

# the final days

## The Lenten Journey DEVOTIONAL | WEEK 4 | MARCH 30

“Holiness is nothing else but the beauty and character of God displayed in our everyday lives. Holy living means more than victory over sin; it also means growth in character so that we become more like Jesus Christ.” – Warren Wiersbe

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### RECEIVE

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As you read **John 15**, remember that these are some of the final thoughts that Jesus will give to His friends before His arrest. They do not fully understand what is about to happen, but they know something is shifting. Think about how hearing the message in this chapter would make you feel if you were there at that time as one of the disciples.

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### REFLECT

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1. Vineyards were common throughout the Ancient Near East, and imagery of vines and vineyards appear throughout Scripture (Isaiah 5; Matthew 20; Psalm 80:8–9) and remain powerful metaphors today. Make a short list of what you know about vines and vineyards. Why is this imagery so prevalent and powerful?
2. In 15:4 & 9, Jesus invites the disciples to “remain in Me.” What does He mean by this statement? Other translations use the word “abide.” How does a person remain or abide in Christ?

3. In 15:10, Jesus explains how we are to remain in Him. What does He say in this verse? To which commands is He referring? (See also 13:34–35 and 15:12–13)
4. In keeping with the imagery of the vineyard, Jesus also talks about pruning. Pruning can be a difficult yet healthy action. Why does Jesus speak about pruning here? How does pruning build health? What is lost during pruning?
5. In 15:18, Jesus makes a strong statement about the hatred that the world has for Him. What is He referring to here? Why might the disciples be hated in the same way?
6. In 15:15, Jesus makes a significant statement; He calls His disciples friends. Why is the distinction between friends and servants important? Why does Jesus call them friends? What was it like to be a friend of Jesus' during His final days?
7. To remain in Christ and keep close to God is the work of spiritual formation and soul care. This work requires habits and practices. Do you currently have any practices or habits in your life that keep you connected to God? If so, what are they? If not, are there any that you might imagine adding to your life?
8. The season of Lent is a season for reworking habits and practices to draw closer to God and remain in His love. How has this Lenten journey been for you? If it is a new experience for you, what has it been like? If you are familiar with Lent, what have you learned over the years of observing this sacred season?

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## RESPOND

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There are many spiritual practices that help us build the habits we need to remain and abide with Christ. Prayer and Bible reading are two of the most common practices but there is a long list of experiences that have shaped Christian formation throughout the centuries. Below is a list of a few better-known practices that can help strengthen our faith. Consider trying one of them this week:

- Journaling
- Fasting
- Practicing solitude and silence

- Painting, drawing and other creative practices centered on visual arts
- Dancing, running, walking and other movement-based practices
- Acts of kindness and service to others
- Confession
- Intentional fellowship and time spent with others
- Simplicity

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## BLESSING

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Lord, we want to remain with You in response to Your promise to remain with us. We are grateful for Your presence in our lives and Your consistent care and love for us. Lead us to habits and practices that keep us connected to You and that help us live out Your commands to care for one another. Help us learn how to pray and to practice the things that deepen our relationship to You and to one another. Thank You for Your love, for the abiding and enduring gift of Your grace, and for the invitation to live as branches on Your vine. Amen.

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## READ FOR NEXT WEEK

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### Reading Plan | The Final Days

Week 1 | March 9 | John 11

Week 2 | March 16 | John 13

Week 3 | March 23 | John 14

Week 4 | March 30 | John 15

**Week 5 | April 6 | John 16**

Week 6 | April 13 | John 12

Good Friday | April 18 | John 18 & 19

Easter | April 20 | TBD