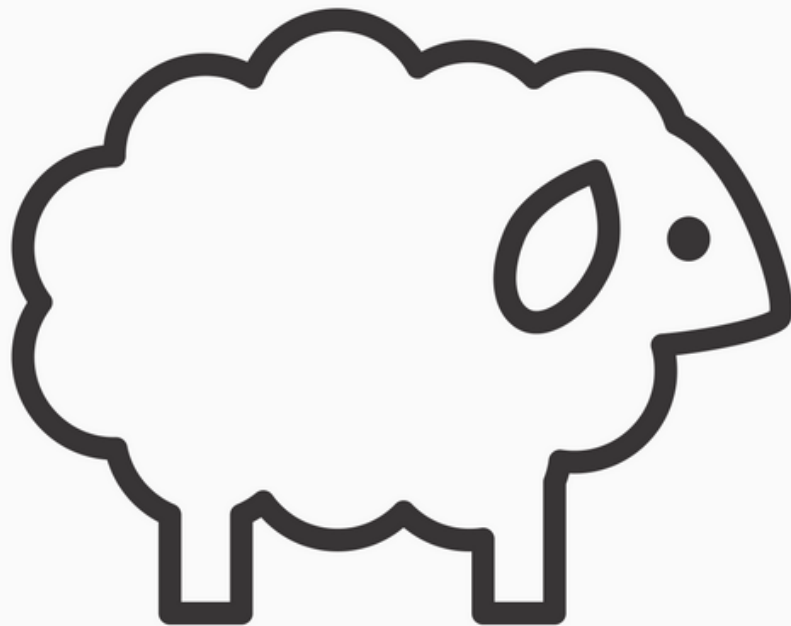


LENT CHALLENGE

"40 Day" Journey Of Preparing
Your Heart For Easter



Hello and welcome!

We are so glad you decided to do this retreat! We hope that this is a meaningful Challenge, one that brings you the depth and love of Jesus.

Everything we do at SpirituallyHungry.com is to provide you with tools to connect deeper with God. That's our mission, because we strongly believe there is nothing more important than staying close to God's love and presence.

So thanks for signing up, and we're excited for you!

A Little Bit About Us

Spiritually Hungry is a family - literally! Our names are Alexis and Aaron Waid, and we have been married for 9+ years. Prior to marriage, we were best friends for 7 years, before ever dating. We have been in each other's lives for 17 years and we approach life as a team.

We are both graduates of Denver Seminary, and each hold master's degrees from our wonderful alma mater. In addition, we both have served in various professional ministry positions, even as co-pastors together.

SpirituallyHungry.com is our new venture together, as we share our ministry online. On our site, we focus on making God accessible to people and helping them connect in meaningful, impactful ways. We deeply believe that what Jesus did 2,000 years ago has profound implications for us today. We really are all about Jesus, the fruit of His ministry, and the love God has for us.

Opening Thoughts

The Lent Challenge is our most intense challenge yet! We've created this Challenge to be an inner journey with you and God. But this Challenge isn't about doing - it's about being. We truly believe that if you follow this Challenge closely these next 6 weeks, your mind and heart on Easter Sunday will be transformed!

I (Alexis) have always loved Lent. I'm not sure why, exactly, but I think it has something to do with the "challenge" of it all. I was raised Roman Catholic and attended Catholic school for most of my elementary education, and attended a Catholic high school for 4 years.

Every Lent brought forth a new opportunity to challenge myself to give something up for the Lord. I have always loved challenges, so it's no wonder that my ministry site has a major component of spiritual challenges attached to it!

So... every year as Lent approached, I would think, "*What am I going to give up? It has to be something I love, something that will really be a challenge.*" Funny enough, I usually picked Sprite, because I loved Sprite so much as a youth. Of course, only a few days into Lent, (sometimes even hours) I found myself sneaking a sip and eventually just indulging myself in that bubbly lemon-lime pop (Oh yes, this Pittsburgh girl drank "pop" not "soda"!)

'*Well, there goes Lent,*' I would think. Of course children and youth have different perspectives and capabilities, but I do dare wonder how far off I was as a teenager from regular adult thinking about Lent.

Lent was always exciting in beginning. "*Could I do it?*" I wondered, every year. From the perspective of giving up something for 40 days, I don't think there was ever a Lent I "succeeded" in.

