

THE DISCIPLE'S WAY

Daily Reflections for Lent

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FORWARD MOVEMENT
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INTRODUCTION



Going Forward with High Adventure

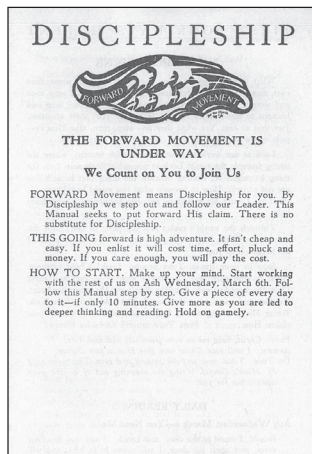
Back in 1935, the very first publication of Forward Movement began by saying, “The Forward Movement is under way.” On one level, this could have referred to the fact that a new organization was launching with an invigorating call for Lenten practice. But this opening line meant more.

In the mid-1930s, the Episcopal Church faced grave challenges. The church was anemic, lacking the money to fund its mission and the people to sustain its life. Unsure of how to respond, the General Convention of 1934 chartered the Forward Movement Commission to “reinvigorate the life of the church.”

When the commission members gathered in late 1934 to decide how to accomplish their charge, they couldn’t agree on how to proceed. In what was surely a Spirit-led insight, the first head of Forward Movement is reported to have said, “If we want the Episcopal Church to be strong, we need our congregations to be strong. And if we want our congregations to be strong, we need them to be filled not with habitual Christians, but with disciples of Jesus Christ.”

So, the Forward Movement began with a bracing call to discipleship. In Lent of 1935, the first publication emerged. It was a bold summons to follow Jesus. In Lent 2025, we are celebrating 90 years of Forward Movement's ministry, but even more than that, we are giving thanks for nine decades of disciple-making, church renewal, and transformation of lives.

In this book, you will read the contents of the 1935 publication along with reflections from contemporary authors. We kept the King James Version of the daily scripture readings to accompany the meditations, but you can also find the New Revised Standard Version translation in the back of the book. We set the text from the original publication in highlighted boxes to make it easier to identify. The 1935 language is vigorous, and we asked our authors to adopt a similarly vigorous tone that might not be usual for today's church. But we need a stirring call to follow our Lord, a wake-up call.



"There is no substitute for discipleship. This going forward is high adventure. It isn't cheap and easy. If you enlist, it will cost time, effort, pluck, and money. If you care enough, you will pay the cost." That's what they said in 1935, and it's still true today.

The Lent booklet of 1935 featured a woodcut of a ship with seven sails. The seven sails doubtless recalled the seven steps of

discipleship: turn, follow, learn, pray, serve, worship, share. The imagery of a ship is commonly used for the church: the church is a refuge, a safe place in stormy waters. But in this case, the woodcut helps us picture the church not as a static place but as a community of disciples on the move.

In traditional church architecture, the place where the people sit is called the nave. This word comes from the same origins as “naval,” and it takes its name in part because the pointed roof can be seen as an upside-down ship. When we come to church, we are gathering in a kind of ship. Ships fulfill their purpose when they travel, sometimes on stormy seas. And the church fulfills its purpose when it moves forward, sometimes amidst great challenges.

Perhaps the greatest spiritual danger in this day and age is complacency. It's tempting to delude ourselves into thinking that we can fit our Christian faith into the gaps of a comfortable consumer lifestyle. It's easy to lose the plot and think that church is primarily a place for comfort, not a place of transformation.

We need a vigorous push, both as individuals and as a church. Jesus rightly said that we cannot serve two masters. Either we choose to follow him, or we do not. My prayer and fervent hope are that we will put Jesus first. I hope you will find this Lenten devotional book helpful in rekindling—or beginning—your journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

You will encounter a variety of voices among the authors here, all ably edited by Richelle Thompson. Jason Sierra has

created new cover art to recall the 1935 art and to inspire us afresh. Above all else, I pray that our church will be stirred to carry out the work that our Lord has given us to do, to make disciples of all nations. It will not be easy, but that is the adventure of discipleship. And we are never alone, for Jesus has promised to be with us until the end of the age.

Have a holy and stirring Lent.

Scott Gunn

Cincinnati, Ohio

Feast of St. Philip and St. James 2024

THE FORWARD MOVEMENT IS UNDER WAY



We Count on You to Join Us

Forward Movement means discipleship for you. By discipleship, we step out and follow our leader. This manual seeks to put forward this claim. There is no substitute for discipleship. This going forward is high adventure. It isn't cheap and easy. If you enlist, it will cost time, effort, pluck, and money. If you care enough, you will pay the cost.

