

The Season of Lent

Since the second century, Christians have observed a period of prayer, fasting, and reflection in preparation for the celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter. By the fourth century, Lent was the 40 days before Easter, not including Sundays. Lent is observed not only by Roman Catholics but also by many Protestant Christians.

Just as we sometimes do a thorough "spring cleaning" a few times a year, Lent is an opportunity to come to God for cleansing and renewal of our spiritual lives. There are three practices that have traditionally been a part of Lent:

- Prayer and reflection, including confession and repentance
- Fasting as a way to humble ourselves and make space in our lives for God
- Giving to help those in need

The Bible does not command us to observe Lent, but these three practices are very biblical and beneficial for our spiritual lives. These are things that we should be doing anyway, so why not do them during Lent? Let's commit ourselves to seek the Lord, which is the first step in experiencing revival and renewal in our spiritual lives.

There are suggestions for practice each week during Lent. Since Lent begins on a Wednesday, week 1 is a partial week.

For more information about Lent, see Pastor Ken's article at <http://kencarlson.org/bible/what-is-lent/>

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 1

READING and MEDITATION:

Sign up for one of the daily Lent devotions at <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/>

Sign up **now**, so that you can continue to read the devotions during Lent.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

Begin thinking and praying about things you might want to cut out of your life during Lent, perhaps starting with sweets and junk food. Consider also a non-food fast by cutting down on time spent watching TV/videos, gaming, or wandering the Internet. Remove some things from your life to make more room for God. There will be more suggestions for practice each week during Lent.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Lent, watch the three videos here: <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2015/#day-lent-to-the-rescue>

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 2

READING and MEDITATION:

Continue prayerfully going through the devotionals from <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2017/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

This week of Lent, consider taking one fast day: skip a meal or two on that day (don't avoid liquids, though). Use the time that you would have spent eating for prayer and meditation on the Scripture. For the entire week (Monday-Saturday) begin cutting parts of your diet and/or routine. This is a good week to cut junk food (dessert, soft drinks, candy, burgers and fries). Ideally what you cut out this week will stay out of your diet until Easter. Begin cutting back TV, movies, or other electronic habits. Don't eat meat on Friday. Sunday is always a feast day, because on Sunday we celebrate Christ's resurrection. So don't fast on Sundays.

Look for an opportunity this week to help someone in need. Volunteer at a food bank. Give a protein bar to a homeless person. Run errands for someone who is sick and can't go out. Start small, but do something.

MORE INFORMATION

If you haven't done so yet, watch the three videos here: <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2015/#day-lent-to-the-rescue>

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 3

READING and MEDITATION:

Continue prayerfully going through the devotionals from <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2017/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

If a complete fast (skipping one, two, or three meals) works for your lifestyle, choose a day this week as a fast day (remember to drink plenty of liquids). For the entire week (Monday-Saturday), cut out more of the unnecessary stuff from your diet and routine. If you eliminated sweets and/or junk food for the first week, keep them out of your diet for this week as well. Finally, try cutting the media out of your routine for one day this week (a day without TV, or the Internet, or ...). Remember that your weekly fast (all of the above) doesn't apply on Sunday, which is always a feast day. And take care not to just remove things from your day: add more of God. Take the time you save by fasting, and offer it to the Lord. Invite God to fill you.

Continue to look for an opportunity this week to help someone in need. Volunteer at a food bank. Give a protein bar to a homeless person. Run errands for someone who is sick and can't go out. Start small, but do something.

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 4

READING and MEDITATION:

Continue prayerfully going through the devotionals from <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2017/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

Pick one day this week to fast from a meal or more. Avoid desserts and sweets. Begin cutting out red meat, and eat no meat on Friday (Friday is the day of the crucifixion, which is the reason for traditional fasting from meat on this day). Begin cutting back on alcohol and coffee (or switching to a low-caffeine substitute like tea). Next week, it will be suggested that you fast completely from red meat, alcohol, and strong caffeine drinks. Be more purposeful about choosing quiet reflection at a time when you would otherwise choose distraction (TV time, Web surfing at lunch or before bed, video games, listening to the radio in the car, etc.).

Have you done anything yet to help someone in need? If not, pray that God would give you an opportunity to do that this week.

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 5

READING and MEDITATION:

Continue prayerfully going through the devotionals from <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2017/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

Pick a day or two this week to fast from a meal or more. If you haven't already, eliminate desserts and sweets this week. Also, eliminate red meat, alcohol and strong caffeine drinks (substitute tea or some other milder drink if you get headaches when you quit coffee). If you watch TV or watch videos on line, take two to three nights off this week. If you listen to the radio in the car, leave it off. If you spend a lot of time looking around, on the Internet, cut back each day wherever you can. If you play video games, pick several days to not play. Leave the computer off at lunchtime or at night. And finally, whenever you have free time because of these practices, say a prayer and offer the time up to God. Ask God to draw near to you and to direct the time.

Remember, Sundays during Lent are feast days.

For more information about fasting, see these sites:

<http://kencarlson.org/bible/faq-on-christian-fasting/>

<https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.html>

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 6

READING and MEDITATION:

Continue prayerfully going through the devotionals from <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2017/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

Pick a day or two this week to fast from a meal or more. Continue fasting from desserts and sweets, red meats, alcohol, and strong caffeine drinks (you may substitute tea or some other milder drink if you get headaches when you quit coffee). Consider eliminating all meat for this last week, or the last few days of Lent. As always, ask God to show you what is right for you. Continue fasting from various media, and add to them if you can. Cut back on, or eliminate, TV, videos, the Internet, video games, etc. And finally, whenever you have free time because you have given something up, be sure to spend extra time with God in bible reading, prayer, and meditation.

For more information about fasting, see these sites:

<http://kencarlson.org/bible/faq-on-christian-fasting/>
<https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.html>

Lent: Suggestions for Practice Week 7

READING and MEDITATION:

Continue prayerfully going through the devotionals from <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/easter/> or <http://ccca.biola.edu/lent/2017/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

Pick a few days this week to fast from a meal or more. Continue fasting from desserts and sweets, red meats, poultry, alcohol, and strong caffeine drinks. Consider eliminating fish for so that your diet is vegetarian or vegan for the last week. Decide for yourself whether to do this strict fast for a few days next week, for the whole week, or not at all. As always, ask God to teach you what is right for you. For fasting from various media, continue the practices from last week and add to them if you can. Eliminate TV, the radio, the Internet, or the computer. And finally, whenever you have free time because you have given something up, be sure to spend extra time with God.

Spend some extra time in prayer and meditation on Good Friday this week. Come to the Good Friday service prepared to reflect on Christ's death on the cross for us.

For more information about fasting, see these sites:

<http://kencarlson.org/bible/faq-on-christian-fasting/>
<https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.html>