

Embrace the Holy Rhythms
of the Lenten Season

SACRED
&
STILL

JULIE FISK • KENDRA ROEHL • KRISTIN DEMERY

Embrace the Holy Rhythms
of the Lenten Season

SACRED & STILL

JULIE FISK • KENDRA ROEHL • KRISTIN DEMERY

TYNDALE
MOMENTUM®



A Tyndale nonfiction imprint

Visit Tyndale online at tyndale.com.

Visit Tyndale Momentum online at tyndalemomentum.com.

Tyndale, Tyndale's quill logo, *Tyndale Momentum*, and the Tyndale Momentum logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries, registered in the United States of America. Tyndale Momentum is a nonfiction imprint of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois.

Sacred and Still: Embrace the Holy Rhythms of the Lenten Season

Copyright © 2025 by ThreeThreads, LLC. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior illustration of flourishes copyright © ProVectors/Adobe Stock. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Eva M. Winters

Interior design by Cathy Miller

Edited by Donna L. Berg

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked AMP are taken from the Amplified® Bible (AMP), copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked AMPC are taken from the Amplified® Bible (AMPC), copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® *NIV*.® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version,® copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4964-8752-0

Printed in China

31 30 29 28 27 26 25
7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Contents

Introduction 1

How to Use This Devotional 5

WEEK 1 Pursuit (*Ash Wednesday–Saturday*)

DAY 1 God’s Pursuit of Us 8

DAY 2 Pursuing an Intimate Relationship with God 13

DAY 3 Chasing Sunsets 18

DAY 4 He Meets Us in the Moment 23

WEEK 2 Love (*Sunday–Saturday*)

DAY 5 The Sanctuary of God’s Love 30

DAY 6 God *Is* Love 34

DAY 7 This Is What Love Looks Like 40

DAY 8 Because He First Loved Us 46

DAY 9 The Unexpected Gift of Loving Others 52

DAY 10 Building the Community We Need 58

DAY 11 For Further Reflection 65

WEEK 3 Forgiveness (*Sunday–Saturday*)

DAY 12 Healed Inside and Out 68

DAY 13 One-Sided Forgiveness 72

DAY 14 Forgiving God 79





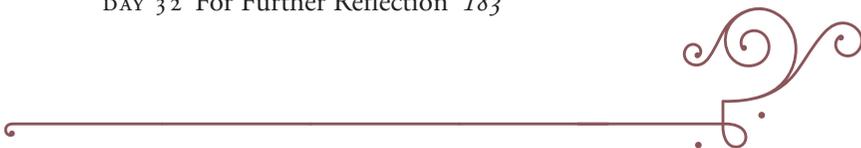
- DAY 15 The Power of an Apology 86
DAY 16 The Stories We Tell Ourselves 92
DAY 17 Forgiving Ourselves 98
DAY 18 For Further Reflection 104

WEEK 4 Peace and Contentment *(Sunday–Saturday)*

- DAY 19 Peace in the Tension of Life 108
DAY 20 Embracing Peace as We Wait on God 112
DAY 21 Going Smaller 118
DAY 22 Calendar Clutter 125
DAY 23 All That We Need 132
DAY 24 Choosing Joy 138
DAY 25 For Further Reflection 144

WEEK 5 Generosity *(Sunday–Saturday)*

- DAY 26 The Ultimate Generosity 148
DAY 27 No-Strings Generosity 152
DAY 28 Our Words Matter 158
DAY 29 A Budget of Blessing 164
DAY 30 Coach Kyle 170
DAY 31 A Community of Generosity 176
DAY 32 For Further Reflection 183





WEEK 6 **Freedom** (*Sunday–Saturday*)

- DAY 33 Freedom in Christ 186
DAY 34 Freedom Through Grace—for Us and Others 190
DAY 35 Freedom from Worry 197
DAY 36 Freedom in Surrender 203
DAY 37 Freedom from Shame 209
DAY 38 Freedom for Everyone 215
DAY 39 For Further Reflection 221

HOLY WEEK **Hope** (*Palm Sunday–Silent Saturday*)

- DAY 40 Embracing an Eternal Perspective 224
DAY 41 Equal Access 228
DAY 42 Our Living Hope 234
DAY 43 Jesus Is Our Hope 240
DAY 44 A Command to Love and Unity 246
DAY 45 Where Is Death’s Sting? 254
DAY 46 We Are Not Abandoned 260
For Further Reflection 264

EASTER **Joy** (*Resurrection Sunday*)

- DAY 47 He Is Risen! 268

Appendix 274

Notes 278

About the Authors 280



Introduction



MY FOOTSTEPS TAPPED RHYTHMICALLY across the black-and-white, geometric-patterned floor as I (Kristin) stepped directly into the choir area of the cathedral. I followed a friend to the side to slip into a row lit with small lamps. Immediately, my head tilted upward to take in the gorgeous fifteenth-century, chancel-vaulted ceiling with pendants linked in a beautiful starry pattern. A sweeping glance around the interior revealed soaring arches, stained glass windows, and various monuments.

