

PAUL DAVID TRIPP



JOURNEY  
TO THE  
CROSS

A 40-DAY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

“This is all that we’ve come to expect and enjoy from Paul Tripp—a daily, fresh delivery of gospel comfort and hope. This will help us all to deepen our sense of appreciation and wonder at what Jesus has done for us.”

**Sam Allberry**, Speaker, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries;  
Associate Pastor, Immanuel Church, Nashville, Tennessee; author,  
*7 Myths about Singleness*

“Paul Tripp has once again led us past feel-good platitudes and into focused, Christward reflection. Through tension and tenderness, lament and thanksgiving, the Lenten season will transform us when it leads us to the cross of Christ.”

**Ruth Chou Simons**, Founder, GraceLaced Co.; author, *GraceLaced* and  
*Beholding and Becoming*; coauthor, *Foundations*

“Like so many others, I have benefited richly, and for years, from the ministry and writing of Paul Tripp. This latest work is no exception. *Journey to the Cross* is a precious reminder—one worth returning to again and again—of not only the rich benefits we receive through Christ’s humiliation, death, and burial, but also of his dignifying invitation to properly lament the wrong that is in the world and the wrong that is within us. The season of Lent is a special, forty-day season to enable and empower God’s people to do just that, and Tripp has provided us with a remarkable roadmap for the journey. I can’t recommend this wonderful resource highly enough.”

**Scott Sauls**, Senior Pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashville,  
Tennessee; author, *Jesus Outside the Lines* and *A Gentle Answer*

“I can’t imagine volunteering to take a journey toward a place of gruesome execution. Who would? But that is the kind of passage that Lent asks of us every year: a journey of evaluation, examination, and blessed humiliation that leads to new life and increased joy. So, if we must traverse this path, then I don’t know anyone whom I’d rather have as my tour guide than my brother, Paul Tripp. Through his decades of soul care, his transparent faith, and his deep love of God and his word, you’ll find yourself learning to stop, to listen, and ultimately to worship the one who walked this path before you.”

**Elyse M. Fitzpatrick**, coauthor, *Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women*

“*Journey to the Cross* encourages us to be honest about our sin and embrace the cross of Christ, where we find mercy, grace, and salvation. As we linger on our need for a Savior, we’re prompted to rejoice again in the hope that we have in Jesus. I look forward to reading this beautiful devotional by Paul Tripp in every Lenten season.”

**Hunter Beless**, Founder and Executive Director, *Journeywomen* podcast

“This book understood me so well and convicted me so much I almost had to stop reading after day nine! Paul Tripp powerfully brings many truths home in this journey of reflections on God’s love at the cross. Perhaps the most relevant is the desperately needed good news that there is a godly appropriateness in mourning for a broken world and for our own broken and sinful hearts. We can mourn in earnest because God has compassion. We can mourn with confident hope because Christ works in our mourning to grow us into the joy of victory over sin.”

**J. Alasdair Groves**, Executive Director, Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation; coauthor, *Untangling Emotions*

“The greatest feasts are anticipated, and accentuated, by preceding fasts. Advent waits for Christmas, and when it comes, it is all the sweeter. And Lent—the long, winding, forty-day wilderness journey through the valley of the shadow of death—prepares our souls for the highest joys of the year, marking the greatest day in the history of the world so far: resurrection Sunday. For years both my wife and I have been guided, strengthened, and renewed by the ministry of Paul Tripp, as an instrument in God’s redeeming hands. It’s both encouraging and sobering now to have this help from Tripp for the bittersweet trek along the path of Lent.”

**David Mathis**, Senior Teacher and Executive Editor, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org);  
Pastor, Cities Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota; author, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines*

“It’s incredible. Time and time again, Paul Tripp’s insightful reflections on Scripture help bring God’s truth into the here and now of daily life. Tripp brilliantly and gracefully illuminates why the Lenten season is so important as it points us to the greatest act of love in all of history. *Journey to the Cross* is Paul Tripp’s writing at its absolute best—I loved this book and you will too.”

