

### **Lent: What is it? Why is it?**

The highlight of the year for Christians is Easter, the day when our Lord rose from the dead. Lent is a forty-day season of preparation for Easter. Lent always begins on a Wednesday, called Ash Wednesday.

**Why 40 days?** Because, Jesus fasted and was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. Lent, then, is our time of fasting, prayer, temptation and repentance. Lent is not required anywhere in scriptures, but it has been a custom, which Christians have practiced for most of the last two thousand years.

Lent is not just about giving up our sins, but giving up things that we love and cherish, to remind us that Christ gave up things He loved and cherished. It is really a preparation to celebrate God's marvelous redemption at Easter, and the resurrected life that we live, and hope for as Christians. Jesus has set us free from being a slave to sin.

In many languages, the word "Lent" actually means "fast." This is where the custom of giving up something for Lent originated.

#### **What is Fasting?**

Fasting is a spiritual weapon, and like prayer, it allows us to grow closer to God. Fasting does not just mean refraining from eating certain foods; it deals with abstaining from sin. There are many ways of fasting even though food is the most popular. Moreover, a fast should relate to how a person needs to grow spiritually.

#### **Examples of things to fast from:**

**Foods**—meat (beef, veal, pork, chicken, turkey), white rice, fried foods, caffeine, carbonated beverages, foods containing preservatives, refined sugar, sugar substitutes, white flour (all products using it), margarine, shortening, high fat products

**Words**—criticism, negativity, gossip and nagging.

**Behaviors**—apathy, indifference, hardness of heart, self-centeredness and jealousy.

**Inner Torments**—fears, arrogance, negative thoughts, near-despair, doubts and sadness.

**Noise**—in order to listen more attentively to the Lord and

Fasting is meant to help purify us so that we will be more open to the Spirit of God. It is emptying ourselves so that we can more readily surrender to what God wants us to do in life.

#### **Truths About Fasting:**

1. Looses the bands of wickedness (Isaiah 58:6)
  2. Builds our faith (Matthew 17:21)
  3. Makes it easier to hear the voice of the Lord (Acts 13:2-3)
- "... If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chron. 7:14

#### **The focus of Lent is always threefold:**

1. It is a time to prepare new converts for baptism through intensive classes and instruction.
2. It is a time for long-standing Christians to review their lives and renew their commitment to Jesus Christ.
3. It is a time for backsliders to be restored to the faith.

#### **Therefore, Lent is a time for:**

- Disciplining self
- Praying daily and often to listen and respond to God; build a relationship with Him
- Meditating on God's Word and the Lord Jesus' Passion
- Seeking God's will and not our own
- Reflecting on life's difficulties and problems as well as look at own guilt
- Repenting for failures and sin as a way to focus on the need for God's grace
- Humbling self before God and confessing inadequacies
- Emptying self of false pride
- Sacrificing time, energy and resources to the kingdom
- Helping others, especially the poor, disabled and widows
- Committing ourselves to be more like Jesus
- Sharing God with others

In every case, it is a time for serious, disciplined self-examination, a time spent in intensive prayer and repentance before the cross of Calvary. Put simply, Lent is a time to examine ourselves carefully.

#### **How We Pray:**

**Address God:** "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

**Submit to God's will:** "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

**Ask for your physical needs:** "Give us this day our daily bread."

**Ask for forgiveness:** "And forgive us our debts,"

**To the degree that you yourself are willing to forgive:** "as we forgive our debtors."

**Ask for help with temptations:** And lead us not into temptation,"

**And preservation from evil:** But deliver us from evil

**UNITY THROUGH GROWTH IN PRAYER A DAILY MEDITATION FOR 40 DAYS OF PRAYER ~Ask these things through our Lord Jesus Christ.~**

#### **Day:**

**1 -** May we worship our Lord, our God and King whose greatness is seen throughout the earth. Lord, You are merciful and all praise belong to You, who is the Lord of everything.

**2 -** God our Father, teach us to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, that we may grow in character and develop a true sense of values through following Jesus, Your Son and our Brother.

