Table of Contents

Introduction 2
   Lectio Divina 4
   The Way Around 5
   Daily Suggestions 10
      Morning 11
      Evening 12
Deborah Mikesell 13
Psalm 51 NIV 14
Ken Via 16
Lord Who Throughout These Forty Days 17
Mark McKinney 18
Kallie Blanks 19
Kim Arris-Potter 20
Diane Kesterson 21
The General Rules of the Methodist Church 22
Bill Shewchuk 25
Pat Mills 26
Matthew 25:31-40 NIV 27
Servant Ministry 28
Gail Von Mosch 29
Katie Blanks and Tim Hirschman 30
Zailynn’s Grandma 31
The Scripture Way of Salvation 32
Thalia Lay Servant 33
A Prayer for Serenity 34
Carl Von Mosch 35
A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis 36
Mary Harryman 37
Writing a Rule of Life 38
Leading By Not Doing 39
Prayers by John Wesley 40
Mark 11:1-11 CEB 43
John 13:1-17 CEB 44
John 18 - John 19 CEB 45
What Wondrous Love Is This 50
John 20 CEB 51
Christ the Lord is Risen Today 53
Timelines 54
Introduction

Have you ever heard the right words at the right time? One of the ways we want to encourage you is sharing a time for devotion with the rest of the church family. We put together a custom devotional guide for Lent. People from our church family prayerfully submitted these devotions for friends and family from Thalia.

This devotional guide has been a labor of love. It is not intended to be read in one sitting. Instead, it is designed to be used as a resource on your Lenten journey. We want people of all ages to be part of this opportunity to grow spiritually during the season of Lent as we prepare for Easter.

Our heartfelt prayer, for the friends and family of Thalia UMC, is that we will experience the joy of living and loving like Jesus. Everything contained in this little booklet is intended to inspire and energize you on your walk with Jesus.

As we follow Jesus over time, we begin to see a pattern emerge. There is a flow. Grace seems to follow a rhythm. Grace comes to us from Christ through his Church. The Church embodies that grace through practices of devotion and kindness (piety and mercy, as the Wesleys would say). Relationships evolve from casual acquaintances into deep friendships, which become more like family. The cycle continues. Grace goes round and round as we, the church family, practice devotion and kindness the way Jesus did.

This is the way we experience the joy of living and loving like Jesus: devotion, kindness, and family. These three core values guide our intentional discipleship pathway. Our goal is to help each other fill the emptiness in our lives with the love, joy, and peace of Christ by walking on this journey together.

Our hope is that taking this journey will fill us entirely with the fullness of God. To this end, consider adding the prayer below, from the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3, to your devotional time as we walk from Ash Wednesday, through Lent, to Easter, and beyond.

One of the most powerful ways God satisfies our souls is reading Scripture prayerfully. The practice of Lectio Divina is probably the most important devotional exercise. Below are the four traditional stages of reading God’s Word from the heart, according to Phil Maynard:

“Spiritual reading of the scriptures by stages
Silencio: Prayerful preparation
Lectio: First reading of text, for hearing a word or passage that touches the heart
Meditatio: Second reading of text, for “hearing” or “seeing” Christ in the text
Oratio: Third and final reading of text, for experiencing what Christ is calling us to do or be.
Contemplatio: Prayerful yielding to God” (Phil Maynard, Foundations, p. 46).
Lectio Divina

Use these simple steps to read the passage from Ephesians 3 in a posture of prayer.

1.) Take a moment to quiet your heart and mind, asking God to help you receive whatever the Holy Spirit wants to bring you today.
2.) Read slowly the first time. Then pause with another brief prayer for the light of Christ to shine through the words.
3.) Read again, at a comfortable pace, with an open mind to catch a shimmer of Christ’s light through whatever thought, word, or image God is bringing to you. Take a moment to meditate on the thought, word, or image God is giving you.
4.) Read again, at a leisurely pace, and reflect on what you hear God saying to you right now. Then close with another prayer. You can pray from your heart, recite the Lord’s Prayer, or use one of the prayers in this guidebook.

“This is why I kneel before the Father. Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. I ask that he will strengthen you in your inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having strong roots in love, I ask that you’ll have the power to grasp love’s width and length, height and depth, together with all believers. I ask that you’ll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled entirely with the fullness of God.

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.”

Ephesians 3:14-21 CEB
The vision for Thalia United Methodist Church is “Living and Loving Like Jesus.” The way we make this vision a reality is through devotion, kindness, and family. We inherited this method of intentional discipleship from those who came before us, including the early Methodists from the 18th century. The way John Wesley articulated his own vision for becoming more like Jesus is found in “The Scripture Way of Salvation.” He writes, “But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification?” First, all works of piety …Secondly, all works of mercy…This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation” (John Wesley, edited by Albert Outler, p. 279-280). This language worked for the original audience, but it is a little outdated in the 21st century.

Nonetheless, the works of piety and mercy that defined the early Methodist movement are still vital in our church today. We just updated the language by replacing “piety” with “devotion” and “mercy” with “kindness.” Works of devotion and kindness are expected to be practiced both personally and corporately. In other words, we act with devotion and kindness as individuals within the context of a spiritual family. Some things we do on our own, while other things we do together. When we practice devotion and kindness, both on our own and as a congregation, we experience a deeper communion with God through the church family.

The next few pages include three key passages from the Gospels that will highlight each of the three core values of our discipleship pathway. Below each passage, you will find a list of various practices that fit each of the three core values. It is important to recognize that there is an intentional integration of these practices in our ministries, which are aligned with our vision of “Living and Loving Like Jesus.” This is the way we accomplish our purpose as a church.
Intentional Devotion

While Jesus and his disciples were traveling, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his message. By contrast, Martha was preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal. So Martha came to him and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to prepare the table all by myself? Tell her to help me.”