**Shelby Abbott**, author, *DoubtLess* and *Pressure Points*; speaker; campus minister

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## **Paul David Tripp Books**

*A Quest for More: Living for Something Bigger Than You*

*Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide for Parenting Teens* (Resources for Changing Lives)

*Awe: Why It Matters for Everything We Think, Say, and Do*

*Broken-Down House: Living Productively in a World Gone Bad*

*Come, Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional*

*Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*

*Forever: Why You Can't Live without It*

*Grief: Finding Hope Again*

*How People Change* (with Timothy S. Lane)

*Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Resources for Changing Lives)

*Journey to the Cross: A 40-Day Lenten Devotional*

*Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*

*Lost in the Middle: Midlife and the Grace of God*

*My Heart Cries Out: Gospel Meditations for Everyday Life*

*New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional*

*Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*

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 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
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Lyrics from “Nothing but the Blood of Jesus,” by Robert Lowry, 1876, are cited in Day 38.

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# INTRODUCTION

It's good to mourn, it's healthy to be sad, and it's appropriate to groan. Something is wrong with us, something is missing in our hearts and our understanding of life, if we are able to look around and look inside and not grieve. You don't have to look very far to see that we live, work, and relate in a world that has been twisted and bent by sin, so much so that it doesn't function at all in the way God intended. The sin-scarred condition of the world is obvious in your home, your neighborhood, and your church. We see it in government, politics, business, education, entertainment, and the internet.

In Romans 8, Paul captures the sad condition of the world in three provocative phrases that should break our hearts:

“subjected to futility” (v. 20)

“its bondage to corruption” (v. 21)

“in the pains of childbirth” (v. 22)

We should be rejoicing people, because we have, in the redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus, eternal reason to rejoice. But this side of our final home, our rejoicing should be mixed with weeping as we witness, experience, and, sadly, give way to the presence and power of evil. Christ taught in his most lengthy recorded



sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, that those who mourn are blessed, so it's important to understand why. Mourning means you recognize the most important reality in the human existence, sin. Mourning means you have been hit by the weight of what it has done to you and to everyone you know. Mourning says you have considered the devastating fact that life right here, right now, is one big spiritual war. Mourning means that you have come to realize, as you get up in the morning, that once again you will be greeted with a catalog of temptations. Mourning means you know that there really are spiritual enemies out there meaning to do you harm. Mourning results when you confess that there are places where your heart still wanders.

But mourning does something wonderful to you. The sad realities that cause you to mourn also cause you to cry out for the help, rescue, forgiveness, and deliverance of a Redeemer. Jesus said that if you mourn, you will be comforted. He's not talking about the comfort of elevated feelings. He's talking about the comfort of the presence and grace of a Redeemer, who meets you in your mourning, hears your cries for help, comes to you in saving mercy, and wraps arms of eternal love around you. It's the comfort of knowing that you're forgiven, being restored, now living in a reconciled relationship with the one who made you, and now living with your destiny secure.

Mourning sin—past, present, and future—is the first step in seeking and celebrating the divine grace that is the hope of everyone whose heart has been made able to see by that very same grace.

So it is right and beneficial to take a season of the year to reevaluate, recalibrate, and have the values of our hearts clarified

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once again. Lent is such a season. As we approach Holy Week, where we remember the sacrifice, suffering, and resurrection of our Savior, it's good to give ourselves to humble and thankful mourning. Lent is about remembering the suffering and sacrifice of the Savior. Lent is about confessing our ongoing battle with sin. Lent is about fasting, and not just from food; we willingly and joyfully let go of things in this world that have too much of a hold on us. And Lent is about giving ourselves in a more focused way to prayer, crying out for the help that we desperately need from the only one who is able to give it.

For forty days you can use this devotional as your stimulus and guide as you stop, consider, mourn, confess, pray, and give your heart to thanksgiving. May you step away from the tyranny of a busy life, with its seemingly endless demands, and consider the most important thing that's happened to you, your most important struggle, and the most wonderful gift that you have ever been given. And as you do this, may you open your heart and your hands and let go of things that you not only hold, but that have taken ahold of you. May this free you to seek your Savior more fully, to celebrate him more deeply, and to follow him more faithfully.

