



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 2:13 -25

In Jerusalem during Passover many people put their faith in Jesus, because they saw him work miracles. But Jesus knew what was in their hearts, and he would not let them have power over him.

Theme: Jesus knows what is in our hearts.

Do you know anybody who can look right through you, into your heart? Parents sometimes seem to have this uncanny ability: they can read the honesty (or lack of) on a child's face or see through the put-on cheerfulness to the hurt within. Husbands and wives, or best friends have this ability too. Jesus knows us even better than parents, husbands, wives or friends. He knows us inside and out. He knows what is in our hearts.

Family Moment

Jesus knows what is in our hearts. How do we feel about that today? Is there anything we need to do to set our hearts right with Jesus?

Living the Message

Each family member can create a simple prayer symbol—a heart with the words “Jesus, you know what is in my heart.” Individuals place their hearts where they will see them regularly.

Prayer Moment

Using the prayer symbols created above, pause during the day to say, “Jesus, you know what is in my heart.”



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Luke 13:1 -9

“Do you think that these people were worse sinners than everyone else in Galilee just because of what happened to them? Not at all! But you can be sure that if you don't turn back to God, every one of you will also be killed.”

Theme: Turning back to God.

We can really make a mess of things sometimes, can't we? Hurt happens. Feelings of love and harmony and all those good things can be in short supply. Jesus has a solution for us sinners. “Turn back to God.” We need to become more God-focused. This might require forgiveness, being sorry, changing our behavior, willing to love when there is no feeling of love.

Family Moment

See if your family can come up with Scripture stories of people who turned away from God but then turned back to God (the prodigal son). How about people you know or have heard about, who were walking away from God but then returned to God? Share a story.

Living the Message

Ask for forgiveness from someone who you have turned away from.

Prayer Moment

Forgiving God, we are grateful that there is always the opportunity to turn back to you, when we lose our way and drift apart from you, you wait for us to come back to your love. Give us the strength to let go of our pride when we sin, and to turn back to you. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: 2Corinthians 5:20 -6:2

What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world.

Theme: Be reconciled through Christ.

What if... the solicitor on the phone or at the door offered you "peace and forgiveness, no strings attached." We'd probably hesitate before hanging up or shutting the door—or we might think, "Yeah, *right*." The fact is, Jesus is at the door, he's on the phone, he's offering us peace and forgiveness. Do we hang up, do we shut the door?

Family Moment

Check the schedule at your parish to see when the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated. Put it on your family calendar.

Living the Message

Reach out in forgiveness and reconciliation to a family member.

Prayer Moment

Take some quiet moments to examine the areas of your life where you need Jesus' peace and forgiveness.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 6:1 -6, 16-18

"When you do good deeds, don't try to show off."

Theme: Lenten practices.

Show-offs can be really annoying, can't they? And we think, "Oh, how foolish they are." Of course it's not possible that we flaunt our good deeds, is it? No, only other people do that. Well, apparently, the Jesus who knows us so well also knows that our tendency might be to show off—to make sure everyone knows how holy and righteous we are. He assures us that this is really a lousy use of our energy, that quiet devotion and sacrifice are more pleasing to God than showy demonstrations.

Family Moment

Which Lenten practices is your family observing? How are you being faithful to these practices?

Living the Message

Do a quiet act of kindness for another person today.

Prayer Moment

Lord, may we be steadfast and faithful in our Lenten practice. (Family members name things they are doing for Lent.) Through the grace of your son, and the power of your Spirit, give us the energy and the perseverance to stick with our Lenten commitments. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Luke 9:22 -25

"If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross each day and follow me."

Theme: Take up your cross.

How hard it is to forget about ourselves! Particularly in a culture which screams the opposite in so many ways. We begin to feel entitled to what we want, to the detriment of others. Jesus preaches about losing ourselves, becoming as nothing. It takes this gutsy kind of living to carry the cross with him.

Family Moment

What does Jesus mean when he says we have to forget about ourselves? What does he mean when he says we have to take up our crosses each day and follow him? What cross do we carry?

Living the Message

A person in your family, at school, at work or in your community might be carrying a particularly heavy cross right now. Figure out a way you can help.

Prayer Moment

Place a family cross in a prayer place in the center of your home. Every time you notice the cross today pray, "Jesus, be with me as I carry my cross and as I help others carry theirs. Amen."



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Isaiah 58:1 -9

"Do you think the Lord wants you to give up eating and to act as humble as a bent-over bush? . . . I'll tell you what it really means to worship the Lord."

