



A guide for everyone



What is it?

- It's a season in the church year (like Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost)
- It lasts for 40 days (not including Sundays)
- It begins on Ash Wednesday
- It's a time when followers of Jesus prepare themselves, by intensifying their regular practice of spiritual disciplines, to celebrate Holy Week and Easter
- It has been celebrated in the church since the fourth century
- It began as a time for those getting ready to be baptized to prepare themselves

What are spiritual disciplines?

Spiritual disciplines for followers of Jesus are actions we engage in regularly that draw us closer to God. In Lent there are 3 practices that are traditional - prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (giving to those in need). These practices are important in our daily lives and especially as we prepare to remember Jesus' journey to the cross and to celebrate His joyful resurrection.



Let's talk about prayer:

If you wonder, 'how do I pray?', you aren't alone. Jesus' disciples wondered the same and so they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11). Jesus told them they should pray in the words of what we know as The Lord's Prayer. Saying the prayer Jesus taught His followers is a great place to begin when praying.



Jesus said, "This is how you should pray: 'Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. Give us each day the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation.'" (Luke 11:2-4).

That's not the only prayer we can pray!

- You can pray in our own words too
- You can talk to God the same way you speak to a friend
- You don't have to use big words or fancy language
- You can be who you are with God

A simple formula to help you use your own words when praying is:

- Give thanks to God for God's many blessings & anything else you're thankful for
- Ask God's forgiveness for things you've done, thought, or said that are sins against God
- Ask God's help for you and for all who need it

Let's talk about fasting:

Fasting is:

- a spiritual discipline
- when you go without food on purpose (not the same as skipping breakfast b/c you aren't hungry)

You fast so that you can:

- draw close to God
- pray for yourself or others in special times of need
- deepen your relationship with God

Some examples of fasting include:

- Moses, Elijah, and Jesus in the Bible fasted for 40 days
- after Jesus returned to heaven His followers fasted every Friday to remember the day Jesus was crucified on and to give special thanks to God for Him
- since the 4th century, followers of Jesus have fasted during Lent as a way to get ready to celebrate Holy Week and Easter

To fast, you can abstain from food for:

- one meal
- for one whole day (sun up to sun down)
- for lunch for a week or
- abstain from chocolate/Starbucks/Tim's for all of Lent (or whatever makes sense for you)

For more about fasting, read what Jesus taught about it in Matthew 6:16-18.

Let's talk about almsgiving:

Almsgiving is the practice of giving to those in need. Giving is a subject that Jesus talked about alot, as well as helping those in need. So when we practice almsgiving, we are not only doing as the church has done for thousands of years, but also doing what Jesus taught His followers to do (Matt 6:2-4).

Giving alms can look like:

- saving up money during Lent and donating it to a ministry at your church that helps those in need or to another organization that does (foodbank or homeless shelter)
- giving your time to help those ministries and organizations that help those in need

By feeding the hungry, clothing those in need, visiting the lonely/isolated Jesus teaches that we have done the same to Him (Matt 25:37-40).



More from the Bible:

You can read and study more about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving by looking up the verses below in the Bible. If you have questions, ask your priest.

Prayer: Matthew 6:5-13; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Phil 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14-15; Mark 11:24; 1 Timothy 2:1; James 5:16

Fasting: Luke 4:2-4; Acts 13:2-4, 14:23; Isaiah 58:3-7; Exodus 34:28; Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:3-5, 10:3; Joel 2:12-13; Luke 2:37

Almsgiving: Psalm 112:5-9; Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 5:42, 6:1-6; Luke 10:35; Luke 12:33, 14:13; Acts 3:2-10; Galatians 2:10; 1 John 3:17; Deuteronomy 15:7; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Hebrews 13:16

