



# THE WORK OF IMAGINATION

Lent begins in the ache, the questions, the tension between love and loss. It does not rush toward resolution, but invites us to slow down, to turn with honesty, and to journey with Jesus through wildness, confrontation, and cross. Along the way, we listen to voices from the margins, learn from stories of resistance and renewal, and remember that God meets us not in strength, but in surrender.

This is the work of imagination: to envision a world remade by mercy, to trust that healing is possible even in the shadow of empire, and to practice love that outlasts despair. Lent calls us into this holy labor—not as a solitary act, but as a communal path toward transformation.

## THE WORK OF IMAGINATION PRACTICES FOR FAMILIES

These devotions are designed for families with children, youth, and adults of all ages. Feel free to adapt the content and questions to fit your family's needs. Remember, you don't need to complete every activity to have a meaningful experience. We encourage you to explore the material, decide what works best for your family, and find time each week to gather for a devotion. Each devotion includes the following elements:

**Scripture:** Look up each scripture and read it out loud together.

**Reflection:** A devotional-like reflection that connects the scripture and theme to Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. It might make sense for you to read this section to your family, or you may want to read it yourself and see which questions or themes resonate best.

**Discussion:** This is a chance for family discussion with open-ended questions to engage your creative minds.

**Imagine It. Live It. Family Practices:** Take time with your family to do each week's suggested three practices—the Embodiment, Advocacy, and Joy Practices. They'll become part of your spiritual toolkit—resources to draw on when feeling weary, overwhelmed, or unsure how to respond. If you notice they are repeated in other resources of *The Work of Imagination*, you are right! That's intentional! By returning to them again and again, in different ways and settings, we begin to form sacred habits that shape how we live, love, and imagine.

**Prayer:** Each week's devotion concludes with a brief prayer. You can read the prayer or invite your children to repeat after you. This prayer is a simple ritual for ending your family's weekly devotion time. You might also choose to repeat the prayer throughout the week.

**Coloring Page:** Each week comes with a coloring page based on the primary character from the Bible passage. Have fun looking through it with your family and see if you can find all the different elements that come from the scripture.

**Audio Recordings:** Life is busy! Play the podcast of the reflection, questions, and prayer on your family drives, while making meals, settling in for the evening, or whenever it works within your busy schedule.

Find them here: [illstrtdm.in/TheWorkOfImaginationPodcast](http://illstrtdm.in/TheWorkOfImaginationPodcast) or by scanning this QR code.



## FEEDBACK

Your thoughts matter to us. If you found this resource helpful or meaningful, we'd love to hear from you! Any suggestions or ideas for improvement are always welcome. You can reach us at [info@illustratedministry.com](mailto:info@illustratedministry.com) or connect with us on the following social networks:

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Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, a season that helps us prepare for the mystery of Easter. Lent lasts for 40 days, not counting Sundays. It mirrors the time Jesus spent in the wilderness and invites us to spend time in reflection and prayer, as well as doing acts of kindness and justice. Some people give something up during Lent, like a favorite snack or activity. This is to make room for awareness of God's love. Others choose to take something on, like helping a neighbor, giving more generously, or practicing quiet prayer. Whatever form it takes, Lent is a season of sacred turning—a shift in direction helping us move toward God and each other.

Christians celebrate Ash Wednesday by receiving ashes on their foreheads in the shape of a cross. The ashes remind us that life is fragile and sacred. We come from the earth, and we return to it. Through it all, God meets us with love. The ashes we receive are often made from palm branches burned after last year's Palm Sunday. The ashes are soft, dark, and messy. They remind us of something beautiful—from ashes, new life can grow. A forest after fire. A seed in the ground. A heart ready to turn.

On Ash Wednesday, we also read a part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 6. Jesus was speaking to a crowd of ordinary people, including families, children, workers, and wanderers, all gathered on a hillside. They lived in a time when powerful people made big rules and often ignored those who were poor or hurting. Some religious leaders made faith feel like a contest in which the loudest prayers or the biggest donations determined who was holy.

