



Lent.

JUDE BENEDICTION

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling
and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory
with great joy
to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord
be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority,
before all time and now and forever. Amen.

- Jude 24-25



Lent

A Six-Week Journey Toward Easter

Our hope and prayer is that the words in this Journal will draw you deeper into the meaning and the mystery of Christ's death and the resurrection. As you come closer to this cross-shaped gospel of grace, may you be inspired to new ways of loving well and changing lives through Christ. We're grateful for Woodmen friends who shared their voices and their hearts in this project.

Week One: Kristin Woolley

Week Two: Josiah Dangers

Week Three: Karin Harper

Week Four: Lindsay Betz

Week Five: Kurt Birky

Week Six: Noah Collins

An invitation to the Cross

For more than a thousand years, Christ-followers have devoted the weeks leading up to Easter to prepare their hearts to fully engage with the deep sorrow of Good Friday and the exuberant joy of resurrection Sunday. Although traditions vary slightly, this Lenten season has historically included increased times of prayer and reflection on God's Word, penitence and some form of self-denial, such as fasting.

This Lent Journal is your invitation to join in this ancient practice by taking a few minutes each day to meditate and pray. The benediction in the New Testament book of Jude forms the framework for our Journal, the pathway which will lead us closer to the cross and the resurrection. You'll recognize the words of this passage from the way we close Woodmen worship services each weekend, sending the church into the week ahead with a Christ-centered, God-glorifying, Holy Spirit-fueled purpose in our hearts.

In the following pages, you'll find six weekly sections, each exploring one phrase from this benediction. For each week, you'll find a brief devotional written by a member of the Woodmen community and scripture passages for your reading and reflection. There are also questions and space for you to write and respond.

You're free to engage with the content in a way that works best for you. Already have a daily Bible reading plan? Make this a supplement as we approach Easter together. If you're hungry for more, or you aren't yet reading scripture regularly, you can read the suggested passages over again each day of the week. Ask the Holy Spirit to take you deeper as you search His active and living words and seek to apply them to your life.

In addition to reading and reflection, you'll also find six daily prayer suggestions for each week. We're trusting God to move—to do things that only He can do—as we unite as a church around these daily prayers.

You might choose to give something up during Lent, perhaps fasting from a favorite food or eliminating TV or social media. Christians through the centuries have discovered that making some small, yet meaningful, sacrifice can remove distractions and stir our hearts toward more consistent, intentional prayer and dependence on the Lord as we're reminded daily of Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

Lent traditionally begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts for 40 days (plus Sundays). In biblical literature, 40 days or 40 years often represents a time of testing or waiting in preparation for something new. Jesus was tempted in the Judean desert for 40 days before beginning His public ministry. He appeared to His disciples for 40 days before ascending to Heaven. In scripture, forty years can also represent the length of a generation. The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness before entering the promised land.

This year, as we celebrate 40 years since Woodmen's beginning, it's exciting to remember God's faithfulness and to anticipate and dream about new things He has in store. How might He use Woodmen for His purposes in the generation to come?

While we can't see what the next 40 years will hold, we can be confident that the best beginning point is prayer. We hope that over the next 40 days this Journal will help fuel your prayer time as you prepare for Easter 2020 and for the new stories God is writing in and through your life.

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling ...”

I wish the beginning of the Doxology in Jude said, “to Him who *keeps you* from stumbling.”

When I was a young believer, I assumed that I wouldn’t stumble anymore because I’d found love and forgiveness in the name of Jesus. I quickly discovered, however, that my life was not sin-free. My sin was always before me even though I honestly wanted to follow God.

The good news is that, although we’re flawed and sinful, we’re not without hope. While the opening words from Jude’s benediction don’t match my wish, they do affirm a greater truth that I’m coming to understand as God grows me: He has provided One who is able to keep us from stumbling, but He has given us a part to play as well. When we live lives surrendered and obedient to God, when we humble ourselves and depend on His power and wisdom, He is ever-present to keep us on the path, to rescue us. And when He rescues, let us praise the Lord this side of heaven, and see victory here on earth, in the land of the living (Psalm 116:9).

