

## Community

As someone who tends to be fairly independent, it is hard for me to ask others for help. I think this is partly because of how I was raised, but I think it is also a wider cultural reality. We Americans tend to celebrate the individual and self-sufficiency.

The season of Lent is a time for reflection, and often includes individual spiritual disciplines. This is definitely a good thing, and I commend it to others. But as we reflect on our individual lives we might also reflect on our need for connection. Yes we are individuals with our own physical, spiritual, and emotional needs, but we also need connection with other people. God does not intend us to walk through life alone. God created us for relationship.

The reality of our lives is that at some point we will all suffer. It is a part of our human existence. The good news is that we do not have to suffer alone. It is difficult for us to ask for help. I know. I have been there. It is also difficult to offer help. Both require us to be vulnerable. To ask for or to offer help mean sharing a part of ourselves with others. It does require a great deal of trust. This can all be quite scary, but it can also be profoundly meaningful.

When Christian community is at its best, there is a strong sense of trust, and people are carrying one another's burdens. No one should carry their burdens on their own. Unfortunately, there are times when there is no one standing there ready or willing to help. Thankfully we have a God who came to this earth to carry our burdens, and is present with us through all the challenges of life.

*Gracious God, thank you for the gift of community. It is difficult for me to ask for help, so open my heart to share my burdens with those around me. It is difficult for me to offer help, so open my heart to help carry the burdens of those around me. Amen.*