

# Lent is for Everyone (even Littles)

Ifeoma U. Perkins, MD



## A Prayer for You and Your Family During Lent

Father God,

We thank you for the gift that is Lent. We confess that as busy as life gets sometimes, it is hard to pause to remember the significance of you, Jesus: your birth, death, and resurrection from the grave. Thank you for reminding us through observance of Lent that the full lives you have in store for us involves more than meeting our practical and tangible needs. We also need you in every aspect of our life. We need the word of God, the guidance of God, the presence of God, and the courage of God in all things, all days, and always. I pray that as we spend time in your Word this season, that every person that also encounters the words of Lent is for Everyone (even Littles) would be encouraged and reminded of your presence in whatever form of wilderness they find themselves facing. For their good and for Your Glory. We love you and thank you for loving us so generously. In Jesus name. Amen.

With love,  
Ifeoma

# Lent is for Everyone (even Littles)

## An Introduction to this Devotional

### **What is Lent is for Everyone (even Littles):**

It is a simple 7-week discussion-based devotional for Christian families to guide prayer and Bible-reading during Lent. Reflections are based on the story of Lent, our Lord Jesus Christ's experience in the wilderness taken from Matthew 4: 1-11. The devotional is intended to begin on Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, and end the week of Easter. Each week focuses on a different attribute of God that is revealed through the Holy Spirit and Jesus's temptation and triumph over the devil during his time in the wilderness. It is adaptable for both adults and children of all ages; it is also intended to be gently repetitive so all learners have opportunity to glean something.

### **Purpose of this devotional:**

To create an opportunity for Christian parents, caregivers, and families to feel invited, encouraged, and empowered to spend time in God's Word together during Lent

To guide families, children and adults alike, in remembering some important character traits of God that are revealed through Jesus Christ's triumph over the devil in the wilderness during Lent

To encourage Christian families to continue to grow together in the discipline of prayer and reading of God's Word

### **Why discussion question:**

As a long time educator myself, I have found that questions preserve the interactive nature of important discussions, and devotional time is no different, in my opinion. Asking questions helps you as the leader of the discussion understand where the limitations or holes are in the understanding of your learners. This allows efforts in teaching to be more likely to be productive as you fill gaps in their knowledge and reinforce what they already know.

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### **A word on prayer and reading the Bible:**

The Bible tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us (James 4:8). Our Lord Jesus modeled for us that prayer is a very important way to do this (Luke 5:16). Jesus also showed us, in his 40 days in the wilderness that the Word of God is an important way we overcome the lies and schemes of the enemy (Matthew 4:1-11). Prayer and reading the Word of God are pillars in our walk with the Lord and crucial to both our individual discipleship and in the discipling of our children. I hope this devotional helps encourage you in your efforts towards both! This devotional is not intended to be a substitute for either of those but rather a tool to spur families towards God in both.

### **A word on discipleship of our families:**

I believe in every role God calls us to serve Him in life, we are to work out our own faith walk with the Lord. And parenthood, I believe, is no exception (Phillipians 2:12). I believe that every moment you spend sharing your faith in Jesus and love for God with your children with humility and honesty in real life spaces is never lost. Ever. It's important and ok for your children to see your joy but also your struggle in your faithwalk and tough questions as a follower of Christ. Your children witnessing you asking God for help and wisdom as well as practicing confession, repentance, and asking for forgiveness when you make a mistake are so important. Through an honest and humble walk of faith, by the power of God, our children too might feel invited to come wholly as they are to their Heavenly Father, God, who loves them immeasurably.

### **God is parenting all of us:**

God is the perfect parent here; there is no space for intimidation or shame in discipling our children: You are God's child. And your children are God's children. He is parenting ALL of us on this journey in discipleship during Lent, and that is a good thing because some days many of us barely feel like we know what we are doing!

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## A Few Practical Tips

**"Prepare."** If you can, try to take 5 minutes to read over the page with the reflection you will be leading the day or morning before. Familiarity with the content helps you to better lead the exercise!

**Bring your Bible with you each time.** It's ok to use a Bible application in a device with a screen during devotional time, but I am finding that it is also important to have a visible paper Bible if at all possible present with you too. I find that for some children, young children in particular, sometimes screened devices can become a bit of a distraction from the words you are sharing verbally. Having a paper Bible present also helps children come to recognize the Bible as a safe and familiar household item that makes its way into many rooms in the house in many different seasons. In ways, my prayer is that having a paper Bible present will remove some of the intimidation many (myself included!) experience in reading the Bibles in their own personal walk of faith as they get older.

