

40 DAYS OF HOPE



A LENT EXPERIENCE

Welcome to the 40 Days of Hope Lent Experience!

Throughout church history, Lent has traditionally been a time for Christ followers to focus on the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. While this has been a way of observing the lenten season over many years and across many denominations, what if we used these practices to look outside ourselves this year?

What if for the next 40 days instead of focusing on ourselves, we asked God to do a work in the people and places around us?

What if we look for ways to offer hope instead?

THE EXPERIENCE:

You will find the 40 Days of Hope Experience divided into 6 weeks with a specific theme each week.

THIRST / HUNGER / SICKNESS & SUFFERING / STRANGERS / UNPROTECTED / OPPRESSED

Every week will also have the following sections:

- ❖ Scripture Reading and Reflection
- ❖ Personal Response to Theme of the Week
- ❖ Tangible Ways to Offer Hope
- ❖ A Simple Prayer

YOUR INVITATION:

You are invited to set some weekly intentions during this lenten season. Consider how you might create space in your schedule to be with God and move through the lesson each week. What would it look like to be more generous with your time, resources, or acts of kindness? Let's commit to the next 40 days to growing together as we share in this experience and offer hope to the world around us.

Week 1- **THIRST**

“I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” *Matthew 25:35*

READ: [John 4:4-14](#)

Jesus begins his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well by asking for a simple drink of water in the hot midday sun. But then He goes deeper. He tells her that physical water can only quench thirst for a while — but He can offer “living water” that brings eternal life.

Jesus knew the woman needed — as we all do — both physical and spiritual water to live life “to the full” as God intends (John 10:10). Jesus crossed His day’s social boundaries of gender and ethnicity to speak to this woman as an equal and show that her deepest personal and spiritual needs could only be met by God’s Spirit.

ENGAGE

Possible ways to engage the scripture reading:

- ❖ Consider reading the passage a second time in a different translation.
- ❖ Notice if there are any words or phrases that stand out to you. If so, ask God why this caught your attention.
- ❖ Try putting yourself in the story. What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling?
- ❖ Where do you see hope in this passage?

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO THIRST

According to charitywater.org 703 million people lack basic access to clean and safe drinking water.

Make a commitment to drink only water this week.

When you reach for something else, pause and pray for those who thirst.

WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

- Bring a case of water for donation to Recovery Cafe or for the YWCA Birthday Bash.*
- Make a donation to [Charity Water](#)

PRAY

Pray that everyone in the world would have access to clean water. Pray for anyone you know who might need the hope that comes from Living Water.

* These items can be dropped off at church on Sunday mornings.

Week 2- **HUNGER**

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.” *Matthew 25:35*

READ: [John 6:5-14](#)

People saw Jesus healing the sick, so they followed him, hoping to see more of these miracles. But traveling and listening had left them tired and hungry. Jesus decided to meet both their physical and spiritual hunger.

The story is simple, but amazing: Andrew introduces a boy to Jesus, and he offers his few loaves and fishes. Jesus accepts his offering and then multiplies it beyond what was needed. It is from just such small beginnings that the kingdom of God grows and flourishes.

ENGAGE

Possible ways to engage the scripture reading:

- ❖ Consider reading the passage a second time in a different translation.
- ❖ Notice if there are any words or phrases that stand out to you. If so, ask God why this caught your attention.
- ❖ Try putting yourself in the story. What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling?
- ❖ Where do you see hope in this passage?

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO HUNGER

Hunger and malnutrition are often the beginning of a vicious cycle: Adults are less able to provide for themselves and their family when they're weaker, and often have more illness. Children are less able to learn and succeed in school when they are hungry.

According to the USDA, Economic Research Service the number of food-insecure people in 2022 was estimated at 1.3 billion worldwide, an increase of 118.7 million people (10%) from the 2021 estimate. This includes 44.2 million people in the U.S. which increased by 45% in that same year.

Choose one meal this week to fast or eat something simple, like rice and beans.

During that mealtime or meal consider and/or discuss with your family or friends the problem of hunger and what might be done about it.

WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

- Donate canned soup or canned fruit for Christian Ministries or Second Harvest Food Bank.*
- Consider volunteering at Christian Ministries.
- Provide a meal or part of a meal for Recovery Café.
- Donate to feedingamerica.org

PRAY

Pray for everyone to receive the healthy food they need. Pray for neighborhoods in Muncie with limited access to healthy foods. Pray for those who are yet to have an encounter with the Bread of Life.

* These items can be dropped off at church on Sunday mornings.

Week 3- **SICKNESS AND SUFFERING**

“I was sick and you looked after me.” *Matthew 25:36 (NIV)*

READ: [Luke 10:25-37](#)

In Jesus' time, Samaritans and Jews were considered enemies, but when the Samaritan traveler encountered the injured man on the road to Jericho, he didn't turn away. Instead, he went above and beyond to make sure the man had everything he needed to recover. Jesus' directive to us is clear: “Go and do likewise” (v. 37).

ENGAGE

Possible ways to engage the scripture reading:

- ❖ Consider reading the passage a second time in a different translation.
- ❖ Notice if there are any words or phrases that stand out to you. If so, ask God why this caught your attention.
- ❖ Try putting yourself in the story. What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling?
- ❖ Where do you see hope in this passage?

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO SICKNESS & SUFFERING

Jesus wants us to show mercy to those who are suffering. Suffering comes in many forms from illness or injury, to depression and anxiety, to life circumstances. Jesus tells us to offer hope to others experiencing all types and levels of suffering.

Who do you know that is suffering in some way? Do you know someone who: is in the midst of grief? is ill? is experiencing a difficult season or life circumstance? is exhausted from caring for small children or an elderly relative? Make a point to pray for them this week.

WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

- Send a card or note of encouragement to someone who is suffering.
- Have coffee with someone and allow them to share their concerns/problems.
- Babysit for a parent of littles so they can run some errands or just take a nap.
- Visit someone in assisted living or at a local hospital.
- Buy a Michaels gift card for Shift craft projects.*

PRAY

Ask God to give healing, strength, and protection to those who are struggling. Pray that He will bring someone to mind to whom you can offer hope through prayer, words, or deeds.

* Gift cards can be dropped off at church on Sunday mornings.

Week 4- **STRANGERS**

“I was a stranger and you invited me in.” *Matthew 25:35 (NIV)*

READ: [Luke 14:1-24](#)

The Bible is filled with many stories of hospitality. In welcoming others, including strangers, into a space of generosity, friendship, and care we imitate Jesus, who invites us all to come to Him to find rest (Matthew 11:28).

In this passage Jesus instructs us to offer hospitality to more than our family friends. The man in the parable of the great banquet invited “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” and even sent the servant out to the country until the banquet hall was full – the unclean and the stranger. Jesus often ate with people who were considered outsiders and sinners. He taught that the kingdom of God is open and welcoming to all.

ENGAGE

Possible ways to engage the scripture reading:

- ❖ Consider reading the passage a second time in a different translation.
- ❖ Notice if there are any words or phrases that stand out to you. If so, ask God why this caught your attention.
- ❖ Try putting yourself in the story. What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling?
- ❖ Where do you see hope in this passage?

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO STRANGERS

Anyone we don’t know yet is a stranger. We see them every day, everywhere. Whether it is a refugee family that has been relocated to Muncie or someone who just moved into our neighborhood, God offers us many opportunities and ways to welcome the stranger.

Stay alert for opportunities to welcome someone – something as simple as a smile in the grocery store or opening a door for someone can bring comfort or hope. Be open to noticing those around you and to being interrupted.

WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

- Consider stepping outside your comfort zone and invite someone you don’t know well to lunch or coffee (maybe the Mom you see in the school pick up line or the new guy at work).
- Where it seems appropriate, invite someone to church or into your home for a meal (remember, most of our closest friends were once strangers).
- Take a prayer walk in a neighborhood.
- Experience an event where you are a minority.
- Volunteer to be a welcome family for [RADC](#) (Refugee Alliance of Delaware County – formerly MARRC) or donate funds to assist in their work.

PRAY

Ask God to provide adequate housing for everyone and for communities that grow together so that no one feels like a stranger.