Together we will follow Jesus on his journey to the cross. The horrible, public sacrifice of Jesus should ignite not only our celebration, but also our mourning. The cross confronts us with who we really are (sinners) and what we need (rescuing and forgiving grace). How can you consider what Christ willingly suffered because of our sin and not mourn the sin that remains? How could you consider how lost you were and how spiritually

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needy you still are and not celebrate the grace of the cross? This will be a devotional of celebration and self-examination.

During our forty days together, may your mourning increase so that your joy may deepen. May you groan more so that you would pray more. May your sadness ignite your celebration. And may all of this result in blessings that are too big and too obvious to miss.



# DAY 1

*God is holy, so sin is serious. God is gracious, so sin can be forgiven. On the cross his holiness and grace kiss.*

Of all the events in my life, one is by far the most important. Of all the blessings in my life, one is without a doubt the most wonderful blessing of all. Of all the things I most needed, but could never provide for myself, this was my deepest need.

One summer my mom and dad decided to empty their house of their four children. I ended up with my younger brother at a children's camp in the middle of nowhere in northern Pennsylvania. It was a long way away for a long time for a nine-year-old boy. I remember dragging a heavy wooden locker that my dad had made up the long hill to my cabin. I was bunked in with a rowdy pack of eight- and nine-year-olds, whose faces would change at the beginning of each week.

I can remember being a bit upset that I had been assigned to the oldest male camp counselor on the staff. He didn't look athletic and he was a bit bald, so he looked ancient to me. I just

knew he would be boring and strict and that I would be stuck with him that long hot summer. What I didn't know was that God was going to use that man to give me two wonderful gifts, gifts that we all need, whether we know it or not. That summer turned out to be the most significant, life-altering, and eternally important of my life.

I was being raised in an imperfect Christian home, and I carried with me a God-awareness from day one. My family attended church whenever the doors were opened and had family worship every morning. I knew every biblical story and could quote many key passages from memory, including the entire Christmas story as told in Luke 2. But the one thing I lacked was the knowledge of my own sin. I was the quintessential Christian-culture kid who was not a Christian. My problem was that I had no knowledge of the difference, and because I didn't, I had no sense of personal spiritual need. But at camp that would change dramatically and forever.

My old bald counselor decided that before our bedtime devotions each week he would teach his fidgety pack of nine-year-olds the first several chapters of Romans. So, I got Romans 1–5 over and over again that summer. God knew what I needed and put me right where I would get it. One particular night the words of Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” cut like a knife into my heart. But I fought the conviction that gripped me and tried my best to hide the emotion that accompanied it.

I climbed into my third-tier bunk, but couldn't sleep, so I began to do what no nine-year-old boy ever wants to do in bed

at camp: I began to cry. And I could not stop crying. I had been given an unexpected and undeserved gift, *the knowledge of my sin*. At nine years old, it gripped me, scared me, and would not let me go. I lay there crying and knew I needed to pray. Why? Because I had been given another gift: *the knowledge of a ready, willing, and capable Savior*. I had been blessed with the awareness of his offer of forgiveness to all who confess their sin and by faith seek his forgiveness.

In my tears, I had no idea how blessed I was. I had no idea of the horrible deceitfulness of sin. I had no idea of the natural self-righteousness that is in the heart of every sinner. I had no idea that most people have no idea how dark their condition actually is. I had no idea how skilled we sinners are at giving self-atoning arguments for what we have said and done, in an attempt to remove any real guilt for sin. I had no idea that I had been chosen and was being called to no longer be a cultural Christian, but a true child of God. I had no idea that the only thing in life more important than the knowledge of sin is the knowledge of the Savior's grace. And I had been given both. I had no idea that I had to experience the terrifying knowledge of sin, or I would never seek the Savior's forgiving grace.