**Welcome movement, with young kids.** If children <5 years old are among your cohort, consider doing the devotional on the floor in an open space with a few toys they can tinker with during that time frame. Expect and welcome their getting up and moving around. In 7 weeks, we are repeating the beautiful story of Lent at least 14 times with this devotional. It's ok if 5-10% of the story registers with them each time, really and truly! You would be surprised how much they actually will retain eventually!

**Repetition helps with recall, especially for very young children.** If you choose to paraphrase the story of Matthew 4:1-11, maybe opt to read the same Bible verse aloud each time to reinforce repetition and help young learners better understand the verse. You will also find that as the weeks and days progress in Lent, you are able to move more easily and quickly through the devotional yourself.

**Prepare to pivot.** The goal is not perfection! Be flexible and keep showing up; if today your people are sick, try again tomorrow. If tomorrow your people need snuggle time or are very tired from work, try again the day after that. If another day everything falls apart after 5 minutes, paraphrase the story of Matthew 4: 1-11, read a verse aloud, say a prayer, and call it good. Or abandon this devotional plan all together, seriously, and read a psalm or proverb and pray together! God can and does use any and all efforts you make to draw near to him in reading the Word of God and connecting with him as a family. For our good and for His glory. This situation is no exception.



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# How to use this Devotional

Pick 2 nights a week to work through one reflection page of this devotional as a family.

Each day, plan to read or paraphrase (see pages 15 and 16) Matthew 4:1-11 aloud and the short corresponding reflection. Then discuss the discussion questions as a family. End with a group prayer; in our home we practice tandem prayer where we each take turns praying aloud.

Keep the devotional time under 10 minutes if you can; set a timer initially if you need help keeping to time! This is particularly crucial if you have learners <5 years in age or of any age that may find being engaged for longer stretches of time challenging.

If you are starting in the middle of Lent, feel free to pick up wherever you would like! You don't have to start from the beginning, but if you want to that's completely reasonable too!

# Seven Week of Reflections

Week 1: God Leads Me

Week 2: God Gives Me Courage

Week 3: God Always Provides

Week 4: God is Always with Me

Week 5: God's Word Guides Me

Week 6: God Speaks to Me

Week 7: God is Worthy of my Worship

# Lent is for Everyone (even Littles)

## Week 1: God Leads Me

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

**TIP:** If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses.

### REFLECT

Have you ever needed some help getting somewhere? Like when we get in the car to go somewhere? What can we use to get there? A map! The map tells us where to go so we won't get lost. The Bible tells us that Jesus went to the wilderness during Lent and do you know how Jesus got there? The Spirit of God (also known as the Holy Spirit) led him! Even though Jesus's friends and family couldn't tell him where to go, God led him and He did not get lost. Even though the devil tried to trick him. The Spirit of God led Jesus and as followers of Christ He leads us today too!

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- Do you think we can ask God to lead us when we [insert a familiar family related task]? Sometimes it's a little hard and we will probably need his help

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- Can you think of a time recently when you needed some guidance or direction doing something?
- How might God may have been leading you in that situation?
- How can we remind ourselves when things get tough that God is still leading us, like He led our Lord Jesus in the wilderness?

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## Week 2: God Gives Me Courage

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

**TIP:** If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses

### REFLECT

Sometimes, God calls us to do hard but important things. Have you ever been asked to do something difficult/hard? [reference a recent time when you saw them trying to complete a challenging task] In Matthew 4, Jesus had to do something hard too: going into the wilderness without his friends and family and with the devil trying to trick him. It was hard, but Jesus did it because He had courage. He loved us so much that He was committed to dying on the cross to save us from our sins, and getting through the wilderness was part God's great plan to get there. His love for us and his faith in God the Father were much bigger than any fear. Having courage does not mean that things aren't hard sometimes. But what is really cool is that as followers of Jesus, we have his Spirit (the same Spirit of God that led Jesus) in our hearts and *He* gives us courage to do things God asks us to do (Acts 1:8). Just like Jesus, as followers of Christ, our love for God and for others and our trust in God can be WAY bigger than our fear! God always gives us just the right amount of courage to follow his plan for us.

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- When we have to do something hard, who can we ask for help and courage? God!