Theme: Fasting that pleases God.

In the Scripture reading, Isaiah is clear that the Lord has little time for acts of worship that are empty. Why fast for a day if you're only going to think about yourself? Why give alms if you're going to abuse your workers? If our worship is real, we can't help but be in the business of removing chains of oppression, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked.

Family Moment

How well does our family worship the Lord?

Living the Message

Re-read Isaiah 58:6-7. Choose a way to do one of the things which Isaiah suggests.

Prayer Moment

Lord, teach us what it really means to worship you. Help this family's light shine like the dawning sun because of how we reach out to those in need. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 25:31 -46

"When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink."

Theme: For the least among us.

Jesus tells us that he is in the faces of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned. The least loveable among us—that is where Jesus is. And he is rather clear—"feed me, clothe me, visit me. . . and the reign of God will be yours."

Family Moment

In our community, where are the hungry, the naked, the most forgotten? How can we reach out to them?

Living the Message

Choose one simple way your family will reach out to a forgotten person today (i.e., pack a lunch and give it to the homeless person who stands at the intersection, purchase a children's game and drop it off at the nearest family shelter).

Prayer Moment

Lord, today we lift up to you the lonely and most forgotten people in our community. Through our actions and our prayers may they experience your love and care. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Leviticus 19:1 -2, 11-18

"Don't hold grudges. On the other hand, it's wrong not to correct someone who needs correcting. Stop being angry and don't try to take revenge."

Theme: Letting go of hatred.

So much of how we are supposed to live is easier said than done, isn't it? We really want to hold onto that grudge sometimes. We really want to hang onto our anger and return hurt for hurt. Yet when we hold on to grudges, to anger, when our energy is focused on revenge, our hearts cannot be at peace in Jesus. He pulls us towards him. He says, "Let go."

Family Moment

What is a grudge? Why do we hold grudges? How does it feel?

Living the Message

Choose to let go of a grudge today, to let go of anger, or to abandon a plan for revenge.

Prayer Moment

Dear Jesus, we offer to you all of our struggles in trying to love each other well. Help us to let go of hurts and of anger, and to hold onto the peace and forgiveness you offer. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 6:7 -15

"You should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, help us to honor your name."

Theme: Prayer.

"The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2685) The home is where children learn to pray, where they learn to persevere in prayer. At home, prayer awakens the family to Christ's presence.

Family Moment

What is our family's definition of prayer? Based on this definition, how good are we at being pray-ers?

Living the Message

Choose a time to pray together as a family every day. Try to persevere with your prayer time in the home.

Prayer Moment

Light a candle. Slowly pray the Our Father. Offer each other God's peace.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 7:7 -12

"Everyone who asks will receive. Everyone who searches will find. And the door will be opened for everyone who knocks."

Theme: Are we guilty of meager expectations?

Do we have meager expectations of what Jesus can do in our lives? What if we truly believed and trusted in these verses of Scripture? Do we believe in a Lord who wants everything that is good for us? Do we believe in a Lord who waits for us to ask, who hopes that we will seek him, who stands at the door to open it if only we would knock?

Family Moment

What have we asked the Lord for recently? How has Jesus answered our prayers? What doors can Jesus open for us today?

Living the Message

Write a family prayer based on this formula:

Lord, we ask for (name what family members ask for);

Lord, we seek (name what family members seek);

Lord, open the door of (name a virtue such as love, peace, forgiveness) for us. Amen.

Prayer Moment

Pray the prayer your family wrote.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 5:12

"Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about."

Theme: Treating others well.

This advice: "Treat others as you want them to treat you" is so simple, so rationale, so right. Then why is it so hard? If only these words could be before us always—such as when we are yelling angry words, losing our patience, gossiping, posed in stony silence . . . all the times when we dish out what we ourselves hate to take.

Family Moment

Talk about some ways the family can concentrate on "treating others as you want them to treat you."

Living the Message

Determine a code word or phrase with which family members can gently and with kindness remind each other about the way we should treat each other. What changes do we notice around our home?

Prayer Moment

In silence, recall the experiences of your day, particularly your actions and attitudes towards others. Ask Jesus' forgiveness for the time you did not treat others well today.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 5:20-26

"So if you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God."

Theme: Making things right with people in your life.

Lent is a time of spiritual housecleaning. A part of this cleaning is setting things right with the people in our lives.

Family Moment

Describe what it is like in your family when you are all getting along well with each other. Who do you need to make peace with in your family?