But that's what people, not just youth and kids, usually think. To succeed in Lent means to successfully give up something and stick with it the entire 6 weeks.

But is that what Lent means?

Is it about giving something up without faltering, cracking and caving in?

Actually, Lent is about preparation. Aligning one's heart and mind on the life, ministry and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It's a time in the Church calendar where Christians go without, practice discipline in an effort to take on more of the attributes of God.

Lent is much more than a Challenge, it's a way of life.

Guidebook

We have prayerfully crafted a guidebook that will help you in your journey this Lent.

If you have done a Spiritually Hungry Challenge before, please note that this one is a little bit different.

Instead of daily Challenges, the Lent Challenge will focus on six unique Spiritual Practices that will help you connect and reflect on God. The purpose of a weekly Spiritual Practices is to align your heart and mind on a single spiritual discipline for the entire week and to get the most out of it.

Since the durations of Lent changes every year, please use the below breakdown as a guide and accommodate to the current Lent calendar.

Challenge Breakdown

Week 1: First 11 Days : Prayer **Pages 6-9**

Week 2: Days 12-18 : Fasting **Pages 10-11**

Week 3: Days 19-25 : Scripture Saturation **Page 11**

Week 4: Days 26-32 : Journaling **Pages 12**

Week 5: Days 33-39 : Identifying with Jesus' Pain **Pages 13-17**

Week 6: Holy Week: Days 40 + : Silence **Pages 17-18**

Spiritual disciplines are a great tradition of the Church that date back centuries. In short, they are simple ways to connect with God. The intention is not to master the technique, but rather use it as a means to find your way to God.

Should you be interested in learning more spiritual disciplines check out the fabulous resource *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. It's been my favorite resources for years, and an essential purchase for anyone interested in connecting to God.

In addition, we have **two worksheets** for you. The first one is **Entrance Worksheet (p. 5)** that will help you align your head and heart to the Challenge before you. The second one is an **Exit Worksheet (p. 19)**, designed to help you better process the Challenge.

And finally, we have a **Facebook Challenge Group, Spiritually Hungry Challenges**, we would like to invite you to!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1051266348352753/>

In our group, we come together and talk about the current Challenge and spiritual development. Being part of this group will also allow you access to bonus content such as devotionals, Christian encouragement and prayers.

We hope this Lent is an amazing one for you. We hope that it is a time where a deep growth happens in you as you turn to God. We wish you a season where you can grow deeper into your relationship with God. A time where you walk moment by moment in His presence and love.

Should you have any questions or seek further guidance you can contact either of us at:
alexis@spirituallyhungry.com
aaron@spirituallyhungry.com

Before you start...

We would love for you to stop and fill out the Entrance Worksheet to help prepare your heart and mind for the Challenge. Again, you'll start off this Challenge with the "Entrance Worksheet" and in order for you to process the Challenge better, you will end the Challenge with the "Exit Worksheet."

Entrance Worksheet

#1 - Why did you decide to take this Challenge?

#2 - What does Lent mean to you? What is your previous history with Lent?

#3 - If you are deciding to give something up for Lent, what was your decision process like?

#4 - What would be the greatest outcome for you from this Challenge during this Lenten season?

#5 - Are you in community with anyone else observing Lent? If so, how might you encourage each other?*

***If you happen to not have a community, please join us in our community online where we will be encouraging each other this Lent. Facebook group Spiritually Hungry Challenges can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1051266348352753/>**

The 6 Week Lent Challenge Begins Here!

Week 1: Prayer

For the next week and a half you are going to devote yourself to prayer. There are MANY ways to pray, so feel free to experiment and utilize which ever ones you want. Switch it up and have fun connecting with God in different ways!

For each of the 11 days we have provided you with prayer prompts you can situate your prayers around. These are only suggestions, so feel free to add or amend to this list however suits you. Remember, the point in prayer is to connect to God.

Day One: Opening Up To God

In this Prayer Practice, you acknowledging you are entering a journey, in fact, a 6 week one! A journey will you desire to grow closer to God and prepare your heart for Easter.