But Jesus had a different idea. He said, "Don't do good things just to show off. Do them because God's love lives in your heart. If you give, give quietly. If you pray, go to a quiet place. If you fast, don't make a show of it." These practices—giving, praying, and fasting—are meant to impress others. They're meant to help us grow in love.

Ash Wednesday reminds us that faith is not about pretending to be holy. When we turn our hearts toward God, we practice true faith. True faith doesn't show off; it shows up. It shows up in quiet acts of care, in prayers no one hears but God, and in choices that bring more fairness, sharing, and kindness into the world. Sometimes that means giving something up—not to be seen as extraordinarily good, but to make space for love to grow. Sometimes it means doing something behind the scenes—giving a small gift, whispering a prayer, or offering a quiet act of justice—that no one notices but God.

As we begin our journey through Lent, we are invited into a sacred turning—to turn toward truth, to turn toward mercy, and to turn toward one another. When we turn toward the quiet, powerful love of God, it will transform the world.

### Questions

1. When we keep acts of kindness or faithfulness just between us and God, how is our faith changed?
2. Where or when do you feel close to God: at bedtime, outside, or when you're quiet? What might it look like to pray quietly in that time or place?
3. What habit could you consider giving up or doing less often (e.g., screen time, complaining, rushing, etc.) to make more room for loving, listening, or helping others?

## IMAGINE IT. LIVE IT.

These practices—*Embodiment, Advocacy, and Joy*—are woven throughout the Lent resources, like the Lenten Spiral. Returning to them helps build spiritual habits that ground us, strengthen us, and keep us connected to God's imaginative work—even when life feels hard.

### Embodiment Practice

**OUR BODIES ARE PART OF HOW WE LIVE INTO GOD'S IMAGINATION. THESE PRACTICES HELP US SLOW DOWN, LISTEN, AND BE PRESENT TO WHAT WE BELIEVE.**

Candles remind us of Jesus, who brings light into the world. They also remind us that our prayers rise up to God, even when they are small. Give each family member a small piece of paper to either write a one-word prayer or draw a prayer or hope they have for this season (e.g., something to grow in, let go of, or turn toward).

Then, light a candle in a safe, open space. Place it inside a fire-safe bowl. With an adult's help, each person can take a turn burning their paper over a fire-safe bowl. If your setting doesn't allow an indoor flame, simply tear the paper slowly. After each paper is burned or torn, say together, "God, receive our prayer." When all the prayers are shared, blow out the candle and close with, "God, help us walk in your light this Lent. Amen."

### Advocacy Practice

**WORKING FOR JUSTICE IS PART OF HOW WE LIVE INTO GOD'S IMAGINATION. THESE PRACTICES HELP US NOTICE WHAT'S UNFAIR AND TAKE LOVING ACTION TO HELP MAKE THINGS RIGHT.**

As a family, choose a cause or organization in need of support this Lenten season. Decorate a small container to remind you of the cause you chose, and collect money for it throughout Lent.

Get creative! Loose change or even the money from recycling cans counts. Leave the decorated container in a prominent place as a visual reminder to pray for the organization, too.

### Joy Practice

**JOY IS PART OF HOW WE LIVE INTO GOD'S IMAGINATION. THESE PRACTICES HELP US CELEBRATE, CREATE, AND REMEMBER THAT DELIGHT AND HOPE ARE SACRED, TOO.**

A common practice during Lent is to give something up to make room for awareness of God's love. Have each family member choose a heavy item (e.g., a 5-lb weight, books in a backpack, a bag of flour, etc.). Let that heavy item represent what habit you plan to give up. Have each family member hold the item in their hands, arms stretched out. See who can hold it the longest. Cheer each other on! Then, talk about how good it felt to let go, knowing it doesn't have to be carried anymore. Celebrate the small freedom of a burden released.

### Prayer

Dear God, in place of empty rituals, you long for hearts filled with genuine love and true faith. In quiet moments, transform us as we connect with you, so our actions might spread your compassion and mercy to others. Amen.