What I did know was that I needed to pray. I needed to confess my sin and cry out for God's forgiveness. And I knew I needed to do it right there and then. But in my nine-year-old mind I thought it was disrespectful to pray such a significant prayer lying down. So I crawled out of my bunk and down the ladder as quietly as I could. I knelt in the middle of the stone floor and confessed my sin and placed my little-boy trust in the forgiving

grace of the Savior. Then I quietly climbed back up to my bunk and fell fast asleep.

The Lenten season is about the sin that was the reason for the suffering and sacrifice of the Savior. It is about taking time to reflect on why we all needed such a radical move of redemption, to confess the hold that sin still has on us, and to focus on opening our hands, in confession and submission, and letting go of sin once again. But as we do this, it is important to remember that the knowledge of sin is not a dark and nasty thing but a huge and wonderful blessing. If you are aware of your sin, you are aware of it only because you have been visited by amazing grace. Don't resist that awareness. Silence your inner lawyer and all the self-defending arguments for your righteousness. Quit relieving your guilt by pointing a finger of blame at someone else. And stop telling yourself in the middle of a sermon that you know someone who really needs to hear it.

Be thankful that you have been chosen to bear the burden of the knowledge of sin, because that burden is what drove you and will continue to drive you to seek the help and rescue that only the Savior Jesus can give you. To see sin clearly is a sure sign of God's grace. Be thankful.

*Reflection Questions* —————

1. In a typical week, how aware are you of the depth of your sin?  
When was the last time you wept over your sin?

DAY 1

2. Do you usually view the conviction of the Spirit as a blessing to be pursued or a burden to be avoided? Why?
3. What habits and disciplines help you foster an inner spirit of confession and repentance?

*Read and meditate on Psalm 51:1–12, using it as a template for a time of confession.*







## DAY 2

*When the shadow of the cross hangs over us, we are not surprised by sin, and we are not afraid to look at what has already been forgiven.*

**M**y sin seemed to sneak up on me again, like a stalker jumping out from behind the bushes. I was unprepared, but why? I was surprised, but shouldn't have been. The instant change in my thinking, desires, and emotions was shocking. I got angry in a situation where my anger was unexpected. Instead of wanting to serve, I suddenly wanted to win, to be affirmed as right. My voice got louder, my tone got sharper, and my face reddened. My ability to communicate turned from a tool of help to a weapon of offense. I said unkind things and other things in an unkind way. At that moment, I was a self-appointed king, the universe shrunk to the size of my desires, and all I wanted was for my will to be done. And as I was sinning, I was already erecting self-atoning arguments that would make my sin acceptable to my conscience. But it wasn't long before remorse came, and by God's grace confession followed.

Open your heart to what I am about to say next. My story is your story too. Whether you're standing in your teenager's bedroom, sitting with your computer on your lap, plodding through work, or rushing through the grocery store, sin creeps up on you and seizes you. Before you know it, you're in its hold. Later you look back with regret. You tell yourself that you'll do better next time, only to get kidnapped again a little further down the road. This is the sadly repeating drama of all of us living between the "already" and the "not yet."

This is why it is important to dedicate a season of every year to sit under the shadow of the cross of Jesus Christ once again. Under the shadow of the cross, sin doesn't surprise us anymore, doesn't depress us anymore, and doesn't move us to deny or defend. Under the shadow of the cross, we remember who we are and what it is that we are dealing with. Under the shadow of the cross, we are required to admit that the greatest enemy we face is not difficulty or maltreatment from without, but the enemy of sin within. Under the shadow of the cross, we quit pointing fingers and begin crying out for help. Under the shadow of the cross, we are reminded that we are not in this battle alone; in fact, there we admit that we have no power whatsoever to battle on our own. Under the shadow of the cross we get our sanity back, admitting who we are and what it is that we so desperately need. The shadow of the cross is a place of peace and protection that can be found nowhere else. Let the shadow of the cross be your teacher.

