



ADULT STUDY

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LEADER'S GUIDE Session 1

Will You Come and Follow Me? An Adult Lenten Study on Hymns

Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days

Goal of Session

Participants will explore a Lenten hymn text and experience it as a sung prayer petitioning our Lord to be with us in our life journey.

Preparing for the Session

- For each session of this study, participants will need copies of the hymn to be studied that week. Please see Resource Sheet 2, "Hymn Appearances of Lenten Study Hymns," at the end of this Leader's Guide. It provides the hymn numbers of the suggested hymns in a variety of hymnals.
- If possible, plan to have the study in a space with a piano and recruit a pianist. Provide the hymns well in advance so he or she will have the opportunity to prepare. Ask your accompanist to plan to play the hymn tune paired with the text in the hymnal you are using as well as two or three other tunes as suggested in the Participant Handout. If it is not possible to use a piano, recordings of the hymn tunes can be found online.
- Read through this Leader's Guide carefully. There are probably more activities than your group can do in forty-five minutes each week. Plan accordingly and select the activities your group will most enjoy.

Session at a Glance

OPENING

- Introduce Lent
- Pray together

EXPLORING

- Meet the hymn writer
- Learn to mourn our sins
- Learn to prevail over temptation and trial

RESPONDING

- Sing this story
- Commit to a Lenten discipline

CLOSING

- Pray the hymn

- You may want to print the suggestions for Lenten disciplines (activity 7) on a board or newsprint.
- This first session does not assume participants have read the Participant Handout. The remaining sessions will work best if participants come having read the handout. Consider distributing the following

week's session at the end of each session and commit as a group to reading it during the week.

Materials Needed

- Copies of hymnals
- Bibles
- Copies of Resource Sheet 1
- Copies of Participant Handout for Sessions 1 and 2
- Newsprint or board and marker

Teaching Tip

The sessions in this study call for encountering the hymns as they are meant to be encountered—by singing them. In order to fully explore and understand the lyrics, it may be helpful to first hear them read aloud and then experience the deeper meaning that comes from combining music and text.

Opening (5 minutes)

As participants are arriving, ask the pianist to softly play this session's hymn.

1. Introduce Lent

When most participants have arrived, welcome them to the study. If group members are not familiar with one another, ask them to introduce themselves. Invite those who are parents or grandparents to name ways in which parents-to-be prepare for the impending birth or adoption of a child. Discuss:

- What physical, mental, and emotional preparation did you experience as you awaited the birth or the adoption?
- In what ways did you reflect on your own lifestyle and changes that you might need to make?

Explain that this is the first Sunday of Lent, the season of forty days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday—not counting Sundays—a time of preparation and reflection leading up to the celebration of Easter. In the Participant Handout, the author suggests that, in part, the significance of the number forty might be that forty weeks is the typical period of gestation for an infant. Invite the group to quickly scan the text under the introduction and name some other possible reasons for the significance of the number forty.

Tell the group that in this Lenten study, they will explore six Lenten hymns. The first of these hymn texts explicitly utilizes the number forty.

2. Pray Together

Pray the following or a prayer you choose:

Holy God, we give thanks for the gifts of those whose words can grant us new insights. We give thanks for the wonder of music, with its power to mesh with words in ways too deep to express. By your Spirit, open our ears, our minds, and our hearts to new understandings as we begin this Lenten journey. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

3. Meet the Hymn Writer

Invite the group to silently read the information about Claudia Hernaman, the writer of the hymn text. Discuss the following:

- What are some significant facts about Hernaman's life and work that particularly struck you?
- The writers of the study note that Hernaman's concern for the use of song as a means of religious instruction for the young is evident in her work. What hymns or religious songs can you name that you learned as a child? Who introduced you to those songs? In what ways did those songs contribute to your faith formation?

4. Learn to Mourn Our Sins

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first stanza of the hymn as printed in the Participant Handout. The writers point out that the words allude to Jesus' forty days of fasting and praying in the wilderness, accounts of which are in three of the Gospels. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1, found at the end of this guide, to three volunteers. Have them read aloud the reader's theater from the Resource Sheet, which is based on the account from Matthew.