HOW TO START. Make up your mind. Start working with the rest of us on Ash Wednesday. Follow this manual step by step. Give a piece of every day to it—if only 10 minutes. Give more as you are led to deeper thinking and reading. Hold on gamely.

FIRST FOUR DAYS IN LENT

A DISCIPLE TURNS

What they did, we can do. They lived in times worse than ours, more cruel, more hopeless. These first disciples were men and women like us—everyday humanity. Jesus comes near and beckons to them. They turn to him, give him their attention. Just that at first. Yet what they do—stop, turn, take him in—puts us forever in their debt. They started discipleship. Look at our world: a mad scramble for security, where the strong trample the weak. Look at yourself. “Each man feels the thing he might be, beating beneath the thing that he is.” You are not content. How to become what you might be? That’s the question. I can’t lift myself by my own bootstraps. I must have help.

Through the world’s racket and the pulse of one’s own dissatisfaction, Christ keeps saying: “I am the way. Turn to Me. I am here to help you.”

Stop in your tracks. Turn around. Look! Christ is there. What do you care that he doesn’t register on eyes and ears? Only the very first ever got him that way. He is in your heart. His face and voice are in the Gospels. Get hold of the little book. Wring his meaning out of it. Ask someone. The church proclaims him. Stop. Turn around. Consider Him.

PRAY: Christ, help me to turn from self and find you.

AFFIRM: I will face Christ and give him a fair chance.

DO THIS: Trust your impulse to stop and turn. This week, read Saint Mark’s Gospel. Wring the meaning out of it—the good news it has for you.



TURNS



The Week of Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday



You Need Me

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

—REVELATION 3:20

It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.... I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

—MATTHEW 9:10-12, 13B

When Jesus said, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners," he was making it clear: "I have come to call all y'all." The call was for everyone, as no one is fully righteous on their own. Jesus began his public ministry with a brief proclamation to all who would listen about making this discipleship turn:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

To repent is to look back on wrong past actions, feel remorse, confess to God, and then change our behavior going forward. On Ash Wednesday, we are offered space to recall the ways in which we see we have messed up, fallen short, or hurt others out of our own wounds. The Book of Common Prayer gives us these words in the prayer for the day, "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness."

This is not about beating ourselves up, as the heart of this love message is offering us a "do over," a second chance, or third or fourth or hundredth. The most common word for sin in scripture means "to miss the mark." This was a term used in archery for not hitting the bullseye. The goal we are to be aiming for is God's will for our lives. Scripture makes it clear that we can miss, not because our aim is slightly off but because we are using a different target. In this season of Lent, we see that there is more to the discipleship turn than looking back with regret. We also get to take fresh aim.

This is where a word about translation can deepen our understanding. The word for repent in the Greek text of Mark's Gospel is *metanoia*, which means to have an "after mind"—a mind reconfigured after a metamorphosis. We usually refer to this type of transformation as a change of heart and mind. Translators like to opt for the most economical way of conveying a concept with a single word standing in

for another single word. So, they used the word repent to convey the meaning of a change in how someone sees the world and their place in it.

This conversion is what happened when an encounter with Jesus caused someone to know him for who he is and to fall in love. The first followers had already seen how the maker of heaven and earth is present in Jesus, the Messiah. But when they learn Jesus cares about them and wants them to be with him, that changes everything. Their lives will never be the same after his invitation to go deeper in their faith.

Andrew, Simon Peter, James, and John will leave their fishing nets, not out of regret for their past sins but out of hope for what life with Jesus could be. The change captured by the word *metanoia* is nothing less than regeneration, a new birth that leads to new thoughts and actions, not driven by fear but responding to love. This moment of recognition of the truth of the Good News of Jesus would change the heart of Mary Magdalene, who became the apostle to the apostles after Jesus's resurrection. Down through the centuries, we see saints in every age in whose lives we find a *metanoia*, a revolution, that took over their hearts and minds, after which life was never, ever the same. With converted minds, they set their mark as God's will.

The life-changing, heart-transforming Good News at the heart of Christianity is that you matter to the maker of the cosmos. Once you see that there is a creator God who does not stand back like a mildly curious clockmaker or a stern judge but a loving God who cares for you as the best of loving parents care

for their child, then everything is different. We can find healing and wholeness in Jesus and let past pains go as we look forward in faith to a life lived with the awareness that God is with us and will never forsake us. In a world of wounded people going on to hurt others, this is the best news ever.