Week 5- **UNPROTECTED**

“I needed clothes and you clothed me.” *Matthew 25:36 (NIV)*

READ: [Matthew 18:1-6](#)

Throughout history, children have often been exploited — considered second-class citizens or cheap workers. In many parts of the world today, this is still the case. According to World Vision and Human Rights Watch an estimated 160 million children worldwide are involved in child labor, and 80 million of these are working in hazardous conditions.

Jesus, however, doesn't see children as less-than. In fact, when His disciples asked how to be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus told them they must “become like little children” (v. 3). That probably wasn't what they were expecting, but Jesus's teachings often challenged His followers — as they do us today — to think differently about the world and our place in it.

ENGAGE

Possible ways to engage the scripture reading:

- ❖ Consider reading the passage a second time in a different translation.
- ❖ Notice if there are any words or phrases that stand out to you. If so, ask God why this caught your attention.
- ❖ Try putting yourself in the story. What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling?
- ❖ Where do you see hope in this passage?

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO UNPROTECTED

We're to give others and their needs the same care and attention we'd give Jesus-especially children. As He makes clear, we should do everything we can to ensure their well-being and prevent anything that might cause “one of these little ones ... to stumble” (v. 6). Caring for others and offering them hope is how we begin to experience life as God intends it in His kingdom.

Try wearing the same clothes for more than one day in a row. As you do, lift up prayers for the millions who don't have the clothes they need and for child workers across the globe.

WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

- Downsize or redecorate and donate your gently used clothing or household items directly to the YWCA.
- Donate new or gently used leggings or sweatpants in all sizes for Muncie Community Schools.*
- Purchase men's or women's socks and/or underwear for our friends at Recovery Café.*
- Donate to the Isaiah 117 House <https://support.isaiah117house.com/delawarein>

PRAY

Pray that all children and adults have the basics they need to thrive: clothes, food, education, and health care.

* These items can be dropped off at church on Sunday mornings.

Week 6- **OPPRESSED**

“I was in prison and you came to visit me.” *Matthew 25:36 (NIV)*

READ: [Luke 4:14-21](#)

In His hometown synagogue, Jesus read from Isaiah 61. He explained that He was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of one who would proclaim “good news to the poor,” “freedom for prisoners,” and “recovery of sight for the blind.” He would be the one who “set the oppressed free” (v. 18).

Jesus put these words into practice and invites us to do the same. He spent time with the poor and oppressed. He fed people, healed people, and cast out demons. He taught a different way of living based on trust in his Father. We can invite people to find hope in Jesus through our words and actions.

ENGAGE

Possible ways to engage the scripture reading:

- ❖ Consider reading the passage a second time in a different translation.
- ❖ Notice if there are any words or phrases that stand out to you. If so, ask God why this caught your attention.
- ❖ Try putting yourself in the story. What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling?
- ❖ Where do you see hope in this passage?

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO OPPRESSED

Everywhere people face many kinds of oppression. They're caught in situations beyond their control, from sickness and hunger to economic difficulties to systemic exploitation and abuse.

The Christian community is called to help people living in the world's hardest places through action and prayer. We're invited to follow Jesus by working to ensure the oppressed are set free. Jesus enters our lives not only to transform us but also to help us transform the world.

Be sure to wear your “Hope” bracelet this week. When you notice it throughout the day, pray for those in situations beyond their control and ask how you can offer them hope.

WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

- Befriend someone who is alone in your community.
- Send a card, note, or even flowers to someone going through a difficult time or a difficult situation.
- Learn about one of the many organizations serving and advocating for the oppressed and consider donating money or your time to help them. (a book, podcast, video)
- Sponsor a child who lives in poverty through Food for the Hungry. (fh.org)
- Donate to the International Justice Mission (ijm.org)

PRAY

Ask God to give strength, protection, and freedom to those suffering under any type of oppression.

Information about many of the local organizations and their contact person is available on our Love Your Neighbor wall.

Created by: Debbie Fuller

Formatted by: Jessie Andry

Edited by: Jessie Andry, Wil Davis, Cindy Davis. and Lisa Ashton