*1. The shadow of the cross teaches us who we are.* We all need to stop again and again and let the cross remind us of who we are, and in reminding us, to humble us anew. We do tend to think

of ourselves more highly than we ought. Here's what happens to many of us. When we first come to Christ, we are very aware of our sin, and therefore we carry with us a constant desire for God's help. But as saving grace gets our lives into order and we are following, fellowshiping, and obeying, we begin to let go of that sense of need. We begin to think of ourselves as okay—and in one sense we are, because our salvation is sealed once and for all. On the other hand, as long as sin still lurks inside us, we are not okay and are still in constant need of redeeming grace. Sitting under the shadow of the cross shatters the delusion that we are free of the need of what originally brought us to Jesus: divine grace.

2. *The shadow of the cross teaches what we need.* The cross powerfully reminds me that I need much more than situational, relational, financial, or physical change. The cross is the ultimate diagnostic. It accurately puts its finger on the ultimate disease, and then offers the only reliable cure. Accurate diagnosis is always necessary for there to be a real, lasting cure. Bad diagnosis will prevent cure from happening. Your inner lawyer, your friends, and your culture may tell you that your biggest problem is not you, and they may tell you that all you need to do is move, quit, find new friends, get a new job, or make more money; but each one of those is a misdiagnosis. These things will not treat the disease that has you in its grip. Only grace can do that. The cross preaches that sin is our problem and that rescuing, forgiving, transforming, and delivering grace is the only medicine that will provide the cure we all need.

3. *The shadow of the cross teaches us who God is.* The cross tells us that God is unrelentingly merciful. It is amazing to think that he

would control all the things that he needed to control so that Jesus would arrive on that awful cross as an acceptable sacrifice for our redemption! The cross preaches God's saving zeal, his boundless love, and his willingness to unleash his almighty power and unlimited sovereignty to draw rebels to himself. The cross teaches us that God doesn't look at sinners with disdain or disgust, but with generous and tender love. The cross teaches us that we do not have to clean ourselves up to come to God; we only need to come in humble confession. The cross teaches us that when we sin, God doesn't greet us with a sentence of condemnation, but with a reminder once again of the completeness of his pardon. The cross allows unholy people to look in the face of a holy God and have hope.

4. *The shadow of the cross teaches us what God offers us.* The cross teaches us that God offers us the one thing that no other person or thing can. He offers us the grace of forgiveness. He offers us the grace of welcome into relationship with him. He offers us the grace of personal transformation. He offers us the grace of a new identity and new potential. He offers us the grace of a glorious and fully secured destiny. Yes, it is true, he offers us grace upon grace!

5. *The shadow of the cross teaches us how we should live.* The cross teaches us that we should live humbly wise. It's foolish and prideful to be unprepared for the battle with sin. Unpreparedness denies all that the cross teaches us about who we are and what we need. The cross teaches us that we need to pray for eyes to see and hearts that are attentive to the enemy's temptations and sin's lies. The cross teaches us to be humbly ready and to start every day with cries for divine rescue and strength.

6. *The shadow of the cross gives us hope and courage.* The cross teaches us to be unafraid to admit and confess sin, not because we are powerful or capable, but because Jesus is the victor, and there is nothing that we will ever face inside or outside us that exists outside the circle of the completed victory of the cross. I can face my sin without depression or panic because he battled for me and won and continues to do so.

It really is a good thing to sit under the shadow of the cross for a season, to consider, confess, and rest once again.

### *Reflection Questions*

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1. What do you think it means to live under the shadow of the cross? What are some practical ways to get yourself there?
2. Do you agree that your greatest problem is your sin? What attitudes or actions in your life suggest that maybe you don't truly believe that?
3. Think of some of the things you need right now, either materially or spiritually. How might placing yourself in the shadow of the cross inform or enhance your perspective on those needs?

*Read Psalm 130, and note what the psalmist says about who we are and who God is. Use this psalm to guide your prayer time today.*

*“This will help us all to deepen our sense of appreciation and wonder at what Jesus has done for us.”*

**SAM ALLBERRY**

Speaker, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries;  
Associate Pastor, Immanuel Church, Nashville, Tennessee;  
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