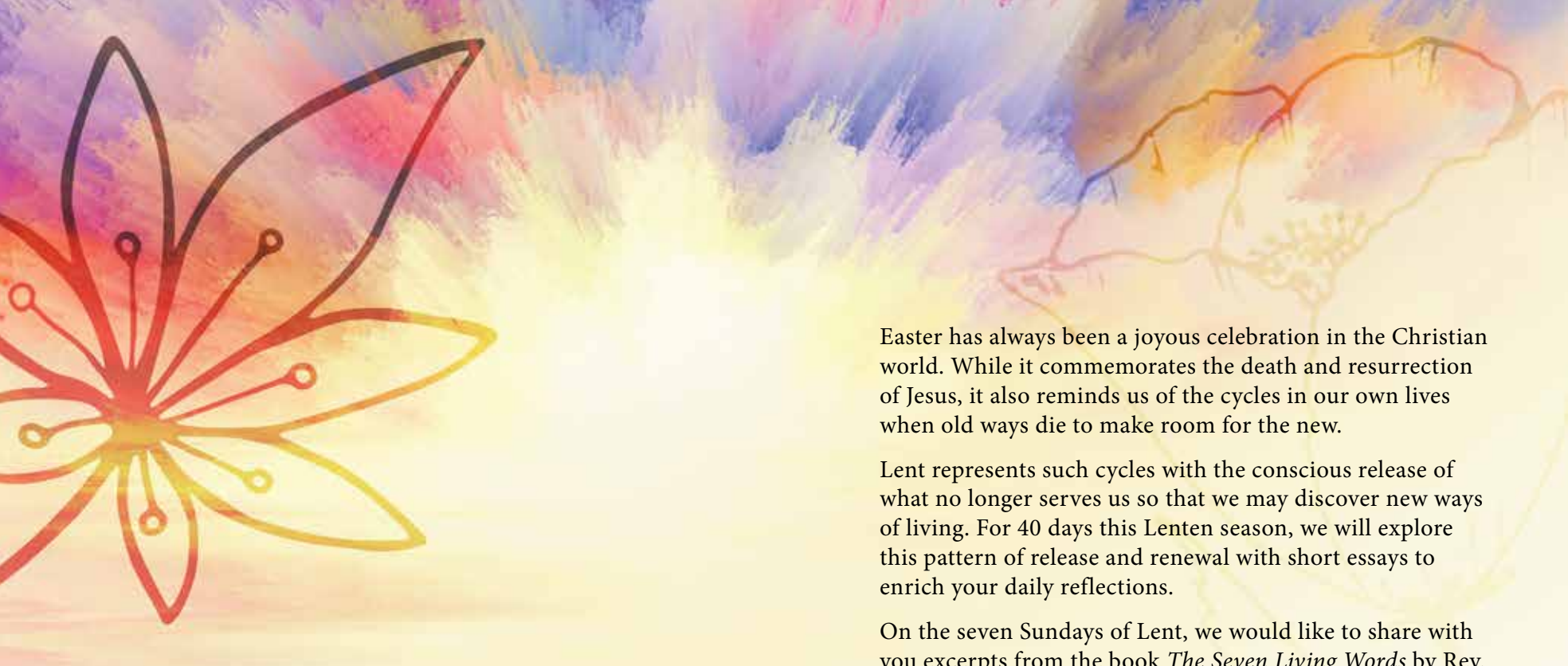




Release and Renew

A Spiritual Practice for Lent 2021



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Generous donations from friends like you allow us to make Unity literature available to those most in need of spiritual encouragement. You may give at unity.org/donatenow.

The special articles and Sunday essays in this booklet were excerpted from the book *The Seven Living Words* by Rev. Mark Anthony Lord (Accelerator Books, 2008). It is available on amazon.com along with his second book, *Thou Shall Not Suffer: 7 Steps to a Life of Joy* (Hierophant Publishing, 2014).

Easter has always been a joyous celebration in the Christian world. While it commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus, it also reminds us of the cycles in our own lives when old ways die to make room for the new.

