



5 Ways to Do Lent

Differently

by Pamela Palmer



Bible Study Tools

Many Christians around the world are looking ahead as Easter approaches. Believers of Christ anticipate Holy Week and seek ways to prepare their hearts for this special season. Many Christians participate in Lent, which is the 40 days leading up to Easter. The length of 40 days corresponds with the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting, resisting temptation, and preparing for His public ministry life.

*“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry”
(Matthew 4:1-2).*

The Lenten season is marked by prayer and fasting. Lent, however, may look different for each believer, and churches across the globe celebrate Lent in various ways by offering prayer guides, encouraging believers to fast and pray, and holding services dedicated to the Lenten season.

Perhaps like other Christians, you are already thinking about what you will fast from, or give up, for Lent. Or maybe you are wondering if you will even do anything to participate in Lent this year.

What Is the Purpose of Lent?

Lent leads believers into a deeper relationship with Jesus through intentional prayer

and fasting. It requires slowing down and making time for prayer, limiting oneself, and reflecting on the road Jesus walked to the cross. When Jesus was in the wilderness, He sacrificed, He prayed to the Father, and He resisted the enemy’s attempts to thwart His ministry and work on the cross. It is on similar principles that Christians celebrate Lent — to pray more, to resist the enemy more, and to approach God with humility.

*“So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off”
(Acts 13:3).*

In Scripture, aside from Jesus, we also find fasting and prayer in the Old Testament, such as when Queen Esther called for a time of fasting before she approached the king. We read of Jesus’ followers engaging in fasting and prayer, too. In the 13th chapter of the Book of Acts, the Christians spent time in prayer and fasting before going out to minister. These two spiritual practices, fasting and prayer, are important disciplines for believers. The Lenten season gives Christians the chance to practice them intentionally and purposefully.

You may feel unsure if it is important to participate in Lent, or maybe you are simply tired of doing the same thing each year for Lent. If so, spend time prayerfully deciding

how to participate in Lent in ways that are honoring to God and that will nourish your relationship with Him. God loves His children and wants us to draw near to Him. Lent becomes a significant time for followers of Jesus to center our hearts and lives around Jesus through prayer and fasting.

5 Ways to Do Lent Differently

1. Practice Lent in Community, instead of on Your Own

One of the blessings of being a Christian is that we can get connected to a church community to do life and faith with other believers. Many churches offer opportunities for the congregation to come together to practice Lent. You may want to attend a service or chapel night during Lent, follow the Lenten guide that your church has made available, or suggest that your small group participate in Lent together.

Whether you connect with a friend, spouse, or neighbor, participate in Lent not by yourself this year, but in community with other believers. This can help you stay accountable to prayer and fasting while building up others in their faith walk.

2. Make Lent about God instead of Yourself

When it comes to Lent, it is easy to make it all about what we are fasting from and how hard that might be. Some people fast from sweets, fried foods, alcohol, or other things like social media, video games, or gossip. However you fast, it should be less about you and more about God.

Jesus warned believers when they fast to not appear somber or as though fasting is a burden (see Matthew 6:16). Whatever you fast from during Lent should be for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God and redirecting your heart toward Him. The most important thing this Lent is setting your eyes on Jesus and the great sacrifice He made in giving up His life to save the world.

3. Journal through Lent instead of Only Reading

Many Christians will read Lent-themed devotionals that generally include daily reflections, Scripture readings, and prayers. These types of books can make Lent more meaningful. However, this year try journaling through Lent. Get a new journal or grab a blank notepad you already have and dedicate time each day to journal to the Lord your praises, thoughts, prayers, confessions, worries, thankfulness, and hope.

Journaling or writing to the Lord each day during Lent can take you from mere reading to deeper reflection and engagement with God. You can even look back to this written record of your experiences with God during Lent for encouragement, insight, and a reminder of God's faithfulness.

4. Give Time instead of Giving Up

As Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, in addition to fasting, He also gave His time to the Father. This year, as you practice Lent, consider ways that you can give your time the Lord and His kingdom. Perhaps your church or a local organization has ways that you can serve others and be a light in the world. God has given each person skills and talents, and He has called believers to serve others.

Each day, you may find ways to give your time to the Lord by helping and serving others. Perhaps you can give of your time and do Lent differently this year by writing someone an encouraging note, providing a meal, engaging more in worship and prayer, or praying for someone specifically.

5. Sacrifice instead of Consuming

Ultimately, Lent presents followers of Jesus the chance to fast and pray. As we consider ways to do Lent differently, that does not mean getting away from the heart of Lent, which is to walk closer to the Lord through

prayer and fasting. This year, embrace the opportunity of sacrifice, just as Jesus sacrificed.

We live in a world in which we constantly consume — information, money, food, attention, and the like. Lent reminds us to sacrifice, and that sacrifice is part of the way we are called to live like Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome that we can be “living sacrifices, pleasing to God” (see Romans 12:1).

A Prayer for Lent

Heavenly Father,

You are good and faithful in all seasons of life. As I turn my attention to Easter, I want to set my heart on You this Lenten season. Your Son gave His life so that I can have life and freedom. I do not want to miss what this season is about. Help me to figure out what I can do to participate in Lent in such a way that is honoring to you and that deepens my faith and my relationship with You. Lord, I desire to participate not simply to check off a to-do list, I want to practice Lent purposefully and significantly. Help me to do Lent differently this year so that I can have a more meaningful experience as Easter nears. Help me to keep my eyes on you, Jesus.

Amen.

Conclusion

Lent is a special and sacred time in the life of the Church. Christians around the world anticipate celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a time of joy as we honor Jesus's greatest sacrifice — His life — to conquer sin and death. However you choose to partake in Lent this year, do it prayerfully and in ways that draw you nearer to Jesus. He gave His life and wants all to know Him and have a personal relationship with Him.

Pamela Palmer is a writer, speaker, and the founder of upheldlife.com, the platform on which she produces devotionals and faith resources to inspire keeping faith at the center of life. She is in pastoral ministry and gets to share in the emotional and spiritual lives of others. She lives and thrives on Jesus, coffee, and music. She is the author of Living a Deeper Faith: Nurture Your Relationship with God and Live a Faith-Fueled Life. Pamela married the perfect man for her and they have two beautiful kiddos. She has been published on herviewfromhome.com, and you can follow her at upheldlife.com or on Facebook.com/upheldlife.

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