The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won’t be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:38-42 - Mary at the feet of Jesus

Intentional Devotion

- Showing up for worship
- Participating in a group or class
- Reading the Bible
- Praying more often
- Giving from the heart
- Connecting my walk with Jesus to the rest of my life
- Works of Piety
- - Public worship of God
- - Reading of God’s Word
- - Holy Communion (The Lord’s Supper)
- - Family & Private Prayer
- - Searching the scriptures
- - Fasting or abstinence
- - Christian conferencing
Choosing Kindness

Jesus replied, “A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion.


Choosing Kindness

Loving our neighbors, like the Good Samaritan, by showing mercy to others.

- Volunteering for service work
- Acts of Random Kindness
- Going on a mission trip
- Sharing what I have to give
- Letting Jesus use my life to connect with someone else
- Works of Mercy
- - Feeding the hungry
- - Clothing the naked
- - Caring for the sick
- - Visiting those in prison
- - Sheltering the homeless
- - Welcoming the stranger
- - Peacemaking
- - Serving the common good
Treating People Like Family

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table. Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound, of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus’ feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume.

John 12:1-3 - Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Jesus

Treating People Like Family

Spending time together, like Jesus, so everyone can feel welcome.

- Eating together
- Making other people feel welcome
- Letting others get to know me better
- Getting to know others better
- Inviting God to make this church an extended spiritual family
- Christian conferencing
- Within these small groups, Methodists were encouraged to follow Wesley’s General Rules:
  - 1. Do no harm by avoiding evil of every kind.
  - 2. Do good as often as you can to as many as you can (to their bodies and to their souls).
  - 3. Practice the means of grace taught to the disciples by Jesus.
The way to find the joy of living and loving like Jesus
Daily Suggestions

Rev. Karen Kurtz gave me a book that changed my life. I was in my summer internship at Oak Ridge UMC in North Carolina before my final year in seminary. She and her husband, Rev. Dr. Michael Kurtz, were my guides as the co-pastors at Oak Ridge.

The book, *Seven Sacred Pauses*, by Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B. transformed my life. I am sharing a few practices that I have grown to treasure over the years, because I believe it will change your life, too. You are welcome to check out the book for yourself. For now, consider adding these two practices to your daily routine for the season of Lent.

The first is a blessing for the morning to start your day. The second is an inventory to review how things went at the end of the day. Like most things in life, whatever you put into it will impact what you get out of it. I am confident that the Holy Spirit will bless whatever effort you are able to give to this holy work.

May you be filled entirely with the fullness of God!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Joe
Senior Pastor
Thalia United Methodist Church
Morning

The Blessing of Your Hands at This Midmorning Pause

Sit in your favorite chair, stand by a window, or choose some soulful place for this blessing prayer. Hold out your hands in gratitude for their many uses. Reach out and touch the things that are near you. Feel the texture of the things you touch. Think of some of the tasks you have done and will do this day. How important are your hands for these tasks? Now bring your hands to a comfortable resting place on your lap or held up in a gesture of praise.

O Source of Life, you lifted me out of the earth. From your hands I have come. I place my hands in the welcoming hands of your heart and pray for a sweet anointing in this midmorning hour. Anoint my hands with tender awareness. Anoint my hands with compassionate touch. Anoint my hands with sacred energy. Give success to the work of my hands this day. Help me remember my potential to reach out and touch things to life. Give me spirit hands. Fill my hands with insightful consciousness. Let me see with my hands the way those who are blind see. May all that I touch be transformed into an instrument of grace. O Holy One, anoint these hands and use them for healing all through the day. May it come to pass.

You may wish to use oil for anointing or water for cleansing and purifying your hands.

From Seven Sacred Pauses, by Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B.
Evening

Take a moment to let these images embrace you. Use the following Examen of Consciousness as a careful reflection of your day, or create your own:

• Have I been a good memory in anyone’s life today?
• Have the ears of my heart opened to the voice of God?
• Have the ears of my heart opened to the needs of my sisters and brothers?
• Have the eyes of my heart beheld the Divine face in all created things?
• What do I know, but live as though I do not know?
• Have I been a good student of the hours today?
• How have I affected the quality of this day?
• Have I been blind or deaf to the blessings of the day?
• Is there anyone, including myself, whom I need to forgive?
• When did I experience my heart opening wide today?
• Have I worked with joy or drudgery?
• Have I waited with grace or with impatience?
• What is the one thing in my life that is standing on tiptoe crying, “May I have your attention please?” What needs my attention?

From *Seven Sacred Pauses*, by Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B.
Deborah Mikesell

From the Valley to the Mountain Top

Lent calls us to fast, pray and repent.

Fasting can be beyond abstaining from food. Fasting is humbling myself before God and denying myself pleasures. The second part of the Lenten journey is prayer, asking God to transform me into a purer form of what Jesus taught. I often use the acronym ACTS: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and petition in praying. Ultimately, repentance means to me, turning away from self-centeredness, acknowledging mistakes, and asking for forgiveness. I need to seek the fullness of the spirit to take over.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” Isaiah 58: 9-10

As I begin the 40 days, the most difficult part of Lent is forgiving myself. This year I will use the devotions of my Church family as well as the conscientious actions of all Lenten practices to reset my soul, to change and to move forward with HOPE.
Psalm 51 NIV

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.  
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.  
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Savior,  
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
Open my lips, Lord,
    and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
    you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
    a broken and contrite heart
    you, God, will not despise.

May it please you to prosper Zion,
    to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
    in burnt offerings offered whole;
    then bulls will be offered on your altar.
Ken Via

My name is Ken Via. I became a member of this church in the spring of 1975 when I was a sophomore at Princess Anne high school. I went off and sowed some wild oats until 1985. I came back to Thalia in 1988. I have been back ever since. I am very fortunate to belong to the United Methodist Men. I learned a lot from old-timers like Bob Beam, Harry Davis, Bob Metcalfe, Ben Witten, Johnny Draughon, Johnny Johnson, John Fowler and many more who are not with us anymore. I value my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I love our church. I'm proud my sister, Deborah Mikesell, is involved. I'm also very grateful for what my mother, Helen Via, taught me about the importance of Thalia United Methodist Church. Praise God!

