
examen
'God, investigate my life...' Psalm 139:1
Kairos
NETWORK CHURCH

Lent 2023

Week 1 - Ash Wednesday

Investigate my life



There is a tension at the heart of Lent that helps us on our spiritual journey. On the one hand we start with Ash Wednesday. We mark ourselves with a cross and ask God to forgive us. We accept that we are broken, fallen and in need of rescuing. Then we begin to journey towards Easter, that great and terrifying moment where we see just what Jesus would do to rescue us, and we celebrate his defeat of death. On the one hand Lent has nothing to do with us and is all about God's work.

On the other hand we might give something up, or make plans for reading or courses or prayer. We might use the next 40 days to build in a habit or try something to help us take a step closer to God. So there is a tension, which is in fact the perfect tension of following Jesus. We can't do any of this, we're utterly reliant on Jesus. Yet Jesus calls us. Lent becomes a time where we pay attention to our journey - how are we learning to follow him?

We remember Jesus fasting in the desert and we attempt to walk more closely. Fasting is a great way to explore this tension. We give up something we love or need - screens, chocolate, meal(s), alcohol, because we want to make space in our lives to draw closer to God. We identify with Jesus as he fasted in the desert and received the Holy Spirit's power. At the same time by giving things up we remind ourselves of our dependencies and appetites, we remember how weak we are.

Story

"I fast when I feel I need clarity from God. The process calms the storm within me from the voices that create uncertainty, confusion, and doubt. This might be for myself or when someone else is needing guidance or healing. Clarity comes as I replace what I am fasting from with prayer and reading my bible. The result of fasting for me is always a renewed sense of well-being, hope, purpose and direction." Mandy

Is there something you might fast from this Lent?

At Kairos we have been developing 5 journey statements that might sum up the first stages of following Jesus. They are not the last word on being a disciple, but they each mark a step on the journey. They are not at the foot of the mountain (that is simply saying yes, I'll follow you) nor are they at the top. Think of them as maps for the route - somewhere after setting off from basecamp.

We've produced 2 versions of these statements, one with 'I' and another with 'we'. That's another tension. We are called to be a body, to journey with each other. And Jesus calls us each individually.

The journey statements are:

- ***I encounter God's presence in prayer and worship***
- ***I am in a Kairos community that grows my faith***
- ***I experience fruitfulness on my frontlines***
- ***I have friends who aren't yet Christians and can spot people of peace***
- ***I am able to share God's story and my story.***

This Lent I invite you to join me using these statements to examine our lives. Let's hold them up to ourselves and see how we're doing on this journey. What have we learnt so far as we've followed Jesus? What might God be asking us to learn next? We'll look at one of these each week.

We've called this journey 'examen'. The examen is an ancient Christian practice of looking over your life by asking questions. It's been developed and practiced in many forms. One of my favourite comes from the beautiful little book "Sleeping with Bread" in which the examen is distilled into 3 simple questions:

1. **What am I most grateful for?**
2. **What am I least grateful for?**
3. **What can I learn from these things?**

On our journey we'll ask many questions, but keep returning to those three.

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Each week there'll be some different things you are invited to try. Don't try and do them all, but maybe see if there are one or two you might like to give a go. As Lent goes on you might find yourself enjoying one or two new practices and wanting to stick with them and trying to build a habit. Alternatively you might like to try a couple of different things each week. Both approaches are completely fine, as long as you don't over-burden yourself with things you feel you ought to do!

God, investigate my life;
get all the facts firsthand.
I'm an open book to you; Psalm 139:1 (MSG)

Jesus, teach me to occasionally live with less,
to fast those things which distract me
or in which I am tempted to put my trust.
I know that you have the best for me
and are leading me in the way of everlasting abundant life.
Amen.
Engage Worship

Ponder



How does your life demonstrate that you follow Jesus?

How does your life demonstrate that you need Jesus' help?

How might fasting feature in your Lent this year?

Try this



Read Psalm 139 and ask God to investigate you.

Take a moment to read our journey statements again.
Are there any you feel you have taken steps forward with this year?
Are there any you feel you want to do something about?

Week 2 - Monday 27th February

I encounter God's presence in prayer and worship

You are created in God's image to know relationship with God. All people are. In Genesis we see how God would walk with humans in the cool of the day. You are amazing, and you are lacking, you need God's presence.

Prayer and worship are ways in which we may draw near to God. Very simply they are the ways we have conversation with God and live to give Him glory.

In one sense the whole of life is prayer and worship - we can talk to God at all times and everything we do we are invited to do as worship for God. In another sense we do particular things at particular times to help us connect, find ourselves at home with God, be especially close.

God is present with us. We may not always feel this, we may not always have (or want) an ecstatic experience but God is present. Jesus says 'I am with you always' and we are invited to be 'rooted and established' in his love.

'***For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.'***
Ephesians 3:14-19

Creator God, who formed us from the dust, breathe in me again.
Put a new song in my heart and grant me a new imagination
to perceive fresh possibilities in Your world today.
Lectio 365 app

Ponder



What does prayer and worship look like for you at this time?

Do you have set times in your day and week where you pray and worship alone? With others?

What words or phrases stand out to you from the Ephesians passage? What might God be saying to you today?

Where are you rooted and established? Where might rootedness need to grow in your life?

Try this



Download and use the Lectio 365 and/or Inner Room apps from 24-7 Prayer and use them to build your own rhythm of prayer. *www.24-7prayer.com/join_in_posts/pray-using-apps/*

Try taking 10 minutes in silence, or out in nature, or just talking to God. How does it feel?

Read a Psalm and use it to inspire you, start to write or sing your praise.

Come to a Kairos Community worship event or gathering you wouldn't normally attend. See how you experience God in that space.

Sign up for the Harrogate House of Prayer emails and make some time to pray through the email. *www.netmakers.org.uk/pray*

Choose a friend to pray for each day over the next few weeks.

Find two or three people to pray with each week for the next few weeks.

Try praying out loud, either on your own or with others. Get used to hearing yourself talk to God.

For Kairos Communities

Though we've designed these Lent resources to work for individuals you could also use this as a community if you wanted to. You might like to try one or more of the following ideas:

Treat each week as an outline for a Community meeting. Read the introduction together and then use some of the ponder questions to start some discussion. Finish by making yourself accountable about what you might try and start the next meeting sharing how that went.

Make some space once or twice in Lent to practice a simple examen. Ask one another - What are you most grateful for? What are you least grateful for? Give each other time to answer as fully as you want to. What do you learn from each other as you do this?

Check in with each other about the things you have tried this Lent. Are any of you sticking with one or two things to try and form a habit? Have some of you tried a few different practices? What have you enjoyed?

If you are using this resource in a triplet

You could use these resources each week you meet in Lent.
Discuss the questions together and each choose one thing you want to try.
Start your next meeting together with some accountability, ask:
How did it go with your "try this" practice from last week?