

Spiritual Practices for the Season of Lent

What is Lent?

Lent is the season of the Christian Calendar comprised of the 40 days preceding Easter, when Christians remember their own depravity and mortality as they focus on the coming Cross of Good Friday. The 40 days does not count the six Sundays in the season, as these days are reserved for feasting.

During Lent Christians have traditionally adopted practices to help them focus on simple living, fasting, and prayer in an effort to grow closer to God. Commonly Christians forego a specific food or habit to help them in their recentering on God. The important part of this practice is to not just give something up for 40 days, but to use the absence of that item in life to point back to God.

What should I do during Lent?

Find ways to focus on God. Fast, serve, or pray.

Fasting can help you focus on God by eliminating distractions in life. Most people think of fasting as abstaining from food for a day. But fasting can also be abstaining from certain foods or from anything that distracts us from God. It's a great practice to fast from things that take up large chunks of time.

Serving shifts one's focus from self to other. In this way we become more like Jesus. Use these 40 days to find ways that your whole family can serve together. At Otter Creek, there are lots of ways to use your gifts to serve others. Contact the staff if you need help finding a place to serve.

Pray, but not in the way you might normally pray. God always welcomes our requests out of his love for his children. During the season of Lent, shift your prayers to focus on two things: the need for God's forgiveness in your own life and for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Pray with great humility. Here is a Lenten prayer guide:

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/>

No, but really, what should I do during Lent?

Need more specific help in designing some disciplines for Lent? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Attend Ash Wednesday and Good Friday services at Otter Creek to bookend the season of Lent.
2. Carve out time in your day to spend in prayer. Find a rhythm of prayer that works for you, even if it is a Breath Prayer – a short phrase that you can say in one breath and repeat throughout the day.
3. Read a chapter of a gospel each day. Doing so will get you through two gospels during Lent.
4. Fast from something that consumes much of your free time. Facebook? Texting? TV? Use that time for other disciplines.
5. Fast from a particular food item that you enjoy. When your body craves that item, leverage that craving to focus on God.
6. Offer forgiveness to others. Live exceedingly graciously, letting go of past grudges, as a reflection of God's grace through Jesus.
7. Volunteer to serve in Otter Creek's Habitat for Humanity home building effort. Contact rob@ottercreek.org for details.

No matter what you choose to do, remember the purpose of this season is to draw nearer to God. When considering adopting one of these practices, ask yourself how you will use it to dwell on the life of Jesus.