In Christ,
Ken Via
Lord Who Throughout These Forty Days

1 Lord, who throughout these forty days,
   For us did fast and pray,
   Teach us with you to mourn our sins,
   And close by you to stay.

2 As you with Satan did contend,
   And did the vict'ry win,
   O give us strength in you to fight,
   In you to conquer sin.

3 As you did hunger bear and thirst,
   So teach us, gracious Lord,
   To die to self, and always live
   By your most holy word.

4 And through these days of penitence,
   And through your Passion-tide,
   Forevermore, in life and death,
   O Lord, with us abide.

5 Abide with us that when this life
   Of suffering is past,
   An Easter of unending joy
   We may attain at last!

#269 The United Methodist Hymnal
Mark McKinney

“Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God’s words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4: 8-11 Christian Standard Bible

I was not raised in the Church. I was exposed to religion, and I considered myself a Christian without truly knowing what that meant. I went to church services periodically, usually around Easter. But when I was in college, I met a wonderful woman who immediately filled a hole in my heart that was shaped just for her. She is smart, funny, caring and can look straight into my soul and know exactly what is going on inside. She was raised in the Church at Thalia UMC, and her family was active in the life of this church. So when we started dating, we began attending Thalia UMC services when we were home from college. The people of Thalia made an impact on me, and I began to wonder why everyone here seemed so happy and welcoming and willing to speak to a stranger like me, as though I was someone they had known forever and were just waiting for me to show up.

Fast forward to a year after we’ve graduated from college, and my wife and I got married here at Thalia UMC. But I was still in law school, and so we moved halfway across the country for me to finish my education. When I graduated, we made the decision to move back to Virginia to be closer to our respective families. We lived in Richmond for a year while I studied for the bar and tried to begin my legal career. During that year, we attended Good Shepherd UMC, and the Pastor there made such a huge impact on me every Sunday that I asked her to baptize me into the Family of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eventually, I got a job in Hampton Roads, and we moved back to Virginia Beach. When we made that move, we began to attend Sunday Services at Thalia UMC on a regular basis. The people here were still just as open and friendly as they had been when Michelle and I were just dating. But this time, I was invited into the life of the Church through ministry opportunities, first playing sports, then through United Methodist Men, and eventually as a leader of a few special projects. I have now been a member of this church for almost 30 years, and the people of Thalia have become a second family to me. Like any family, we have not always agreed. We have not always had great times. We have suffered losses, and we have seen many changes as we have aged. But, we have always loved one another. We have always tried to discern God’s will and put his calling before our own desires. This church is not the space and facilities. This church is the people like me who call Thalia UMC our home. I love this church because I love these people. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my wife, her family, and the people of Thalia for helping me find the true meaning of being a Christian, a disciple of Christ. I can only hope the Lord allows His Holy Spirit to call others to join this family and be accepted just as I have been.

Peace, Mark McKinney
Kallie Blanks

“You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice.” Exodus 23:2

I have always been interested in politics and how our government works. I am presently taking High School World View and have been amazed by what I have learned about the various views held in our country and the world. Some believe we are all God, and we keep coming back until we have gotten our lives right! (New Spiritualists) That fact still shakes me every time I think about it. As I study the teachings of Jesus, I think how strong he was when faced with very dangerous crowds and those who taught in the Temples. I want to be like Jesus: strong, knowledgeable, and passionate about what is right in God’s sight.

Every day we must testify our love for Jesus in what we say, how we behave, and who influences our lives. So much of what I see and hear on social media sounds so good. I have strong examples in my life who struggle with these untruths, too. That’s why it is good to be a part of a strong group of believers who are from all ages and nationalities. Our church family supports each other in a loving, caring way.

As I prepare for Lent, I am going to continue to seek truth, justice, and compassion. That’s Jesus’ way and he won’t steer us wrong, I promise.
Kim Arris-Potter

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” Psalm 139:13 NIV

“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Psalm 139:16 NIV

“God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.”
Ephesians 15 NLT

Many people are surprised to learn I am adopted. I look very much like my siblings and have similar family mannerisms. My three younger siblings are all natural children born to my parents. Praise God for a birth mother who chose to give me a better life than what she could provide and for the wonderful Christian parents who loved and raised me. While I was very fortunate to be adopted into such a great family, I struggled with feelings of abandonment and not really belonging.

When my husband and I were blessed with the birth of our daughters, I had an intense desire to learn about my heritage. I was able to meet with someone at The Child and Family Service office, the agency through which I was adopted, who was able to provide me with some non-identifying information about my birth mother’s family and very little information about my birth father. So, while I really do not know a lot about my earthly heritage, I do know the One to whom I belong and He knows me. The above-referenced Bible verses speak to me personally but can be applied to most anyone’s circumstances. God knows us. He made us. He sees us. We are adopted into His family by salvation through Christ Jesus. And it gave Him great pleasure! We belong to Him. He will never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Prayer: Abba Father,

Thank you for salvation through Christ Jesus. No matter what our personal circumstances are, thank you that we belong to You; that You know us and love us unconditionally. Continue to draw us to Yourself as we desire to have an intimate and personal relationship with You. Amen.
During the Pandemic, I discovered the song "I'll meet you in the morning" on YouTube. The harmony of the singers resonated with me. Early morning is a time when I explore my spiritual path; past, present, and future. Recalling the breath prayer, "More of you God and less of me," I assess my progress each day using a devotion from the UPPER ROOM, a translation from the Common English Bible, an open mind, and a personal prayer.