Spend sometime with God today speaking about your desire to follow Him. Seek His way, His direction, His voice. Whether you do this prayer quietly, spoken, written or while in creation is solely up to you and where you find yourself most connected to God. Ask for help in preparing and following through with your Challenge.

The intention of this Prayer Practice (Opening Up To God) is to allow yourself to open up to the movement of God in your life. Be receptive to where He leads. This may not be obvious to you as you are praying, but be alert for God stirring and leading in you heart in the coming days and weeks. Often God speaks quietly and repetitively.

Day Two: Open Hands

This Practice goes along with the previous Prayer Practice from yesterday- Opening Up To God.

Did anything come up when you opened yourself up to God yesterday? Where might God be leading you to? Use where God is leading you as your inspiration for today's Prayer Practice.

Open Hands Description:

Think about the issue in your life that your holding on to. As you think about it, use your hands to symbolize the frustration, allowing them to ball up into fists. Focus your problem to your hands and welcome God into your mind. As you do, slowly release your problem to God and slowly unclench your hands until you have to open palms. This symbolic act is a prayer that helps release your problem to God. End the exercise with open hands that symbolize your willingness to trust God with your problems. Repeat this exercise as many times as needed to help align your heart and mind to God.

Day Three: Slowing

In today's Prayer Practice, we would like to you to look into slowing down with God. Literally, your goal today is to slow down.

Spend sometime with God examining the way you live your life. Are you in a rush? Tense? Stressed at times or most of the time?

Speak with God about the call to slow down. Lent is all about waiting, and slowing down will enable you to better take on the Challenge and embrace what God has for you.

Day Four: Breath Prayer

A breath prayer is a simple statement that you can use throughout the day to help you deal with your thoughts, stresses, and heart matter.

Breath prayer allows you to focus on the prayer and God, and it's incredibly simple.

To begin, first breathe in air while saying a name or title for God such as:

Jesus

Father

Spirit

Creator

Healer

Redeemer

Then, slowly exhale out your concern or desire such as: "Help me"

"Be with Me" "Comfort Me"

For example, you might slowly breathe in the name "*Jesus*," while thinking about Him and what He has to offer you. Then, you slowly exhale while saying, "*Keep me close to You*" and truly focus on releasing your concern into the loving arms of Jesus. Repeat this prayer as many times as needed.

Day Five: Listening

In this Prayer Practice, you will stop and remain in the presence of the Lord. Your objective is to receive God's conversation to you. Often in my case (Alexis), I am too busy talking to God to hear God.

Listening is designed to help you create space and intentionality for listening to God's voice. Spend some time today quietly sitting before the Lord without speaking. It may help to envision sitting with Jesus and trying to focus on what He is speaking to you.

Day Six: Prayer Throughout the Day

Being in connection with God throughout the day is a wonderful privilege Christians can participate in, but only if they are cognizant of God's presence. One way to become aware of God surrounding you is to pray throughout the day (and you get to use your phone to help you with this one!).

Set an alarm or reminder on your phone to come up every waking hour (or at least with a regular frequency) to remind you to stop and pray for a moment.

Think about what you would like to bring before God, and let that be the focus in your prayers. You might focus on the stresses you are facing, or you might simply pray to understand more about God's love for you. Honestly, you can focus on anything of importance to you - the main point of this exercise is the discipline required to complete it. When that alarm or notification sounds, stop everything and focus on an awareness of God's presence and speak with Him about what's on your heart.

Now I understand you may not physically be able to stop everything, but in your inner being, you can. It is a discipline that takes time to master. But in the inner sanctuary of your mind, you can build a place where you and God can meet in the midst of life.

Day Seven: Rest

Rest in the Lord today. Throughout your prayer time, seek how God tends to your soul and refuels you when you turn to Him. Examine with God your use of time and how often you rest. Do you rest enough or too much? What might God be calling you to do?

Day Eight: Centering Prayer

This Prayer Practice requires you to simply focus on making yourself present to God.

Begin by finding a comfortable place and focusing on the awareness of God's presence with you.

Simply be with God and rest in His love for you.

Focus on the reality that His love is overwhelming you, and try to allow yourself to experience it. As you do, center yourself into this truth and awareness. If your thoughts should wander, simply relax your mind and try to center yourself back to the presence of God.

