



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

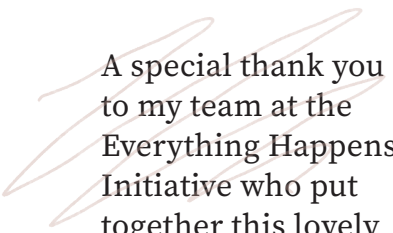
Blessed are you
who have found yourself—yet again—
among the fellowship of the afflicted.
Making the long, long walk toward the cross.

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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The Burden of Love

MONDAY, APRIL 4

☐ *Good Enough*, 167-172 ☐ Psalm 86:1-7

01

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear,” said theologian C.S. Lewis. Fill in the blank using your own words:

No one ever told me that grief felt so like _____.

02

We don't always have the capacity to invite our losses in, to give them space to resonate in our thoughts and feelings. It's costly. In such cases, simply name them and put them outside the door of your heart while you rest. You can invite them in and entertain them later. Be gentle with yourself. Grief is the experience of a loss carved out by love, and the greater the love the deeper the grief. If now is the right time, let your heart speak of what you have loved and lost.

03

“Jesus wept” (John 11:33-35, Luke 19:41). God in human form cries with us, for us. But Jesus didn't just say I feel your pain, He walked right toward it, to a cross of humiliation and apparent defeat. Little did we know He was shouldering death itself, bearing it away through the Easter mysteries that lie ahead on this Lenten path. He knows. Let God come into your pain with the infinite compassion that can reach and touch the depths of it. How does knowing that Jesus too experienced deep grief feel to you?

God, breathe Your compassion upon me, even now. You, Who have walked this path of darkness and death. Turn Your face to me, right where I am, and gather me up into Your arms of love. That I might rest awhile.

Amen.

TUESDAY, APRIL 5

☐ *Good Enough*, 173-178 ☐ Psalm 46

01

The psalmist of Psalm 46 describes God's presence in the midst of a world crumbling around them. Have you ever experienced this?

02

Begin reading Psalm 46 again, this time out loud. If there are any phrases that shimmer or stand out to you in a special way, pause right there. In the stillness, bring your troubles to God.

God, I didn't want to look. I didn't want to drag all this anxiety and fear out into the open. But here it is. Not a pretty sight. But there is relief in finally letting myself feel it. So part of my fear is that there's no help for it. I don't see any. But this is where You come in, God, and be for me the strength I don't have. The stability I don't feel. Come Lord, and shelter me. Right here.

Amen.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6☐ *Good Enough*, 179-183 ☐ Luke 9:28-36

01

What moments in your life do you wish you could have bottled up?

02

Begin to look around inside that memory, and notice the details. What do you see? What do you feel? What made it so special? Pick up a stone and make it your tactile connection to this memory. Your Ebenezer.

03

Read Luke 9:28-36 and see yourself in the story, walking up the mountain with the group. Who are you in the story? What do you see? Do you say anything?

04

As soon as Jesus walked back down the mountain, he started to explain about his coming death and resurrection to his dazed friends. But they didn't understand at the time. Do you have any confusion or questions that go unanswered?

God of quiet enchantment, I've known you. Every awe-inspired deep breath and knot in my throat is a primal hymn of your unpredictable beauty. May I notice the small, glimmering moments, for though they are fleeting, they are enough.

Amen.

Gondola Prayers

THURSDAY, APRIL 7

☐ *Good Enough*, 184-188 ☐ Psalm 5:1-7

Lectio Divina:

Take 5 or 10 minutes to let your body relax, and your mind become receptive and open. Let thoughts come and go.

When you feel settled, read Psalm 5:1-7 slowly, out loud, as if you have never heard it before.

Read the verses again, and notice if one phrase comes alive for you in a special way.

Turn that phrase over in your mind, and see if any memories or images or thoughts arise. Talk to God, and ask what meaning the phrase has for you right now.

Read the passage again, simply taking it in, and resting with God.

God, I don't know what to do with this load I carry. I feel like I am supposed to do something special to get your attention, but my attempts mean nothing to you. I don't want to pitch to you, dream at you, or explain myself to you. I just want to sit in your gentle presence, known and held.

Amen.

The Cost of Caring

FRIDAY, APRIL 8

☐ *Good Enough*, 189-194 ☐ Psalm 143

01

How has caring cost you?

02

Writer and nurse Christie Watson described how she knew she was doing her work right: it cost her something. Love, service, kindness, empathy—it all costs us something. Fill in the following blanks:

Love costs me _____

Service costs me _____

Kindness costs me _____

Empathy costs me _____

03

How have you experienced God showing up even (or perhaps, especially) in the midst of a costly love?

God, I know what it's like to be held up by the strength of love. I long to be this for others but sometimes it feels too heavy. I need you to hold me as I hold space for others, to fill me as I empty out little by little. Guide me gently with your wise Gardener hands, pruning no more or less than what is kind.

Amen. _____

The Reality-Show Gospel

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

☐ *Good Enough*, 195-199 ☐ Psalm 62

01

Where are you grasping for certainty for the sake of others?

02

For yourself?

03

For God?

04

What might you try instead of saying, "Everything Happens for a Reason"? (Feel free to make your answer snarky.)

God of all comfort, You know what it's like. You know what they are feeling, what I am feeling. You see past the grasps for certainty into hearts vulnerably entangled with others. You sit with those who sit with others, still, quiet, lingering. Root me here, in the middle of this, now knowing, yet known.

Amen.

**Your presence
itself is prayer,
and may the words
that come be simple:**

I am so sorry.

I love you.

You are not alone.

Good Enough, p. 198