Rising early to meet God has become a time of praising, confessing, and studying the Bible. I question how the numerous stories of God's people relate over thousands of years, examine trends of the various cultures, consider the details of the era, and search for big ideas that will help me grow in my spiritual journey. During Lent, my goal is to learn more about "dying to self" daily as I contemplate the example Jesus set for believers during His time on Earth. I realize it is a journey and I anticipate challenges. It has been said that obedience brings empowerment...As I meet with God each morning, I pray to feel His presence, peace, and power over my wants and wishes.
The General Rules of the Methodist Church


In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.

2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.
Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:

The putting on of gold and costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self-indulgence.

Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.
To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

The public worship of God.

The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.

The Supper of the Lord.

Family and private prayer.

Searching the Scriptures.

Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

From The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church- 2016. Copyright 2016 by The United Methodist Publishing House
My father died in the early morning hours of Easter Sunday in 2000, almost 24 years now, and I still miss him so much. I ask why would a loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God allow something so horrible like this to happen? I read "Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People" by David Arnold, but I found it not satisfying. I shared my frustrations with my Accountability Small Group, but still remain grieving the loss of my father and questioning my faith. Recently, a friend of mine shared a eulogy he had heard at the celebration of life service for a long-time friend named Beverly. She had a saying painted on the wall in her home -- I live by what I KNOW, not by what I feel.

Paul said "We KNOW that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who are called by His purpose." And in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Beverly knew this and I am confident that my father did as well. So, I need to remember some basic truths of our faith -- the things I KNOW:

- God is in control
- He loves us
- He never makes a mistake
- And this is not the end of the story for my father, or for me.

Though my heart still aches at the loss of my father, I no longer blame God. I recognize that everything that I love I will eventually lose, but in the end, love will return in a different form, and God will be with me. I am at peace.
‘Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”
– Hebrews 13:16

The question asked in the season of Lent has always been...What are you giving up? Often, after our choice is made, we begin to second guess ourselves. Are you feeling deprived already? Wishing you had chosen something else, anything but this? Now instead of getting closer to God, we are counting the days until Lent will be over. So, let's think a little differently and turn our question into a statement.

Give to Others

There are so many needs to be fulfilled. God could really use more hearts and hands. Think of a way you can make someone else's life a little better each day during Lent. Your gift can be anything from a bit of your time to a word of encouragement, or how about the assurance of forgiveness? You could share a meal, or simply provide a listening ear. Instead of abstaining from chocolate, let's give a gift of chocolate. When we begin to think about Lent in a new way our love for God and others deepens. May God bless you in your creative generosity.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for all you do for each of us. Guide each of us to the people who need us most in the coming days. May we be generous givers. Amen
Matthew 25:31-40 NIV

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

“Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

“Then the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
Servant Ministry

¶ 135. Christian Discipleship—The ministry of all Christians consists of privilege and obligation. The privilege is a relationship with God that is deeply spiritual. The obligation is to respond to God’s call to holy living in the world. In the United Methodist tradition these two dimensions of Christian discipleship are wholly interdependent.

¶ 136. Our Relationship with God: Privilege—Christians experience growth and transition in their spiritual life just as in their physical and emotional lives. While this growth is always a work of grace, it does not occur uniformly. Spiritual growth in Christ is a dynamic process marked by awakening, birth, growth, and maturation. This process requires careful and intentional nurture for the disciple to reach perfection in the Christian life. There are stages of spiritual growth and transition: Christian beginnings; Christian birth; Christian growth; and Christian maturity. These require careful and intentional nurture for the disciple to come to maturity in the Christian life and to engage fully in the ministry of all Christians.

¶ 137. Our Relationship with Christ in the World: Obligation—The ministry of all Christians in the United Methodist tradition has always been energized by deep religious experience, with emphasis on how ministry relates to our obligation to Jesus Christ. The early Methodists developed a way of life that fostered reliability, and their methodical discipleship is best expressed in the General Rules that John Wesley first published in 1743, which remain in The United Methodist Book of Discipline, pages 77-80.

The United Methodist Book of Discipline 2016
“But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.” 1 Peter 4:13

Everyone has opinions and, for the most part, is free to proclaim them. What is more important to Christ is not your thoughts as much as how you live your life each day. Words are cheap, actions are powerful.

I think that too often in this life we complicate things that are quite simple. Like the Pharisees in the day of Jesus, we focus on things that perhaps we should not. When Jesus and his disciples walked through a field, the Pharisees attacked them for picking grain and eating it on the Sabbath. They were hungry and took the bounty God had given. But the religious sect focused on the law (no work, or harvesting grain on Sunday) rather than feeding the needs of others.

I think that today, instead of choosing to walk with Jesus in that field of wheat, we are sitting on the sidelines checking the boxes that keep us in the category of Christian according to religion.

I wonder what would happen if we loved as well as we disagreed? What if we decided to love others as much as we love our own opinions? What if we laid down offense, laid down our lives and simply loved instead? Maybe we need to admit we have been wrong, forgive others who have wronged us, or try to be better today than yesterday. Live a life of kindness and kingdom thinking. Then we could remember that leading others to Jesus is more important than any opinion we might have.

Prayer: Dear God, I pray that you help me to not take offense when I am criticized and cut down by those who claim to know you. Open all our eyes to the kingdom-work that transcends racial, political, and religious boundaries so that we can be unified even in our disagreements. In Jesus’ name. Amen.
Katie Blanks and Tim Hirschman

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

My fiancé and I are planning our wedding. There are so many preparations for our big day! But the one thing we are positive about is this-God placed us together, strengthens our love, and wants us to live in a life where He leads our every decision. We want to celebrate our union before God, family, and friends, where we vow to love each other until death do us part. We have had strong examples of what marriage is and what it is not. Many of these beautiful couples are our friends at Thalia UMC. As we get closer and closer to our Wedding Day, we ask God to give us His wisdom. We want to be a couple whom others see as passionate, caring, and loving examples of Our Father.
Zailynn’s Grandma

I see God in my Granddaughter, Zailynn.

“Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Psalm 139:12-14

From the first moment I laid eyes on Zailynn Amara, I saw God’s amazing love for a tiny little, helpless baby. She was born with osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease). Zailynn was fourteen inches long and had a broken shoulder. She struggled to breathe and eat, but she always knew when her Grandma and DaDa came to be with her in the NICU. She would turn her head towards us and just stare. Those bright eyes were God’s eyes telling us that He was there with our special girl.

Doctors told our family that Zailynn had many challenges ahead, but God had given Zailynn determination and a will to beat the odds. Her physicians from all over the world conferenced about her serious medical challenges. Operations were performed, special skin was placed on her large incisions. Doctors became mechanical engineers, designing equipment to save her life. God shined through Zailynn’s gray eyes, and she even learned to giggle. We believe God taught her that, too.

God continues to give Zailynn the determination she needs to face the challenges of mobility and eating. Zailynn rides a little bus when she needs to get places and tries a few new foods when she can. With God’s strength and love guiding her life, she is a happy, funny, artistic, dramatic six-year-old in kindergarten. Her favorite songs are “Jesus Loves Me” and Dolly Parton’s, “Coat of Many Colors.”

During our journey through Lent, look for God’s presence in those that have challenges. Assist God with your prayers and a helping hand. That person just may be an angel sent especially for you.

Gail Von Mosch, Zailynn’s Grandma
The Scripture Way of Salvation

III.8. “Experience shows that – together with this conviction of sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to all our words and actions, as well as the guilt which on account thereof we should incur were we not continually sprinkled with the atoning blood – one thing more is implied in this repentance: namely, a conviction of our helplessness, of our utter inability to think one good thought or to form one good desire and, much more, to speak one word aright, or to perform one good action, but through his free, almighty grace, first preventing us and then accompanying us every moment.

9. ‘But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification?’ First, all works of piety such as public prayer, family prayer and praying in our closet, receiving the Supper of the Lord, searching the Scriptures, by hearing, reading, meditating, and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows.

10. Secondly, all works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted, such as the endeavoring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succor the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance and these the fruits meet for repentance which are necessary to full sanctification. This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation.”

John Wesley, edited by Albert Outler, p. 279-280
Thalia Lay Servant

As I walk along the two-mile wooded path at Chesapeake Park, I think of my journey during Lent. My Lenten walk begins with Ash Wednesday, a day of repentance, when I confess my sins and profess my devotion to God. I start out my park walk, strong just like I do during Lent, but as I travel that first mile, my legs feel heavier, and I might have to take a seat for a few moments. My Lenten journey reminds me of the times I strayed from Jesus. I didn't take enough time to read and study my Scripture, my prayers were shallow, or I complained of all the injustice and darkness around me, yet did little to make it better. I felt like stopping my park walk, but I knew what I was doing was good for my arthritis and my heart needed a good workout. Jesus didn't stop his missionary journey when times got hard and neither does he want me to stop at the one-mile mark. He encourages me to push on: I can do it!

Lent leads us to the triumph of mercy over all that would crush us or reduce us to something unworthy of our dignity as God’s children. Lent is the walk leading from slavery to freedom, from suffering to joy, from death to life. The mark of the ashes with which I set out reminds me of my origin: I was taken from the earth; I was made of dust. True, we are dust in the loving hands of God, who has breathed his spirit of life upon each one of us, and still wants to do so.

I got off that park bench. I pushed on, walking faster, and was exhilarated when I finished my three-mile walk. When my Lenten journey concludes with Easter morning, I will celebrate. Jesus conquered death and sin, and I finished my walk strong and encouraged. Join me this Lenten season as we walk our faith and grow ever closer to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Gail Von Mosch
Thalia Lay Servant
A Prayer for Serenity

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;

trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;

so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr
Carl Von Mosch

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5-6

All my life I have loved the outside. As a child, I especially enjoyed riding my bike, swimming, water skiing, and summer sports. As I got older, I added golfing and fishing to my outside pleasures. I never gave a thought to getting sunburned, peeling, and then sunburned again. My very pale skin and blond hair looked better with a good suntan.

But in the spring of 1994 my outside pleasures came to a screeching halt. I noticed a raised dark spot on my lower back. It looked strange, but it didn’t hurt. I let it go for a while, but that spot grew darker and larger. I saw my doctor and was sent immediately to a dermatologist. I was diagnosed with skin cancer! This was a humbling experience for me as I had to accept whatever treatments came my way. I learned quickly that skin cancer kills sun worshipers like me every day.

I have undergone countless treatments and surgeries because of my initial diagnosis. But as Peter stated, I have cast my anxieties on God, and I know he cares greatly for me. Through God’s guidance, I have used my skin cancer diagnosis to teach others about using proper sunscreens and wearing protective clothing when exposed to sunlight. I still play golf and enjoy the outside, but I also respect my skin.

Prayer: Thank you, God for this time of reflection and for being there for me when my anxieties have been great. You are my rock.
A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, unity;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.
“But for the grace of God I am what I am and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain but labored more abundant than they all, yet not I, but by the grace of God which was with me.” 1 Corinthians 15:10

It took years to come back to this Bible quote. It happened in a strange moment with a friend in passing when I was struggling with my illness. I looked it up to understand the meaning of what was said and it hit me.

