



A Good Enough Lent

A 40-Day Companion to
Read, Reflect, and Pray

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent marks the forty days leading up to Easter, mirroring the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. It is a practice that began during the 4th century as a way to prepare Christians for the holiest days of the year.

During Lent, we ask God to show us the world as it is. We begin with the reality of our finitude rubbed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday—from dust we were made, to dust we shall return. Then, we walk through that reality in a kind of dress rehearsal. It's the downward slope of God—the Great Descent, where the whole Church walks toward the cross.

Frankly, Lent is my favorite part of the church calendar because it is a time when the whole church is on the losing team. A time when we all get a minute to tell the truth: Life is so beautiful and life is so hard. For everyone.

Of course, the cross isn't the end of the story, but this season of grief is carved out to acknowledge the reality of Christ's sacrifice. And the reality of suffering that so many of our circumstances reflect too—our own pain and grief and despair. Easter is coming, yes. But for now, we sit in the ashes of our broken dreams and broken hearts, knowing that God sits here with us.

Many people practice Lent by giving something up—alcohol, meat, chocolate, social media. Some take up something new—a new prayer practice or swearing profusely like I did one year (you probably remember reading about this in *Everything Happens for a Reason (and Other Lies I've Loved)*).

This year, I'm inviting our Everything Happens Community to give up on the idea that life is always getting better and settle in for a life and a faith that is good enough. Together, we're going to take ourselves off the hook for perfection. Perfect lives. Perfect bodies. Perfect relationships. And realize that this is the beautiful work of being human... again today. Thank God we get to do it together.

So what do you say? Do you want to commit to a "Good Enough" Lent?



Kate

HOW TO USE THIS COMPANION GUIDE

Each of the following forty entries is meant to be read alongside our new book of spiritual reflections, *Good Enough: 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection*. Of course, you can just use this free guide or just read *Good Enough* on its own, but you might find the most richness and depth when used together.

EACH DAY INCLUDES:

- An entry to read from *Good Enough*
- A scripture to read and reflect on, based on that day's theme
- Little checkboxes to indicate what you've read ☐
- Reflection questions that are meant to be all-play—accessible whether you are practicing Lent solo or using this book with your church, in a book club, or around the dinner table with your family.
- A prayer to close your time
- Feel free to print this booklet out and write your answers on these pages, in a journal, or simply meditate on your responses.

A NOTE ON SUNDAYS

Lent lasts for a full 40 days, but Sundays don't count. They are a day off from whatever you are abstaining from during Lent, a day to remind us that we are made for both—grief and joy, sorrow and delight. Strangely, this might feel like a hard thing to do—to make yourself stop working or worrying or checking off your day's reading—and really rest.

But over the next six weeks, you're invited to press against that part of your wiring that tells you that you must always be accomplishing, producing, processing—that everything must be *for* something. And take a day off from the Lent-y feelings to practice the discipline of Sabbath. Rest! Feast! Enjoy!

Before we begin, we wholeheartedly believe in blessing the crap out of each other. So here is a blessing for you, my dear.

A BLESSING FOR A MEDIUM-SAD JOURNEY THROUGH LENT

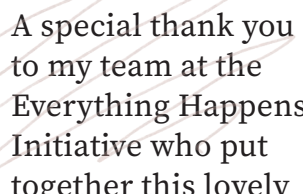
Blessed are you
who have found yourself—yet again—
among the fellowship of the afflicted.
Making the long, long walk toward the cross.

Blessed are you,
who are tired of pretending
that raw effort is the secret to perfection.
That that which breaks your heart
is overcomeable.
It's not. And you know that now.

Blessed are you
who need a gentle reminder that
even now, even today,
God is here,
walking with us,
meeting us in our places
of sorrow and despair,
desperation and grief.
Slowing lifting our chin toward hope.
Not promising to erase the pain.
But to carry it with us.

Blessed are we who realize
we are never—were never—alone.
And somehow,
That is good enough.

To learn more about the work of the Everything Happens Initiative, listen to podcast episodes, or download additional resources, visit katebowler.com.



A special thank you to my team at the Everything Happens Initiative who put together this lovely companion.

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Happy Enough

MONDAY, MARCH 14

☐ *Good Enough*, 61-67 ☐ Philippians 4:10-13

01

Sometimes hunger looks like ambition or goal-setting or bucket lists. It can help us visioncast or create futures for ourselves we might not reach for otherwise. When was the last time you felt that endless hunger that strives for more, more, more? What gift does that kind of hope offer you?

02

On the flipside, when so few of us are living our BEST LIFE NOW, the narrative of endless progress can make us feel like we missed the mark—that we'll never be good enough or smart enough or successful enough. What downsides have you recognized in the "everything is possible" worldview?

03

Being content in our present moment can be a tricky discipline. Look around. What feels like contentment right now? If nothing comes to mind, compress your attention even smaller.

Dear God, You know me, and You know those things I do that dampen Your life in me. Grant me freedom to come out from under what is not mine to carry. Let me sit awhile in Your presence, and begin to sense how You are shaping for me a pattern of life that builds strength and peace. And may it be for me such an inner joy, that it might overflow to others.

