

# PRACTICE

Formation in the way of Jesus  
FASTING//LENT



An invitation for our community this year is to engage the season of Lent with intentionality (and overlap with the practice of fasting). Have you experienced Lent before? What was that like? What did you do? What was the significance of the season for you?

**Lent Background:** Quite a lot could be said about Lent! For our purposes, **Lent is an annual season within the traditional church calendar (similar to Advent) in which we anticipate and prepare for a significant Holy Day (Easter).** Typically, Lent has been a 40 day period between Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Although its format has varied throughout the centuries and throughout different cultures, the basic concept of Lent remains the same: **to open our hearts to God's refining grace through prayer, confession, fasting, and almsgiving as we anticipate Holy Week.**

### **Characteristics of Lent:**

- Lent is signified by the color **Purple**, which is the color of the repentance of sins.
- Lent is a season of **confession**. Fasting and confession go hand in hand. We are naming and seeking freedom from anything that can have a controlling influence in our lives that takes the place of God (idols). Are there recurring areas of sin in our lives that we need to name in order to be free?
- **Fasting and Prayer.** Fasting helps free us from our idols, and can be a powerful means of renewing our relationship with God. The 40 days of Lent are a reflection of the 40 days of fasting undergone by Moses (Exodus 34:28), Elijah (I Kings 19:8), and Jesus (Matthew 4:2) (BTW, these are the three who end up on the mountain together during the transfiguration, see Matthew 17:3). Fasting is a way of denying ourselves to be more attuned to God's spirit, and it is a way of disciplining our bodies and our cravings. Keep in mind that Jesus connects fasting with pride (Matthew 6:1-6), and that for those who are new to the practice it can be quite jarring. Have grace for yourself, and make sure health/diet issues are considered!
- **Meditation on Christ:** we are heading towards Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter. We are not fasting to see how long we can go without certain things, we are fasting in order to remember Christ's sacrifice for us, that he is the lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Sarah Phillips writes: *Lent is a time when Christians find out our faith is not just a feel-good, self-help religion but one that answers the deepest questions of life and eternity. Those who journey through the Lenten season will enter the Easter season with an increased appreciation for who God is and what He has done for us. And the joy of Resurrection, as well as the promises of eternity, will not be soon forgotten.*
- **Alms Giving (Generosity):** Fasting is both deeply personal, but also leads to right relationship with our neighbors (see Isaiah 58!!). **Are there ways for us to be seeking justice, peace, shalom, and right relationship with people in our community who need good news?**

# PRACTICE: LENT

## Week 1: ALCOHOL & CAFFEINE

Monday: Read Luke 4 (The temptation of Jesus)

Tuesday: Contemplative prayer (focus on the temptations)

Wednesday: Bless someone with the \$ you would have spent on drinks

Thursday: Drink only water. Pray for the thirsty.

Friday: Journal your reflections from this week's fast

**Saturday: Rest/Sabbath**

**Sunday: Worship Gathering/Share a meal with family/friends**

## Week 2: TV, MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES

Monday: Read Matthew 5 (The Sermon on the Mount)

Tuesday: Contemplative prayer (focus on the Beatitudes)

Wednesday: Send a handwritten note to someone who needs it

Thursday: Play a card or board game with a friend/family member

Friday: Journal your reflections from this week's fast

**Saturday: Rest/Sabbath**

**Sunday: Worship Gathering/Share a meal with family/friends**

## Week 3: INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA

Monday: Read Matthew 6 (The Sermon on the Mount cont.)

Tuesday: Contemplative prayer (focus on the Lord's Prayer)

Wednesday: Put your phone away/Turn it off for the day!

Thursday: Call someone and tell them what you love about them

Friday: Journal your reflections from this week's fast

**Saturday: Rest/Sabbath**

**Sunday: Worship Gathering/Share a meal with family/friends**

# PRACTICE: LENT

## Week 4: SWEETS & TREATS

Monday: Read Luke 14 (Eating with Jesus)

Tuesday: Contemplative prayer (focus on Luke 14:15-24)

Wednesday: Cook a meal and take it to someone

Thursday: Do something nice (sweet) for someone you don't like

Friday: Journal your reflections from this week's fast

**Saturday: Rest/Sabbath**

**Sunday: Worship Gathering/Share a meal with family/friends**

## Week 5: PERSONAL

Monday: Read John 12 (Jesus enters Jerusalem)

Tuesday: Contemplative prayer (focus on John 12:12-19)

Wednesday: This week choose something that feels personal to your journey: (Anger, Sarcasm, Outrage, etc)

Thursday: Set up a time to talk to a friend about this week's fast, how can you journey together?

Friday: Journal your reflections from this week's fast

**Saturday: Rest/Sabbath**

**Sunday: Worship Gathering/Share a meal with family/friends**

## Week 6: EXCESS

Monday: Read Matthew 27:1-56 (The Crucifixion of Jesus)

Tuesday: Contemplative prayer (focus on Matthew 27:45-56)

Wednesday: Have a "no spend" day where you don't buy anything!

Thursday: Collect items in your home to donate or give away

Friday: Journal your reflections from this week's fast

**Saturday: Rest/Sabbath**

**Sunday: EASTER AT DISCOVERY!**