My life’s struggle fell into place and I understood why I was brought back home to serve others in need of help. So many things out of my control that happened to me, I could not understand why God would let this happen. The turmoil I created for myself because of this was a spiral downfall away from God’s Word and his offer for peace and understanding. Looking for a good Christian was not something I could find for many years, until I happened to meet this young pastor one day. He reached out to me and was helpful and understanding. He walked the extra mile to show me what it was that was missing in my understanding of God’s Word. He showed me that God never gave up on me and was always there beside me. Now I find comfort and strength knowing God will always show me a way. My days can be a struggle, but I find peace within myself and the confidence to know I will never be burdened with more than I can handle. It has been God’s way of showing me what he wants me to do, so yes: but by the grace of God, go I.
Writing a Rule of Life

The value that John Wesley placed on rules of life has inspired Methodists for many generations. Perhaps this stemmed from his experience of growing up in the Epworth rectory where family life was structured according to clearly defined rules. His first Methodist society, which was established in London’s Fetter Lane a few weeks before his Aldersgate experience, was based on 11 rules. Many people have adopted what is sometimes referred to John Wesley’s ‘rules for life’:

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can!”

Although there is no evidence that the words actually originated with Wesley, they do resonate closely with his writings.

In 1743, John and Charles Wesley established three general rules of life for Methodist societies:
“First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind. Secondly, by doing good, by being merciful after (your) power. Thirdly, by attending on all the ordinances of God.”

By Rev. Ian Bell
Leading By Not Doing

Leading by Not Doing: A Reflection on Wesley’s Instruction to “Do No Harm”

Three key laity leaders of a large suburban church went to dinner together. As they reflected on their ministry, the conversation turned to the pastor. "I am so tired of his taking over meetings. Why are we even elected?" one woman remarked.

"I know," said the church council chair, "and he never returns phone calls. I never know what he's going to come up with next."

The first woman continued, "He's not much of a leader, if you ask me. He's got his favorites, and he basically does anything they tell him."

"We really ought to talk to the staff-parish chairperson about him," replied the council chair.

The third woman sat quietly and then asked, "Have you ever talked directly to the pastor about these things? We complain about his leadership, but what kind of example do we set when we talk about him behind his back?"

Good leadership is commonly defined by the things we do — by our skills and abilities and accomplishments. Rarely do we reflect on what not to do as leaders. Although it is important to engage in good activities, it may be even more important to refrain from bad actions.

John Wesley, in his instructions to all those desirous of salvation, explained that the evidence of their sincerity was "First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced ..." (Book of Discipline 2000, ¶103, p. 73) Even before listing good things to do, Wesley began by listing harmful things to avoid doing. There is a powerful lesson for Christian leaders in this instruction — as valuable as good works may be, it is even more valuable to avoid those things that might harm others or destroy the foundation of trust of the congregation.

So what does it mean for leaders in the congregation to "do no harm"? What are the "evil" actions "most generally practiced"? For our purposes, I want to focus on five important ways to "do no harm": (1) refuse to gossip, (2) avoid unfair criticism, (3) rely on fact rather than rumor, (4) be respectful, (5) deal with disagreement openly and honestly.

From Discipleship Ministries
https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/leading-by-not-doing-a-reflection-on-wesleys-instruction-to-do-no-harm#~text=For%20our%20purposes%2C%20I%20want,with%20disagreement%20openly%20and%20honestly
Prayers by John Wesley

Oh Merciful Father,
Do not consider what we have done against you;
But what our blessed Savior has done for us.
   Don't consider what we have made of ourselves,
   but what He is making of us for you, our God.

O that Christ may grant “wisdom and righteousness,
   sanctification and redemption”
To every one of our souls.
That this precious blood may cleanse us from all our sins,
   and that your Holy Spirit may renew and sanctify our souls.
May He crucify our flesh with its passions and lusts,
   and cleanse all our brothers and sisters in Christ
   across the earth.

O let not “sin reign in our mortal bodies,
   that we should obey it in its lusts.”
But, “being made free from sin,
   let us be the servants of righteousness.”
Let us commend our hearts to you,
   and let our ways be pleasing in your sight.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
   who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
   one God, now and forever.

Amen
O God,
Purify our hearts, that we may entirely love you, and rejoice in being beloved by you.

O that we may never sink into a crude love of anything here below nor be oppressed, with the cares of this life; but assist us to “abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.”

Give us true humility of spirit, that we may “not think our ourselves more highly than we ought to think.”

Make us to “love one another with mutual affection” and to delight in doing good.

Make us so happy, that we may be able to “love our enemies, to bless those that curse us, to do good to them that hate us; to rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep.”

And help us to “pray always and not faint; in everything to give thanks, and offer up the sacrifice of praise continually, to rejoice in hope of thy glory.”

Make us “know both what it is to have little, and what it is to have plenty; everywhere, and in all things,” instruct us “both to have plenty and to suffer want,” being enabled to “do all things through Christ who strengthens us”

Amen
O Lord, the giver of our salvation,
You are the hope of all the ends of the earth.
Upon you the eyes of all wait; for you give to all life and breath and all things.
You still watch over us for good, you daily renew to us our lives and your mercies
And you have given us the assurance of your word, that if we commit our affairs to you,
if we acknowledge you in all ways,
You will direct our paths.

We desire, O Lord, to be still under your gracious conduct and fatherly protection.
We beg the guidance and help for your good Spirit,
To choose our inheritance for us, and to dispose of us, and all that concerns us, to the glory of your name;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,
one God, now and forever,

Amen
When Jesus and his followers approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives. Jesus gave two disciples a task, saying to them, “Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘Its master needs it, and he will send it back right away.’”

They went and found a colt tied to a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some people standing around said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They told them just what Jesus said, and they left them alone. They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes upon it, and he sat on it. Many people spread out their clothes on the road while others spread branches cut from the fields. Those in front of him and those following were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!” Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. After he looked around at everything, because it was already late in the evening, he returned to Bethany with the Twelve.
Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them fully.

Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus replied, “You don’t understand what I’m doing now, but you will understand later.”

“No!” Peter said. “You will never wash my feet!”

Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t have a place with me.”

