his disciples' feet rather than ordering one of them to wash his own. He loved when he told his disciples to put away their weapons when he could have taken up a sword to defend himself. He loved to the point of hanging on a cross with outstretched arms asking his Father to forgive those who had put him there.

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Jesus showed us what love looks like and then he summoned us to do the same. He told us to follow the example that he had laid out for us. Just as Jesus laid down his privilege, his power, and his very personhood for the sake of the world, he calls us to humble ourselves, to stop grasping for status, and to seek the good of others.

Jesus loved to the end. Will we follow him there?

Prayer

O God of love,
You have loved us to the end.
Though we grasp for glory, you stoop to wash our feet.
Though we seek our own good, you give your life for the sake of all.
Though we divide and conquer, you draw us into your outstretched arms.
Forgive us for we know not what we do.
Teach us to love like you love.
Lead us to follow your example.
Help us to love to the end.
Amen.