—*Frank Logue*



Thursday

How Much Do You Care?

Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them: But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit ... Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

—MATTHEW 13:3B-9

A good gardener knows the importance of turning over soil. They will take the time to till the land to refresh nutrients, oxygen, and minerals in preparation for the ground to receive new seeds. In our passage today, the sower distributes seeds that produce fruits of many spiritual kinds. Clearly, he plans to spread this seed no matter what type of soil he encounters, with the hope that our hearts will be fertile ground for the seeds to flourish and thrive.

As disciples, we turn the soil of our hearts by engaging in spiritual practices such as participation in the sacraments, scripture reading, and prayer. But there is a subtle warning here

that we disciples should heed. The more of these practices we do, the richer and more fertile the soil of our hearts becomes. This growth is wonderful if we let God plant the seeds of love, peace, and justice that the Holy Spirit desires for this world. But if we plant other seeds of power, prestige, personal security, etc., they will likewise grow and flourish. No matter what seeds are planted, they will grow in well-tilled soil. Ironically, soil that is not tilled at all may be in less danger of producing negative fruits because it is not likely to produce much fruit. Thus, we need to be sure to return to the sower over and over again.

One way to return to God is through the pastoral rite called Reconciliation of a Penitent (also known as private confession). This service is an excellent tool in our work of returning. In fact, the whole idea of reconciliation is that we come to the cross to lay down the sins we have been carrying, to lay them at the foot of the cross, and then to turn around and return to the life God has called us to. In private confession, we are given the gift of pruning away the fruits that are the byproducts of the self-serving seeds we have planted in our lives. In confession, we are given a safe place to release the things weighing us down by confessing the places in our lives where we need help, guidance, and then reassurance of our beloved status as children of God. As we begin this first week of Lent, let this be an invitation to consider calling your priest and engaging in this freedom-giving practice and turn again to God so that our hearts may be ready to accept the seeds of the Spirit.

—Hillary Raining



Friday



Simple? Troubled? Welcome.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light.

—MATTHEW 11:25-30

Growing up in Texas in the 1980s, I realized at a young age that being part of a church was simply a facet of society. If you lived in an area that was predominantly Christian, it was often assumed by your neighbors that you were also a Christian. In that way, people lived in very similar ways to one another, and cultural norms were clearly established, sometimes quite prominently and other times in unwritten ways. This type of “Christian” society kept people thinking, acting, and doing

things in similar ways. It wasn't until I was in college that I recognized that American culture has a great deal more variety of religious thought, practices, and lifestyles.

The first-century religious establishment in Jerusalem held a firm belief that the only way to know God and to love God was to follow a strict set of ordinances and practices that must be obeyed at all times. Adherence to these precepts was of utmost importance. Some of these practices were so rigid that they kept people from having any kind of spiritual experience of God at all. Jesus's ministry sought to clarify how these practices were originally intended to serve God and God's way of love, but he also was very quick to show how aspects of these religious norms detracted people from recognizing the presence of the Living God in their lives. Even though the leaders of the religious establishment expected all people to adhere to their interpretation of God's law, many who were poor, sick, illiterate, or disabled were not always able to comply. Jesus identified the lack of compassion in the law and sought to teach his disciples another way to live a life of love, loving God fully and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Instead of focusing on following the law, Jesus invited his disciples to follow him.

When I began recognizing the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in society, I realized that I had always approached my faith in a very passive way. Sure, I went to church and said my prayers, but learning to follow Jesus and his way of love was a completely different dimension of life. The life of a disciple requires a person to turn toward the love God has for us.

We turn toward God's love when we follow Jesus, but this takes a great deal of concentration and effort. When I made the deliberate decision to follow a path of discipleship, I began reading more about Jesus. I started spending long periods of time reflecting on God's purposes for me. I knew I needed a deeper understanding of the Bible and how it has informed the Church since the beginning. After all, when anyone changes certain aspects of their life and how they see the world, a whole new framework of habits and practices must be established to orient oneself to a new way of life. There's a *metanoia* involved: a need to turn toward a new way to be.

The most important and most valuable aspect of knowing and following Jesus is recognizing that we are always with him, and he is always with us. When things get difficult, Jesus can lead us by his yoke. He can give us rest for our souls, even in moments of significant challenge. His gentleness and meekness make us receptive and teachable. Jesus extends an open invitation for us to follow. When we do, we see how we are always together with him, and he is always with us.