Lent represents such cycles with the conscious release of what no longer serves us so that we may discover new ways of living. For 40 days this Lenten season, we will explore this pattern of release and renewal with short essays to enrich your daily reflections.

On the seven Sundays of Lent, we would like to share with you excerpts from the book *The Seven Living Words* by Rev. Mark Anthony Lord, who currently serves at Unity Naples, Florida. He presents Jesus' final words from the cross as a guide to developing our own Christ attributes and to living from a higher spiritual awareness.

Lent 2021 begins with Ash Wednesday, February 17, and runs until Easter on April 4. We hope this booklet will be your companion through the season as you contemplate what may be released from your life and find yourself transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Your Friends in Unity

An abstract painting with a textured, layered appearance. The colors are primarily warm, including yellows, oranges, and reds, with some cooler tones like blues and purples. Black outlines and lines are drawn over the paint, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and emotional intensity.

The Crucifixion

By Rev. Mark Anthony Lord

The crucifixion and the seven last words spoken by Jesus on the cross are an enlightening blueprint for transformation—for letting go of the past and moving forward into our next level of expansion and consciousness. Whether you are moving through a major transition, one that feels too enormous to endure, or ... you are simply feeling Spirit within calling you to let go so that you can experience greater life, the story of the crucifixion will guide you on a clear, loving, and perfect path ...

Because the Bible is a study in consciousness and its deeper levels, its stories are a symbol-rich guide for revealing the experiences, situations, and growth challenges that the soul encounters on its journey “back to the Father’s house.” It represents an evolution of consciousness, from asleep to awake and from awake to enlightened.

In [the Unity] *New Testament Interpretation* workbook, it says, “The crucifixion itself symbolizes a process of crossing out, or eliminating, that which is no longer needful for our continued unfoldment. What has fulfilled its purpose in us must be either lifted to a higher level of expression in consciousness, or let go of completely. Jesus’ crucifixion illustrates both these meanings.”

Crossing out that which no longer serves or supports us feels downright scary! I know for myself that when I become aware that something is no longer serving me, whether it be a relationship, a job, a way of thinking, or a way of being in the world, my first thought is, “OK, I want to change ... but I also want to take *this* with me.” What I am really saying is, “I’m willing to change, but don’t change me or anything in my life.” I’m guessing you can relate! Our first impulse is to hold on tighter ...

Our true spiritual evolution is calling us to be happier, more fulfilled, and more on-purpose. So that which doesn’t match our next expansion has to go—or at least change along with us. That brings us to the really uncomfortable part: We don’t *know* what will fall away

in the world of form or what will transform and come with us ... You don't get to pick and choose what stays and what goes ...

Here's the deal: The crucifixion of that which is false and fear-based, and the resurrection of your full, authentic, powerful, and God-centered being, is *not* optional ... What is guaranteed is that you will neither miss nor want for anything. The God-self within you will have the final say, and there will be a day when you completely and unequivocally trust it. The road to this day can be short, long, or ... lifetimes, but the destination is assured, and the outcome will be more magnificent than you can imagine.

Remember ... each crucifixion is calling us to be more fully who we are: fully free, fully powerful, and fully faithful that we are always supported and sustained by the love of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Wholeness). Every crucifixion, no matter how difficult or seemingly life-shattering, is simply a desire to follow your dreams at all costs. Our crucifixion is calling us to surrender, so that we can remember the truth—that *within* us is the greatest power of all, a divine Being that is eternal and that can never be destroyed or diminished.