Living the Message

Today, make peace with the person or persons in your family who you haven't been getting along with well lately.

Prayer Moment

Lord, make me a channel of your peace. Where there is division and hatred, may I sow love, where there is injury, help me to forgive, where I cause pain, help me to be truly sorry. I look to you, merciful Jesus, for strength and compassion as I set things right with the people in my life. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 5:43 -48

"But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you."

Theme: Love my enemies?

Who are my enemies? The list, long or short, demands my attention. Love is what Jesus requires of me—love for those on that list. Love and prayer for those who mistreat me.

Family Moment

Why does Jesus want us to love our enemies? What is difficult about what he asks us to do—that is, love our enemies and pray for those who mistreat us?

Living the Message

Make a commitment to reach out to the one person who you haven't been getting along with well lately. Say a prayer for someone who has hurt you.

Prayer Moment

Holy God, help us to re-build the bridges of peace and love between each other, even our enemies. May our home be a model of reconciliation, of compassion, of mercy. We ask this through Jesus, our model. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Luke 15:1 -3, 11 -32

"But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

Theme: Celebrating reconciliation.

Notice the reaction of the father when the prodigal son returns. He orders party supplies immediately! Once the preparations have started, he waits with open arms to welcome his son to the celebration. How Jesus celebrates when we return to him!

Family Moment

Share stories of reconciliation and forgiveness. Focus on the celebration. How has your family celebrated reconciliation lately?

Living the Message

Forgiveness is something to celebrate! Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation together. Mark the occasion with a special meal or time of family togetherness.

Prayer Moment

Jesus, for your gift of forgiveness, I am always grateful. May this gift be a big part of my life. I celebrate in your arms. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 4:5 -42

A lot of Samaritans in that town put their faith in Jesus because the woman had said, 'This man told me everything I have ever done.'

Theme: Lord, show myself to me.

The story of the woman at the well is one of the most awesome teachings about faith and discipleship. Watch what Jesus does—he draws the woman out of herself, looks into her soul, and he shows the woman who she really is and who she can be. Once she tastes the living water Jesus offers, she can't help but share her discovery with others.

Family Moment

Talk about the symbol of water. How is water used in your home? Name what would happen if the water was turned off for a day, a week, a month. How is Jesus "living water?" Is this "living water" a part of your home? Is it turned on?

Living the Message

Quench the "thirst" of someone you know. Choose an action that will bring Jesus to him or her.

Prayer Moment

Pray for people and situations thirsting for the love of Jesus. After each prayer respond with: "Jesus, who gives us living water, hear our prayer."



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Mark 12:28 -34

"People of Israel, you have only one Lord and God. You must love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.' The second most important commandment says: 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' No other commandment is more important than these."

Theme: Love of God and love of neighbor.

These two commandments are our framework for living. They are a criteria for the choices we make, an assessment tool for our actions and attitudes. They are the two habits of highly effective Christians.

Family Moment

Using a sheet of paper divided into two columns, brainstorm two lists. Title one column: "Love God." In this column name lots of ways to love God. Title the other column "Love Neighbor as Self." In this column, name lots of ways to love our neighbor.

Living the Message

Circle several ideas from each column. Turn these ideas into action this week.

Prayer Moment

Lord, grant that today I may love you and my neighbor a little more fully than yesterday. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Luke 18:9 -14

"If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored."

Theme: Humility.

Humility isn't about wallowing in our inadequacies and putting ourselves down. It is about knowing the truth about ourselves, knowing both the gifts with which the Lord has blessed us, and knowing that these gifts are not ours but God's.

Family Moment

Talk about what humility is. When was the last time you publicly recognized someone else for something he or she did well? How is Jesus a model of humility? Find a passage in the Gospels when he recognizes his father.

Living the Message

Jesus always points us to God, his father. He put God first and died on the cross for us. Decide on a way to put Jesus first in your life this week.

Prayer Moment

Jesus, give us a humble Spirit, to always acknowledge you as our Lord and our God. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 9:1 -41

The man said, 'Lord, I put my faith in you!' Then he worshipped Jesus.

Theme: The light of faith.

A little spit and sand to make mud, and Jesus cures a man of his blindness. So now this man can see, physically see. But this Gospel is about a lot more than 20/20 vision. It is about faith, and Jesus as the light...it is about the spiritual ability to see Jesus for who he is—to see with the eyes of faith.

Family Moment

Who wears glasses in your family? What is it like for those with poor eyesight when they don't have their glasses or contacts on? Can they see well? How and what does Jesus want us to see? What kind of blindness does he want to cure in us?

