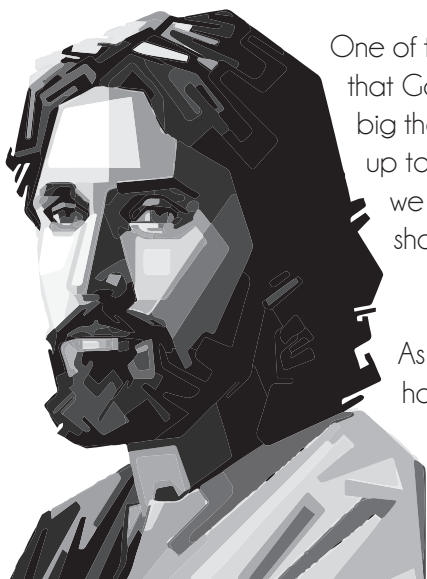


Face-to-Face with Jesus Every Day: Learning to Break the Chains



One of the most significant things that distinguishes Christianity from other religions is our faith claim that God chose to come to us face-to-face in the person of Jesus, the Christ. Think about how big that is. God wants to be in relationship with YOU. And yet there are so many barriers we put up to shield our lives from God, so many ways we try to distance ourselves from others. When we look at Jesus' life, he was all about showing up in people's lives, breaking boundaries to show God's love for each person who is, as the Bible says, made in God's image.

As we come face-to-face with Jesus this Lent, it is also true that there are things that are holding us back, things that bind us to old ways of thinking, prejudices that keep us from seeing one another as divine image bearers, habits that keep us from living the full promise of life with God. There are also things that bind other people around us, like racism, poverty, power, and wealth. Lent is a season of confession, and confession is nothing other than telling the truth about ourselves before God. Break the Chains is a simple, family-friendly way to pay attention to some of the things that bind us, and to become

more aware of things that bind other people around us. As we break each link in the chain, we are asking Jesus to set us all free and draw us into the fullness of resurrection life with him.

What you will need:

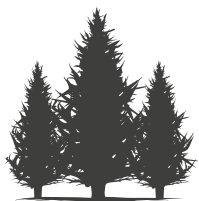
- 6 lavender sheets of paper in this packet
- 1 white sheet of paper in this packet
- Scissors
- Adhesive (glue, stapler, tape, glue dots)

Assembly:

1. Cut the 7 sheets into strips, following the dotted lines on each page.
2. Bend the first strip (Ash Wednesday) into a circle with the text on the inside (this will give every link a feeling of surprise).
3. Dab with glue (or staple or tape) to secure.
4. Thread the next strip through (1- Thursday).
5. Bend into a circle shape and use a dot of glue (or staple or tape) to secure.
6. Repeat steps 3-4 until your chain is complete, using the white-colored "Sunday strips" Where they fit in, after every lavender "Saturday strip."

How to share:

Please email all of your photos to contactus@sylvaniasfirst.org. We will be using your photos throughout lent. We can't wait to see and share your photos!



First Sunday of Lent

Hold: one minute of silence (breathe in trust, breathe out fear)

Read: Mark 1:12-13

Pray: Ever-present God, when I am surrounded by my fears, fill me with deep trust in you. Amen.

Share: a photo showing trust in the midst of fear.



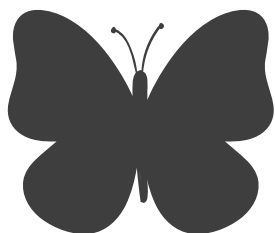
Second Sunday of Lent

Hold: one and a half minutes of silence (breathe in confidence, breathe out confusion)

Read: Mark 8:27-29

Pray: Saving God, help us to see you as you are, and to discover who we are in the light of your love. Amen.

Share: a photo that represents salvation to you.



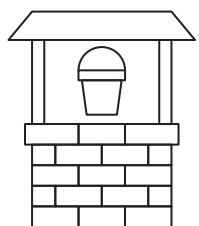
Third Sunday of Lent

Hold: two minutes of silence (breathe in healing, breathe out hurt)

Read: John 3:16-17

Pray: Healing God, teach us to trust you, and to love the world around us as much as you do. Amen.

Share: a photo that represents healing to you.



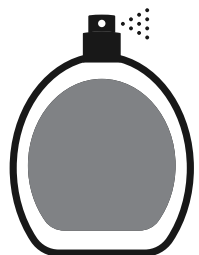
Fourth Sunday of Lent

Hold: two and a half minutes of silence (breathe in compassion, breathe out judgment)

Read: John 4:13-14

Pray: Living God, well up in us a deep love for the people you send our way. Amen.

Share: a photo that represents compassion to you.



Fifth Sunday of Lent

Hold: three minutes of silence (breathe in love, breathe out apathy)

Read: John 12:3

Pray: Self-giving God, give us the grace to offer you all that we have and all that we are. Amen.

Share: a photo that represents love to you.