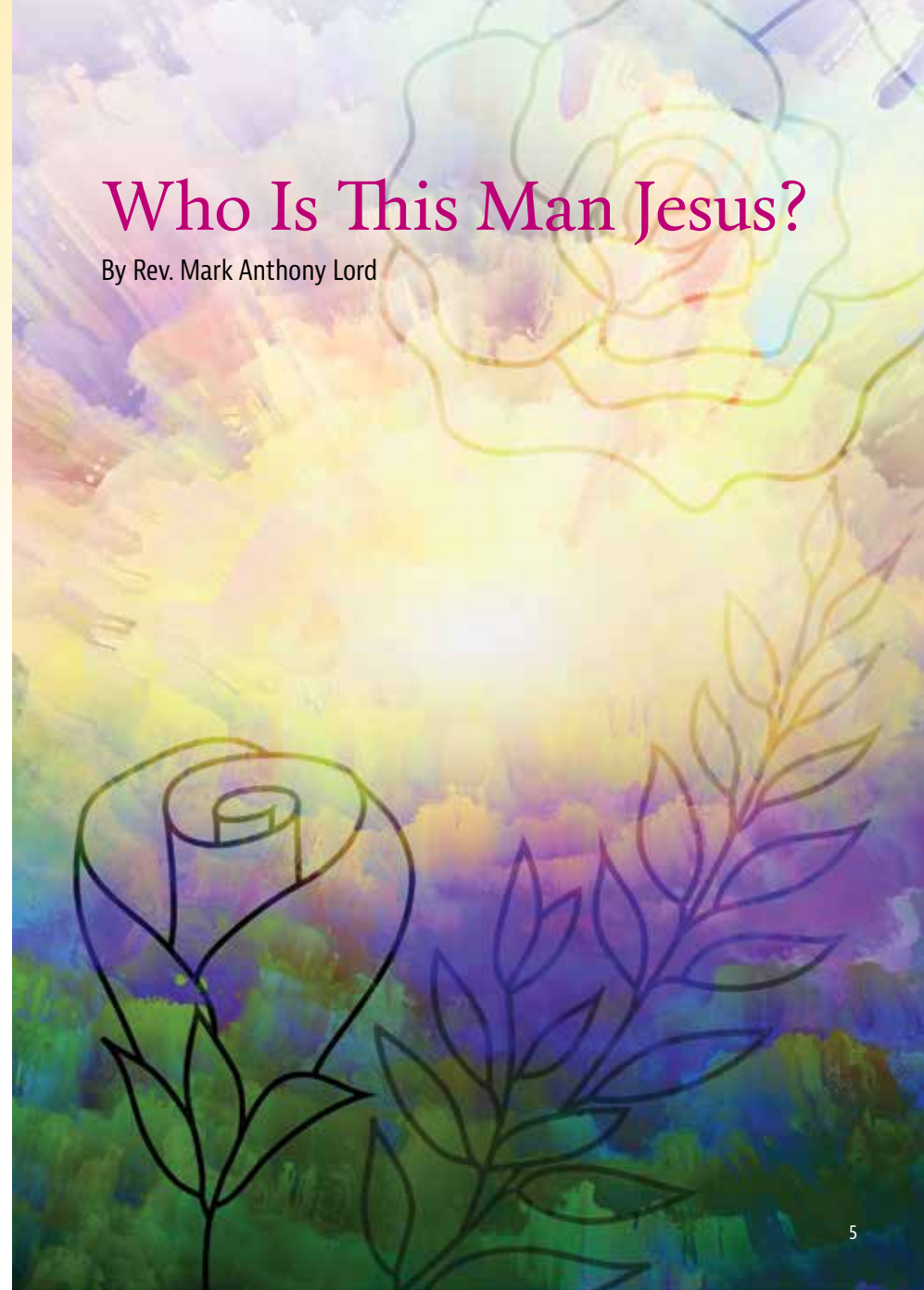
This is the main point that Jesus was making in the story of his crucifixion. He was saying, "Look, take my body if you have to. You cannot destroy me. You cannot take *life* away from me, nor can it be taken away from you!" ...

It's time to stop playing small and pretending that there's something great "out there" that is bigger and better than you. It's time to awaken to the God-self within you so you can cocreate heaven on earth. There may very well have to be some crucifying of that which no longer serves. So be it. Whether pain is pushing you or a vision is pulling you, let this mystical story be your guide.

Excerpted from *The Seven Living Words* (Accelerator Books, 2008)

Who Is This Man Jesus?

By Rev. Mark Anthony Lord



We hear the word *enlightenment* quite often. What does it mean? It all begins with the idea or illusion that there is separation between you and God. Any belief that you and God are somehow at a distance from each other—God out there, in the clouds, up in heaven, somehow outside of your experience of being right here and right now—is a myth that produces what I'd call *in-darken-ment*.

