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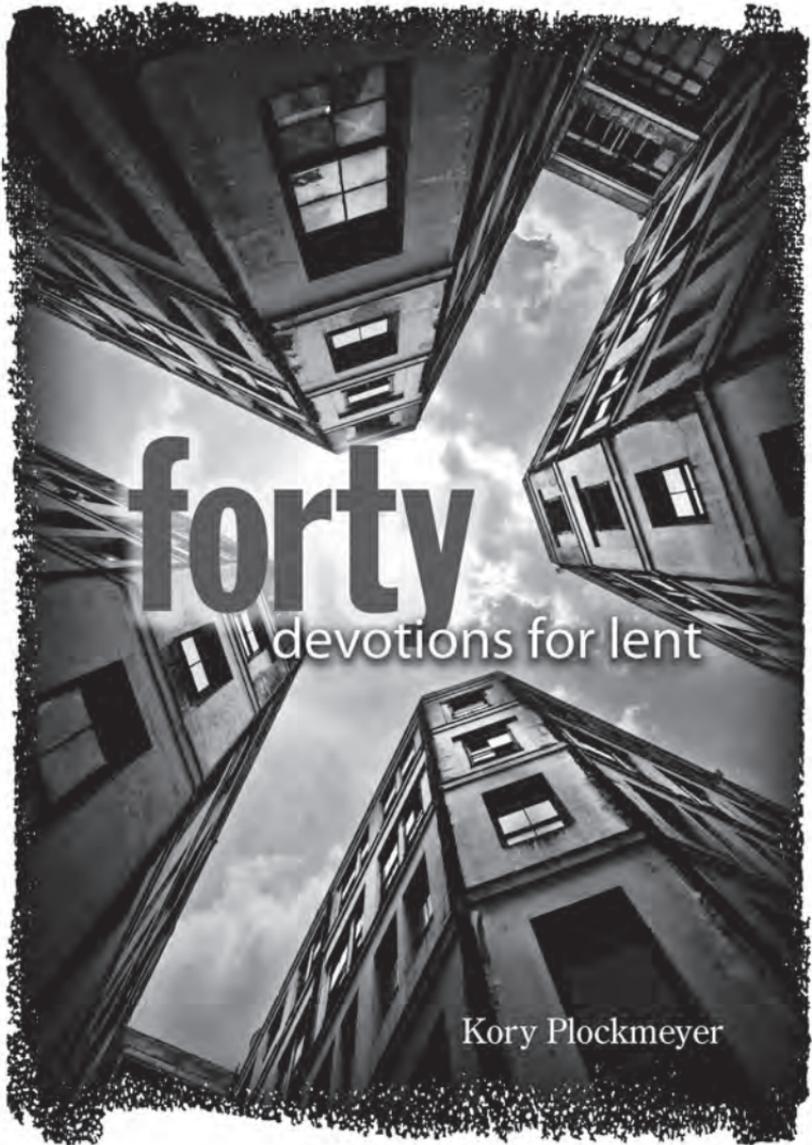
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forty
devotions for lent

Kory Plockmeyer



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Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Introduction

I hope that you will find these next forty-six days an opportunity to reflect upon and rest in the greatness of our God and the sacrifice of Jesus.

Lent is a time of fasting and mourning, remembering our sinfulness in light of the glory of Easter. It is a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of Easter Sunday.

Traditionally, the Sundays of Lent are miniature Easters—reminders in the middle of our fasting and reflection that we are looking forward to the glorious hope of the resurrection of Jesus.

One of the great images of preparation scattered throughout the Bible is a number: forty. Again and again, God's people spend periods of forty days or years waiting for an encounter with God. In this devotional, in keeping with the spirit of Lent and the celebration of Sunday mornings, each week will follow a different biblical story of such preparation. On Sundays, we will reflect on the good news of God to which each story points.

Grace and peace to all as we join our hearts in prayerful reflection this Lenten season.

—KP

DIRTY

“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Read
Job 42:1-6

When I was a college student I went to a school that held an annual Ash Wednesday chapel service. Every year, I would see students walking across campus with what looked like a dirty smudge on their foreheads. To be honest, I avoided chapel that day each year. I wasn't sure I wanted somebody putting ashes on my forehead. It just seemed, well, dirty.

In today's reading, God has just finished speaking to Job, telling him that it is not his place to question the plans and ways of God. Job 38:1 tells us that God spoke to Job out of a storm. The encounter is so overwhelming, so breathtaking, that Job is nearly left speechless. Job has been brought face to face with a God who is so much bigger, so much more powerful, so much more awe-inspiring than Job could possibly have imagined. The only thing that Job can do in response is to get dirty—a sign of repentance and a symbol that he is not worthy of the God he has just encountered.

Sometimes, we forget just how big God is. We confine God to being the god who agrees with us, the god

who is there as our “insurance policy,” the god whom we encounter only when we’re with the right people or singing the right songs. We cut God out of our professional and personal lives, believing that somehow these are domains outside God’s dominion.

Lent brings us face to face with a God whose plans are bigger than anything we could have possibly imagined. At Lent we meet Jesus and discover a plan for salvation that includes death on a cross. During Lent, we encounter a God who loves us more than we can possibly imagine, a God who is more wonderful than we can know. Lent connects us to the God who is God of our good days and our bad, God of all times and places.

The only thing we can do in response is to get dirty.



PRAYER

Spend some time reflecting on the greatness of God. Consider ways in which you may have tried to put God into a box. Bring these things before God in confession. Then marvel at the majesty of God’s love for us embodied in Jesus.

God, you are greater than our words can say and more wonderful than we can know. Forgive us for those times when we try to make you less than what you are. Help us to use this time of Lent to reflect on you and the majesty of your plans.

Thank you for the grace you have given us in Jesus. Amen.

This Lenten devotional explores the biblical motif of “forty” through the stories of Noah, Moses, the exodus, Elijah, and Jonah. All of these narratives foreshadow the gospel—they are reminders of Easter morning in light of the “forties” that have come before.

In Jesus we find the answer to Noah’s rainbow, the living Word of Moses, the true deliverance for God’s people from their desert wanderings, the voice of God walking the earth, and salvation for all people of every nation.



Kory Plockmeyer is the pastor of Campus Edge Fellowship, a ministry to the graduate students, faculty, and staff of Michigan State University committed to exploring the intersections of faith, learning, and life.


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