



# A Lenten Guide



TRINITY  
SAN ANTONIO

A life-giving church

**“...there is no other way  
to life and true  
depth of peace, but the  
way of the cross.”**

**- Thomas A Kempis**

## A PASTORAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Lent is an opportunity to follow Jesus who was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for 40 days of prayer and fasting. This Lent at Trinity, we are inviting the Spirit to lead us into a deeper relationship with the Lord and be increasingly conformed to His image. Together, we help each other say ‘no’ to all of the things that we consume and that consume us so that we can say ‘yes’ to the Lord.

Many of us have little space for silence, speaking with and listening to the Lord, and receiving love, strength, and guidance from him. We long for a fresh start. We need a spiritual, physical, and emotional detox. Lent is that space.

Here are a couple ways you can use this Lenten Guide:

- Take time to pray about God’s invitation to you this Lent. What is he asking you to say ‘no’ to? What practices is he asking you to say ‘yes’ to? Write them down at the end of this booklet and share them with a prayer partner.
- God will invite everyone into their own practices. We don’t need to share all of the details of our Lenten devotion with others if you don’t want to and we don’t need to judge others for what they are or aren’t doing.
- With that said, it can be incredible helpful to have a one or two other people that you share you practices with who can encourage you in them. Who is that for you?
- There are lots of ideas in this guide and online, but *don’t try to take on too much*. Keep it really simple and just be consistent.

Remember, praying with Jesus in the wilderness is all about growing our desire and need for the Lord. So let’s clear out space to meet with him, and if it’s harder than we thought it would be, that just means we’re recognizing how much more we need him than we thought.

Peace,  
Pastor Matthew

# LENT: JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

## WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a 40 day penitential season (excluding Sundays which are always mini-Easter feast days) starting Ash Wednesday and ending with the Paschal Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday). These 40 days represents the 40 days of Jesus' temptation in the desert and Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. Lent is a time of spiritual preparation and renewal, and invitation to go deeper in your walk with God.

Lent is not a time "for doing things we never do otherwise." But rather, as Peter Leithart suggests, "like Sunday, Lent is for intensifying things we do all the time." Lent intensifies our already held conviction that we have no power to save ourselves, that all our righteousness is rubbish, and that Christ alone is mighty to save. Lent is the Gospel proclamation that we are far worse sinners than we ever dared to imagine, and yet more deeply loved than we ever dared to hope.

Observing Lent is not required to be "a good Christian." But rather it is a season all Christians are invited to freely enter into for our spiritual benefit and the benefit of those around us.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LENT?

There are some themes that often arise when people describe their experience of practicing Lent. However, this list is not exhaustive, nor prescriptive; God's activity in your life cannot be predicted or controlled!

**HUMILITY:** Humility is the capacity to recognize who we are in relationship to the living God. The path of Lent reveals our mortality, sin and limitations. Often, the Holy Spirit reveals personal and corporate blind spots during Lent. Our hunger pains, headaches and failures during Lent become living reminders of our great need for the salvation offered through Jesus Christ.

**RE-ORDERED LOVES:** The gentle harness of Lent is designed to loosen our unhealthy attachments to creation (including food, drink, and money) so that we may enjoy a deeper bond to the Creator. We learn to internalize and enjoy the love of Christ during Lent.

**PURITY:** During Lent, we see the incompatibility between our commitment to Jesus and our dabbling in idolatry (loving the world and pleasures more than God). We confess our sins and thereby take hold of the forgiveness that is ours in the Gospel.

**JOY:** As we give ourselves to him in our suffering, Jesus Christ supplies us with a lasting spiritual overflow and the consolation of the Holy Spirit. This is to be distinguished from a “spiritual high,” which cannot be sustained over time or during suffering. Easter Sunday and corporate worship during Lent grants us a taste of heaven.

**RENEWED IMAGINATIONS:** As we progress through events of Ash Wednesday, the 40 days of Lent and the drama of Holy Week, we begin to see ourselves and the world as they are in God. The events of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection become for us a window into the new creation (otherwise known as the Kingdom of God) which gives us a secure identity and invites us to participate in the Kingdom of God!

**DEPENDENCE:** During Lent, we unlearn the lie that we are self-made, self-contained individuals. We learn to draw our strength from the life of God and the bonds of affection with our fellow Christians.

## DISCERNING YOUR LENTEN PRACTICES

The three main habits during the season of Lent are prayer (our weapon against Satan), fasting (our weapon against the flesh), and almsgiving, or charity (our weapon against the desires of the world).



PRAYER



FASTING



ALMSGIVING

**PRAYER** during Lent focuses on our need for God's forgiveness, increased sensitivity to the Spirit, and praying for those around.

### WHY DO WE PRAY?

- We pray in order to confess our sins to God and ask the Spirit to transform our hearts, longings, and desires.
- We pray in order to lift other people and their needs to the Lord.
- We pray to praise God and be reorientated towards Him.

### IDEAS:

- Pray through Scripture, Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments. Pick one for each week of Lent.
- Set aside an extra 5-10 minutes a day to pray
- Set aside 10 minutes of complete silence.
- Use family prayer chain and pray one link after dinner
- Create a prayer journal
- Meet with Pastor Matthew for private confession (if you're interested in learning more about what this entails, text me and I'll send you a brief biblical explanation).

**I WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME PRAYING BY...**

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**FASTING** or giving something up that is a regular part of life, like eating dessert or scrolling through Facebook, can be a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice. That time can also be replaced with more time connecting with God.