Enlightenment takes place when an individual realizes a oneness with God so profoundly that there is an awakening from this dream of separation, never to return to it or be seduced by it again. The illusion of separation is gone forever because you realize that there is no one “out there” who can hurt, harm, persecute, or save you. It's the *aha* of all *aha*'s, knowing that the life of God is your own life.

This may seem like an unusual idea to you. Part of you may even be crying out, “Blasphemy!” Take a deep breath and let this idea sit with you for a while. Imagine that there is one power and presence, this thing called God that is within, through, and as *all* of life, all that exists ... We are a part of a divine and perfect spiritual reality that we cannot see with our human eyes, but we can sense it and feel it with our true nature ...

Enlightenment, I imagine, is the place of total freedom, joy, acceptance, peace, and unconditional love—pure *bliss*. It is our natural state of being, our eternal reality. This is the reality that I believe Jesus lived in, spoke from, taught from, and enjoyed to the very last breath of his physical life—and beyond, of course ...

The teachings of Jesus offer us salvation from the belief that we are somehow separate from God, undeserving of love, or doomed to live a life of pain and suffering. In fact, if they were selling this “salvation” over the counter at my local pharmacy, I would be first in line to buy it. Who wouldn't want that? The good news is that you don't have to buy it. You do, however, have to be willing to do the work necessary to realize this salvation, this enlightenment.

What matters is what Jesus taught—and still teaches—and how his life can be used as an example for anyone who desires to become free. I love knowing that Jesus and I are made of the exact same God, the exact same stuff. I love knowing that we use the same Mind of God and that truly, in God, we are perfectly and forever one.

His work on this planet was to be a mirror, to reveal the truth of our own Christ consciousness. He never described himself as the exception or the expert. He taught that “this and greater things shall *you* do.” That simple passage demonstrates that he is not the exception and clearly implies that we are all made of God and are capable of achieving Christ consciousness. In fact, I believe that is ultimately what we are all here to do and will do ...

To wrap it up about Jesus, I would have to simply say: Jesus is cool ... radically cool. Jesus is the most inclusive teacher I know. He truly sees no color, no race, no sexual orientation, no age, and no “sin” or behavior within someone that deems that person unworthy of heaven. Jesus taught that “heaven is at hand.” What that means is that heaven is in this now moment, in this present space and time ... When we find it inside of us, and we commit to throwing our hearts open and revealing it, we see it everywhere and in everyone.

Jesus told us, “I and the Father are one,” which is also true for you and me. We are *all* one. We are all part of the great I AM.

Excerpted from *The Seven Living Words* (Accelerator Books, 2008)





Release and Renew

LENT 2021

I release any belief in limitation.
I renew my sense of possibility.

I release a habit of judging others.
I renew my commitment to see the Divine in all beings.

I release all doubt and indecision.
I renew my divine power of wisdom.

I release negative thinking.
I renew my positive expectations.

I release discontent.
I renew my gratitude in all things.

I release apathy.
I renew my zeal and enthusiasm.

I release the fear of lack.
I renew my awareness of abundance in my life.

I release any sense of worry.
I renew my faith in divine order.

I release thoughts of competition.
I renew my willingness to cooperate.

I release any need to complain.
I renew my outlook through appreciation.

I release old feelings of bitterness.
I renew inner peace by forgiving.

I release feeling stuck.
I renew my will to take the next step forward.

I release any feelings of hostility.
I renew my practice of nonresistance.

I release thoughts of illness.
I renew my openness to the healing power of Spirit.

I release anger.
I renew my patience.

I release any sense of discouragement.
I renew my hope with the power of affirmative prayer.

I release my darkest fears.
I renew the strength and courage of my heart.

I release feelings of loneliness.
I renew my connection with Spirit, self, and others.

I release problems that seem to overwhelm me.
I renew my understanding of my spiritual nature.

I release the shadows of sorrow.
I renew myself in the serenity of silence.