

GOD'S GARDEN

*How does
your soul
grow?*



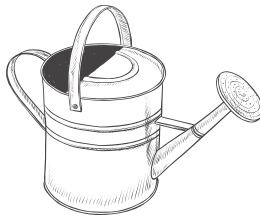
LENTEN

2019

DEVOTIONALS



PSALM 92:13



A NOTE FROM PASTOR JENN

Dear Lenten Gardeners,

We come to this season of Lent using the metaphor of a garden to dig deep into the work of God in our souls. In John 15, right before his arrest and trial, Jesus walks with the disciples and offers this as a part of his last words to them:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vineyard keeper. 2 He removes any of my branches that don't produce fruit, and he trims any branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit. 3 You are already trimmed because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch can't produce fruit by itself, but must remain in the vine. Likewise, you can't produce fruit unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything. 6 If you don't remain in me, you will be like a branch that is thrown out and dries up. Those branches are gathered up, thrown into a fire, and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples."

These six weeks leading to Easter we will focus on different work of the Gardener or Vineyard Keeper God in our souls. As we make our way with Jesus to the cross and Resurrection, we want to dig in and get our hands dirty into the garden of our faith journey to ensure we are cultivating a spiritual life which bears the fruit of God's Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Each week there will be a spiritual discipline to take up as another tool for us to be connected and present with the work of the Great Gardener. We invite you to use this devotional as a starting point for your work of getting your hands dirty so God can grow something glorious on Easter Sunday.

Here's to the work of growing beauty,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jennifer Stiles Williams". The ink is dark and the writing is fluid and personal.

The Rev. Jennifer Stiles Williams
Lead Pastor



MARCH 6

Are you ready to get your soul dirty?

Many people excuse themselves by claiming that they don't have to do work anymore because they are beyond it. They are simply afraid of getting their hands dirty. Getting your hands dirty washes your being. - Frederick Lenz

Often when we think about the ideal spiritual life, we envision a quiet, simple experience of scripture reading or prayer. The person we might see in our mind's eye might be one who is always peaceful and joyful, seeming not to have a care in the world.

In reality, though, spiritual exploration is not always (or even often) peaceful and quiet. More often it's messy. More often it's frustrating. More often it's challenging.

When we dig in to our spiritual experiences, it invites us to get our hands dirty. We dig in not only to texts from scripture, or prayer practices. Those practices invite us – require us, even – to dig deep into our own souls and beings. They require us to confront that which is not yet holy inside ourselves. They require us to really get our hands dirty – spiritually, and sometimes even physically.

We also think of the spiritual life as a goal to be achieved ... and yet, if we do it right, it continues to invite us deeper and wider all along the way. We are never complete. There is always more to explore.





MARCH 7

It's happened to all of us...you close your eyes to pray...

...nothing...nothing happens and you have no words to pray.

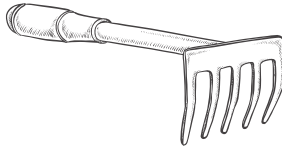
"God's command to 'pray without ceasing' is founded on the necessity we have of his grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it, than the body can without air."
- John Wesley

There is no wrong way to pray, but we often hear beautiful prayers that make our words to God seem inadequate. How do you find a way to speak with God when you can't find the words? You just begin.

Many refer to God in majestic language: *Holy Father, Mighty Creator*. Others refer to God more personally and intimately: *Oh God, Father God*

No matter how you choose to approach, God awaits the opportunity for our hearts to be open to see God more clearly each day.





MARCH 8

Spiritual discipline takes more time than we have in a world that moves 24/7.

“Let your heart guide you. It whispers, so listen closely.”

--The Land Before Time, 1988

We live in a world that is nonstop and scheduled in every moment. It takes something HUGE to stop us, to shock us into silence.

“The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

“Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”

--1 Kings 19-11:12

Because the world is so loud, we expect God to be LOUD, to shout for our attention. But what have we done to get God’s attention? Have we stopped and gotten silent to allow God to get a word in edgewise?





MARCH 9

"I'd rather regret the things I've done than regret the things I haven't done"
--Lucille Ball

Spiritual disciplines can become static...we return to the same prayers, bible verses, songs, and practices that we've done hundreds of times. Faithful spiritual practices remain fresh and open for God to move in our lives and breathe into us.

Beware familiarity in your spiritual practice. Returning to the same Bible stories can be a trigger to not reading it closely. Revisit scripture reading through the eyes of Jesus--you may find that this approach invites God to meet you in uncounted ways with unimagined consequences.

Slow down and encounter God, through spiritual disciplines, with the expectation of experiencing the Trinity in new and powerful ways.

Spiritual disciplines allow us to learn anew about the inescapable wonder of God's prevenient and everlasting grace which finds us, feeds us, and employs us each day.





ADULT
MINISTRY

LENTEN STUDIES 2019

View and register for classes on the St. Luke's app by selecting More... and then Adult Groups, or visit st.lukes.org/wednesday.

Pre-register for dinner (5:15 p.m. in Building C), and then join a small group Lenten study starting at 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS STARTING MARCH 13

Disciple I Fast Track: The New Testament • Cost: \$15

Fully engage with the biblical text in this bestselling Bible study! Join Pastor Jenn for this 12-week New Testament Study in Spring 2019! Each day, participants will focus on 3-5 chapters and weekly sessions will provide insight to the week's reading selections. Great choice for new believers and those seeking connection to the Bible.

NEW THIS SPRING: Distance Learners will be able to join by phone or video chat to participate with questions, comments, fellowship from anywhere in the world!

6:30 to 8:00 p.m. in Founder's Hall Distance Learning Classroom

Exegesis with Pastor Bill • Participants should bring their Bibles to class

Join Pastor Bill and millions of Christians around the world in consideration of biblical texts on the journey with Christ toward the cross. Each week participants will have the opportunity to explore the context, meaning, and significance of the text—before the Sunday sermon. Allow Lent to come alive in you!

6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Building C Attic

Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World • Cost: \$15

Join Pastor Jad in this transformative Lenten study. We will practice centering prayer, celebrate eucharist, and discuss "Life of the Beloved Henri", JM Nouwen's seminal book. This simple book is a sincere testimony of the power and invitation of Christ is indeed a great guide to a truly uplifting spiritual life in today's world.

6:30 to 8:00 p.m. in the Founder's Hall Smart Classroom

Understanding Spiritual Disciplines

Join Caryn Royer each week in the St. Luke's Prayer Labyrinth to look at each week's spiritual discipline: prayer, fasting, silence, and lectio divina. Learn the history of spiritual disciplines in Christian faith, and tips for using spiritual disciplines to deepen your faith.

6:30 to 8:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Financial Peace University (FPU) • Cost: \$100

Financial Peace is a 9-lesson money course that teaches step-by-step how to create a budget, pay off debt, spend wisely, and save for the future. Join fellow St. Lukers on the journey of freedom from debt and financial worry to unparalleled generosity.

6:30 to 8:00 p.m. in Building C, Room 208

Visit the St. Luke's app or st.lukes.org/wednesday to learn more about programs for children and youth.

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