If you happen to fall asleep, don't beat yourself up - maybe sleep is what your weary soul needs. Just like a parent who loves having their child rest soundly in their arms, rest soundly in the Lord's.

This practice could be done in a less than a minute, so don't try to overextend yourself.

Start off slow and intentionally understanding your limitations. Believe me, God will meet you where you are.

Day Nine: Praying with a friend, family member or loved one

Find a trustworthy friend who is committed in their relationship with God, and inquire if they would like to pray with you today. Meet, either in person, video chat, or phone. This is a great way to build a spiritual friendship and gain insight into how God works in human relationships.

Create a list of prayer topics for your session today. This will help guide you through your time with ease and fluidity.

Day Ten: Practicing the Presence

The whole purpose of this Prayer Practice is to help you walk with God no matter what you are doing, from washing dishes at home to sitting through a meeting at work. And even better...it's super simple!

Practicing The Presence means keeping in mind that God is with you as you go about your day.

For example:

As you are embarking on your daily chores: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.
As you are commuting to and from work or school: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.

As you are watching your children: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.

As you are meeting up with your friends for coffee: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.

As you are studying for a test: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.

As you are watching TV: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.

As you are working at the office: keep God's presence in the forefront of your mind.

You got the idea! Just keep renewing/refreshing the reality over you throughout your day that God is with you!

Day Eleven: Reflection

Spend some time with God today and reflect with Him the past eleven days. Talk to Him about connecting to Him in different ways. Dialogue about your favorite Practices and the ones you found more challenging.

Talk to God in a way that is most beneficial to you (out loud, writing, quietly, etc.)

Congrats the first "week" is over and we do hope you have learned some new ways to connect to God through prayer!

Week 2: Fasting

Did you know fasting is a type of prayer? It is a way to connect with God and hear His voice clearer.

There is much to say about fasting. It's a Spiritual Discipline that is designed to remove something such as food and replace it with God.

By removing food (or whatever you choose) you provide a conscious place for you and God to meet. You are saying no to something in order to say yes to God.

Two Golden Rules:

#1 Turn to God and ask Him for guidance in what would be best. Seek His way.

#2 The purpose of the fast is to replace an item with God. A fast isn't about accomplishment, endurance or ego. It is about turning to God instead of turning to the thing you are giving up. It's an exchange. It also isn't about dieting. Anything other than focus on God defeats the purpose of fasting.

You have many options on how you can do your fast this week.

Types of Fasts:

Time Fasts:

1 Day

3 Day

7 Day

After 12 pm each day

Every lunch for a week

Every Wednesday of Lent

Nourishment Fasts:

Food

Water

Meat

Daniel Fast

Sugar

Caffeine

Coffee

Luxury Fasts:

Social media

Television

Cell phone

Going out to eat

Driving your car

Conditions of the Heart Fasts:

Gossip

Complaining

Lust

Jealousy

Judgment

Pick one from the list and implement it this week. See how it goes. There is no format for this week because it's all about what you choose to give up and when and how. So enjoy this week: even though it is a challenge to fast, God is right there with you.

Week 3: Scripture Saturation

This Spiritual Practice is about allowing God's word to penetrate your mind, heart and actions. The desired outcome is to have Scripture saturating your day each day of this week, keeping your mind on God.

Having God's word on your mind and heart can transform your day and your life. As God's word penetrates you, your perspective and thoughts begin to attune to God.

How to do the Spiritual Practice of Scripture Saturation:

Each day this week, we provide for you Scripture to saturate your day with.

Pick a time each day to read the assigned Scripture.

We strongly suggest that you read in the morning before anything starts, that way you will start off the day with the word of God and allow it to shape your actions and thoughts.

Be mindful and attentive in your reading, don't allow your mind to wonder. Stay focused on centering your mind around the words you are reading.

Reread the passage several times and allow immerse yourself in the word of God.

Helpful tips you could implement:

Read aloud.

Write the Scripture out.

Read the Scripture with someone else.

Week 3 Format

Day One: Romans 12:1-2

Day Two: Psalm 23

Day Three: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Day Four: Isaiah 40:28-31

Day Five: John 15:1-17

Day Six: Galatians 5:13-26
Day Seven: John 21:15-25

Week Four: Journaling

Journaling is a great way to dive deeper into your emotions with God. Try to allow this to be more of a stream of consciousness than an exercise in “pretty writing.” Please try not to filter your writing. It’s supposed to be raw and messy. Allow what’s hidden in your heart to come forth through writing and God’s guidance.