Living the Message

Eyes of faith can see the need for Jesus in the world. Put on the eyes of faith. What do you see? What need can you take care of today, for Jesus?

Prayer Moment

Spend five to ten minutes in reflection: Light a candle. Play quiet instrumental music. Repeat: "Jesus, you bring light where there is darkness."



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 11:1 -45

Jesus then said, 'I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?'

Theme: Resurrection.

Lazarus was dead, and through the power of Jesus he walked out of his own tomb. Imagine that. But Lazarus would die again someday. His resurrection wasn't forever...yet. In other words, he was resurrected back to life as we know it. What Jesus did with Lazarus was a preview of coming attractions—resurrection of the body to life everlasting, to life in eternity with God. Lazarus' resurrection was a sign that eternity with God would be an option.

Family Moment

What is Jesus showing us by how he brought Lazarus back to life?
What does Jesus promise us, if we choose him?

Living the Message

Write a note to a family member or a friend who has experienced the death of a loved one recently. Share the message of eternal life through pictures and words.

Prayer Moment

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who come to me, even though they die, shall live."



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 8:12 -20

"I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life."

Theme: Jesus is the light of the world.

It's bad enough to be walking in the dark, literally. It's hard to get from one place to another without being able to see where we are going. The same principle applies to the spiritual journey. And Jesus lights up that journey for us. With him, we don't have to walk in the dark.

Family Moment

Take turns blindfolding each other and challenging each other to get from one end of the room to the other. Talk about the images of darkness and light. How does the light of Jesus guide us everyday? What does his light make possible in our lives? How does his light make a difference?

Living the Message

Take a moment to complete this one sentence for each member of your family, "You show me the light of Jesus by"

Prayer Moment

Light of Christ, shine! Enter all of the dark areas of my life. May your light lead me to God. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 8:51 -59

"I tell you for certain that even before Abraham was, I was, and I am."

Theme: "I am..."

We use the verb "to be" all the time. "I am, you are, we will be" and so forth. Our "to be's" are always followed by something else like "I am tired" or "you are lovely." God's "to be" requires nothing else, no descriptor—because God "is." Try thinking about that...try praying about that.

Family Moment

Ask each family member to describe himself or herself by filling in the blank: "I am..." Then ask family members to describe each other by filling in the blank: "You are..." Finally, together, fill in the blank for your family: "We are ..." How would God respond if we asked God to fill in the blank: "I am..." Do you think God would fill in the blank? Did God fill in the blank for Abraham?

Living the Message

Look for an opportunity to share something about who God is with someone else. Tell someone about God's all encompassing kind of love.

Prayer Moment

Let God's words, "I am," be the focus of your prayer and reflection today.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 13:21 -33, 36 -38

"I tell you for certain that one of you will betray me."

Theme: Betrayal.

We have a problem with Judas. He turned Jesus in, after all! Our righteous indignation screams "How could he have done that? What was he thinking? What a loser!" So we judge Judas rather than consider our own failures to be faithful and trustworthy...because if we did examine our own motives and actions, we might seem too much like him.

Family Moment

What does it mean to betray someone? How does this happen? What are some examples of betrayal in our lives, in our world? Do we ever betray Jesus? How?

Living the Message

Set out to repair a relationship in your life which has been damaged by betrayal.

Prayer Moment

Jesus, help me to be honest in my relationships, help me to be true to you. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 12:20 -33

"I tell you for certain that a grain of wheat that falls on the ground will never be more than one grain unless it dies. But if it dies, it will produce lots of wheat. If you love your life you will lose it. If you give it up for this world, you will be given eternal life."

Theme: Dying to self.

Seeds are hard. They feel hard. Especially seeds such as a grain of wheat. The grain must fall to the ground and enter the darkness of the soil in order for its hard shell to break, and for the seed to become more than just a seed. We can hardly see the grain of wheat, it is as nothing, that is until the wheat bursts forth.

Family Moment

Buy a few grains of wheat at a health food store. Pass them around. Feel them. What do they feel like? Jesus compares us to a grain of wheat. What does he mean?

Living the Message

Do something today that requires real sacrifice, that requires you to die to yourself.

Prayer Moment

Place the grains of wheat at your family table today. Pray together: Help us, Lord Jesus, to be as these grains of wheat which fall to the ground, die and burst forth with abundant life. May we allow you to break through our shells so that we will bear much fruit for you in this world. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Philippians 3:8 -14

"All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, so that somehow I also may be raised to life."