—*Troy Mendez*



Saturday



The World's Hope

And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

—LUKE 10:23-24

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

—JOHN 4:13-14

To be a Christian is to be a person who offers hope: a hope based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hope in Jesus Christ orders the human imagination and mode of living in the world. At the same time, we seek and desire a world built on justice and modeled on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Hope in the Christian experience lives on by acknowledging how blessed we are to have spiritual ancestors who encountered Jesus, how blessed we are to live in the life of Christ now, and how blessed we are to know that God will be with us in our future. Jesus Christ says to us what he said to his disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." In Jesus, we see God's saving words and acts that bring life and love into the world.

Christian hope allows us to drink from the water, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." To be a Christian is to be a person of hope; it is a hope that invites us to be the light of the world. Christian hope springs up in us like a well of water; because of it, we commit to a life that brings peace and justice to all. The hope we have in Jesus Christ always points us to eternal life. Eternal life shows itself in our present reality through how we feed the hungry, visit the sick, give drink to the thirsty, and pay loving attention to the poor.

What does it mean for us to be a people of hope? Expectation. Trust. Desire. At the center of the spiritual life, alongside faith and love, is the virtue of hope. Both a verb and noun, hope calls us to expect the presence of God in ourselves, our neighbors, and every human being. To expect to be the hope, love, and presence of God in myself and every human being is a game changer in the spiritual life, moving us from expecting to trusting. Faith and hope are the wings of love. In truth, hope would never exist without love.

Jesus reveals to the disciples how blessed they are to have the hopes of all the world in their very presence. Jesus Christ is

the desire of every human hope because we believe he is the creator of all that is—seen and unseen. Part of hope is knowing that we will meet Jesus face-to-face one day. This is our deepest and strongest hope.

Christians are at their most authentic self when they point to Jesus Christ as the world's best hope. In Jesus, we find and learn the way to be good news to the poor and oppressed. Hope in Jesus Christ motivates us to love and work on behalf of the most vulnerable in our midst. The true disciple of Christ undermines the lies of our society that tell us that some lives have greater value than others. When our hope is founded on God, we build our lives on the truth that God is love. Hope reminds us of this truth: we cannot love God, whom we cannot see, if we do not love those we see. May our hope in Jesus Christ lead us to do what is good, true, and beautiful. Christian hope points to the power and life-changing and saving impact on Jesus, who loves this world.

—*Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones*





FOLLOWS



First Week in Lent

A DISCIPLE FOLLOWS

Christ is going forward. Are you with him before distance parts you? Decide to follow! Step out after him. He lives your life if you try to live his. Now that you get going with your eyes on him, your old job, the old duty is a new thing. His purpose instead of the old drifting. No longer "What pleases me?" or "What pleases people?" but "What says Christ?" You are Christ's partner.

Remember, it is only one step at a time. He never abandons even the most stumbling disciple. He begins to control the look on my face, the thoughts in my head, the things I choose and do. As his partner, I find I must redivide my time, my interests, my strength, my money; none for this, less for that, much more for something else. Master, you've started something in me. It hurts often but keep me with you. My partner has no use for my fearfulness, my old trick of dodging the issue, shading off the truth. It is hard to let all these shabby, hidden things go. It's a showdown. My old self or new in Christ.

PRAY: Help me to follow you this day.

AFFIRM: I have enlisted as Christ's disciple.

DO THIS: Before you say or do something, ask yourself, "Is Christ my partner, with me in this? Does he indicate a different way?" With your regular work done, look for the extra thing he wants you to do.

You are a disciple of Jesus, and that means following Jesus in all ways. In our modern world, this can feel countercultural, antiquated, or simply uncool. The assignment for Christians is radical, transformational, and life-changing! We must keep our minds focused on Christ and doing his will, even and perhaps especially when it means doing things differently from those around us. As disciples of Jesus, we must set aside fear, anxieties, and self-conscious worries to see the truths and face them.

I am a parent to two adolescents, and recently, something very unsettling happened with my younger son. He plays hockey on a competitive travel team. He's 10 years old, and already, his devotion to this sport requires approximately twenty hours per week for seven months out of the year. It's intense.

In the last week of the season, the kids play a final tournament, and emotions run high for coaches, players, and parents alike. All the hard work of the past months comes to a head, and it feels like so much is riding on these final games.