Simon Peter said, “Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!”

Jesus responded, “Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you.” He knew who would betray him. That’s why he said, “Not every one of you is clean.”

After he washed the disciples’ feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, “Do you know what I’ve done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. I assure you, servants aren’t greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them.
John 18 - John 19 CEB

After he said these things, Jesus went out with his disciples and crossed over to the other side of the Kidron Valley. He and his disciples entered a garden there. Judas, his betrayer, also knew the place because Jesus often gathered there with his disciples. Judas brought a company of soldiers and some guards from the chief priests and Pharisees. They came there carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus knew everything that was to happen to him, so he went out and asked, “Who are you looking for?”

They answered, “Jesus the Nazarene.”

He said to them, “I Am.” (Judas, his betrayer, was standing with them.) When he said, “I Am,” they shrank back and fell to the ground. He asked them again, “Who are you looking for?”

They said, “Jesus the Nazarene.”

Jesus answered, “I told you, ‘I Am.’ If you are looking for me, then let these people go.” This was so that the word he had spoken might be fulfilled: “I didn’t lose anyone of those whom you gave me.”

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) Jesus told Peter, “Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?” Then the company of soldiers, the commander, and the guards from the Jewish leaders took Jesus into custody. They bound him and led him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. (Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it was better for one person to die for the people.)

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Because this other disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard. However, Peter stood outside near the gate. Then the other disciple (the one known to the high priest) came out and spoke to the woman stationed at the gate, and she brought Peter in. The servant woman stationed at the gate asked Peter, “Aren’t you one of this man’s disciples?”

“I’m not,” he replied. The servants and the guards had made a fire because it was cold. They were standing around it, warming themselves. Peter joined them there, standing by the fire and warming himself.

Meanwhile, the chief priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered, “I’ve spoken openly to the world. I’ve always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews gather. I’ve said nothing in private. Why ask me? Ask those who heard what I told them. They know what I said.”

After Jesus spoke, one of the guards standing there slapped Jesus in the face. “Is that how you would answer the high priest?” he asked.
Jesus replied, “If I speak wrongly, testify about what was wrong. But if I speak correctly, why do you strike me?” Then Annas sent him, bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.

Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing with the guards, warming himself. They asked, “Aren’t you one of his disciples?”

Peter denied it, saying, “I’m not.”

A servant of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with him?” Peter denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

The Jewish leaders led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman governor’s palace. It was early in the morning. So that they could eat the Passover, the Jewish leaders wouldn’t enter the palace; entering the palace would have made them ritually impure.

So Pilate went out to them and asked, “What charge do you bring against this man?”

They answered, “If he had done nothing wrong, we wouldn’t have handed him over to you.”

Pilate responded, “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your Law.”

The Jewish leaders replied, “The Law doesn’t allow us to kill anyone.” (This was so that Jesus’ word might be fulfilled when he indicated how he was going to die.)

Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?”

Pilate responded, “I’m not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

Jesus replied, “My kingdom doesn’t originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn’t have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn’t from here.”

“So you are a king?” Pilate said.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice.”

“What is truth?” Pilate asked.
After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, “I find no grounds for any charge against him. You have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?”

They shouted, “Not this man! Give us Barabbas!” (Barabbas was an outlaw.)

Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. Over and over they went up to him and said, “Greetings, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.

Pilate came out of the palace again and said to the Jewish leaders, “Look! I’m bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no grounds for a charge against him.” When Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here’s the man.”

When the chief priests and their deputies saw him, they shouted out, “Crucify, crucify!”

Pilate told them, “You take him and crucify him. I don’t find any grounds for a charge against him.”

The Jewish leaders replied, “We have a Law, and according to this Law he ought to die because he made himself out to be God’s Son.”

When Pilate heard this word, he was even more afraid. He went back into the residence and spoke to Jesus, “Where are you from?” Jesus didn’t answer. So Pilate said, “You won’t speak to me? Don’t you know that I have authority to release you and also to crucify you?”

Jesus replied, “You would have no authority over me if it had not been given to you from above. That’s why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.” From that moment on, Pilate wanted to release Jesus.

However, the Jewish leaders cried out, saying, “If you release this man, you aren’t a friend of the emperor! Anyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes the emperor!”

When Pilate heard these words, he led Jesus out and seated him on the judge’s bench at the place called Stone Pavement (in Aramaic, Gabbatha). It was about noon on the Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, “Here’s your king.”

The Jewish leaders cried out, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

Pilate responded, “What? Do you want me to crucify your king?”

“We have no king except the emperor,” the chief priests answered. Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.
The soldiers took Jesus prisoner. Carrying his cross by himself, he went out to a place called Skull Place (in Aramaic, Golgotha). That's where they crucified him—and two others with him, one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a public notice written and posted on the cross. It read "Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. Therefore, the Jewish chief priests complained to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The king of the Jews' but 'This man said, "I am the king of the Jews.'""

Pilate answered, "What I've written, I've written."

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and his sandals, and divided them into four shares, one for each soldier. His shirt was seamless, woven as one piece from the top to the bottom. They said to each other, "Let's not tear it. Let's cast lots to see who will get it." This was to fulfill the scripture,

They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing. That's what the soldiers did.

Jesus' mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

After this, knowing that everything was already completed, in order to fulfill the scripture, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was nearby, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it, placed it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is completed." Bowing his head, he gave up his life.

It was the Preparation Day and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath, especially since that Sabbath was an important day. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of those crucified broken and the bodies taken down. Therefore, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus. When they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead so they didn't break his legs. However, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. The one who saw this has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he speaks the truth, and he has testified so that you also can believe. These things happened to fulfill the scripture, They won't break any of his bones. And another scripture says, They will look at him whom they have pierced.

