

LOCAL CHURCH ST. PETE



LENT GUIDE 2026

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WHAT IS LENT?

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and is the period of 40 days (not including Sundays) which comes before Easter in the Christian calendar. The period of 40 days corresponds to Jesus' 40 days of fasting and testing in the desert before he began his public ministry (Matthew 4). We get the word Lent from the Old English words for "springtime" and "slowly." Lent is a time of contemplation, a time of dedication, and a time of preparation. The season of Lent engages our hearts and minds so that we are truly ready to celebrate once we arrive at Resurrection Sunday.

The season of Lent is a time marked with increased fasting, prayer, and giving to those in need. These are three spiritual disciplines or practices that Jesus taught his followers to put into practice (Matthew 6:1-18). All three of these practices help us better rely upon the Lord and deny ourselves.

Through repentance, sacrifice, prayer, giving to those in need, and fasting, or abstaining from the normal "food" that we eat (distractions, busyness, entertainment, consumerism) we reflect on the true condition of our souls and our great need for a savior.

Lent invites us to ready our hearts and minds for remembering Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

USING THIS GUIDE

You may be brand new to the observance of Lent, or you may have practiced it for years. Regardless, it is our hope that this guide can bring significance and joy to the Easter season. Here are a few ways this guide is designed to help you:

PERSONALLY

This guide can be used in your personal time with God. Review the Scripture that is included, spending time answering the questions for yourself. Allow the prompts to shape your prayer. The optional fasting categories are designed to help you grow in the practice of fasting. You can also consider journaling as you walk through the 40 days.

FAMILY

This guide can be a helpful tool for families to review each week. Pick a day of the week when you can gather everyone together. This could be over dinner, before bed, or anytime that works for your family. Have different members read parts of the Scripture, and then discuss the questions together. If you participate in any of the fasts, commit to encouraging each other and debrief on how that practice was challenging and enriching to you. There is also an activity idea which can be used together.

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP or HOUSE GROUP

During the Lent season, this guide could also be used to facilitate discussion with a Discipleship Group or within your House Group. The questions included were written with these options in mind.

However you choose to use this guide, here is each week's outline:

- Scripture to read (from our sermon series)
- Questions to consider (feel free to journal)
- Prayer to pray (or pray your own)
- Activity (can be done with your family, friends, or House Group)

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
- Jesus, when being tempted while fasting (Matthew 4:4)

NOTE ON FASTING

Fasting is a spiritual discipline by which we deny ourselves food for a certain period of time so that we can grow in our dependence on God. Fasting is not about trying to impress God, manipulate him, or make ourselves more acceptable to God. Pastor John Piper describes fasting as, “an intensifier of spiritual desire.” When we approach fasting it is important that we have a biblical purpose for our fast. Fasting done without a purpose can be a miserable self-centered experience about training your willpower. Instead of its true purpose, which is to create a greater desire for God.

In the Bible we see several types of fasts. These include:
Abstaining from all food for a meal, a day, or multiple days.
Fasting sometimes, although rarely, included abstaining from all food and drink.

We also want to be sensitive to those who struggle with eating disorders. For some, fasting from food could be harmful, not helpful. If you have a history of disordered eating, consider talking to a doctor or counselor before fasting. If you find that fasting negatively impacts your mental or emotional health, it's okay to “fast” from a different comfort or convenience or choose a different spiritual practice.

If you choose to fast from food, here are a couple ways that you can do that:

- One day - fast from after dinner till dinner the next day
- One meal - intentionally skip one meal each day that week
- Modified fast - fast from a meal or two, but supplement nutrients as needed

Lent is a time marked with increased fasting, prayer, and giving to those in need (Matthew 6:1-18). When we fast we now have more time on our hands because we don't have to purchase, prepare, and eat a meal. We also have more money in our pocket because we aren't buying food that we normally would have. When we fast we create opportunities to give to those in need and pray to God.

Ultimately, the purpose of fasting is to draw closer to God. Fasting humbles us, highlights our need for God and is an expression of self-denial. It isn't a performance for others; it's an expression of dependence and faith in God. With every hunger pang (or feeling of withdrawal), it is an opportunity to speak to God in prayer - recognizing our neediness and His worthiness.