After the reading, explain that a few years ago, an article in a British newspaper noted that the word "sin" (along with a number of other words related to religion) had been deleted from the *Oxford Children's Dictionary* to make room for new vocabulary items such as "chat-room," "MP3 player," and "database."¹ Read aloud the quote in the Participant Handout from Karl Menninger. Discuss some of the following:

- How do you think our culture defines sin?
- Do you think "sin" is a word or concept that children need to know? How about adults? Why or why not?

- The writers pose the question: “Is Menninger right? Are we no longer particularly shamed by the things we think or do or say?” Would you agree or disagree with the argument that we no longer seem to take our own sins very seriously and that we need to relearn how to “mourn our sins”?
- What do you think it means to “mourn our sins”?
- The writers note that the New Living Translation of the Bible translates the first beatitude as “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him.” What do you need from God? How do those needs relate to sin and grace?

5. Learn to Prevail over Temptation and Trials

Distribute hymnals to the group. Invite volunteers to read aloud the first two stanzas of the hymn. Note that these stanzas continue as a prayer to the Lord. Then read the third stanza and explain that the story of Jesus’ testing in the wilderness is important in Scripture because it helps us understand how Jesus, even though sinless, can still relate to the experiences and struggles of our lives. Discuss:

- What temptations confront you in your daily living?
- The writers observe that we need “a reminder to die to the nagging voices of our appetites so that we may come alive to God’s voice instead.” What appetites clamor most insistently in your life?

Invite participants to reflect on how their journey with Jesus through the wilderness of Lent can help them learn to resist temptation so that they emerge at Easter spiritually stronger.

Invite volunteers to read aloud the final two stanzas of the hymn. Here the writers note that Claudia Hernandez shifts her attention from Jesus’ time in the wilderness to our own journey through Lent. Call the group’s attention to the word “abide” used in both stanzas. Tell them that this word is used in John’s Gospel to describe the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, particularly in one of the “I Am” statements: “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5). Discuss:

- If we ask Jesus to abide with us, what is implicitly required of us as disciples?
- What implications are there for us in Lent as we sing this prayer?

Responding (15 minutes)

6. Sing This Story

Invite the group to join together in singing the entire hymn as it appears in the hymnal. After singing, point out in the hymnal the name of the hymn tune that has been used. Ask a volunteer to describe what common meter is. Then invite participants to turn to the index in the hymnal, find the metrical index of tunes, and locate common meter (CM). Depending on how many tunes are listed, form small groups and divide the list of tunes up so that each small group can have several to look up. Ask each group to name the hymns in the hymnal for each of their assigned tunes. Ask: What other hymn texts are listed for the hymn tune used for today’s hymn in this hymnal?

To experiment with the extent to which a tune affects the mood of a text, recall for the group that it was a popular practice a few years ago in some youth settings to sing “Amazing Grace” to two other familiar tunes—a familiar ad for Coke (“I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony...”) and the melody for “House of the Rising Sun.” Try singing the first verse of “Amazing Grace” to each tune. Ask: Which tune seems to fit better to you? Why?

As the writers suggest, now sing a stanza of today’s hymn text to the tunes ST. ANNE, MARTYRDOM, and AZMON. Discuss:

- Does one of these tunes fit the mood or focus the words of the text better than the others? If so, which one, and why?
- In your opinion, which tune or tunes best reinforce the message of the text?

7. Commit to a Lenten Discipline

Encourage group members to consider one or more of the following spiritual practices in the coming week (either read this list or write it on newsprint prior to the session and review it):

- Use the petitions of this sung prayer during your time of devotion during the coming week.
- Spend some time during the next week thinking about the words and music that sustain you on your faith journey and the traveling companions past and present who travel with you when you sing.