It was my first time in an Anglican cathedral, although this one doubled as the college chapel for Christ Church at the University of Oxford in England. I was nineteen and on my first solo trip overseas for a semester at Keble College, and I wanted to soak in the history and culture of the country. Attending Evensong seemed like just one more experience I could take in.

We sat quietly on wooden seating during the procession of one of the robed choirs. As the organ notes waned, I settled in for the greeting, and then the sixteen boys of the choir began to sing soulfully, cowlicks askew, as their twelve adult counterparts filled out the rest of the swelling sound.

I sat spellbound, taking in the atmosphere, the harmony of voices, the traditions, and the liturgy. It was beautiful, serene—and entirely new for me.

You see, my sister Kendra and I grew up mainly in nondenominational churches. The desire to seek the presence of God was just as earnest in those churches as it was in this place, and yet the mantle of tradition and history added a weight that was unfamiliar to me. I wondered, *In my search for God, what else had I missed?*

It's not that I thought my experience at Evensong that night was any better or worse than the churches I'd always known and loved. Still, something about being in a place that had stood for hundreds of years and seen thousands of worshipers pad across its floors resonated deep inside me.

That experience lit an appreciation for the parts of Christianity I'd overlooked, and years later, it inspired me to experience for myself the significance of Lent.

I (JULIE) GREW UP IN A DENOMINATION that observed Lenten traditions. I remember my church's deeply meaningful liturgical rhythms throughout Lent and my own somber reflections as I fasted and prayed, even as a child, on Christ's teaching, suffering, and ultimate sacrifice. Reflective pausing in prayer and preparation for Holy Week, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday is a tradition we can all embrace, no matter our denominational background and subcultures.

While some denominations have specific traditions around Lent, as followers of Christ, we have freedom to observe Lent in ways that speak specifically to us as individuals and families.

INTRODUCTION

This knowledge and freedom brought the three of us together several years ago to begin observing Lent as individuals and families. It was a simple idea: Each week leading up to Easter, we would pick a concern in our world to pray for, a country and people group affected by the issue, and one thing we could give up that week to remind us of others' needs.

Throughout the six weeks of Lent, we would talk with our kids about circumstances happening worldwide and even within our communities. We would pray for the needs of others, fast, and—when appropriate—find ways to give or otherwise bless others.

It became a meaningful time of year for each of us and ultimately grew into the devotional guide you now hold in your hands. Based on our own experiences and musings, we've included forty-seven daily readings to guide you through the Lenten season from Ash Wednesday to Resurrection Sunday. You'll also find suggested fasting exercises for each week throughout Lent.

Our prayer for you as you embark on this study is that you would find it as powerful as we have for awakening your heart to the true significance of the season and that you would develop your own Lenten traditions to carry on throughout the years.

Kristin, Julie, and Kendra

How to Use This Devotional



THIS BOOK EMBRACES an intentional rhythm based on weekly themes. Each Sunday sets up the theme and the fasting activity for the week. Then the devotionals from Monday through Friday are a deep dive into the theme. Saturday wraps up the week and invites you to spend time in prayerful reflection.

Whether you read one day or all forty-seven days, our hope is that you will be challenged and encouraged by each week's topic and fast. If you fall behind in the reading or break your fast, that's okay! You've got a new week, a new fast, and a fresh start every Sunday.

Ash Wednesday through Saturday: This short week sets us up for the weekly rhythm by focusing on *pursuit*—God's pursuit of us and our pursuit of him.

Sunday: This day introduces the week's theme and fast. In the appendix, you'll also find a Breath Prayer for each week to help keep you focused throughout the day.

SACRED AND STILL

Monday through Friday: Each day, you'll find a Scripture verse, story, prayer, question for reflection, "Sacred Rhythms" action step, and space for journaling.

Saturday: Finish the week with reflection questions designed to help you review what you've experienced and learned.

