

Lenten Field Guide // Week 3: Hang in there!

The world that we find ourselves navigating is no doubt a fast-paced, next-day-delivery, instant-oatmeal kind of world. Therefore, when life brings us into an elongated season -- especially one that involves suffering or even growth-- we are often caught off guard by the length of the season. We know though that some lessons just cannot be learned overnight, as tough as that may be. Just like a golf swing cannot be perfected in one day, our spirituality cannot be quickly downloadable like a PDF file. The good stuff takes time to know intimately.

We see in Matthew's gospel that Jesus takes a long season of forty days to engage with tough spiritual questions, all while he is starving for food. These temptations that the devil brought forth centered around Jesus' identity and mission. Had he not known who he was or what he was here to do, perhaps the devil's tantalizing temptations would have been harder for Jesus to resist.

As people of long-seasoned faith, we need spiritual disciplines in our lives that we practice every day--on the days when we feel like it and on the days that we do not. Just like it takes training to prepare for a college entrance exam or a 5k, our faith takes training. In order for the best of our Christian tradition to come forth from us in the hardest moments, we must practice it every day, so that it becomes our rhythm, our mother tongue. Spiritual practices like prayer, fasting, self denial, sacred time, service, justice and resistance work are just a few practices that help us live our faith values every day and prepare us for the long seasons that life will bring.

Scripture to consider: Matthew 4:1-11

Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. ²After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. ³The tempter came to him and said, "Since you are God's Son, command these stones to become bread."⁴ Jesus replied, "It's written, *People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God.*"⁵ After that the devil brought him into the holy city and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, ⁶"Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written, *I will command my angels concerning you, and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone.*"⁷ Jesus replied, "Again it's written, *Don't test the Lord your God.*"⁸ Then the devil brought him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹He said, "I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me."¹⁰ Jesus responded, "Go away, Satan, because it's written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*" ¹¹The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God's glory. ³But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴endurance produces character, and character produces hope. ⁵This hope doesn't put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Journeying through Lent with Children:

For children, Lent can be a time to practice our disciple skills as we get ready for Easter! Because Lent can go on and on and on from a child's perspective, it is easier for them to commit to practicing a skill for one week rather than for six weeks. What if each week in your home, you practice one skill with your child?

Offering yourself and your gifts – What simple serving projects could your family do together this week? Some ideas might include: taking a bag of groceries to the food bank, gathering old clothes to take to a shelter, writing letters or drawing cards to send to people who need them, etc.

Acts of Worship: Slow down this week and find space to wait. When you get home from work or the day's activities, if you usually turn on the TV or get on your phone, consider leaving it off one night. Create space to sit, wait, and listen to your spirit and to God's spirit. Perhaps there has been something nagging at you that you need to stop and listen to. Perhaps there is someone you need to talk to or reconcile with but being busy has kept you from having to face that. Perhaps you need to make a life decision but have felt stuck and need the space to talk to God about it. Whatever the case may be, sit and wait for God to make the way forward for you.

Acts of Devotion and Spirituality: As we journey through this Lenten season, there are several weeks left. Consider reading a few chapters a day to read the entirety of the Gospel of Matthew. There is often so much blessing in reading a gospel in its entirety because it situates the text in its 1st century antiquity and gives a powerful narrative to popular texts that we focus on often.

Acts of Justice and Resistance: Consider work that Belmont is connected to and if you are feeling called to get involved: [Family Reconciliation House](#)

Acts of Mercy: Consider work that Belmont is connected to and if you are feeling called to get involved: [Leah Rose Grocery Run](#), [Brighter Days Nashville](#)

[Check out the sermon at this link \(posted on Monday\)!](#)