- Consider fasting as a spiritual discipline during Lent, either from food or from another appetite that clamors most insistently in your life, such as social media or consumption of nonessential goods.
- Consider what other trials you experience in your life for which Jesus' abiding presence is a source of help and healing. How might your prayers during the season of Lent more fully awaken you to this presence and your reliance on it? To what might you commit yourself during this season that would exemplify a fuller commitment to what is required of us as disciples—to truly be a branch of the Vine?

Encourage the group to consider these practices as suggestions that may spark other ideas of ways to engage more deeply during Lent.

Closing (5 minutes)

8. Pray the Hymn

Invite the group to sing this hymn again, focusing on experiencing it as petitions in a sung prayer. Following each stanza, ask your accompanist to play through a stanza as the group reflects. Then say, "In your mercy," and invite the group to respond, "hear our prayer." An alternative is to have strong singers each sing a stanza as a solo as the group reflects.

Distribute copies of Participant Handout 2 or obtain group members' e-mail addresses so you can send it to them electronically. Agree as a group to read it before the next session.

Teaching Alternatives

- Provide copies of biblical concordances or refer adults with smartphones or tablets to online concordances and invite the group to explore the significance of the number forty.
- After exploring the significance of the number forty in Scripture, give each person a large sheet of paper and art materials. Invite them to write forty in the center of the page and then use words, symbols, or drawings to express the significance of the number.
- After they hear the readers' theater, invite participants to read the passage from *The Message* and then use a search engine to locate the references

from Deuteronomy and Psalm 91 that Jesus quotes to Satan.

- The writers refer to the fasting of Moses and Elijah. Invite group members to read the following passages: Exodus 34 and 1 Kings 19:2–19. Discuss the purpose of fasting for Moses and Elijah. Then have them read 2 Samuel 12:15–23. What was the purpose and function of fasting for David?
- Invite the group to read the parable of the moneylender in Luke 7:36–50 and discuss our reliance on God's grace.
- Participants can further explore the contents of Claudia Hernaman's *Lyra Consolationis* online at <https://archive.org/details/lyracons00bona>.
- Invite the group to sing the hymn text to some of the other common meter hymn texts the writers cite.

Key Scriptures

Matthew 4:1–11

Mark 1:12–13

Luke 7:36–50

For More Information

For more information about fasting, see "The Practice of Self-Emptying: Rediscovering the Fast," in Marjorie Thompson's *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life, Newly Revised Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), chap. 6.

To learn more about Claudia Hernaman and to see a list of hymns she wrote, see http://www.hymnary.org/person/Hernaman_CF.

Endnote

1. Julie Henry, "Words Associated with Christianity and British History Taken Out of Children's Dictionary," Dec. 6, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/3569045/Words-associated-with-Christianity-and-British-history-taken-out-of-childrens-dictionary.html>.

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Resource Sheet 1

Readers' Theater: Jesus in the Wilderness

NARRATOR: Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the test. The devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the devil took advantage of in the first test:

DEVIL: Since you are God's Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread.

JESUS: It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth.

NARRATOR: For the second test the devil took him to the Holy City. He sat him on top of the Temple.

DEVIL: Since you are God's Son, jump. He has placed you in the care of angels. They will catch you so that you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone.

JESUS: Don't you dare test the Lord your God.

NARRATOR: For the third test, the Devil took him to the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all of the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were.

DEVIL: They're yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours.

JESUS: Beat it, Satan! Worship the Lord your God and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness.

NARRATOR: The test was over. The devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus' needs.

