



# Lenten

## BIBLE READING PLAN

What is Lent?

**How do I participate, and is it good for children?**

Participating in Lent is a great experience for the whole family. Lent prepares us for the celebration of Easter in new and exciting ways. It teaches the benefits of prayer, sacrifice, meditation, and discipline for great purposes, and it makes us all stronger. Participating in Lent can only help!

**What is Lent?**

Lent, the period of 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays), beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 17th, 2021. It ends at sundown on Holy Saturday, the evening before Easter, which is Sunday, April 3rd.

During Lent, Christians from all denominations can enter into a season of preparation, reflection, and repentance when we seek to “turn around” and realign our lives and focus toward God. It is a time to give up things as well as take on new lifestyle choices, helping us rid ourselves of distractions and our own selfish desires. By doing so, we seek to live and love as more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

There is no right or wrong way to celebrate Lent. It should be a personal communion between followers and God, each of us focusing on ways we would like to grow spiritually as we heighten our Christian walk.

However, if you are new to Lent, some ideas can be helpful! Here are some things you can do each day to make your Lent season especially meaningful:

**Pray regularly during Lent.** Most people see Lent as a special time to connect with God in personal ways. That starts with prayer. Make a plan to pray daily for yourself and your family. The point of Lent is to prepare the Christian for the Arrival of Christ and the celebration of his resurrection and ascension. So it is not considered selfish to pray for yourself. However, pray for yourself in a way God would want you—pray for greater strength, faith, love, and holiness in the schema of your life, not for wealth, power, and long life! Pray to hear God’s voice more clearly, not that great sound system from Best Buy so you can hear the world’s noise and chaos better.

If your children are participating with you, try saying your prayers aloud each day when they are with you. It will spark their prayers to be Christ-centered and not self-centered.

**Set aside a daily prayer time and place.** People who pray at the same time and in the same place daily are thought to have more dynamic prayer encounters. The scene for Lent can be your living room before the rest of the family arises. It can be a special place in the back yard if the weather is nice. The important thing is that your show of habitual commitment will find favor with God.

If you are including your children in your Lenten rituals, kids have enjoyed making a prayer tent by draping a blanket over the dining room table or a card table and keeping it as a “tabernacle” throughout Lent. They will enjoy the prayers said therein and joining you there for a prayer and reading each day.

**Light candles while reading and worshipping.** Candle-lighting is as old as our faith. While not necessary, people report it creating a special feeling of connection between themselves and the heavenlies. Here is one intriguing passage about candles and incense from the Revelation:

*Then another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the hand of the angel.*

We don't really know how a small flame or incense connects with the heavenlies, but this verse from Revelation 8 and several others imply that the connection is real. A small flame can affect your faith in good ways.

You don't want to leave candles unattended if children are in the house and/or participating in your Lent rituals. If your children are engaging in rituals by themselves, you can encourage them to pray in dim light or darkness if they have no fear of the dark and light the light on their phones or pray under a blanket with a small flashlight.

**Fast from your food supply.** Fasting has been encouraged during Lent throughout the ages. Granted, if you live with health problems and/or are up in years, you should check with your physician before fasting. As well, children should not be encouraged to fast, as hunger can create negative connotations with Lent in their minds. For adults—pastors, youth ministers, parents, and Sunday school leaders—fasting has often brought about greater spiritual connections and broadened faith.

The important issue with fasting is not to make any commitments you feel you cannot keep. You want to keep your word to God and not break an oath. So long as it is a sacrifice that God will see, it's better to under-commit than find yourself having to walk back a promise. Skipping one meal, all meals until sunset, or fasting each Friday are some ideas for beginners. Another is to complete a bread-and-water fast or a broth-and-water fast, which Christians have used based on their abilities.

The good news about fasting is that even doctors are starting to say fasts are very good for the digestive tract, ridding the liver, kidneys, and intestines of toxins from processed food and other no-no's from the American food supply. They can act as a reset button for the digestive tract to balance metabolism.

All fasting should be accompanied by water to keep you hydrated. Pick your own fasting rules, ones you are confident will work for you while showing some sacrifice on your part, and then feel free to go before the Throne of Grace with confidence in your Lenten prayers.

**While children should not be encouraged to fast, they can make "food sacrifices."** Fasting is likely too extreme for growing bodies. Doctors only recommend that very sick children fast, and there is nowhere in the Bible that God asks children to fast for spiritual reasons. However, as Lent is a time to learn about sacrifices, you can discuss with your children making a food sacrifice for God, like dessert or mac n cheese certain days of the week.