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- Sometimes God asks us to do things that may feel hard but they are actually good for us. Can you think of something that is hard to do but good/important to do?
- How can we ask God for courage in those instances?

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## Week 3: God Always Provides

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

TIP: If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses

### REFLECT

How do you think Jesus survived 40 whole days in the wilderness, away from his friends and family? The Bible tells us that He was hungry. Do you think He may have been thirsty too? And somehow He got through it all. What would you do if you were stuck in the desert for 40 days? One important way the helped Jesus survive the desert is that even though He was hungry, his Spirit within Him was even stronger than the hunger. That's because Jesus wasn't just a person like you and me, He is also the Son of God; He is God with Us. And when Jesus fasted in that wilderness, God provided encouragement in His Words that Jesus remembered. When we go through tough times, God provides for our needs too in many different ways. Sometimes He blesses us with tangible things we need like food and water or peace. Sometimes, He provides people to love and help us. And sometimes He provides encouragement in his Words, like Jesus, that strengthen our spirits within us!

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- Can you think of something God provided for you today? Why don't we pause to say thank you to him for it?

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- What has God provided recently that you are grateful for?
- Are there times when God met a non-material need that you had?
- How can we remind ourselves when things get tough that God is still providing for us?

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## Week 4: God is Always with Me

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

TIP: If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses

### REFLECT

Do you think Jesus felt alone sometimes in the wilderness? I think He probably did miss his family and friends at times. 40 days is a long time! Even though Jesus's friends and family were not with him during his time in the wilderness, Matthew 4 tells us in the Bible is that God, in the form of the Spirit, was with him. The Spirit of God actually led him into the wilderness. That's because Jesus's time in the wilderness was an important part of his life before He died on the cross for us. The Holy Spirit was with Jesus then and guess what? As followers of Jesus Christ, He is always with us even now (Matthew 28:20). His Spirit is always with us! So when we are doing something hard that God asks us to do, we can always trust and expect the Spirit of God will not only lead us, He will be with us. That means we are never alone!

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- Have you ever felt alone? Even if there is no one else around, who do you think is always with us and always watching over us? God!

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- Have you think of a time recently when you felt lonely?
- It's not pleasant to feel lonely, but it is normal sometimes. Even though we are lonely we are never alone.
- How can we remind ourselves as followers of Christ when we feel lonely that God is still with us?

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## Week 5: God's Word Guides Me

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

TIP: If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses

### REFLECT

In the wilderness, the devil tried to trick Jesus not one, not two, but THREE times to disobey God. Do you know how Jesus beat the devil at his mind games? With the Word of God. Jesus remembered what is True and spoke it aloud to the devil each time, and it worked! Today, we too have the Word of God, in the Bible, to help us live God's perfect plan for our lives. It's filled with stories of how God used brave men like King David and women like Mary and Deborah to do amazing things for His glory. Sometimes it gives us wisdom and helps us make tough choices. Sometimes it helps us forgive each other when we make mistakes too. The Bible actually calls the Word of God the "sword of the Spirit" because it helps us too to overcome many battles we face in this life (Ephesians 6:17). God's word was a guide for Jesus in the wilderness, and it is our guide for life today too (2 Timothy 3:16).

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- Can you think of some important truths the Bible tells us about God? Let's name a few.
- What do you think the Bible says about you? It says that you are wonderfully made by God himself (Psalms 139:14)!

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- Can you think of a time when the Bible guided you?
- Do you have a favorite verse in the Bible that you like? Would you like to share it?
- How can we encourage and remind ourselves to spend time in God's Word?

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## Week 6: God Speaks to Me

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

**TIP:** If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses

### REFLECT

Just before Jesus entered the wilderness for 40 days, did you know that He got baptized? And after He was baptized the heavens opened and everyone heard God's voice from heaven saying "this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This all happened just before Jesus went into the wilderness. God spoke and then all of those people learned that Jesus is the Son of God. But in the wilderness, the Bible doesn't mention God speaking out loud like that again. In those moments, we do know that Jesus spoke the Words of God when the devil tried to trick him remember? I bet that was a source of comfort to his heart. God still speaks to us in a variety of ways, but the most important and consistent way He speaks to our hearts is through His Word, the Bible (Hebrew 4:12). Sometimes He also speaks through people who love us and love God giving us good advice. Other times He may speak by using things that happen to help guide us towards his perfect plan (Proverbs 16:9; Romans 8:28).