Silent Saturday and Resurrection Sunday: We break from our weekly pattern with full devotions on these two significant days.

WEEK I

PURSUIT

Ash Wednesday–Saturday



God's Pursuit of Us

Long ago the LORD said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."

JEREMIAH 31:3



"ADAM? EVE? WHERE ARE YOU?"

I (Kendra) can hear God calling to them in the garden as they hid behind the bushes, ashamed. They had never experienced such a feeling before. Even after showing themselves, they still wanted to hide, blaming others to cast aside any guilt of their own. They were attempting to cover their shame, but they also cut off their hearts from the intimacy they once shared with God. This was the first time humans tried to hide from him, but it wouldn't be the last. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's actions, and now we certainly know shame and guilt in many of the same ways.

Believing lies about God, ourselves, others, and the world around us, we cling to what we hope will give us peace, security, and love, realizing

too late that many of those things simply leave us still lacking. We fall into sin that promises comfort and ease, only to find ourselves bound to selfish desires and lusts of the flesh that don't really fulfill our God-given purpose or desires. We are left hiding parts of ourselves from God, not wanting him to see the bits and pieces we'd rather undo or wish away. We, too, hide ashamed.

And yet.

That wasn't the end of Adam and Eve's story, and it won't be the end of ours either. As you read through the Old Testament, you'll find instances time and time again of God pursuing people. His longing for an intimate relationship is evident, his love clearly expressed, his desire to draw all people to himself plainly stated. He called throughout the ages, "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself" (Jeremiah 31:3).

But he has never been completely understood by humans—not in the fullness that he desired. He has been seen only as if through unclear glasses, darkly. His complete heart for all people has remained shrouded. Filtered through an imperfect humanity, his attributes as a loving God have been at times distorted and unknown. Those who were his ambassadors on earth often missed the essential parts of who he is, mistaking them at best and misrepresenting them at worst. They put heavy burdens of rules and regulations on people, which God never meant for us to have. Maybe we thought his love, his desire for us, was too good to be true. Or perhaps we knew we'd made mistakes and felt we deserved pain and strife. Maybe we didn't think we were worthy.

Regardless, this is where Jesus entered the story. Fully human. Fully God.

SACRED AND STILL

He arrived here as a baby, growing in all the ways every human does, and yet living a perfect life. He came to show us who God is. Who he has always been. He came to make him clearly known.

And he came to teach us how to live and how to love, paving a way back to the Father who never stopped pursuing us.

Now we see in Jesus that God did not come just for one group of people but for all of us.

In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,
a light has shined.

MATTHEW 4:15-16

A light shined for all of us who sat in darkness, Jew and Gentile alike. Jesus came to redeem and restore. To forgive sin and heal the diseased. To love the unlovable and the unclean, and those of us who sit in the shame of our sins, hiding ourselves from God.

Jesus came to pursue us, once again, but this time as a human so that we could touch, feel, and hear him speak clearly. Although sin was still present on earth, God chose to walk again with us.

Some call this day Ash Wednesday, putting ashes on their foreheads to signify repentance. But I think those ashes are also a beautiful picture of our humanity, of our mortality. Scripture tells us that from dust we came,

and to dust we will return (see Genesis 3:19). This is worth remembering. We are nothing, and yet we are everything to God.

As we start making our way through the Lenten season, we remember God's pursuit of us. We come, ready to be fully known, fully loved, just as we are. No more hiding. No more shame. We step out from behind the bushes and call back to God, "Here I am!"

And he comes to us, running as a Father to his children, ready to embrace us and to love us. Nothing forced or coerced, just a simple welcome. All we have to do is allow ourselves to be welcomed back into the place that was always meant to be our home.

With God's help, we will respond to his promise for each of us: "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them" (Revelation 21:3).

Heavenly Father, thank you for pursuing humanity from the very beginning. Thank you that you never change but have always remained the same. You are continuously loving us and calling us to a relationship with yourself. We're so grateful you sent Jesus, who wholly encompasses your nature and shows us clearly who you are and have always been. Thank you for showing us, as your followers, how to live on the earth. Transform us to look more like you over these next several weeks. We love you. Thank you for loving us. Amen.





Pursuing an Intimate Relationship with God

*You must love the LORD your God with all your heart,
all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.*

MARK 12:30



LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY FRIEND: She is among the first to help—a meal dropped off, a texted prayer, a bouquet of celebratory flowers, a cup of your favorite coffee on a hard day. She is smart about how our bodies work (and don't) and shares her knowledge freely, always happy to talk about immunity, gut health, better sleep, and stress management. She is beautiful, inside and out. And those slight crinkles around her eyes that she'll lament about? They reveal her love of laughter. She is a woman of substance and faith, and I (Julie) am blessed to have her in my life.