Amen.

Right After It's Over

TUESDAY, MARCH 15

☐ *Good Enough*, 68-73 ☐ Psalm 61:1-4

01

God's Great Magic Act, as Kate describes, is the mystery of God's presence and love in the midst of suffering. Reflect on a time when you glimpsed this truth in your own life.

02

Grief is a long story. There is no 5-step formula to moving on, but some practices can help to nurture your tender self in the thick of it. Make a list of small, practical things to try when you are in deep grief. Perhaps what's worked for you in the past will work again.

03

Think of someone you know who is in the midst of grief right now. Spend time in prayer for them and their circumstances. Ask that God surround them with the awareness of love. Then, reach out, saying something like: "No need to reply, but you are on my mind. I wish I could take this pain away. You are so, so loved. You are not alone."

Pray a wordless prayer.

Set the timer for 10 minutes (or 20 if you're feeling extra-spiritual). Settle into a comfortable position, perhaps in a chair with hands open in your lap. Connect with the ground somehow, the soles of both feet resting comfortably. Center your thoughts on the desire to pay attention to God, and to yourself as God's very own. When your thoughts wander and you realize it, thank God turn your mind back to prayer that is utterly open, receptive, and soaked in the awareness that God is God.

Needing Rules At All

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

☐ *Good Enough*, 74-78 ☐ Psalm 25:4-7

01

Are you a rule-oriented person, or do you chafe a little against such strictures? Is there a balance for you that works best?



I am a rule breaker.

I am a rule follower.

02

Think of the rules that go along with the practice of something you have mastered, be it a hobby or artistic expression or job-related skill. How do these rules provide the structure for creativity to be possible?

03

What spiritual habit would you like to be reminded to do each day? Pick a physical reminder (a pebble in your pocket, an alarm clock, a paper chain) that can provide the daily cue to make it possible.

Dear God, be with me as I build new habits into my day that are fruitful and life-giving. Grant me freedom and grace to trust this process, so that I might continue to grow toward that You, look more like You, and be better used for Your divine purposes.

Amen.

For the Exiles

THURSDAY, MARCH 17

☐ *Good Enough*, 79-85 ☐ Matthew 25:35-40

01

To love those who have been devalued and demeaned, is to do what Jesus did—to restore their human dignity. Who is someone you know who does this well? Or perhaps a time you received that kind of kindness?

02

Are there any people in your sphere of influence who seem invisible, shunned, or forgotten? How might you extend kindness to them this week?

03

Is there a little part of you too painful to look at, that is hidden under a shadow of shame? Perhaps parts that feel left out, forgotten, last-picked? Allow yourself to see through the eyes of God for a minute. Speak kindly to yourself. If it's too hard, imagine what you might say to a friend who feels the same way. Say it to yourself instead.

God, thank you for moving the center of Your kingdom to be with those who are rejected, just so they could belong. Encircle me in those very arms of Your love, that my restoration might be so complete, so pure, and genuine that it radiates love to others in a way that gives them the same standing—the right to receive and give love and care, simply by virtue of their humanity.

Amen.

The Tragedy Olympics

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

☐ *Good Enough*, 86-91 ☐ Galatians 6:2

01

“The Tragedy Olympics”—where someone one-ups a set of horrific circumstances with their own—is often done out of a desire to relate or perhaps get a bit of attention for their situation. What’s the funniest incident of this that you have seen played out?

02

Look around. Is there evidence that “struggle is everyone’s normal”? How does social media support or undermine that idea?

03

Think of a time when someone knew how to support you in your pain. What did they do that felt like love?

God, show me how to be a support to others in their pain. May my reaction never be to judge or compare or compete. Teach me, when I don’t know the right thing to do or say. But when I feel afraid or inept, empower me to follow through, to show up again and again with love and compassion and faithfulness.

Amen.

The Bad Thing

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

☐ *Good Enough*, 92-97 ☐ Psalm 139:13-18

01

Have you experienced the moment when someone sees you only as your diagnosis, tragedy, or misfortune? Or maybe it's the reverse, and what comes to mind are the moments when you felt awkward and afraid in the presence of pain. Why does being in the presence of pain make people—or, if you are being extra honest—you, uncomfortable?

02

Describe a time you experienced what Rudolf Otto calls “the numinous”—that moment when we catch a glimpse at the great mystery of the world, where holiness, fear, and humility are all wrapped in one.

03

Think of someone in your life who is enduring a difficult circumstance. How can you practically remind them that they are not the bad thing?

Fearfully and wonderfully made, the Psalmist says. Pray the psalm to God for yourself or for someone else in pain. As you read, what feels true? Then pray it again. Let the truth of the words wash over you.

Amen.

It's like seeing a garment turned inside out and all the rough seams are showing. You see someone's absolute humanity shine through all the pain, and that vulnerability makes them more—not less—beloved.

The great mystery of the world is peeking through, and we get just a glimpse... We understand holiness and mystery and fear and humility all in the same moment.

And it is beautiful.

Good Enough, p. 94