Make children aware of not being overly zealous, so as to break their word, or under-zealous, such that they are "pulling a Cain." Make them aware of the story of Cain and Abel from Genesis 4, Abel making a cheery, thoughtful sacrifice and Cain a begrudging one. God did notice!! You want to discuss with them what will be a healthy balance if you all agree to make a food sacrifice.

Lent is a great time to talk to kids about more than food sacrifices. The subject can be broadened to lifestyle-money sacrifices, time sacrifices and sharing belongings!

**Think of a new way to serve others and commit to it.** While this is not a necessary part of Lent, our Christians lives are about service, and the season provides great opportunities. Think of some area of service you have not done before but would like to start. Do you have a burden for the elderly? Make weekly visits to a nursing home during Lent, bringing flowers, candy, spiritual readings, etc. Does your burden extend to animals? Call a shelter and ask if you can volunteer during Lent. Give your time to lonely or hurting people on your street. Invite someone over for dinner on Wednesday nights whom you think is in need of friendship.

Your services are entirely between you and the Lord. But teaching service to children is vitally important, especially in this generation of must-get-rich and me-me-me. We are almost working against our culture to teach sacrifice and service.

**Finally, read the Scriptures daily.** Some people are faithful and true to daily Bible readings all year long. Most of us need to get on the horn! Lent is a great time to practice daily Bible readings. And for that, we are providing help with the Lent Calendar of Daily Scripture Readings below.

This combination of daily scripture readings comes from a range of sources used by ministers, priests, and lay people from various denominations. All scriptures are appropriate for children and not too long for their attention spans. It is only in the days approaching the end of Lent--Christ's arrest and crucifixion--that the readings encompass an entire chapter or thereabouts. The stories of the Last Supper, Arrest, Crucifixion and Resurrection are important; we cannot start learning them too soon, nor can we have too much exposure.

The daily readings have been selected in a sort of "round robin" style, providing a reading or two from the Old Testament, then the same from the New Testament, and finally one or two from the Book of Psalms before starting over again. By the end of Lent you will have read 40 scriptures offering a plethora of understanding, joy, forgiveness, peace, and hope.

**You will notice there are no scriptures for Sundays.** Sundays do not count toward the 40 days of Lent, so we don't provide scriptures. The hope is that you are attending worship on Sundays and will get your fill at those services!

**If you don't get it perfect.** In spite of the earlier encouragement not to break promises made in the Throne Room, don't expect your Lent to go without adventures and challenges. If you miss a day of scripture reading, go back to it the next day! If you forget your fast until after you've just eaten a handful of nuts, just go on!

God is not looking for perfection. He is looking for a commitment. He is looking for a chance to draw you closer to him—that is what Lent is all about!



# Lenten

## BIBLE READING PLAN

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1</b> ASH WEDNESDAY Joel 2:12-17	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2</b> Isaiah 58:6-12	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3</b> Psalm 51:7-12	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4</b> 2 Corinthians 5:6-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5</b> Matthew 6:1-6	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6</b> Matthew 6:19-21	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 7</b> Genesis 9:8-17
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 8</b> 1 Peter 3:18-22	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 9</b> Psalm 25:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 10</b> Mark 1:9-15	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 11</b> Genesis 17:1-7	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 12</b> Psalm 22:23-31	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 13</b> Romans 4:13-16	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 14</b> Mark 8:31-38
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 15</b> Mark 9:2-9	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 16</b> Exodus 20:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 17</b> Psalm 19	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 18</b> 1 Corinthians 1:18-25	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 19</b> John 2:13-22	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 20</b> Exodus 33:12-23	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 21</b> Psalm 107:17-22
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 22</b> Ephesians 2:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 23</b> John 3:16-21	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 24</b> Jeremiah 31:31-34	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 25</b> Psalm 51:1-7	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 26</b> Psalm 119:9-16	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 27</b> Hebrews 5:7-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 28</b> John 12:20-27
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 29</b> Isaiah 7:10-14	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 30</b> Psalm 45	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 31</b> Psalm 40:5-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 32</b> Hebrews 10:4-10	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 33</b> Luke 1:26-38	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 34</b> Psalm 118:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 35</b> Matthew 21:1-11
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 36</b> John 12:12-19	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 37</b> John 11:35-53	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 38</b> John 13:21-38	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 39</b> John 19:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 40</b> John 20:1-31		

Day 1 begins on Ash Wednesday and Day 40 ends on Holy Saturday [Sundays are taken off]