She sounds lovely, doesn't she? Here's my point: You know *about* my friend, but you don't *know* my friend. You don't even know her name, and chances are good that you've never met her. Your knowledge of her is

filtered through my perspective, meaning that you know my version of this woman based on the facts I've shared or omitted (intentionally or not).

The same goes for God. We can know *of* God. We can listen to a lifetime of sermons. We can read a library of books about who he is (or isn't). We can know the basic outline of his story. Don't get me wrong; it's valuable to read books and listen to sermons about him! But unless we are regularly pursuing a one-on-one relationship with him through prayer, worship, and reading of Scripture (the Word of God), we risk knowing *of* him rather than *knowing* him. And when we rely solely on others to tell us about him, we know only their version, their perspective of God.

No matter whether we have been a follower of Jesus for one day or one hundred years, no matter how many good deeds and faith-filled tasks we have completed, no matter how knowledgeable and mature we are in our faith, we are called into an intimate, personal relationship with God.

It's the same as any intimate relationship—parent, child, best friend, or spouse. We can skate by for a while on the foundation of our relationship and past investments of time, attention, and affection. But to maintain the strength and closeness of the connection, we need ongoing investment. If we neglect spending time and cultivating affection, the relationship suffers strain and grows distant, until we find ourselves saying things like “I thought I knew her,” “I don't feel like I know him anymore,” or “We've grown apart.” With fellow humans, this requires an investment from both parties, so strained or lost relationships may be beyond our ability to fix. But with God, we are the ones who grow distant, not him.

In the book of Revelation, John writes letters to seven churches based on a vision he received from Jesus. The letters are Jesus' words

to those particular churches, but they are instructional for us and our church communities today. Jesus commends the church in Ephesus for many things, but then he says, “I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches” (Revelation 2:4-5).

It should not surprise us that, just as we invest in our earthly relationships, we must be intentional about our relationship with God. And Jesus’ rebuke to the church in Ephesus is comforting as I realize that I am not the only one who sometimes neglects intimacy with God—or who confuses *doing* for God with *intimacy* with God. My conversations with other followers of Christ also confirm that I am not alone in this. It’s easy to get so busy serving faithfully that we neglect intimacy.

The beautiful thing about intimacy with God is that there is no need to pretend. There is no need for keeping up appearances, for trying to impress, or for being anything other than who we are. It is freeing to be nothing more and nothing less than the truest version of myself before God, even as he calls me toward growth and continued maturity.

How do we maintain (or regain) intimacy with God? We’re told to go back to *first things*. And while your first things may look slightly different from mine, our spiritual foundation must consist of prayer, worship, and Scripture reading—all three of which build a love of God, involving all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Prayer is a cornerstone in our relationship with God. We are told to be bold, diligent, and continually in prayer (see Matthew 7:7; Luke 21:36; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18). For some, prayer involves stilling

our whole body in singular concentration; for others, it involves writing or journaling; and for still others, it's often done while our body is busy with a mundane task such as laundry, washing dishes, going on a walk, or driving the car. There is no "right" way to go about the process of prayer, as long as we are in regular conversation with God.

While we often think of *worship* as music because that is a common format both in Scripture and in our churches, it's really about acknowledging the goodness and sovereignty of God in and through everything we do (see Colossians 3:17). Worship is not reserved for Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings; it's woven all throughout our days as we move through God's creation with appreciation and thanksgiving.

God uses *Scripture* to encourage, teach, refine, and grow us in our faith (see 2 Timothy 3:16). We never arrive at a point that the Word of God is no longer instructive or relevant. Our time spent in Scripture guides our days and helps us become (and remain) disciples of Jesus (see Psalm 119:105; Matthew 4:4).

The ways you and I weave prayer, worship, and Scripture into our daily rhythms will likely look different, and that's okay. The key is not to get so busy going about the work of God that we become like those in Ephesus, forgetting our first things.

Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us back into intimacy with you. Thank you for grace and a fresh start as we find a rhythm in returning to first things. Meet us as we draw near to you for the first or the millionth time with encouragement and instruction for this season. Amen.





For Reflection:

Of the three “first things” in your relationship with God—prayer, worship, and Scripture reading—which is the hardest for you to weave into your day? Which is the easiest? Why?