Slightly adapted from Matthew 4:1–11, *The Message*.
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Resource Sheet 2

Hymn Appearances of Lenten Study Hymns

Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days	<i>Celebrating Grace Hymnal</i> #169
	<i>Chalice Hymnal</i> #180
	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> #319
	<i>Gather</i> (3rd ed.) #479
	<i>Gather Comprehensive</i> #392
	<i>Glory to God</i> #166
	<i>Hymnal 1982</i> #142
	<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i> #285
	<i>Lift Up Your Hearts</i> #132
	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> #418
	<i>The Covenant Hymnal</i> #214
	<i>The Presbyterian Hymnal</i> #81
	<i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> #269
	<i>The Worshipping Church</i> #200
	<i>Worship and Rejoice</i> #252
Will You Come and Follow Me (The Summons)	<i>Celebrating Grace Hymnal</i> #473
	<i>Common Praise</i> (1998) #430
	<i>Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New</i> #768
	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> #798
	<i>Gather</i> (3rd ed.) #790
	<i>Gather Comprehensive</i> #700
	<i>Glory to God</i> #726
	<i>Hymns Old and New</i> #560
	<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i> (2nd ed.) #622
	<i>Lift Up Your Hearts</i> #742
	<i>Sing! A New Creation</i> #267
	<i>Sing the Faith</i> #2130
	<i>The Faith We Sing</i> #2130
	<i>Voices United</i> #567
	<i>Wonder, Love, and Praise</i> #757
	<i>Worship and Rejoice</i> #350
I Danced in the Morning (Lord of the Dance)	<i>Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New</i> #311
	<i>Gather</i> (3rd ed.) #796
	<i>Gather Comprehensive</i> #708
	<i>Glory to God</i> #157
	<i>Hymns Old and New</i> #228
	<i>The Presbyterian Hymnal</i> #302
	<i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> #261
	<i>Voices United</i> #352
	<i>Worship and Rejoice</i> #118

To God Be the Glory	<i>Celebrating Grace Hymnal</i> #349
	<i>Chalice Hymnal</i> #72
	<i>Common Praise</i> #371
	<i>Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New</i> #710
	<i>Glory to God</i> #634
	<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i> (2nd ed.) #442
	<i>Lift Up Your Hearts</i> #604
	<i>The Presbyterian Hymnal</i> #485
	<i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> #98
	<i>Worship and Rejoice</i> #66
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	<i>Celebrating Grace Hymnal</i> #186
	<i>Chalice Hymnal</i> #195
	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> #803
	<i>Glory to God</i> #223, #224
	<i>Hymnal 1982</i> #474
	<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i> (2nd ed.) #725
	<i>Lift Up Your Hearts</i> #175
	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> #425, #426
	<i>The Covenant Hymnal</i> #222
	<i>The Presbyterian Hymnal</i> #100, #101
	<i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> #298, #299
	<i>The Worshipping Church</i> #213
	<i>Worship and Rejoice</i> #261
All Glory, Laud, and Honor	<i>Celebrating Grace Hymnal</i> #175
	<i>Common Praise</i> (1998) #181
	<i>Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New</i> #14
	<i>Gather</i> (3rd ed.) #498
	<i>Gather Comprehensive</i> #402
	<i>Glory to God</i> #196
	<i>Hymnal 1982</i> #154, #155
	<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i> (2nd ed.) #292
	<i>Lift Up Your Hearts</i> #146
	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> #442
	<i>The Covenant Hymnal</i> #227
	<i>The Presbyterian Hymnal</i> #88
	<i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> #280
	<i>Voices United</i> #122
	<i>Worship and Rejoice</i> #265



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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 1

Will You Come and Follow Me? An Adult Lenten Study on Hymns

Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days

Introduction

The number forty has long held special significance in Jewish and Christian traditions. Preschool children learn in a Sunday school song that God told Noah to build him “an arky, arky,” and then flooded the earth with rains that fell for forty nights and “daysies, daysies.” Older children learn that after the exodus from Egypt, the Hebrew people wandered in the wilderness for forty years before entering into the promised land. Lessons about the life of Jesus point out that he also wandered in the wilderness, for a period of forty days rather than forty years, before embarking on his public ministry.