Journal Topics

Day One: Examen

We want you to stop and look back on the Challenge so far. Reflect on what you have learned, what has been challenging and where you feel God is leading you. Write about it as your first journal entry.

Day Two: Heart Desires

Journal on the desires of your heart today. Whatever they may be, write about what’s stirring in your heart and what you desire in your life.

Day Three: Worship

Today is all about worshiping the King. As you journal, worship God through your words, trying to express in written form your emotions.

Day Four: Prayers for Others

Write your prayers for those on your heart, such as loved ones, community at large, organizations, and suffering regions throughout the world.

Day Five: Thanksgiving

Journal today about all the things you are thankful for, bringing to light the things you might be taking for granted. Thank God for all of these blessings.

Day Six: Forgiveness

What hurts might you be holding on to? Allow this time today to journal about your pain, disappointment and loss. Who or what might be holding you prisoner? Write about the things, people or memories where you hold resentment. You can even consider yourself in this equation, if you feel you have anger toward yourself as well. Write about what is in your heart and bring it before God, allowing Him to guide you through the process of forgiveness.

Day Seven: Love

We want you to spend the last day of this week journaling about love. What are your thoughts about it? What is your experience with it? And How do you understand and receive God's love? Explore the topic of love today and speak with God about your findings.

Week 5: Identifying with Jesus' Pain

Jesus was ultimately rejected by the vast majority of people that He loved, cared for and ministered to in His life.

Yes, He was loved by many, and He had friends in many of the places He visited. But He was also abandoned by the masses, and His friends fled in the face of opposition. Jesus faced detractors and opponents in virtually every community He entered. Much of His ministry was spent with death plots formulating around Him to end His influence on the nation.

In the span of a year and a half, Jesus went from being the most talked about preacher in ancient Palestine to dying the most despicable death reserved for traitors and hardened criminals. Certainly someone who had such a meteoric decent in stature would know something about suffering, right?

We write all of this because sometimes hearing the words "suffering" and "Jesus" we immediately jump to His crucifixion - and understandably so. The humiliation and cruelty of Jesus' death is undeniably the greatest pain He endured.

But Jesus' suffering didn't begin with His arrest.

Jesus didn't live a life of bliss up until His last couple days on Earth.

Jesus lived a lifetime of suffering.

In order to move towards health and truth - in order to see purpose, wisdom and growth in our suffering - we have to recognize fully and completely that Jesus knows what you're going through. And not just because He's God, the all-knowing and all-powerful God. But Jesus knows what you're going through because in His life, He faced a lot of pain, opposition, suffering, humiliation.

Jesus was put through a tremendous number of trials in His life. He was born in the ancient equivalent of a barn and He died in a way too terrible to think about closely without getting nauseated. And everything in between His birth and death wasn't much rosier.

When you pray, when you simply talk to Jesus, you're not talking to your typical King, who has lived a life of pampering, luxury and adoration. You're talking to the King of humanity, and He claimed that throne through His suffering. He understands the plight of His people because He himself has been there. Jesus didn't flee from suffering. He didn't call down the angels to save Him from His arrest. Jesus says He didn't call upon His power as God because He intended to fulfill Scripture. Jesus endured suffering fully and completely as a human being.

That's the thing - the purpose of Jesus' life...was to suffer. It was His destiny.

So as Easter is upon us, let's take this week to really explore what Jesus' rejection and suffering really looked like. With fresh eyes and a new focus, journey with Jesus to the Cross. See how His life looks a lot like yours.

For He too has seen and experienced much pain, rejection and loss and because of that He understands you better than you may realize.

Day One

Luke 4:14-30 NIV

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

23 Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

24 "Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Guiding Reflection Questions:

What do you see in this passage, what is happening?

How might you relate to this story? Have you ever felt attacked because of something you said or did?

What can you learn from Jesus' response to the threat?

Day Two
Matthew 8:18-20 NIV

18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake.
19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."
20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, **but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.**"

Guiding Reflection Questions:

What do you think Jesus meant by His response in v. 20?

