

LENT CALENDAR

FAST | PRAY | GIVE

How to Use

Each day, read the verse and do three simple action steps: fast, pray, give.

On Saturdays, there is a short devotional. On Sundays, we rest and take the day off.

Fast

Each day, there is a suggested fasting practice based on the Scripture reading. Use these as a guide; if the recommended practice isn't applicable, feel free to tweak it in a way that works for your lifestyle and spirit.

Pray

Whether you are praying alone or with others, whether you journal in depth or simply create a breath prayer, there is no wrong way to do this step!

Give

The giving practice is structured so that anyone can participate. Giving is a powerful obedience, so modify this step as much as needed.

Jesus said, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."



As we begin the Lenten season and start counting down the days until Easter, I find my thoughts instantly drift toward my eventual to-do list. Easter baskets to fill. Family dinners to coordinate. Travel plans to arrange. As is so often the case, the Mystery begins to feel clouded by the immediate.

But I find myself craving an Easter that is less about chocolates and services, and one that's a little more like Thomas.'

Poor guy has always gotten a rough rep. For three years he abandoned his whole world to follow this carpenter from Nazareth, only to watch Him bleed Thomas' hopes and dreams into the splintered wood of the cross. I'd be a doubter, too.

But Jesus appears and in a characteristically tender act of divine humility, extends His shredded flesh. "Touch me. Believe."

Perhaps the wounds of Jesus are still extended today. Perhaps our greatest "to-do" is to simply reach out and touch the hands of God.

ASH WEDNESDAY

"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6

FAST from television today; spend the time you would have spent watching TV asking Jesus to prepare your heart for repentance.

PRAY for humility and a willingness to really grieve over your sins.

GIVE the Lent Calendar to a friend, and ask them to help keep you accountable to completing it.

THURSDAY

"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God, 'Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.'" Daniel 9:3-5

FAST by only eating one meal today. Allow the hunger to remind you of your sin and your need for repentance.

PRAY specifically about the sins that you have been struggling with. Ask Him to forgive you, and ask Him to show you the next right step to take.

GIVE an apology to someone who you have wronged or someone who has been affected by your sin.

FRIDAY

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face..." Matt 6:16-17

FAST from social media.

PRAY for the desire to please God alone, and not man.

GIVE \$5 anonymously to someone in need, such as a donation to the Omaha Food Bank or a Starbucks card to the mom in the store with screaming kids.

SUBMISSION

Saturday | February 21 |

Lent Reflection

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READ
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"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16

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REFLECT
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- Where am I holding on to control? What won't I surrender to God?
- What do repentance and submission have in common?
- Am I willing to submit fully to whatever God asks of me? What holds me back from freely giving Him whatever He asks for?

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PRAY
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- Ask God to identify the things you need to submit to Him.
- If you're ready, tell Him that you will do anything He asks you to do.



Every year, as the weather got colder and the teachers began adorning the school hallways with pipe cleaner spiders, I would obsessively begin preparing my Halloween costume (a pretty weighty task for an 8 year old girl). And every year (for an embarrassing number of years), without fail, I wanted to dress up as Queen Esther.

I mean, what little girl wouldn't want to be Esther? Not only had she been chosen as the most beautiful woman in the country but she was incredibly shrewd and unflinchingly brave. Halloween gold, right there.

But until recently, I hadn't considered what might be the most remarkable trait she possessed. We see it in the verses highlighted above. She was fully submitted to the will of God - even at the risk of her own life.

Honestly, I still wish I "dressed" like Esther. I wish unexpected car problems and student loans and scary illnesses would find me like her - fasting before my God, open handed, surrendered to His will.

Perhaps fasting leads to repentance because it's part of a larger, holier picture. Perhaps fasting drives us to lay our sins, our wills, our very selves, at the feet of our God.