What is not taught as frequently as the basic plots of these stories is the deeper significance of the number forty. In both Jewish and Christian Scripture, this number generally suggests a period of purification, testing, or preparation. For example, in the days of Noah the forty-day flood purified the earth, enabling God and all creation to start fresh with a new covenant sealed by the rainbow sign. In the era of the exodus, the forty years in the wilderness tested the Hebrew people, challenging them to rely on God’s provision of manna and quail for food and on the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night for guidance. During the prolonged journey to the promised land, on two different occasions Moses fasted for forty days: first when initially summoned to

Mt. Sinai in preparation for receiving the tablets of the law (Exod. 24:18; Deut. 9:9) and second on returning to the mountain to receive new tablets, having broken the original ones in anger at the creation of the golden calf (Exod. 34:28).

Still later in Hebrew history, the number forty continued to symbolize a testing and preparatory time. After confronting Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, Elijah fled into the wilderness of Judah. There, an angel gave him a meal of water and a cake baked on hot stones, a meager meal that nevertheless sustained him for the forty days and nights of his journey to the same mountain on which Moses had earlier received the law. Elijah may have thought his flight was away from conflict. But after the earthquake, wind, and fire, the voice that came to him on the mountain instead sent him back to his home country to reenter the struggle against idolatry and injustice (1 Kings 19).

Numerous other examples of the symbolism of preparation, testing, and purification can be found by looking up the number forty in a biblical concordance. Precisely why the number held this significance for ancient Jews, however, remains something of a mystery. Part of an explanation might be that, for a people who measured time by means of a lunar calendar divided into seven-day units, the typical gestation period for a

human infant is forty weeks. What better image than pregnancy to connote a lengthy time of preparation?

Whatever the explanation, the Jewish image of forty persisted in the New Testament. After Jesus' baptism, the Spirit "led" (Matt. 4:1) or "drove" (Mark 1:12) him into the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the devil. Commemorating this most significant forty, Christian practice since the Council of Nicea in 325 CE has identified a period of forty days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday—not counting Sundays—as the season of Lent. In fact, Lent is so strongly identified with this sacred number that in many languages, the very word for the season leading up to Easter comes from a root meaning forty: *Tessarokosti* in Greek, *Quadragesima* in Latin, *Quaresima* in Italian, *Quaresma* in Portuguese, *Cuaresma* in Spanish, and *Carême* in French.

For Children and Adults

So it is fitting that we begin our journey through Lent—our own time of preparation, testing, and purification—by examining a text in which the number forty explicitly figures. Claudia Hernaman's "Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days" has appeared in dozens of denominational hymnals since the late 1800s. It was first published in a collection of hymns for children, *The Child's Book of Praise: A Manual of Devotion in Simple Verse*, which Hernaman coedited with the Rev. James Skinner in 1873. But as has often been the case, a text originally written to instruct young people in important biblical or doctrinal truth has turned out to be equally prized by adults. Other famous examples of this phenomenon include Cecil Frances Alexander's "All Things Bright and Beautiful," Dorothy Ann Thrupp's "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us," Lesbia Scott's "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God," and Eleanor Farjeon's "Morning Has Broken," all initially composed with children in mind.

Apart from the fact that she wrote some 150 hymn texts, not much is known about Claudia Hernaman. Born in Surrey, England, in 1838, she was christened Claudia Frances Ibotson. Her father, W. H. Ibotson, was an Anglican priest. As evidenced by her later work as a poet, which included translations of texts from German and Latin, she was well and classically educated. At the age of twenty, she married a clergyman, J. W. D. Hernaman, who held a post as an inspector of schools. Whether the couple ever had children of their own is not recorded. However, a concern for the use of song

as a means of religious instruction for young people is evident in many of her works. In addition to the collection already mentioned, she published a collection of *Christmas Carols for Children* and a book of *Holy Week Services for Children*, and she contributed to *Hymns for the Children of the Church* and *Hymns for the Little Ones in Sunday Schools*.