How might you be able to see a correlation between your life (past and present) and Jesus' proclamation of having no home?

Day Three
Luke 6:6-11 NIV

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 **The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely** to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.
9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" 10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 **But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.**

Guiding Reflection Question:

Have you ever felt watched? Talked about? Plotted against? Most of Jesus' ministry was surrounded by a huge shadow of opposition and doubt. Imagine for a moment, being in Jesus' position 2,000 years ago.

How might you and Jesus have felt the same things and experienced the same things. Speak with Jesus about your encounters with people slandering you. Ask Him how He felt.

Day Four
Matthew 14:10-13a NLT

10 So John was beheaded in the prison, 11 and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. 12 Later, John's disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.
13 **As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone.**

Guiding Reflection Questions:

Have you ever lost a loved one? Jesus did, and his ministry counterpart and cousin, John the Baptist is just one example.

Jesus understands death and experienced grieving while here on earth. He knows what loss feels like from the human perspective. How might this help you in your walk with God?

Day Five

John 15:18-20 NIV

18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that **it hated me first**. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also**. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

Guiding Reflection Questions:

This isn't just sage advice, Jesus lived this reality. The world hated, and still does, hate Him. What do you think about this?

If the world hated Jesus, how might you find a correlation to Jesus in some of the opposition you have faced in your own life?

Day Six

Matthew 26:69-75 NIV

69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

70 But he denied it before them all. “**I don’t know what you’re talking about**,” he said.

71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

72 He denied it again, with an oath: “**I don’t know the man!**”

73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

74 **Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”**

Immediately a rooster crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Guiding Reflection Questions:

Just like with Judas, Jesus predicted what would happen, but does that make it any easier? Has anyone ever abandoned you? How about your best friend or maybe even a parent or spouse?

Imagine Jesus in this moment in history, it's His arrest and imminent death. And He is all alone - the only ones there are His accusers. Have you ever felt that way? Speak with Jesus about His experience and your experience with abandonment.

Day Seven

Mark 15:16-20 NIV

16 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17 They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18 And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19 Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20 And when they had **mocked him**, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Guiding Reflection Questions:

Have you ever been mocked or ridiculed?

Obviously Jesus has - how might you two be able to grow closer because of a shared understanding in rejection and isolation?

Week 6: Silence

How much silence do you have in your life? We all tend to fill up our days with noise. Our TV's are on, music in the car, conversation and talking throughout the day. None of these are bad, however, there should be a counter-balance to the noise in your life.

Because it is often in silence where we can hear God.

Consider the story of Elijah seeking God, from 1 Kings 19:11-13a NIV

11 The Lord said (to Elijah), "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. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Consider what this means in your personal life with God. What might you glean from this story and how might silence be a profitable practice for you?

So what is silence? Susan Muto, the author of Am I Living a Spiritual Life?: Questions And Answers For Those Who Pray, states:

"To be silent is not merely to be mute. Spiritual silence is an emptying of self to make room for God. Ultimately it is only silence that can open us to a deeper experience of God." (p. 29)

That is what silence is all about, opening yourself up to God in a different way, by removing noise.

This Lent you have tried different spiritual practices with the intention of preparing your heart for the Cross and the Grave. As you enter in Holy Week, try the Discipline of Silence this week.

This week is a memorial week, a somber week, a serious week. We at Spiritually Hungry couldn't help but to feel called to direct you to the Practice of Silence before the awesomeness of Easter.

This week is not formatted. We couldn't even imagine how to direct you more in the Practice of Silence. We do however have some suggestions for this week, that should help you in your endeavor.

Make space everyday this week to be silent.

Perhaps set aside 15 or 30 minutes in the evening to be silent with the Lord. That means finding a quiet, distraction free zone, one where you won't be interrupted by noise. Nature may be a good place to do this as well, maybe during lunch, or some other break in the week. You might consider stopping by your church every day this week and asking to use the sanctuary for your silent time.

Other places you can find silence is in your car, by avoiding the use of the radio or phone. You might also find silence while taking a shower or bath. You might also consider taking a walk with no one but you and God.

Make sure you set a timer, you don't want to keep checking the time to see how much silence you have left. Setting a timer will help you release you to relax and focus on God.

