

Weekly Fasts For Lent

Jesus...was led by the Spirit into the wilderness...

- Luke 4:1

Lent is a time of penitence and self-examination for all Christians. In some ways, the 40 days of Lent reflect the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert prior to his ministry, fasting and resisting temptation. We can observe Lent by following Jesus into the wilderness, and “fasting” from some of the things in our lives that are familiar and comfortable. Try these suggested fasts, and take time to journal, think, or talk about your experiences each week. Begin your fasts on Monday and end Saturday. Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent, and are always feast days, when we break our fasts to celebrate the new life that Jesus’ resurrection brings.

Week One: Treats & Self-Indulgence

This week, resolve to spend nothing on yourself but what is absolutely necessary. Buy no new clothes or gadgets, books or music. Don’t go to the movies or buy coffee or candy. Eat cheaply. Save your money, or give what you would’ve spent to someone in need (or add your money to your family’s mite box for St. Paul’s *Stop Hunger Now* program). What happens when you deny yourself something you’ve become accustomed to, or something you really want? How does it affect you? Why?

Week Two: Food or Meals

Pick a favorite food and fast from it for the week. Or, alternately, pick a meal (like breakfast or lunch) to skip on a daily basis. If you skip a meal, spend the time you would have spent preparing and eating food doing something else. Pray, read scripture, or find a way to bless someone else with each of those blocks of

time, even if it’s just time spent listening to them. Journal about what it’s like to go hungry, even for just one meal. How does your body/mind respond to hunger? If you give up a particular food, consider: what is it like to deny a craving? Is it easy or hard?

Week Three: Television, Music & Media

This week, forgo the usual shows. In fact, turn off the TV altogether. Drive without the radio. Leave the iPod at home. Put the newspaper aside. What is it like to increase the silence, and decrease the media inputs in your life? Do you miss it? What does your reaction to this fast tell you about your connectedness to media? Spend time listening for the still, small voice of God.

Week Four: Social Media & Internet

Turn off Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and news. Check and answer work emails and nothing else. Put a Lenten “Out of Office” reply on your personal email letting people know you’ll get back to them next week. What is it like to unplug, and to fast from constant checking of email, Facebook, etc.? Do you feel disconnected.... or free?

Week Five: Time

Go out of your way for others this week. Fast from indulging yourself with time. Get up half an hour earlier. Make it a goal to bless someone else with your words or actions every day. Once or twice, give someone else the gift of your listening ear, resisting the urge to share your troubles. Commit to do something for someone else: help someone move or paint, stop and help a stranger. What is it like to spend your time on others?

Week Six: Attend Holy Week Services