As this Lenten season begins and we seek to anchor our hearts in Christ’s work on

the cross, whether we’re walking through uncertainty or celebration today, let’s find strength in these three truths:

- Jesus built this church (both Woodmen and the global Church)
- Jesus rescued us
- Jesus will be faithful to see us through to the end

When we get to heaven, we will see that Jesus kept us from falling into traps and temptations that so easily entangle, giving us the power and grace to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. So, go for it! Run your race at full speed today with confidence that with the Holy Spirit as your guide, you have all you need to avoid the snares that might otherwise bring harm.

Be intentional to seek Christ’s face through spending time in Scripture. Pour out your heart to Him in regular prayer. Take heart in the knowledge that, although in this world we will have trouble, He has overcome the world (John 16:33). Our prize at the end of the race, our inheritance, is life with Jesus our Savior forever!

READ Psalm 116:1-9, Psalm 121, Psalm 37:23-34

REFLECT

- 1 *Sit for a minute, breathe, ask the Lord if there are any places in your heart that aren’t currently pleasing to Him. Write a list of these places, confess them to the Lord and ask for His help.*

- 2 *Where in your life are you currently fixating on things that are causing you to stumble? Write some ways that would help you get your eyes up on the One who has all power to rescue you.*

- 3 *What are tangible things you can do this week to run your race well and avoid stumbling? Do you need to reach out for accountability, call a friend or commit to a community group?*

PRAY

- Day 1 Pray for those in our church body who are currently stumbling and struggling—that they would have humility to repent and grace to reach out to someone.
- Day 2 Give thanks to God for the groups and individuals at Woodmen who walk alongside people—Woodmen U, Community Groups, Campus Pastors and more—and pray that these leaders would have wisdom and discernment.
- Day 3 Pray for our brothers in Ark Valley Correctional Facility, that they would not be tempted in such a challenging culture, and that they would run a race worthy of the calling they have received.
- Day 4 Ask the Lord for a greater awareness of His presence in your life—through His creation, other Christ-followers, worship and scripture.
- Day 5 Pray for God’s healing touch on patients at CURE hospitals. CURE, one of Woodmen’s global partners, provides life-transforming treatment and care to children with disabilities.
- Day 6 Thank God for new believers at Woodmen. Pray for them to be able to go and sin no more (John 8:11) and to grow in their faith.

“... **present you blameless before the presence of his glory ...**”

Of all the words I might use to describe myself, “blameless” would certainly be among the last. My heart is a mess, and it always has been. Even when I think it’s not, I’m only being deceived by my pride. The old hymn, *Come Thou Fount*, politely and poetically describes our hearts as, “prone to wander.” Do you ever feel that way?

The prophet Jeremiah offers a less flattering perspective, describing the human heart as “deceitful above all things and desperately sick.” For Jeremiah, a few-thousand years of Old Testament history graphically illustrated his point. My own experience lines up with Jeremiah’s assessment. Blameless? Not me. I have long since despaired of approaching that ideal.

But then, resounding across the millennia, three words shatter my despair: *It is finished*. I hear the voice of Christ echoing in my mind, the one whose suffering sacrifice on the cross changes everything. My debt

settled. My ransom paid. My penalty endured. My sin not erased or ignored, but altogether forgiven.

It is finished. I see my savior rising from death. I see that same resurrection power alive in me today. The righteousness of Christ is credited to my account. My adoption as a beloved child of the Father is complete. Sanctification begun and made possible as, through the work of the Holy Spirit, I am daily transformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

When juxtaposed with the condition of my heart, the saving truth of the gospel becomes matchlessly beautiful. One day, Christ actually will present me blameless before the presence of His glory.

Praise the Lord!

READ Romans 7:21-8:8, Psalm 51, Zephaniah 3:14-20

REFLECT

- 1 Take stock of your actions over the last week. Do they reveal a life fully surrendered to Christ, or an underlying belief that you’re responsible to make yourself blameless?

- 2 Are there areas in your life in which you are still living in condemnation or have abandoned hope of becoming clean? If so, confess these before the Lord and, through His power, walk in freedom today.

- 3 What might it reveal about what we believe about God when we doubt His ability to present us fully blameless?

