

Grace Lutheran Church

13655 Round Lake Blvd. NW, Andover, MN 55304
763-421-6520 | www.graceandover.org

Greeting from Pastor Mark

February 2012

Dear Friends,

Here we are at the beginning of another Lent wondering what kind of changes, challenges, and growth will occur throughout these 40 days. And yet, is it just **another** Lent...simply a repeat of countless others? Or is this Lent going to be different? Will it be more substantial and life transforming?

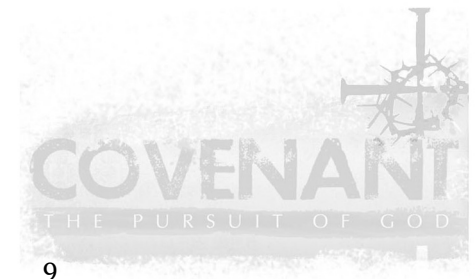
In your hands is a tool that can help make this year's Lent not just **another** Lent, but one that is different, substantial and life transforming! I don't know whether or not you have ever used a journal for Bible reading, prayers, or spiritual reflection, but from my experience, journaling can be a significant way in which to experience things in a "deeper" way. I think this could be especially true, as much of our 2012 Lent Journey will focus on Old Testament "Covenant" stories about God making covenants with his people to heal, restore, bless, and save them. What better way to deepen your understanding of these stories than writing down your thoughts and impressions as you read about them.

If you've noticed, you've only received a few pages of the journal... just the first week or so. We did that on purpose because we want to entice you back to get more! That's right. Every weekend, we will distribute the "next week" of pages in the bulletins. If you are unable to be here for worship, you can either stop by the Welcome Center or download each week's inserts from our website.

I am excited for our 2012 COVENANT—*The Pursuit of God* Lent Journey! I think God is going to do some wonderful things in our lives. I hope part of the reason will be this journal!

Happy writing and reflecting!

Pastor Mark



Saturday, February 25

Today's Reading: Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21

My Observations

My Questions

My Response

Sunday, February 26

Today's Reading: Gen. 9:8-17

My Observations

My Questions

My Response

Why Bible Study?

Why should we study the Bible? Why is Bible Study one of our Habits of Spiritual Formation?

The answer is simple. We need to know our story. We need to know that the God who created the universe—who called Abraham to be the father of a special nation, who patiently wrestled with Abraham's family throughout the generations, who sent the Son to save the world—we need to know that *that* God is *our* God. *God's story is our story. Israel's story is our story.*

More importantly, *we need to know God.* When we open the pages of the Bible we get to discover who God is and how God interacts with the world. God sent Jesus—the Word became flesh—so that we could get a vivid picture of what God is like and what it looks like to live in God's Kingdom in real life. We know Jesus through the Bible, and we know God's amazing grace and love for us through Jesus.

There's one more piece to it. When Jesus physically left the earth he promised to leave the Holy Spirit with us. Part of the Spirit's job is to come along side us when we read the Bible and help us to hear God's voice in fresh and real ways. The Bible is the living Word of God because the Holy Spirit is active in our reading of it.

What does all this have to do with my life, today? How does reading the Bible connect with the daily grind of work, or taxiing the kids to soccer and band practice, or trying to pay the rent or school bills?

It has everything to do with it. We are called to live in the Kingdom of God in every aspect of our lives and be the hands and feet of Jesus to every person we meet throughout our regular routines. How can we know what the Kingdom of God is all about, or what Jesus' hands and feet look like if we don't know the Bible?

How to Use this Journal

This journal is designed to be a companion to your daily Bible reading throughout the Lenten Season. Each day you will be prompted to read a section of scripture and ask three questions:

1. **What do I observe in this section?** This is where you get to be Sergeant Friday... “Just the facts, ma’am.” Ask the investigator questions: *who, what, when, where, why?* Then jot down one or two things that jump out at you.
2. **What questions do I have about this text?** There is no shame to read a text and be left thinking, “huh?” Just jot down your question and move on. Perhaps you could bring it up in your small group, consult a Bible Handbook, or talk about it with a pastor.
3. **Respond.** Bible Study is a conversation with God. What did God say to you in this passage? Did God call you to action? Were you inspired to worship God? Were you prompted to pray for someone? Whatever it is, jot it down, and then go do it!

Here’s a suggestion for what a daily encounter with scripture might look like. This is not a rule, just a guide:

1. **Pray.** Ask the Spirit to help you listen to God’s voice in this passage.
2. **Read** the assigned text.
3. **Read around the text.** What was said before it, what was said after it? Who said it, and to whom was it said?
4. Jot down some words or phrases in the “**My Observation**” section.
5. Jot down any questions you may have in the “**My Questions**” section.
6. **Read the text again...slowly.** This time read it more like a prayer, or like you are reading a love letter. Let it sink in past your brain and into your heart.
7. **Respond.** In the “**My Response**” section make a note of how you will respond to this text. Are you angry, confused, motivated, excited, in awe? There are no wrong answers, it is your authentic response.

For more information on Bible Study, please visit our **Bible Study page** on the Grace website for links to great books and websites.

<http://graceandover.org/Bible-Study.html>

Thursday, February 23

Today's Reading: **Ps. 51**

My Observations

My Questions

My Response

Friday, February 24

Today's Reading: **II Cor. 5:20b-6:10**

My Observations

My Questions

My Response



Sermon Notes

Ash Wednesday: The Journey Begins
Isaiah 58:1-12