After a tough loss in a tournament game, I watched as these 9- and 10-year-old children turned against one another. In the locker room following the game, they began blaming one another for the loss. Their words were unkind, negative, and hurtful. Some children were upset; others joined in the teasing, while most remained silent. And, in the midst of it all, I witnessed an adult yelling at a child to "shut up." I can't make this up.

We can roll our eyes at the intensity of youth sports, modern parenting techniques, or any number of social ills that contributed to this sad scene, but I see it as a sobering example.

These children are echoing what they see. At this age, their behavior mimics their parents, grandparents, teachers, and coaches. This locker room scene is a microcosm of our society at large.

When things go wrong, we turn against one another. I'm not talking about major trauma but rather the everyday incidences of setbacks and disappointment. When this happens, some people become mean, violent, and aggressive. Some people are tender, hurt, and scared. Others remain silent but not unaffected.

As we debriefed this awful experience, I told my son that we never know what has happened to people or what is going on in their lives. The kid who is a bully is probably being bullied. The mean neighbor or grumpy co-worker might be sick, in pain, or grieving.

It doesn't make it okay to treat others poorly, but we can have patience and compassion.

We must work every day to embody what it means to be a disciple. It may seem obvious that we don't want to be the ones using our voices and bodies to lash out in anger or violence. But what do we do when we witness that behavior? When this happens, we have a choice. We get to choose how we wish to

respond in our words, actions, and facial expressions. Do we intervene? Do we remain passive?

We wish to follow Jesus, and Jesus does not abandon us. If Jesus does not abandon us, how do we ensure we will not abandon him? What can we do to ensure we are the parent, grandparent, coach, or teacher standing up for justice and righteousness?

It begins with daily prayer and the study of scripture. Going to church on Sundays is simply not enough. We must intentionally and regularly build our spiritual muscles by developing our minds and hearts and nurturing our souls.

—*Kate E. Wesch*



Monday of the First Week in Lent

Here is Certainty

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

MATTHEW 11:2-6

I spend most of my time and vocation among the demographic the church desperately wants (and needs) to understand: young adults. Young adults have come of age at a time when most of the systems and institutions that previous generations took for granted have all but crumbled. Everything from family, homeownership, and economic opportunities to religious and political institutions to the planet's future feels like it is built on sand that is quickly eroding. From this standpoint, certainty—particularly as it relates to something as mysterious as faith—feels almost laughable at best and insulting at worst.

As I write this reflection, I am walking with a student preparing for baptism. She grew up in a nominally Roman Catholic household, but unlike her siblings, she was never baptized, and her family never attended church services. She began attending chapel services because she joined the chapel choir. Her conversion story resembles the slow burn of a new fire. It started small—feeling connected to certain parts of the liturgy or particular pieces of music—and eventually came to incorporate big questions. When I asked what faith meant to her, she said, “I can’t make sense of everything I read in the Bible or we say in chapel, but something about that calls to me. I believe it *enough* to give it my life and let it guide me.” I found the phrase “I believe it enough” deeply resonant, and it has helped me better wrap my mind around the faith Jesus asks of those who follow him.

John the Baptizer asks Jesus, “Are you the one, or should we wait for another?” It is an important question. John is in prison. Given his relationship with Herod, he likely knows his days are numbered. His question is motivated by his concern about his fledgling religious movement and—perhaps more importantly—the kingdom of God to which his movement points. I hear in John’s question someone primed to give themselves away if only they could have some assurance that Jesus is the one for whom they have been waiting.

John the Baptizer, revered in Christian history, sounds much like many of us. Jesus responds to John by highlighting the mountain of evidence that God is on the move, in language that seems to allude to the prophet Isaiah’s depiction of the

year of Jubilee: the afflicted are healed, the dead are raised to life, and the poor have good news brought to them. The message here is: if you're looking for God, look for the signs that God has been here.

In a world of so much uncertainty, where it can be challenging to know what to believe, those who follow Jesus must learn to discern the signs of his presence. How do we know that Jesus is here? We will know he is here because we see love among people, particularly among supposed enemies. When Jesus is present, we will see joy bubbling up in unexpected places. Where Jesus is, there is peace built on vulnerability, not violence. The signs of his presence include kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If you haven't picked up what I am putting down, these are the fruits of the Spirit. Our work is to discern the signs of his presence in the world around us and cultivate them within ourselves. We are the sacrament of Christ's ongoing presence in the world. The kingdom of God begins with us. We are salt. We are light. We are a city built on a hill. We are messengers of the gospel, witnesses of the Resurrection, whose work is to bring this resurrection reality into the lives of everyone around us.

—*Marcus George Halley*