PRAY

- Day 1 Ask the Lord to show you any ways in which you have lived with condemnation or pride regarding your sin, forgiveness and spiritual growth.
- Day 2 Ask the Lord to purify you, creating a right spirit in you, and restoring the joy of your salvation.
- Day 3 Thank the Lord for 40 years of whole-hearted, Christ-centered worship that has taken place at Woodmen. Ask Him to give us a continual hunger to give Him praise and glory through our songs, our prayers and our service in the decades to come.
- Day 4 Pray that the hope of the gospel would penetrate your neighborhood, bringing many people from death to life.
- Day 5 Pray that through the work of Woodmen global partner Compassion International, God would release children from poverty in the name of Jesus.
- Day 6 Ask the Lord to show you what part you are to play in sharing His transforming truth with your neighbors. Ask Him to show you whom you could invite to Easter service with you.

Week 3



“... with great joy ...”

The phrase *with great joy* and the idea of Christ’s brutal death on the cross seem like opposites, like pieces of a puzzle that don’t fit.

Yet we read in Hebrews 12 that it was “for the joy set before him” that Christ was able to endure the cross. Imagine Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem for the last time the week before His death. He could see the days ahead, full of betrayal, humiliation, agony and death.

How could He find even a sliver of joy in what was coming? What in the world was the joy before Him and how could that joy help Him endure the pain and shame of the cross?

Christ knew the end of the story! He knew that enduring the pain and suffering was opening the door to the resurrection and victory that were on the way.

Our Savior endured suffering for our sake so that He could blaze a trail for our salvation, a path for us to come back home to God. Because of His death and victorious resurrection, we have the opportunity to live in close, personal relationship with the God of the Universe. How crazy is that?

And it gets even better! Part of the joy set before Christ was you. He created you and loves you so much that He endured the cross to make a way to be in loving, joy-filled relationship with you!

If we place our trust in Him, we can find the hope and strength to endure trouble in this world, because we too know the end of the story. We can find overflowing joy in His presence here on earth and expectantly await the far greater joy that will be ours when we dwell in His presence for eternity.

READ Hebrews 12:1-11, Psalms 16, Revelation 19:4-10

REFLECT

- 1 *Reflect on Christ’s love for you as He endured the cross. How does His love for you individually, and His desire to rescue and restore you, impact your heart?*

- 2 *In Psalm 16, David expresses that in God’s presence is fullness of joy. This week, how can you savor God’s presence and find joy there?*

- 3 *As you consider troubles and challenges you’re currently facing, how does the truth of eternity in God’s presence give you hope to persevere?*

PRAY

- Day 1 Praise Jesus for focusing on the joy set before Him and enduring the cross for you.
- Day 2 Ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to focus on the hope of Christ’s return in the midst of earthly struggles.
- Day 3 Pray for those experiencing homelessness in our city, and specifically those at Springs Rescue Mission who are stumbling and struggling with addiction, that they would find hope in Jesus.
- Day 4 Thank God for the many Ministry Partners who have faithfully served with great joy through the past 40 years at Woodmen.
- Day 5 Pray that God would draw many to Woodmen this Easter to worship Christ and to hear of His deep love for them.
- Day 6 Pray that God would strengthen the pastors and workers of Empart, one of our global partners. As they serve in lands where there is spiritual oppression, ask the Lord to keep them safe and give many opportunities to share the hope of Christ.



“... to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord...”

Jesus. Savior. The deeper we know and fall in love with Jesus, the sweeter the sound of His name, the greater our need for His saving grace, the more precious our coming redemption and glory.

In our humanness, we are drawn to comfort. Yet in my own journey, brokenness has been a divine invitation to tender and intimate experiences with the Father. Broken places—that only will be fully healed in eternity—have opened doors for greater peace and victory.

God desires for His children to walk in confident hope, even when He entrusts us with circumstances the world cannot heal. When our journeys take us through valleys of brokenness, Christ’s victory over death and the promise of eternity’s beautiful restoration give our feet grounding amidst grief. As we choose to lean in deeper, we find God faithfully present, opening our hearts to truths beyond the here and now.