**3 -** Father, may we see the face of Jesus in everyone we meet, and minister to those who are less fortunate than we are, for what we do for anyone in need, we do for Him.

**4 -** Lord, we thank You for Your grace, mercy and peace. You have given us salvation for through Christ Jesus' grace, which enriches us in every way and through Him we are comforted in peace, strength and love.

**5 -** Heavenly Father, thank You for being our refuge and strength, and ever present help when we are troubled.

**6 -** Lord Jesus, show us how to be open-minded and able to learn from each other so that, together, we may grow as the people You invite us to be.

**7 -** Father God, You have given us the ability to produce wealth. Help us to take care of it according to Your will.

**8 -** Lord, give me patience and tolerance with everyone. Lord, show me how to be kind and generous to everyone. Lord, help me to live positively and cheerfully for everyone.



## Mount Pleasant Baptist Church Lent Season Observation Prayer and Fasting Guide



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**9** - Thank You for the wonder of ourselves, and we stand in awe at all that You have made. Guide us in Your ways. We ask that the power of Your Spirit be in our lives each day, so that we may live more fully in Your presence.

**10** - We confess our sins, and know that You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**11** - Praise the Lord, all you nations. Speak to him, all people of the earth, because His love is great and He is always faithful.

**12** - Lord, thank you for forgiving us when we confess our sins and repent.

**13** - With thanksgiving Lord, I ask that your peace which is so much greater than I can understand guard my heart and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

**14** - Father, I trust You with everything in my life, and I know that You keep perfect peace for those whose mind stay on You.

**15** - Help me to think anew and see things more broadly than in terms of "success" and failure." Lead me always to trust and place myself confidently in Your hands.

**16** - Lord, help me to treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I forgive others as I would like them to forgive me.

**17** - Lord, we ask that You help us have patience until Christ returns for He has promised to come back and bring us to be with You.

**18** - Jesus, Friend and Brother, may we know You more clearly, love You more dearly and follow You more nearly, day by day.

**19** - May what is not good die within us, and may we bring life to all we meet.

**20** - Lord, we ask You to open our eyes that we may value and appreciate all people, recognizing what we have in common, rather than focusing on what our differences might be.

**21** - O God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

**22** - Lord, help us to be honest and not lie to each other as we have taken off our old selves and are new creatures in Christ.

**23** - Your love for mankind is so great that You sent Jesus, Your Son, to live as one of us. We pray that we may appreciate and value one another. God of love, lead us to grow in love.

**24** - Father, sometimes it seems that You are distant, but I will wait for You Lord even though Your face is hidden.

**25** - Lord, I pray that I will always have Your friendship because with You I will be safe and not stumble.

**26** - Heavenly Father, may I love You with all my heart, soul, mind and body more and more everyday.

**27** - Lord Jesus, I belong to You. Thank You for being my foundation, the chief cornerstone of my life.

**28** - May Your Spirit empower us to work well with others and bring out the best in those with whom we share our lives.

**29** - Lord God, give me such love for You and for others that it will blot out all hatred and bitterness.

**30** - Father, may I make every effort to keep the unity of Spirit through the bond of peace in my church and home.

**31** - Inspire me to develop the talents You have given me for the benefit and the service of those people You have placed in my life.

**32** - Show us how best to use the time and talents You have given each of us, and lead us to grow in appreciation of the contribution that others make.

**33** - Lead us to respect and value every person as unique and important, made in Your image and likeness. We ask this prayer through Jesus, who became a human being because You love our world so much.

**34** - Give us the power of Your Holy Spirit that we may have courage and determination, and may live in such a way that we encourage one another.

**35** - Lord, inspire me always to have genuine care and concern for others.

**36** - May we carry the good news of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ everywhere we go, and help finance the church throughout the world.

**37** - May each of us become a blessing for other.

**38** - Lead me this day, Lord, not only to be of service to others but to ensure that I find quiet moments for you and me.

**39** - Lead us to respect and value all other people that we may work together for justice for all and the building of your kingdom.

**40** - Lord, may we recognize Your Son in our midst, and live truly as brothers and sisters.