Palm Sunday

Hold: three and a half minutes of silence (breathe in hope, breathe out cynicism)

Read: Mark 11:8-9

Pray: Humble God, give us hope when all seems lost. Amen.

Share: a photo that represents hope to you.



Easter Sunday

Hold: four minutes of silence (breathe in new life, breathe out despair)

Read: John 20:15-16

Pray: Risen One, turn our eyes from all weeping to behold the light of your face. Amen.

Share: a photo that represents resurrection to you.

Hold: Thirty seconds of silence (breathe in life, breathe out death)

Read: Matthew 6:19-21

1 **Pray:** Loving God, this Lent, help us change our lives. Break the bonds of apathy, self-absorption, and despair. Free us for heavenly treasure - for where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. Amen.

Share: A photo that represents treasure to you.



2 For centuries, three primary Lenten practices have been these: fasting, giving things away (including money), and prayer.

Today, find a quiet place to pray for someone you know who is having a hard time.

Share: A photo that represents a quiet place to you.



3 **Conversation starter:** Pick a subject or two (your neighborhood, school, work, etc.) and complete this sentence: "The best thing about [subject] is _____!" Gratitude and appreciation can help

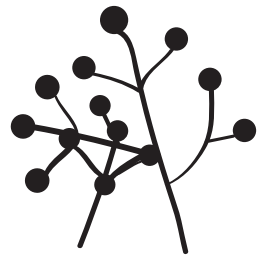
break the chains of negativity that hold us back.

Share: A photo that represents gratitude to you.



4 Be especially alert today to ways you can "be kind to one another and tender-hearted" (Ephesians 4:32). Make a special effort to thank the people working at your grocery store, your pharmacy, your school, or other places that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Share: A photo that represents kindness to you.



5 Write a note/color or draw pictures, and mail them to one of our community nursing homes. Think of them as a gift to those in need of care, or as an appreciative "thank you" to the staff. "Even to you old age and gray hairs, I am God. I am the one who will sustain you and rescue you." Isaiah 46:4 (There is a list on the church website.)

Share: A photo that represents appreciation to you.



6 Learn to say "hello" in three different languages represented in your community. Break the chain of separation!

Share: A photo that represents inclusion to you.



7 Do an internet search together to find organizations that serve refugees in your area. Start here: toledolovesyou.org. Find out what they need, how you can volunteer, and then make it happen! "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Matthew 25:35

Share: A photo that represents welcome to you.



8

With family or friends, decide together on an organization to support financially. For the work of compassion and justice, no donation is too small - and giving helps open the heart of the giver, too! Break the chain of self-absorption and despair.

Share: A photo that represents compassion to you.



9

Conversation starter: If war, violence, or poverty force you to leave your home, what would you take with you?

Share: A photo that represents home to you.



10

Reach out to someone who is by themselves, or seems lonely. Give them a call, send an email, or drop off something fun. Break the chain of loneliness.

Share: A photo that represents friendship to you.



11

Start (or increase) a practice of composting this Lenten season. Composting is a great way to reduce household waste, and voila turns it into something nourishing for creation.

Share: A photo that represents creation to you.



12

Try this experiment: Say only kind and positive things all day today. Break the chain of bitterness, gossip, and negativity.

Share: A photo that represents positive to you.



13

In the US, there are almost 400,000 children under 18 in foster care. Donate to an organization that supports kids in the foster system in Toledo. Look at adriel.org. "True devotion, the kind that is pure and faultless before God the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their difficulties and to keep the world from contaminating us." James 1:27

Share: A photo that represents care to you.



14

Do a household chore for a family member without them having to ask - or even without them knowing about it. Break the chain of toil and increase everyone's delight.

Share: A photo that represents delight to you.



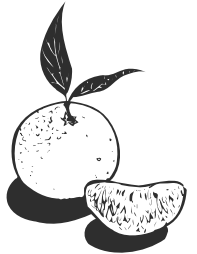
15 **Conversation starter:** What's your all-time favorite memory (or one of your top five)?
Share: A photo that represents memory to you.



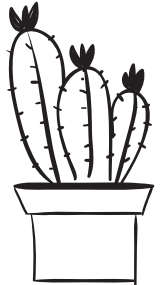
16 **Do the Popcorn Prayer!** Pop some popcorn and have everyone shout out something they are grateful for when they hear a kernel pop.
Share: A photo that represents joy to you.



17 This week or this Lent, try eating less meat, eggs, and/or dairy products. Think toward simplicity and fasting. Also think about taking care of the environment. Remember, God's mercy is "over all God has made." Psalm 145:9
Share: A photo that represents abundance to you.



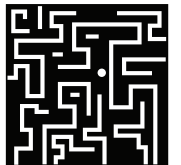
18 Give someone in your household a hug - "just because." It could be through a virtual means too! Break the chains of isolation!
Share: A photo that represents hug to you.