Our inheritance through Christ is both present and future. Our restored relationship with the Father came at the greatest of costs: Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Through His death, our sins

are forgiven, but forgiveness is just the beginning. God also pours out His abundant love. We are clothed in righteousness and are glorious heirs, welcomed into His Kingdom as sons and daughters.

Deep brokenness activated my faith in ways I hadn’t experienced. The resulting closeness of Jesus as I surrendered to Him took my breath away while simultaneously being the only way I could breathe. The world doesn’t recognize our losses as redemption stories, yet Jesus’ presence in our stories can bring hope and wholeness.

His miracle triumph over death goes beyond forgiveness and shouts “Victory” over our present and future! Christ is Savior over our missed opportunities. Savior over our disappointments. Savior over our failures. Savior over our hurts and weakness, our darkness and grief. Savior over all.

He walks with us and leads us gently forward with echoes of the resounding victory He already won on our behalf. In Him, we can walk confidently, toward Eden restored, with joy and hope in our steps.

READ Romans 8

REFLECT

- 1 Think about the biggest need in your life today. How can the promise and confident hope of Christ as your Savior change your journey with this need?

- 2 Write the names of a few people with whom you could share the hope of Jesus, our savior this week. Pray about inviting them to join you for Easter at Woodmen.

- 3 What does Savior mean to you? What aspects of God’s character come to mind as you reflect on Jesus as our Savior?

PRAY

- Day 1 Thank Jesus for the gift of eternal life and the gift of being “more than conquerors” in your journey.
- Day 2 Pray for God to open the hearts and minds of family members and friends who have not yet come to know Jesus as Savior.
- Day 3 Consider a person in your life with a hurt, injustice, or loss that will only be redeemed in eternity. Pray for Jesus to be close as their strength, comfort and peace.
- Day 4 Pray for the pastors, elders and leaders of Woodmen who are pointing many to the Savior today, and thank the Lord for those whose vision and faithfulness began our church 40 years ago.
- Day 5 Pray for the teachers of our global partner, ELIC, who work in countries where the gospel is unwelcome. Ask God to provide divine protection, and to encourage their hearts that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ.
- Day 6 Pray for Woodmen students who are facing brokenness and pain. Call out to God to reveal Himself to them today.



“... glory, majesty, dominion, and authority ...”

Have you ever seen a stunning sunset? A beautiful collision of reds, oranges and purples swirling into the darkening blue sky? Later when you try to describe the scene to others, does it feel like even your best words fall woefully short of capturing the true glory of it?

If it's challenging to describe a sunset, how much more difficult is it to describe an indescribable God? The doxology in Jude gives us four words to help us try to comprehend the God we serve.

GLORY: Honor, magnificence, splendor, grandeur. Glory is the sum of all that God is and does. We rightly ascribe all glory to God—not because of what He has done for us—but simply because He is God

MAJESTY: God is the greatest. This is not to simply say that He is the greatest among peers. Rather, we worship a God who is in His own category, utterly set-apart—the perfect definition of Majesty. There is no other.

DOMINION: He is sovereign over all, He spoke and all of creation leapt into existence. His jurisdiction extends through all places and all time. Everything, including you and me, are under the perfect, divine reign of God.

AUTHORITY: This word is often translated as “power.” Since God created all things, it is only natural that He would have power and authority over all He has made.

Not only do our best words fall short of expressing the attributes of God, but our minds also cannot fully comprehend His nature. He is beyond what we are even capable of knowing.

That's where the truly mind-blowing action of God comes into play. This God—so far beyond anything that we can comprehend—steps down from His rightful throne. He enters into history. Into His creation. He experiences birth, life and death. His infinite love matches His infinite power and He becomes one of us, accessible and personal to you and me—His beloved children.