Sacred Rhythms:

Create a plan for finding moments of worship and prayer throughout the day, and set aside specific time to read your Bible—either through an app or a print copy.



Chasing Sunsets

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.

Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard.

Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world. God has made a home in the heavens for the sun.

PSALM 19:1-4



I (KRISTIN) EXITED THE GROCERY STORE at a brisk clip, but my pace stuttered then slowed as I noticed the sky's brilliance. Luminous pinks and oranges painted the sky in exquisite hues my camera could never do justice.

"You should go look outside," I texted my daughter once I reached the car. "The clouds are pink and pretty over by the sunset." By the time I arrived home a few minutes later, she was stepping outside our front door, head tilted upward. But other homes and large trees concealed the view.

For a second, I considered the groceries sitting in the back seat, then rolled down my window.

"Hop in," I said. Shoeless, she raced to the passenger side and buckled

in. We cruised west until we hit a country road with nothing to obscure the matchless view. We paused, watching the sun's final rays disappear toward the horizon.

My daughter loves chasing beauty, especially if it's in the sky. Thanks to her, I've found myself noticing it more frequently. She's good at looking up and appreciating the sunrise, the sunset, or the clouds. In fact, if you scroll through her camera roll, that's what you'll see: Scattered among silly candid photos with friends and screenshots of cute celebrities are loads more of the sky in all its beauty—dreamy puffs of white gently scudding across the sky or angry thunderheads lumbering hugely in the distance, pearlescent gray and blue clouds juxtaposed with hues of soft yellow and gentle peach, bright rays of blinding sunlight streaming through gaps in the clouds, or misty fog rising gently from below to envelop the view.

As humans, we're wired to chase beauty. Some of it is superficial. We focus on clothes or makeup, youthfulness or strength. We marvel at a shimmering outdoor pool or an immaculate backyard, the newest decor or the fanciest homes.

But our need for the beauty provided by nature is more profound. In some ways, we are made to crave it: Our bodies revel in the vitamin D provided by the sun, and research has repeatedly demonstrated how nature positively affects our mental health.

But all this proves is that our bodies reflect an essential truth ingrained in us—that our search for beauty in all its forms is a search for the divine, and it's through creation that we glimpse it. The fingerprints of our Creator are scattered over every mountain, forest, desert, and prairie, and they all point us back to him.

In this regard, science echoes Scripture. In a paper published in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, researchers explored how humans respond to “ephemeral phenomena.” They found that sunrises and sunsets could “trigger significant boosts in people’s feelings of awe”—something that is usually hard for scientists to elicit in their research. Awe, they found, can potentially “improve mood, enhance positive social behavior, and increase positive emotions.”¹

As Christians, we know that the awe we experience over the sun’s beauty isn’t simply because of the colorful display. Psalm 19 talks about how the heavens are a sign of God’s craftsmanship. They display his glory for us. A sunset is a wordless wonder for us to appreciate, pointing us back to him.

In this way, our pursuit of beauty becomes a turnabout. We realize that the beauty of this world is part of God’s pursuit of us. He is drawing us to him. He is present in the natural world; he is there in creation because it is his. And we are his too. As children of God, we are created in the image of our Father. He is the one who created the heavens, the earth and its contents, and us, and called it all good. Because of him, we can comprehend the pleasure of the sun’s warm rays on our faces or the sand between our toes. He created us that way.

The truth is that when we pursue God, we find that he is already present. When we pause to take in an awe-inspiring sunset, we can take comfort in the larger truth it reminds us of: God’s glory is on display for all to see, if we’ll only take the time to notice it.

And there is a steadiness to God’s pursuit that is echoed in nature. The sun rises and sets every day, whether or not we notice it. God’s glory is on display, reminding us that God is the same yesterday, today,

CHASING SUNSETS

and forever. He is unchanging. He is steady. Immovable. Through creation, God is writing a message to humanity that remains the same: He is always ready, always waiting, boundless and eternal. But it's up to us to see creation for what it is—an invitation into the larger story he is writing, one in which humanity chases beauty and instead finds the God who created it.

Lord, thank you for the beauty of sunrises, sunsets, and everything you have created. May we take time to notice the beauty of the world around us today, using every glimpse of beauty as an opportunity to draw closer to you. May our awe for something as simple as a sunset remind us how awesome you are, how much you love us, and how—when we pursue you—we realize that you have been waiting for us all along. Amen.