And finally we wanted to share with you a spiritual exercise that may equip you this week:

Unplugging

This practice is about becoming unconnected to the world so you can connect to God. For a set period of time, i.e. 30 mins, 4 hours, a whole day etc., try not use technology. Simply turn off your cell phone. Don't use social media.

Keep the TV off.

Don't listen to the radio.

By shutting out the world, you can open yourself to the still quiet voice of God.

We are often over stimulated in our fast noisy world, but God very frequently speaks to us in the stillness and quietness of our inner being.

Exit Worksheet is on the next page

Exit Worksheet

#1 - Which week (spiritual practice) was your favorite and why?

How might you be able to incorporate this practice into your life more?

#2 - Which week (spiritual practice) was the most challenging for you and why?

#3 - Over the past six weeks, you have spent an enormous amount of energy and intentionality on your relationship with God and preparing for the Empty Grave! How do you think your relationship with God has grown over this time period?

Did you learn anything new about you, God and/or your relationship with Him?

#4 -Do you think Easter was different for you this year? If so, why and how?

If so, how could you make each Christian holidays more impactful?

Final Prayer

God, Thank you for walking with me this Lenten season. I have learned a lot about You, myself and our relationship. This time has been precious, and I thank you for this opportunity to grow closer to you in this way. Help me to go forth continuing to seek you in all that I do. Amen.

Final Note

We hope that you had a great 6 weeks - a time where you experienced and connected to God on a whole new level.

We at Spiritually Hungry have lots of ways to connect to God. We have created a lot of Challenges and you maybe interested in trying another one out. We would love to have you come by again! To check out our current challenges at spirituallyhungry.com/challenges.

In addition we have other opportunities for you to grow in your relationship with God.

- **Spiritually Hungry Challenges**

What would it look like if you devoted a period of time to working on a character trait or a discipline with God? Would your life change?

We believe so! By consciously working on attributes with God, we believe that your life will become different. Can you imagine if you took on more of God's character, how different things would be?

Some of our past Challenges include

Cultivating A More Thankful Heart

Living In Joy

Loving Your Spouse Through God's Definition Of Love

You can find all of our Challenges at spirituallyhungry.com/challenges

- **Facebook Challenge Group**

In addition we have a Facebook group, Spiritually Hungry Challenges
[**www.facebook.com/groups/1051266348352753/**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1051266348352753/)

In our group, we come together and talk about the current Challenge and spiritual development. Being part of this group will also allow you access to bonus content such as devotionals, Christian encouragement and prayers.

- **Workshops**

We are currently developing workshops and anticipate having the first published on our site before you complete the Lent Challenge. Workshops intended to help you work through the problems you face everyday, and uncover new thought and direction for dealing with them. In addition, each Workshop takes no more than 30 minutes to

complete! You can check the status of workshops at www.spirituallyhungry.com/christian-workshops

- **Spiritually Hungry Take Home Retreats**

Take Home Retreats:

Self-Care

It is crafted for the person who gives, and gives, and gives some more. You need a break and some rest. It's time to take care of yourself with God, spend three days resting, relaxing and refueling with God.

Married Couple's Retreat

Designed for any married couple. The theme is discerning where God is calling your marriage. This retreat is simple and nonthreatening. Designed by both of us, to ensure both genders would feel comfortable doing the retreat. We hope to help you take a small step in God's direction, moving from A to B, not A to Z. The retreat also has time during the weekend for you and your spouse to enjoy doing fun things together, of your choosing!

You can find our retreats at spirituallyhungry.com/retreats

- **Articles**

Spiritually Hungry also has a lot of great posts on spiritual growth and development. We love to help people find ways to grow closer to God and one of those ways is through knowledge and truth.

Some of our top posts are:

How To Be The Light Of The World:

<http://spirituallyhungry.com/how-to-be-the-light-of-the-world/>

Why God Wouldn't Let Me Lose Weight:

<http://spirituallyhungry.com/weight-loss-with-god/>

20 Worship Songs For The Sad Heart:

<http://spirituallyhungry.com/20-worship-songs-for-depression/>

What To Think About Unanswered Prayers:

http://spirituallyhungry.com/unanswered_prayers/

Thank you again for participating and we hope we see you over at our website!