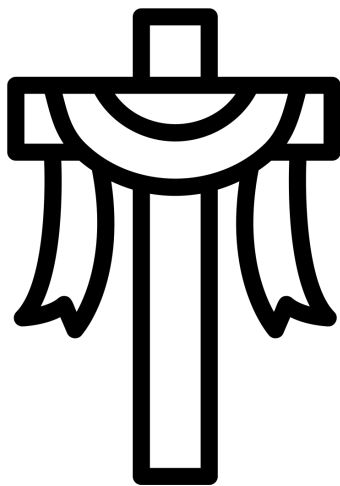


Lent Prayer and Reading Guide



What Is Lent and Why Should We Practice It?

Lent is the season in the Church Year when followers of Jesus walk with him to his death and burial, so that we can participate fully with him in his resurrection. The season lasts forty days (not including Sundays). It begins Ash Wednesday and ends Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Sunday). It is a time for the church to **re-order** its life once again into the Story that defines who we are. We do so by simplifying our lives, centering on Christ, and joining together with others while we do it.

Lent is about **rhythm**. We are rhythmic creatures. We do things in sequences and steps, marching to the beats of drummers. The problem is, there are lots of drummers out there, pounding away to capture our attention, calling us to follow them and submit to their story. Lent is the Jesus drum, calling us back into the left-right-left of God's Story. If it's not Jesus' drum that we're marching to, it's someone else's. If it's not the Story of God that we're submitting our lives to, it is someone else's story.

So, Lent is also a time for the church to **renounce** all the

other stories we have lived into, and to submit singularly to God's Story. But this is not a robotic submission. Robots don't have hearts. We march to the beats of drummers because we actually like the music they're playing. We desire the life they present to us, and so we follow them. With every beat and step we are being formed to look like the drummer we're following. This is why it's so important that we get in step with Jesus. We want to be like him.

In a phrase, Lent is a season to **renounce** and **re-order** our **rhythms** into Christ.

Lent for the Family: A Simple Guide

Renouncing and re-ordering our rhythms takes practice. Practices shape us into certain kinds of people who love certain kinds of things. The practice of Lent intends to spiritually transform us, to re-shape our desires toward the things of God. But it will only work if we submit our hearts and bodies to the practice.

This resource is designed to guide families and churches into a simple practice of Lent.

How to Use

This part invites us to spend the first week and a half in Lent applying the brakes. We live in a 100-mile-an-hour culture that gives us very little space to think about these things. This is why our preparation for Easter involves focused **prayer** and deliberate **practices** that enable us to give ourselves over to God, to direct our desires toward him. This card is meant to help lead us in the soul cleansing (or spring cleaning!) this season calls for, especially in our homes. First, some directions in **discerning a practice**. Next, instructions in creating a centerpiece. And last, a short **daily prayer**.

Discerning a Practice

The point of choosing a practice is not to prove anything, but rather to posture ourselves to give our desires over to God and receive from him. For some this might mean giving something up. Others may need to take something on. These questions may help you discern what kind of practice is right for you (adapted from author Rachel Held Evans):

- Why should I give something up or take something on this season? How will this draw me closer to God and prepare me for Easter?
- Is there a habit or sin in my life that repeatedly gets in the way of loving God, my neighbor, or myself? How do I address that habit over the next 40 days?
- What are some things in my life that I tell myself I cannot live without, but I actually can? Can I abstain from one or two of them this season?
- What activities and routines are already part of my daily life? How can I meet God in the midst of them?

Creating a Centerpiece

Something that may help you and your family enter into the story of Jesus this season is a symbolic table centerpiece (see image on front). You can gather a few simple materials and create this at some point during this first part of Lent: a bowl filled with sand (or dirt, stones, or marbles), 2 sticks lashed together to form a cross, a candle, and a stone marked with a symbol of Christ. Place the stone far from the cross, perhaps in another room. Then move the stone a little closer to the cross every week. (If you have younger children, you can hide it before each meal and let them find it for a special treat.)

Daily Prayer

Begin with *silence*, followed by the *scriptures*:

Ash Wed	W	Psalm 51	
	Th	Jonah 3:1-10	Romans 1:1-7
	F	Jonah 4:1-11	Romans 1:8-17
	Sa	Isaiah 58:1-12	Matthew 18:1-7
Week 1	Su	Gen 3:1-13	Romans 5:12-17
	M	Gen 4:1-16	Hebrews 11:1-4
	Tu	Gen 6:9-22	Luke 17:20-27
	W	Gen 8:16-9:7	1 Peter 3:18-22
	Th	Gen 9:20-29	Ephesians 5:1-20
	F	Gen 11:1-9	Psalm 33: 1-11
	Sa	Gen 12:1-9	Hebrews 11:8-12

Week 2	Su	Gen 13:5-18	Romans 4:13-17
	M	Gen 17:1-8	Matthew 1:1-17
	Tu	Gen 17:15-22	Romans 4:18-25
	W	Gen 19:12-29	2 Peter 2:4-9
	Th	Gen 22:1-8	John 1:25-35
	F	Gen 22:9-14	John 3:16-21
Week 3	Sa	Gen 22:15-18	Acts 3:11-26
	Su	Exod 3:7-14, 4:10-17	Hebrews 11:24-28
	M	Exod 5:1-4, 6:6-12	1 Peter 2:9-10
	Tu	Exod 12:21-23	1 Peter 1:17-21
	W	Exod 16:1-16	John 6:25-40
	Th	Exod 32:7-20	Luke 23:32-34
Week 4	F	Num 21:4-9	John 3:1-15
	Sa	Num 20:2-13	Hebrews 3:1-6
	Su	Num 14:3-12	John 10:22-39
	M	Josh 1:1-9	Matthew 28:16-20
	Tu	Josh 3:7-17	Matthew 23:1-12
	W	John 24:1-3a, 14-25	Matthew 25:1-13
Week 5	Th	Judg 2:16-19	Matthew 1:20-21
	F	Judg 4:1-7	Matthew 25:14-30
	Sa	Judg 13:1-5, 24-25	Luke 1:5-17
	Su	1 Sam 8:4-20	Mark 3:20-35
	M	1 Sam 15:34-16:13	Mark 4:26-34
	Tu	1 Sam 17:32-49	Mark 4:35-41
Holy Week	W	2 Sam 5:1-10	Mark 6:1-13
	Th	1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14	John 6:51-58
	F	1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43	John 6:56-69
	Sa	Song 2:8-13	Mark 7:1-23
	Su	Zech 9:9-12	John 12:12-16
	M	Isa 42:1-9	John 12:1-11
Maundy Good Holy	Tu	Isa 49:1-7	John 12:20-36
	W	Isa 50:4-9a	John 13:21-32
	Th	Isa 53	John 13:1-17, 31b-35
	F	Psalm 22	John 18-19
	Sa	Job 14:1-14	John 19:38-42

Ask yourself or each other these discussion questions:

*What stirred in your heart as you listened?
Where in your life do these Scriptures hit home?
How might God want you to respond?*

Conclude with this prayer:

Father, you call us to surrender our stories to your Story. Help us to do so, and guide us by your Spirit as we enter the desert with Christ this season. Amen.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please email Pastor Marc Jolicoeur at mjolicoeur@mw.church