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- Have you ever heard God speak to you? Maybe in your mind or in your heart or through someone who loves you?
- Did you know that's a big part of why we read the Bible? To allow God's words to speak to our hearts and our minds!

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- Have you remember a time when God spoke to you recently? Maybe through a Bible verse into your mind or in your heart or through someone who loves you?
- Spending time to read the Bible regularly positions us to better hearing God when He speaks to us; what helps you to commit to spending time in God's Word?

# Lent is for Everyone (even Littles)

## Week 7: God is Worthy of my Worship

### READ

Read Matthew 4: 1-11 aloud (see page 15).

TIP: If your group includes one or more people (for example, children < 5 years old) who may have difficulty remaining engaged throughout the entire reading, paraphrasing the story instead and reading one or two verses aloud may help. There are many terrific ways to paraphrase the story (see page 16 for one example). Jesus's statements in verses 4, 7, and 10 are great single read aloud verses

### REFLECT

In his 40 days in the wilderness, the final way the devil tried to trick Jesus to disobeying God was to ask him to worship the devil. But Jesus was way too smart for that. He reminded the devil that God's word said that we should worship and serve only God. And it worked! The devil went away for good that time in the wilderness. We can worshiping and serve God like Jesus said in many different ways today too. We can clap our hands and sing music that honors God like we do in church. We can also dance and move our bodies to worship God; we can "jump for Jesus"! We can use the special gifts He gives us like speaking, painting, writing, building houses, helping others, or even flying rocketships to serve God! We also serve God when we obey him even when it's not easy sometimes: so listening to our moms and dads and doing what God asks us to do is also worship.

### DISCUSS

1. Children <5 years old:

- What are some ways that we can worship God, like Jesus said? Would you like to do any of those now?

2. Children >5 years old, Adults:

- What are some ways that you like to worship God, like Jesus said?
- Are there challenges that hinder this worship sometimes?
- What helps to overcome them?

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Matthew 4: 1-11 (English Standard Version)

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.””

7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.””

11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.



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# Sample “Paraphrasing” Script

## (Matthew 4:1-11)

You remember how we celebrated Jesus’s birthday not too long ago? Well, He didn’t remain a baby. He grew up and got bigger. On one special day He spent a long time in the wilderness. It probably was a kind of desert without many people, plants, or animals. He probably didn’t have his friends or his family with him either. How long do you think He was there? 1 day? 2 days? 3 days? He was there for much longer actually. Forty days! That’s a really long time!

Well, the Bible tells us that while Jesus was there, the mean bad devil came to try to trick him to disobey God. Do you think anybody can trick Jesus? No, of course not! He knows everything! How many times do you think Jesus was tempted? 1 time? 2 times? 3 times! Yes, 3 times! The first time was when Jesus was hungry. The devil tried to get him to turn stones into bread. You know what Jesus told him? No, devil! The Bible tells us that Jesus said in Matthew 4:4: “But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”” Jesus knew that His belly was hungry for food, but His Spirit trusted God more to provide.

And the devil went away. Then that mean devil came back again! For a second time he tried to trick Jesus, just like he tricked Adam and Eve in the garden. He wanted Jesus to jump off the temple/church and save himself from falling down and getting a boo boo. But that wasn’t God’s plan and Jesus knew that. God’s plan was for Jesus to die on the cross to save us from our sins! So again, Jesus said, no devil! Jesus told him that God’s Word says that we should not test God. Then the devil took Jesus up on a high mountain and said, “Jesus if you worship me, I will give you all of the kingdoms in the world; all of it.” He tried to trick Jesus to worship him! But who does the Bible say is the only one that deserves all of our worship? God! The devil tried to trick Jesus AGAIN to disobey God. And you know what Jesus said? He said, no devil! God’s Word tells us to worship God alone. Jesus told the devil to go away. And the devil went away. Jesus chose to obey God and he defeated the devil; He used the Word of God to help him. Today, we have the word of God in the Bible too. And if Jesus can do it, when we ask Jesus into our hearts, His Spirit lives within us and helps us to do so too!

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## About Ifeoma Perkins, MD:

Dr. Perkins is writer and physician practicing in the mountain west. She writes about her walk of faith as a follower of Jesus with particular interest in matters related to grief as well as marriage, motherhood, and medicine. She lives with her husband and two young children in the Colorado where they enjoy hiking and brilliant sunrises and sunsets.

## Connect more with Ifeoma:

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