But she was not just a children's author and not just a writer of hymn texts. Hernaman also composed a drama in sacred verse on *The Conversion and Martyrdom of St. Alban* (1891); he was venerated as the first English martyr. And she compiled a *Manual of Devotions for Travelers by Land and Sea* (1889). Her skills as an editor further prompted her to put together one of her best-known works, *Lyra Consolationis from the Poets of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries* (1890). The purpose of this collection, she noted in its preface, was "to comfort mourners from the first hours of their bereavement . . . guiding them through the valley of tears and the night of sorrow, and strengthening them to wait in joyful hope for the time when 'sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'"¹ Including a special chapter of poems on the death of children, the anthology featured works by well-known literary poets (William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, John Milton, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning) as well as popular hymn writers (Charles Wesley, Catherine Winkworth, John Mason Neale, John Keble) and a half dozen of Hernaman's own poems and translations.

Learning to Mourn Our Sins

What Hernaman described in her anthology as the strength "to wait in hope" is something we need not only in times of personal bereavement but also throughout the forty-day period of Lent when we anticipate the passion and death of our Lord: his "night of sorrow" on Golgotha, the "valley of tears" experienced by the first disciples who lived through Good Friday and Holy Saturday without the assurance that "sorrow and sighing [would] flee away" with the Easter sunrise. As we seek to cultivate such strength, Hernaman's Lenten hymn for children and adults proves an excellent guide.

The first stanza of the hymn has occasionally been altered to begin "O Lord, throughout these forty days," and its pronouns for Christ are sometimes modernized to "you/your" rather than "thee/thy." However, Hernaman's original words are these:

Lord, who throughout these forty days
for us didst fast and pray,
teach us with thee to mourn our sins
and close by thee to stay.²

These brief lines already make a number of important theological and pastoral points.

First, they allude to Jesus' forty days of fasting and praying in the wilderness. This time of testing and preparation put him squarely in line with the prophets Moses and Elijah, each of whose lengthy fasts helped them detach from the things of this world in order to focus more intensely and exclusively on God. But whereas both Moses and Elijah fasted in part to purify themselves for the work God intended them to do, whether delivering the law to a grumbling tribe of exodus travelers or returning to Israel to confront a people who had turned (again) to worshiping false gods, Jesus did not fast to purify *himself*. Surely, as the Son of God, he was already pure. Rather, Jesus fasted and prayed for us. Already his atoning work of suffering for our sins and showing us the path of self-sacrifice had begun.

Thus, even prior to his public ministry, Jesus in the wilderness suffered in body and spirit for the sins of the world. In the closing lines of the first stanza of this hymn, we ask that we might learn "with [him] to mourn our sins." This lesson is at least as important for us as it would have been for the culture of Hernaman's day. Indeed, exactly one hundred years after Hernaman published her text, the psychiatrist Karl Menninger published a book whose title pointedly asked: *Whatever Became of Sin?* In it, he argued that the concept of sin seemed to be disappearing from our moral vocabulary:

In everyday speech many use the word . . . half-jokingly. If someone says he is sinning, we smile; he seeks the reaction in us, with forgiveness implied. If we speak of our own sins, we are usually being humorously self-indulgent or pretentiously pious; few of us are very shamefaced in any such confession.³

Is Menninger right: Are we no longer particularly "shamed" by the things we think or do or say? During the season of Lent, we might ask if we truly "mourn our sins" or if we are rather more inclined to shrug off our failings

as not terribly serious, ready to excuse them as the result of bad genes, bad digestion, or a bad night's sleep.

Lent asks us to take this more honest look at ourselves—not to ruin our self-esteem or make us obsessive or guilt-ridden, but to help us understand our reliance on grace. After all, how can we really appreciate the gift of Easter if we do not grasp what it is giving us: salvation from sin, resurrection into a fully restored and reconciled life? In the New Living Translation, the first of Jesus' beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," is phrased, "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him" (Matt. 5:3). Part of our need of God is the need for a power greater than ourselves to wipe our slates clean, restoring us to healthy relationships when those relationships have been damaged by what we have done or failed to do. As with the parable Jesus tells in Luke 7 about two people whose debts are written off by a moneylender, so it is with our own lives: when we know how much we have been for-

Lent asks us to take this more honest look at ourselves . . . to help us understand our reliance on grace.

given, we will rejoice more fully in that forgiveness and love more deeply the One from whose wounded hands it has come.