READ John 1:1-34, Revelation 4:10-11

REFLECT

- 1 *There is something inside us that longs for independence. However, when we seek independence from God and choose our own path, it often results in sin and separation from Him. Are there aspects of your life that you try to wrestle away from God's will?*

- 2 *Do you struggle to trust God? How can reflecting on His attributes help bring comfort in difficult situations?*

- 3 *God is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Yet we often seek to displace God and set our desires above His. We look to earthly leaders and systems to solve the world's problems. Then we despair when these “solutions” fail. What worldly things do you need to release so that you're free to worship the God of glory, majesty, dominion and authority?*

PRAY

- Day 1** Spend time giving praise and thanks to God. Recognize His character, remember His goodness and faithfulness to you and throughout history.
- Day 2** Reflect on the Glory of God, as seen through His creation. Ask Him to open your eyes and reveal His Glory in unexpected ways.
- Day 3** Reflect on the Majesty of God. He is holy, loving and just. He is the perfect King. Place your trust and hope in Him alone.
- Day 4** Reflect on the Dominion of God. All things are in His jurisdiction. He is patient, just and loving. Lift up lost people and challenging situations—lay them at His feet.
- Day 5** Reflect on the Authority of God. We are bombarded with news of evil in the world, but God has been faithful in the past and He will be faithful in the future. Ask for His favor on Woodmen's short-term mission trips—that they would meet deep needs and stir hearts toward the hope found in Him.
- Day 6** Reflect on the truth that God so loved you that He sent His son, into the world. Ask Him to make this truth come alive in the hearts of children who join us in Woodmen Kids across our campuses.

Week 6



“... before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

We’ve experienced lots of beginnings and endings: Babies announce their arrival into the world with a cry. We watch the Colorado sun dip below the mountains, painting the sky and signaling the close of another day.

But when the last seven words of the Jude benediction speak of forever, it’s an idea we can barely grasp. We simply have no frame of reference for the concept, since all we know and all we have lived are moments that are bound by time.

The benediction begins with our dependence on God, but ends with His dependence on nothing, not even time. Wow! Take a moment to think about God’s glory and power over the universe.

Now go a step further and contemplate the truth that His glory and power had no beginning. David, in a song of God’s omniscience, said, “Your eyes saw me

when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began.” (Psalm 139)

God, in His majesty, knew you before there were beginnings and endings, before time (as we know it) commenced. He knew that His Son would die and be raised to life for you. So often, we imagine limits on God, because our frame of understanding is the finite constraints of human power. We can forget that His power is borderless and boundless.

Through the Holy Spirit, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is active in you and me. This week, as we live out our seconds, minutes, hours and days, let’s be mindful of the ways our words and actions can echo forward into eternity, and have the potential to change the forever of people around us.

READ Psalm 139, Jeremiah 10:6-16

REFLECT

- ① *What aspect or characteristic of God have you taken for granted, and how can you understand Him more clearly in this area?*

- ② *Reflect on your own being—who God made you to be. Do you have complaints? If so, write them down. Are there characteristics for which you’re thankful? Write them down as well. Read Psalm 139:14. How does reflecting on God’s boundless power cause you to think twice about your complaints?*

- ③ *Jeremiah 10 contrasts the Israelites foolish choice to worship idols instead of worshipping the eternal, all-powerful God. When our hearts place anything in competition with God, it’s an affront to His majesty and glory. Are there “idols” in your life that keep you from serving and worshipping Him without distraction? Make a list of the things that sometimes come before God in your life, and ask Him to help you set them aside.*

PRAY

- Day 1** Thank the Lord for His perfect plan and purpose for your life even when it doesn’t make sense today.
- Day 2** Ask the Lord to reveal Himself in powerful ways as Christ is lifted up in churches around the world this Easter.
- Day 3** As Woodmen looks to impact the Pikes Peak region in the years to come, ask God to let us do so in ways that will change lives today and change hearts forever.
- Day 4** Pray for Woodmen’s ACTS ministry, that we would be effective and caring as we look to serve in tangible ways and affirm the dignity of those in need in our city.
- Day 5** Ask God to give you openings with neighbors and family who don’t yet know Christ, and to give you the courage to share what He means to you.
- Day 6** Pray for the people of Estonia, and for Woodmen’s work there to see the hope of Jesus take hold in ways that change the eternal future of many.

JOIN US FOR GOOD FRIDAY & EASTER

GOOD FRIDAY

- Friday, April 10 -

EASTER

- Saturday, April 11 -

- Sunday, April 12 -

For service times and more info, visit

woodmenvalley.org/easter