19 Today and for the rest of the week, avoid processed food as much as possible - food "which does not satisfy" (Isaiah 55:2). The gifts of the Earth are the gifts of God!
Share: A photo that represents the earth to you.



20 Try an online game night with someone you don't know well. Break the chains of loneliness!
Share: A photo that represents fun to you.



21 **Conversation starter:** What are the most serious problems the world is facing today? What do you think you could do to help solve them?
Share: A photo that represents hope to you.



22

Write (or find) a poem - simple or complicated, long or short - for someone you love.

Share: A photo that represents love to you.



23

Pick a day this week to decorate the inside of your mailbox, or outside of your mail slot, to bring a smile to your mail carrier's face. Help make "sorrow and sighing flee away..." Isaiah 25:10

Share: A photo that represents smile to you.



24

Record a video love letter or a voicemail and send it to someone who needs it. Break the chains of indifference!

Share: A photo that represents comfort to you.



25

For the rest of Lent, try sharing and borrowing as much as possible, instead of buying more stuff. Get back to your early Christian roots, when the disciples held "all things in common!" - Acts 2:44

Share: A photo that represents sharing to you.



26

"Pay It Backward!" The next time you're at a toll booth or in a drive-through, pay for the person behind you. Kindness feels different when it's from a stranger - and when it's a surprise! So find a surprising way to be kind this week.

Share: A photo that represents surprise to you.



27

Conversation Starter: Do you believe everyone deserves forgiveness, no matter what? If so, why? If not, why not?

Share: A photo that represents forgiveness to you.



28

Show support to an artist you love! Buy what they make, send them a donation, or drop them a note of thanks and admiration.

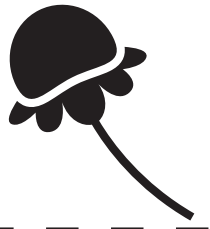
Share: A photo that represents art to you.



29

Try growing flowers from seeds this week: in cups on your window sill, in your yard, or in a public space or abandoned lot. Break the chains of misery, and help “the earth laugh with flowers.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Share: A photo that represents growing to you.



30

The next time you're in line, let someone go in front of you. Break the chains of stress and frustrations! “Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.” - Micah 6:8

Share: A photo that represents patience to you.



31

For the remainder of Lent, commit to becoming even more plastic free: reusable shopping bags; glass, metal, or ceramic water bottles and coffee mugs; and skip straws altogether! Break the chains of damage and disregard for creation!

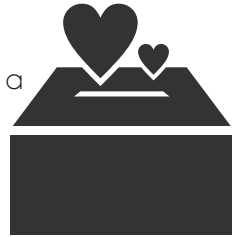
Share: A photo that represents nature



32

Select three local businesses you love (and who could use some support!), and write each of them a positive online review. Break the chains of toil and discouragement!

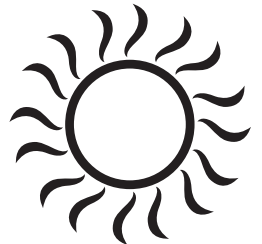
Share: A photo that represents encouragement



33

Conversation starter: What's your idea of a perfect day? Where would you go, what would you do, and who would you do it with?

Share: A photo that represents dreaming



34

Write a handwritten note to someone today, letting them know how much you appreciate them. “Love your neighbor as yourself” - Luke 10:27

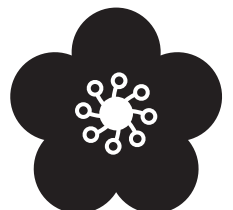
Share: A photo that represents neighbor



35

Pray for someone you don't like, or someone you're estranged from. Challenge yourself: Is a step toward reconciliation possible? Break the chains of resentment!

Share: A photo that represents peace



36

Write down three things you're grateful for today - and share them with a friend. Then write and share three ways you hope for new life for yourself or others this week.

Share: A photo that represents generosity



37

Make plans to virtually visit an organization doing good work in your community - and find out how you can get involved. Break the chains of apathy! "I am among you as one who serves." - Luke 22:27 (There are several listed on the church website.)

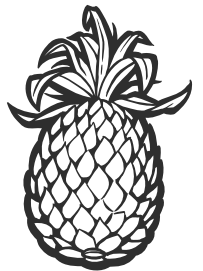
Share: A photo that represents serving



38

Unplug: Try an intentional "technology fast" today. Break the chains of distraction! Share a meal with someone you love (you can use technology for this part), and remember together the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the eve of his death. - Luke 22:7-27

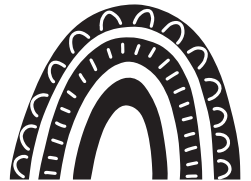
Share: A photo that represents presence



39

Conversation starter: What would you most like people to remember you for after you die? What would you like written on your tombstone?

Share: A photo that represents you



40

Plan a visit to a cemetery and tidy up an overgrown headstone. Let the whole world see that God is still with us, even in death. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:20

Share: A photo that represents faith



What do I want to experience this Lent?