After this Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one because he feared the Jewish authorities. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took the body away. Nicodemus, the one who at first had come to Jesus at night, was there too. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloe, nearly seventy-five
pounds in all. Following Jewish burial customs, they took Jesus’ body and wrapped it, with the spices, in linen cloths. There was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish Preparation Day and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus in it.
What Wondrous Love Is This

1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
   What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
   What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

2 When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
   when I was sinking down, O my soul!
   When I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown,
   Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for my soul,
   Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.

3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing;
   to God and to the Lamb, I will sing.
   To God and to the Lamb who is the great "I AM,"
   while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
   while millions join the theme, I will sing.

#292 The United Methodist Hymnal
John 20 CEB

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him.” Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn’t go in. Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head. It wasn’t with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They didn’t yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her.

It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the
Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they aren’t forgiven.”

Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn’t with the disciples when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, “We’ve seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won’t believe.”

After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!”

Thomas responded to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus replied, “Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don’t see and yet believe.”

Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples’ presence, signs that aren’t recorded in this scroll. But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God’s Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.
Christ the Lord is Risen Today

1 Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

2 Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

3 Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

4 Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

5 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!
Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia!
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!
Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!

6 King of glory, soul of bliss, Alleluia!
Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!
Thee to know, thy power to prove, Alleluia!
Thus to sing, and thus to love, Alleluia!

#302 The United Methodist Hymnal, 1989
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# The Life of Jesus

It's important to note that most scholars do not believe Jesus was born in the exact year 0 AD. Serious scholars generally place his date of birth between 7 BC and 5 BC. The dates used here are based on a birthday in 5 BC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Bible Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 BC</td>
<td>Birth of John the Baptist</td>
<td>Luke 1, John 1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Augustus Taxes the Roman Empire</td>
<td>Luke 2, Matthew 1, Mark 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 BC</td>
<td>Birth of Jesus</td>
<td>Luke 2:6, John 1:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit of the Magi</td>
<td>Matthew 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Escape to Egypt</td>
<td>Matthew 2:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 BC</td>
<td>Slaughter of Infants</td>
<td>Matthew 2:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return to Nazareth</td>
<td>Matthew 2:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 AD</td>
<td>The Boy Jesus at the Temple</td>
<td>Luke 2:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 AD</td>
<td>John the Baptist Prepares the Way</td>
<td>Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Baptism of Jesus</td>
<td>Matthew 3:13, Mark 1:9, Luke 3:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 AD</td>
<td>Temptation of Jesus</td>
<td>Matthew 4, Mark 1:12, Luke 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Calls His First Disciples</td>
<td>Matthew 4:18, Mark 1:16, Luke 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wedding at Cana</td>
<td>John 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Teaches Nicodemus</td>
<td>John 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Testifies to the Samaritan Woman</td>
<td>John 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sermon on the Mount</td>
<td>Matthew 5:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 AD</td>
<td>Jesus Ministers in Galilee</td>
<td>Matthew 8, Mark 2, Luke 4:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Pool of Bethesda</td>
<td>John 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Answers John's Disciples</td>
<td>Matthew 11, Luke 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Speaks Many Parables</td>
<td>Matthew 13, Mark 5, Luke 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 AD</td>
<td>Jesus Sends out His Twelve Apostles</td>
<td>Matthew 10, Mark 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John the Baptist Beheaded</td>
<td>Matthew 14, Mark 6:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Feeds the 5,000</td>
<td>Matthew 14:15, Luke 9, John 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter's Confession of Christ</td>
<td>Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 9:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Transfiguration</td>
<td>Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Sends out the Seventy-two</td>
<td>Luke 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Woman Caught in Adultery</td>
<td>John 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Affirms He is the Son of God</td>
<td>John 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 AD</td>
<td>Jesus Raises Lazarus</td>
<td>John 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Journey to Jerusalem</td>
<td>Matthew 19, 20, Mark 10, Luke 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Triumphal Entry</td>
<td>Matthew 21, Mark 11, John 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Ascension</td>
<td>Acts 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All dates are approximated.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palm Sunday:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus at the Temple</td>
<td>Matt 21:10-17</td>
<td>Mark 11:11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Return to Bethany</td>
<td>Matt 21:17</td>
<td>Mark 11:11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cursing of the Fig Tree</td>
<td>Matt 21:18-19</td>
<td>Mark 11:12-14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Leaves Jerusalem</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 11:19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig Tree Withered (Morning)</td>
<td>Matt 21:20-22</td>
<td>Mark 11:20-26</td>
<td></td>
<td>John 12:20-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Greeks Seek Jesus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing the Disciples’ Feet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of the Disciples’ Fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Intercessory Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flight of the Disciples</td>
<td>Matt 26:56-56</td>
<td>Mark 14:50-52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Hearing Before Annas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial Before Pilate, Part 2</td>
<td>Matt 27:11-14</td>
<td>Mark 15:2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial Before Herod</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>John</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Message from Pilate’s Wife</td>
<td>Matt 27:19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Father Forgive Them...”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Tells John to Take his Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John 19:25-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am Thirsty”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John 19:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Let’s See if Elijah Saves Him”</td>
<td>Matt 27:49</td>
<td>Mark 15:26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is finished”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Temple Curtain is Torn</td>
<td>Matt 27:51a</td>
<td>Mark 15:38</td>
<td>Luke 23:45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Matt 27:51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier Pierces Jesus’ Side with a Spear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John 19:33-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Rolled in Front of Tomb Entrance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Rested on Sabbath</td>
<td>Matt 27:62-66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lake 23:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Leaders Requests Guard from Pilate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Appears to the Women</td>
<td>Matt 28:9-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John 20:14-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Report of the Guard</td>
<td>Matt 28:11-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Appears to Simon Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Cor 15:5</td>
<td>Luke 24:34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Appears to his Disciples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John 20:19-23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Appears to Doubting Thomas</td>
<td>1 Cor 15:5</td>
<td></td>
<td>John 20:24-29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>