

In this fifth week, we keep journeying through Lent—a season that helps us slow down, pay attention, and prepare our hearts for the mystery of Easter. Lent helps us notice where power feels unfair, where choices feel limited, and where love might open a better way. Each week, we hear stories about Jesus: how he listens, speaks truth, and surprises people with the wisdom of God’s kin(g)dom.

In this week’s story, a group of religious leaders ask Jesus a tricky question: “Should we pay taxes to Caesar?” It sounds simple, but it’s really a trap. If Jesus says yes, he looks like he supports a harmful empire. If he says no, he looks like a rebel. The leaders thought they had trapped Jesus, but Jesus didn’t fall for it.

Instead, Jesus asked for a coin. Someone hands him a coin—just an ordinary person, caught in the middle. And that moment reveals something important: many of us live inside systems we didn’t choose. We use money, follow rules, and try to make good choices in a world that doesn’t always reflect God’s justice. Sometimes we’re asked to pick sides when neither one feels right. But Jesus shows us how to pause, look closer, and ask a better question. He leaves everyone wondering: what really belongs to Caesar, and what belongs to God?

Coins might carry Caesar’s image, but people carry God’s image. That means our deepest belonging—our truest loyalty—is not to power or pressure, but to God, who formed us in love. Every day, we hear voices telling us who to be and how to act. Whether it’s classmates, neighbors, or influencers online, we’re surrounded by people trying to claim our loyalty.

But just as Jesus paused to look at the coin, we too can pause to look at the influences in our lives. We can notice who’s trying to name our worth, and we can remember whose image we already carry. In Lent, we practice seeing with God’s imagination. We ask better questions. We find third ways. And even when the world tells us to pick sides, we remember—our deepest allegiance is to God.

Questions

1. Who or what tries to claim your loyalty?
2. How does knowing we belong to God help us when someone tries to tell us who we are or how we should live?
3. What are some ways we can show our love for God in our schools, families, friendships, and communities?

IMAGINE IT. LIVE IT.

These practices—Embodiment, Advocacy, and Joy—are woven throughout these 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.

Get some thick paper or cardstock, markers or ink pads, and wipes to clean your thumbs. Pause, and look at your thumbprint. Notice the swirls, ridges, and lines. No one else in the world has the same one. This print is part of what makes you you. It’s a reminder: you are made in God’s image. You belong. Color your thumb, and press it on the paper. Make a picture with all your family’s thumbprints. Then, talk together: What leaves a mark on us? What kind of marks do we leave on others? How can we remember we are beloved, even when others try to tell us who to be?

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.

Invite each family member to find one item in your home—something you love and are ready to pass along—that you think would bring joy to someone else. As you gather your items, say a prayer together, “God, thank you for the joy we’ve received. Help us share it with open hands and open hearts.” Then, give your items away—with joy.

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.

Take a small piece of paper, and fold it into a pocket or envelope. On the outside, write or draw some of the things that try to claim your loyalty (e.g., fitting in, being perfect, having more stuff, or staying quiet when something feels wrong). Inside the pocket, tuck a slip of paper with something written on it that belongs to God (e.g., kindness, courage, honesty, or your own belovedness). Then, choose one small action to live out your true allegiance. It could be: writing a note to someone who feels pressured to be something they’re not, changing your screen background to a reminder of God’s image in you, speaking up or kindly questioning when a rule or expectation feels unfair, creating a symbol (e.g., bracelet, sticker, badge) that reminds you of your sacred worth, or taping a truth to your mirror that says, “I belong to God, not to likes or labels.” Even small acts can be clear reminders—my worth isn’t defined by pressure or power; I belong to God, and I live like that’s true.

Prayer

Dear God, help us to follow you, even when other voices call us to follow them. Give us the courage to say no to those leading in harmful ways and the courage to say yes to your loving ways. Amen.



COIN BEARER