FEBRUARY 18

ASH WEDNESDAY

*“Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord? ‘Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.’
(Isaiah 58:1-8, ESV)*

Reflect & Pray

Reflect on the Scripture above, and then take 30 seconds of silence to recognize God’s presence with you. Write out a prayer to God that is honest and raw, focusing on your desire for God to purify you during this Lent season, making your heart more aware of His love and grace:



Revelation 1

FOCUS ON CHRIST

WEEK 1 - FEBRUARY 18-24

Read Revelation 1

What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

Is there an attitude or behavior this passage is calling you to change?

Where has your view of Jesus become too small or familiar?

How does this passage deepen our view of who Jesus is?

While living in exile on the island of Patmos, John refers to himself as a, “brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.” How can this view of hardship encourage us to mature in our faith?

John responds to this vision of Jesus by falling at his feet as though dead. Is this an appropriate response for John? Why or why not?

What does this reaction teach us about reverence and awe in our relationship with Christ?

How does knowing Jesus holds authority over life and death affect the way you face fear, uncertainty, or suffering?

WEEK 1 - FEBRUARY 18-24

[illegible]

Activity: Consider fasting a meal, multiple meals, or all food on Wednesdays throughout Lent.



Revelation 2

DEVOTION

WEEK 2 - FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 3

Read Revelation 2:1-11

What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

Is there an attitude or behavior this passage is calling you to change?

The church in Ephesus was commended for hard work, enduring hardship, and rejecting false teachers. Yet, they were called out because their love had grown cold. What does Jesus' message to the Ephesian church teach us?

How can we keep our hearts warm with love for God and others?

To the church in Smyrna Jesus introduces Himself as "the First and the Last, who died and came to life." Why do you think Jesus begins His message to a suffering church this way? What comfort and encouragement does this offer to us in our suffering?

How does remembering Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection shape the way we face hardship, persecution, or loss?

DEVOTION

WEEK 2 - FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 3

Jesus says, “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...” How does God’s definition of “rich” differ from the world’s?

Extra Space to Write:

Meditate & Pray: How can Lent expose the difference between duty and devotion?

“Father, I don’t want to ‘go through the motions’ in life. I want to have a heart that is full of love for you and my neighbor. Would you lead me to love those around me, grant me a heart that cares for those who are hurting, and a greater desire to live a life that glorifies you.”

Activity: Use the money that you would have spent on food (that you fasted from) and give it to someone who is in need.



Revelation 2

REPENTANCE

WEEK 3 - MARCH 4-10

Read Revelation 2:12-29

What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

Is there an attitude or behavior this passage is calling you to change?

Jesus introduces himself to the Church in Pergamum as the one with the sharp, two-edged sword. During Lent, we slow down to let Christ speak truth into our lives. What does it look like for you to truly listen to Jesus— even when his words may confront or challenge you?

The Church in Pergamum held fast to Jesus' name in the midst of intense persecution. Yet they were called to repent because there were some who were holding onto false teaching. What does this tell us about the importance of correct teaching?

Jesus warns that if they do not repent then he will soon come and war against them with the sword of his mouth. The truth of God's word will destroy the errors that are being taught. How can you allow the word of God to correct any false teaching you may hold to?

REPENTANCE

WEEK 3 - MARCH 4-10

The Church in Thyatira tolerated false teaching that promoted sexual immorality. Why is tolerance of sin or false teaching often more subtle—and more dangerous—than open rebellion?

Extra Space to Write:

Meditate & Pray: What actions do you need to repent of?

“Father, I choose to follow and obey you. I don’t want to make up my own version of the truth. I need your word to bring correction in my life. Lord, show me where I need to make changes. I repent and turn to you with all my life.”

Activity: Use the time you would have spent buying, cooking, and eating a meal to be used as a prolonged and focused time of prayer.



Revelation 3

SURRENDER

WEEK 4 - MARCH 11-17

Read Revelation 3

What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

Is there an attitude or behavior this passage is calling you to change?

The Church in Sardis was told to, “wake up, and strengthen what remains.” How might we heed the call to wake up and strengthen what remains of our own works before it's too late?

The Church in Philadelphia had little power, yet remained faithful. How does this encourage you when you feel tired, inadequate, or spiritually worn down?

The Church in Laodicea believed they were rich and in need of nothing. Jesus states they are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. In what ways can comfort, success, or self-reliance dull our awareness of our need for God?