Learning to Prevail over Temptation and Trials

The next two stanzas of Hernaman's hymn continue as a prayer to the Lord who first journeyed into the wilderness for our sakes:

As thou with Satan didst contend
and didst the victory win,
O give us strength in thee to fight,
in thee to conquer sin.

And thou didst hunger bear, and thirst,
so teach us, gracious Lord,
to die to self, and chiefly live
by thy most holy word.

Just as Jesus faced down the temptations of the devil at the end of his forty-day fast, so in the first of these

stanzas we ask for strength to prevail over the temptations of our own lives. The latter stanza, omitted from some hymnals, concentrates on Jesus' first temptation, when the devil proposed that he break his fast by turning stones into bread. Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, part of a speech in which Moses reminded his followers how God had let them go hungry for a time during their years of wilderness wandering so that they would come to understand their need not only for physical nourishment but also for the guidance of God's decrees. The quote is the memorable line: humans do not live "by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." We continue to need this reminder to die to the nagging voices of our appetites so that we may come alive to God's voice instead.

The petitions of this sung prayer ask our Lord to be with us through every trial experienced along our journeys, in life and in death.

In the hymn's closing stanzas, Hernaman shifts her attention from Jesus' forty days in the wilderness to our forty-day observance of Lent and Holy Week:

And through these days of penitence,
and through thy passiontide,
yea, evermore in life and death,
Jesus, with us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life
of suffering over past,
an Easter of unending joy
we may attain at last.

The petitions of this sung prayer ask our Lord to be with us through every trial experienced along our journeys, in life and in death. We ask him to "abide with us" so that, returning to the words from Hernaman's preface to the *Lyra Consolationis*, we may be strengthened "to wait in hope for the time when 'sorrow and sighing shall flee away,'" in the "Easter of unending joy" that will come with our own resurrection.

Singing This Story

Just as different hymnals use differing versions of Hernaman's original words, sometimes omitting her third stanza or modernizing her verbs and pronouns, sometimes making even more extensive revisions (see note 2 below), so also different denominations choose to sing the words of this hymn to different tunes. Numerous options are available, since the text is written in one of the most standard meters used for English language hymns and psalms since the sixteenth century: CM or "common meter," the meter of many old English ballads, with a four-line stanza whose first and third lines contain eight syllables and whose second and fourth lines contain six. Some congregations use a sixteenth-century English psalm tune known as ST. FLAVIAN; others prefer an American folk tune like MORNING SONG (sometimes called CONSOLATION) or LAND OF REST.

One way to shape a daily prayer during the season of Lent might be to look in the back of a hymnal for its metrical index and find the tunes listed under CM in order to experiment with singing Hernaman's words to a variety of melodies (like ST. ANNE, the tune normally associated with "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past;" MARTYRDOM, the tune for "Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed;" or AZMON, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"). Do certain tunes fit the mood or focus the words of the text better than others? Why? Notice how music can reinforce the message of a hymn so that singing really does become, in the often-quoted saying of St. Augustine, a way of "praying twice."

Regardless of the tune to which we sing these words, they introduce us, as children and adults, to the biblical and spiritual meaning of the forty days of Lent. Teaching us the story of Jesus' time of testing and preparation in the wilderness, they urge us to purify our hearts so that, like the "pure in heart" of Jesus' beatitude, we too may come to "see God" (Matt. 5:8) as both the companion and the goal of our journeys.

Endnotes

1. Claudia Frances Ibotson Hernaman, *Lyra Consolationis from the Poets of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nine-*

teenth Centuries (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890), v, vii-viii.

2. This and subsequent stanzas of the hymn are quoted from *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), #269. A version of the text significantly revised by Gilbert Doan as “O Lord, throughout These Forty Days” can be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007), #319.
3. Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973), 24.

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