Theme: Our resurrection from the dead.

Knowing Christ and following in his footsteps is a tall order. Suffering and death are a part of the package. But the return for our investment into a life focused on Jesus Christ is our own resurrection from the dead.

Family Moment

Every time we do something which is Christ-like, we make a sort of deposit into the "eternal life bank." What kind of deposits have we made lately?

Living the Message

Suffer for Christ today. Hold your tongue when someone ridicules you. Stand up for what you believe in even if you are the only one.

Prayer Moment

Shut your eyes and see Christ's footsteps in front of you. What is your next step?



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 8:1 -11

"If any of you have never sinned, then go ahead and throw the first stone at her!"

Theme: Accusations and judgments.

We are not unlike the people in this Gospel—we stand ready to hurl stones at others, accusing and judging them, many times without knowing the full story, and certainly most of the time without considering our own faults and failings. Once again, Jesus goes straight to the heart of the matter: "Go ahead, throw the first stone!"

Family Moment

Talk about the Gospel passage. When are we like the people in the Gospel? When do we try to hurt people by pointing our fingers at all the things they do wrong?

Living the Message

Ask someone you have hurt by judging or accusing them for their forgiveness. Share with another person your struggles to be faithful to the Gospel.

Prayer Moment

Find a stone the size of your fist. Place it where you will see it today. Pray, "Lord, I am sorry for *my* sins."



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 18:21 -35

"How many times should I forgive someone who has done something wrong to me? Is seven times enough?"

Theme: Forgiving —over, and over, and over again.

Another toughie. One-time forgiveness just isn't going to do it. What this means is that if someone hurts me, not just once but over and over and over again, my only response (or at least the *right* response) is forgiveness—again and again and again and again. Whoa.

Family Moment

Talk about the things that we do over and over and over again that hurt each other. Talk about what it takes for us to forgive each other over and over and over again. What keeps us from forgiving this much?

Living the Message

Write 70 x 7 on a piece of paper. Post it on the refrigerator. Let it remind us to keep forgiving, over and over and over again.

Prayer Moment

Pray the Our Father together. Pay particular attention to the words about forgiveness.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: Luke 23:1-49

Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when you come into power!'

Theme: To be with Jesus.

Imagine being there and watching this scene—the exchange between the penitent thief and Jesus. What an awesome witness of one whose desire is to be with Jesus. Jesus responds to the thief's desire: "Come—paradise is for you!" And isn't that our destiny as well? Is it our desire?

Family Moment

Take on the roles of the people at the foot of the cross. You hear the exchange between Jesus and the "good" thief hanging next to him. What are you and those around you talking about?

Living the Message

Find someone to share with or write in a journal. Talk or write about your desire to be with Jesus. Decide on something you can do to be a person not only heading for Jesus, but leading others to him as well.

Prayer Moment

Lord Jesus, give me the desire, everyday, to be with you. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 13:1-15

"Do you understand what I just did for you? ... I have set an example and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you."

Theme: The one who serves.

He knelt down on the floor, rolled up his sleeves and washed a lot of what must have been very dirty feet. The apostles didn't wear sneakers, or loafers ... Hollywood portrays them in sandals. Their feet could not have been very clean—enough to convince me that Jesus' action was one of service.

Family Moment

Do you think the apostles understood what Jesus did for them when he washed their feet? How do we follow Jesus' example to serve one another?

Living the Message

Decide on an ongoing family service project and participate in it together.

Prayer Moment

Lord, when you washed your apostles feet, you were showing us what we should do—place ourselves in service to each other. Help us find ways to reach out to those who can benefit from the gifts of service this family has to offer others. Amen.



Lenten Moments

Focusing Scripture: John 18:1 -19:42

One of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side, and blood and water came out. We know this is true because it was told by someone who saw it happen. Now you can have faith too.

Theme: The Passion.

We watch, we listen, we touch, we feel. Are we bit players, "extras" in this high drama, or are we the main characters? Do we see ourselves among the mobs in Jerusalem...in the Garden of Gethsemane...in the temple precincts...in the Roman procurator's palace...on the road to Calvary...at the foot of the cross. Do we see ourselves in Jesus' eyes as he dies for us?

Family Moment

Read the Passion of Jesus together as a family. With which part or person can you relate today?

Living the Message

Identify the places in your community and in the world where suffering and death is a common scene. How can your family help?

Prayer Moment

Dear Jesus, by your most holy cross, you have redeemed the world. Amen.