**WHY DO WE FAST?**

- We fast to strip away the distractions that might keep us from learning about the deeper parts of ourselves where the Spirit needs to transform us.
- We fast to bring about hunger so as to put those appetites in their proper place and trust Christ as our sustainer.
- We fast to prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies for the celebration and feasting of Easter.

**IDEAS:**

- Give up specific forms of entertainment (cell phone games, youtube, netflix, movies, etc).
- Give up something that you currently find yourself dependent on.
- Consider fasting from a single type of food (sweets, coke, alcohol, etc), a single meal every week, or maybe even a whole day every week (Friday's are traditional to remind us of Christ's betrayal on that day).

**I WANT TO FAST FROM....**

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**ALMSGIVING** such as giving money or doing something good for others is a way to respond to God's grace, generosity and love. For example, some people spend time volunteering or donate money they would normally use to buy something, like their morning coffee.

**WHY DO WE GIVE?**

- We give to compassionately care for the needs of those around us.
- We give (time, money, energy) to expose our fears and actively trust God in those areas.
- We give to be reminded that everything we have is a gift from God.

**IDEAS:**

- Identify someone in financial need that you can bless.
- Make a special gift towards a ministry.
- Volunteer your time (food bank or shelter, visit a nursing home, help an elderly person with tasks, or at church).
- Write one letter of encouragement a week to individuals serving in vocational ministry (missionaries, pastors, worship leaders, teachers, etc).

**I WANT TO GIVE TO....**

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## ANOTHER OPTION: WEEKLY LENTEN PRACTICES

If you like simple (yes please!) here is a weekly guide for you to follow. At the end of each week, write down your answer to the question:

- **Week One** - Set a timer and sit in silence for 10 minutes each day meditating on the holiness and love of God (Ash Wednesday-Sunday).

*How did this influence my day and week?*

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- **Week Two** - Choose something to fast from to remind you of your dependence on God. Something like the traditional meat or alcohol, sugar or caffeine or even social media.

*What was the most difficult part of this?*

*What did it teach me about dependence on God?*

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- **Week Three** - Set a timer for 10 minutes and pray for your enemies by name and those who don't know the Lord. Bless them, one by one. Think of the person you most struggle to love and pray for them.

*How did this impact your attitude towards these individuals?*

*What did it teach you about God's love for them?*

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- **Week Four** - Memorize the Jesus Prayer - “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” and pray it every morning and every evening and meditate upon its meaning for a few moments each time you pray it. If able, pray kneeling on your knees.

*How did this prayer and posture shape my daily conversation with God?*

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- **Week Five** - Invite a non-believer over to your home and cook them a simple week night meal.

*How did this person bless me?*

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- **Week Six** - Read or listen to the Gospel of John (21 chapters so 3 chapters a day). Write down one verse a day that you like or want to remember in your journal.

*What most stood out to me about Jesus?*

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- **Week Seven** - If you normally listen to a podcast, music, or watch TV, choose silence for the week. Ask for the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to His work in these moments.

*Was it hard to not have something on? Why? How did the Holy Spirit minister to you in these moments of silence?*

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## RECOMMENDED READING

The following booklist is very diverse (Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Presbyterian, and Evangelical) but highly beneficial if read with a discerning mind and humble attitude.

The Good of Giving Up: Discovering the Freedom of Lent by Aaron Damiani - The best introduction to the season of Lent and one worth re-reading every year. It's not a devotional but a great one to read before Lent. (easy read)

No Greater Love by Mother Teresa - No name is more well known as a modern day "saint" than Mother Teresa. Wisdom drips from her life spent serving the poor and sick on the streets of Calcutta, India. (easy read)

Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (easy read)

The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis (easy read)

Humility: The Journey Towards Holiness by Andrew Murray (easy read)

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction by Eugene Peterson (medium read)

Social Justice by Basil of Caesarea - Four sermons by the 4th century church father Basil on the topic of our relationship to our money and how we care for the needy around us. You don't have to agree with everything to find this a beneficial and thought provoking read. (medium read)

Journey to the Cross: A 40-Day Lenten Devotional by Paul David Tripp (medium read)

The Confessions of St. Augustine - This is a classic text of one of the most influential Christians of all time where he tells his faith journey (difficult read)

The Great Lent by Alexander Schmemmann - This is a dense theological work from an Eastern Orthodox perspective and not for the faint of heart but rich with insight. (difficult read)

5 Minute Daily Devotions - This is several years old but worth re-reading. Brief Scripture to meditate upon and prayer. (super easy).



*God has been teaching me...*

Week One

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Week Two

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Week Three

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## Week Seven

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# LENTEN SCHEDULE

## **Week One**

- Ash Wednesday Service, March 2nd at 6pm @ Woehler Family Center

## **Week Two**

- Service Project/Mercy Ministry

## **Week Three**

- Vespers Service (6pm)

## **Week Four**

- Service Project/Mercy Ministry

## **Week Five**

- Stations of the Cross

## **Week Six**

- Seder Meal in Homes

## **Week Seven (Holy Week)**

- Maundy Thursday @ Woehler Family Center
- Good Friday Tenebrae Service @ Woehler Family Center
- Resurrection Sunday @ Woehler Family Center

For up-to-date schedule and resources:

[www.trinitysa.org/lent](http://www.trinitysa.org/lent)

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ὁ αἶψα  
ἐν στή  
αὐτοῦ



Διὰ χειρὸς  
ἀποστόλων