Jesus said to the Church in Laodicea, “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.” How does knowing that Jesus’ correction flows from love reshape your view of repentance during Lent?

SURRENDER

WEEK 4 - MARCH 11-17

Extra Space to Write:

Meditate & Pray: What do I need to wake up from?

“Heavenly Father, would you awaken me in areas where I have become spiritually lax? I need a zeal to do the things that please you. Would you give me strength to do the things I know that I should do. Help me to glorify you and fully surrender every part of my life to you.”

Activity: Fast during your lunch break at work once this week and devote that time you would normally spend preparing, buying, and eating your food to reading scripture and prayer.



Revelation 4

REVERENCE

WEEK 5 - MARCH 18-24

Read Revelation 4

What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

Is there an attitude or behavior this passage is calling you to change?

God's appearance in this chapter is described with beauty and mystery. Why do you think Scripture sometimes describes God in ways that invite awe rather than full understanding? How does this deepen worship?

The elders and living creatures surround the throne. What does this scene teach us about who truly holds authority in the universe—and how does that challenge our everyday priorities?

Revelation 4 gives us a peak into heaven. We see that worship in heaven is continuous, not occasional. What rhythms or practices could help worship become more central in your daily life, not just on Sundays?

Lent prepares us to worship Christ at the cross and resurrection. How does seeing God's glory in Revelation 4 prepare your heart to better understand Jesus' humility and sacrifice?

REVERENCE

WEEK 5 - MARCH 18-24

Extra Space to Write:

Meditate & Pray: How can you deepen your reverence for God?

“Father, would you make me increasingly aware of your presence in my life? I desire to live my entire life as a worshipful response to you. I reverently bow my will before yours, that your kingdom would come and your will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Activity: Find a brother or sister in Christ who is in financial need and give them money to help meet their needs.



Revelation 5

WONDER

WEEK 6 - MARCH 25-APRIL 2

Read Revelation 5

What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?

What do you learn about God from this passage?

Is there an attitude or behavior this passage is calling you to change?

John weeps because no one is found worthy to open the scroll. What does this moment reveal about humanity's inability to save itself?

Jesus is described as both the Lion and the Lamb. How do these two images help you understand Jesus' power and humility, especially as we approach the cross?

The prayers of the saints rise like incense before God. How does knowing your prayers matter, even in seasons of waiting, encourage you to pray honestly?

The Lamb is worthy because He was slain. Why is it difficult to see suffering and sacrifice as the path to victory—and how does Lent reshape that perspective?

Heaven erupts in worship because the Lamb is worthy. How can worship reorient your heart when life feels heavy?

WEEK 6 - MARCH 25-APRIL 2

Extra Space to Write:

Meditate & Pray: How can you live in response to Christ's sacrifice?

"Lord, I lay my life before you. May every decision I make honor you. I choose to put you at the center of all that I do and all that I am. May my life bring glory to your name. Thank you Jesus for your sacrificial death, that has brought me everlasting life."

Activity: Spend an extended period of time in prayer. You could invite a group of friends over to your house to pray or your house group could spend more time praying for one another.

APRIL 3

GOOD FRIDAY

We want to encourage you to STOP, READ and REFLECT 3 times today on your own. Then we'll gather together as a community this evening.

At 9AM (on own):

Stop whatever you're doing on Friday at 9AM (about the time Jesus was crucified) and read Matthew 27:11-54. The irony of this passage is that if Jesus had "come down from the cross" if he "saved himself" he would not have accomplished a way to be saved for those mocking him (or for us).

At NOON (on own):

Take a moment and pause to think about the weightiness of what Jesus endured for you and me by reading Luke 23:44-55. It was around noon time when darkness fell across the land as Jesus hung on the cross. He hung on the cross in utter darkness under the weight of our sin.

At 3PM (on own):

Stop and read Mark 15:33-39 + Psalms 22. Reflect on the very Psalm that was most likely on Jesus' mind as he took his last breath. Take a few minutes and express your gratitude for the "finished work" of Jesus – his death in your place as a penalty for your sins, where he received the punishment you deserve.

Tonight 7-8PM (together):

Gather at the church building for prayer, reflection and communion. We'll reflect on the death of Jesus through song, prayer and communion.

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