

Simple practices to deepen your Lenten journey

# Little Way Chapel LITTLEWAYCHAPEL.COM

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## What is Lent?

Lent is a season of 40 days (46 including Sundays) leading up to Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday and concluding on Holy Saturday. Sundays are considered "feast days" when fasts can be broken to celebrate the Sabbath. During these 40 days, Christians around the world dedicate themselves to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, imitating Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, where he fasted and was tempted by Satan. It is a season for repentance, self-denial, and remembering our mortality. Though the origins or Lent are not entirely certain, the forty-day fast prior to Easter was already a well-established custom by 325 AD, as is evident from the fact that the canons of the Council of Nicea reference it as common practice.

## Three Pillars of Lent

Traditionally, the church has turned her attention to three spiritual practices during Lent: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving (serving others). These practices are based on Jesus' teachings in Matthew 6:1-18, where he instructs his followers to pray, fast and give to the poor, but to do it all in secret, unlike the hypocrites who do it publicly, for show.

This guide follows these three traditional Lenten spiritual practices, assigning one practice each day. Each activity has one of the labels below to indicate the practice.



Sundays are a "mini-Easter", when we rest from these practices to celebrate the risen Lord and keep Sabbath.

During Holy Week, the practices are loosely tied to the events of Jesus' life during that final week before his death and resurrection.

## How to use this guide

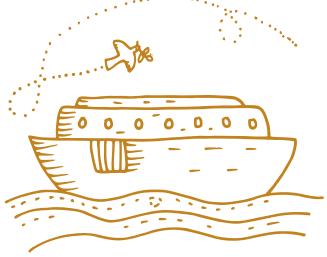
The Little Way Lenten Guide is designed to be cut into squares and stacked as a deck of cards for the dining table, bedroom nightstand, or wherever you intend to use them. They may also be hung on a string with clothespins and taken down a day at a time as a countdown towards Easter.

If your family can manage it, the best time to review these cards is in the morning, leaving the entire day to practice the spiritual exercise. Dinner or bedtime is a great time to check-in and see how everyone fulfilled the activity and what they may have noticed while doing it. Of course, this isn't possible for all families, so find what works for you, and show yourself and your family grace when it does not always go according to plan.

Some activities have an asterisk, which means there is further explanation in the Notes section at the back. To introduce this guide and the three Lenten spiritual practices to your children, you will find a short children's lesson on the following page.

# Pray. Fast give: A Children's Introduction to Lent

After Jesus was baptized, he followed the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. He stayed there for forty days and forty nights. Like Moses on the mountain. Like Noah in the ark.



Like the Israelites' years in the desert. Like them, Jesus wanted to come close to God. In the wilderness, there is no one and nothing, except for God. Not even food. So Jesus fasted. He ate nothing. Not one crumb of bread. Not one grain of salt. And he prayed. Jesus talked to his Father, and he listened, too.

But Jesus wasn't the only one in the wilderness. The devil was there too. The devil tempted Jesus to eat food. Just like the serpent tempted Adam and Eve to eat the fruit in the garden. And he tempted Jesus to turn away from God.

But Jesus didn't turn away. He didn't eat like Adam and Eve had done. Instead, Jesus came close to God. You see, Jesus was getting ready because he knew that when he left the wilderness, he would have big work to do. He would need to feed the hungry, and heal the sick, and tell everyone about the kingdom of God. And he also knew that after he did all this, he was going to die.

## Pray. Fast give:

#### A Children's Introduction to Lent

A long time ago, the church set aside 40 days for us to come close to God, too. We call it Lent. During Lent, we are all on a journey with Jesus in the wilderness. We are all getting ready for Jesus' death and resurrection.

There are three ways that we can come close to God during Lent.



[Lay down prayer card.] Jesus said we should pray, that we should talk to God and listen.



[Lay down fast card.] Jesus said we should fast, give up something important to us for a time.



[Lay down almsgiving card.] Jesus said that we should give. Give our time, give our money, give our love, give our things.

For the next 40 days, we will pray, we will fast, we will give. Each day, we will pick one of these cards, and come close to God as we do them. We will walk with Jesus through the wilderness, so that we can celebrate with him in his resurrection.



#### February 17

Today is Ash Wednesday. Go to church for the imposition of ashes.\*



#### February 18

Fast from snacking this morning, and imagine how hungry Jesus must have been in the desert! For children, eat a big breakfast and an early lunch.



#### February 19

Make a donation jar for loose change to collect during Lent and select an organization to give it to.



#### February 20

Pray the Lord's Prayer every time you wash your hands and reflect on its meaning as a family.



#### february 21

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



#### february 22

Fast from media you listen to: music, audio books, radio, podcasts, etc.



#### February 23

Write a note of encouragement to someone.



#### february 24

Pray for your priest(s) or pastor(s).



#### February 25

Notice when you feel like complaining today, and name something you are grateful for instead.



#### February 26

Throw away someone else's trash.



#### February 21

Go on a prayer walk outside.\*



#### February 28

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



Fast from "screens" today: computers, tablet, phone (except when necessary).



#### March 2

Cook dinner for another family or individual.



#### March 3

Read Matt 5:44 and pray for someone who has wronged you.



#### March 4

Drink only water today.



#### March 5

Write a "thank you" note to someone (e.g., teacher, colleague, friend).



#### March 6

Pray the Jesus Prayer when you wash your hands. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."\*



#### march 1

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



#### March 8

Fast from media you watch today: television,
YouTube, movies, etc...



#### March 9

Give someone a compliment. For a challenge, compliment everyone you talk to!



#### March 10

Prayerfully make the sign of the cross each time you wash your hands today.\*



#### March 11

Fast from sweets today.



#### March 12

Ask someone, "How can I help?"



Today marks one year since the U.S. declared a state of emergency for COVID-19. Pray for all those who have died, lost loved ones, and lost livelihoods.



#### March 14

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



#### March 15

Cut down on waste as much as possible.\*



#### March 16

Tell each person at the dinner table something you love about them.



#### March 11

Today is St. Patrick's Day.
Pray St. Patrick's
Breastplate Prayer.\*



#### March 18

Refrain from raising your voice or speaking unkindly to anyone today.



Read Matt 20:16 and let someone else go first today (in line, traffic, playing with a toy, etc...)



#### March 20

Learn and pray the Five Finger Prayer.\*



#### March 21

Sundays are a "little Easter."
Attend church, celebrate,
and rest.



#### March 22

Offer a prayer of thanks for something or someone every time your wash your hands.



#### March 23

No electronics after sundown. Read or play a family game instead.



#### March 24

Check in with someone you haven't spoken to in a while.



Today is the Feast of the Annunciation. Read Luke 1:26-38 and pray "Let it be to me according to your word" every time you wash your hands today.\*



#### March 26

No meat today.\*



#### March 21

Make an Easter card (or basket) for a friend, family member, or neighbor.



#### March 28

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. Attend church, celebrate, and rest.



#### March 29

Today is Holy Monday, the day Jesus cleared the Temple courts. Clear out your home of excess items to donate.\*



#### March 30

Today is Holy Tuesday, the day Mary poured perfume on Jesus' feet. Pray an adoration prayer each time you wash your hands today.\*



Today is Holy Wednesday, the day Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Confess your sins to God.



#### April 1

Today is Maundy Thursday, the day Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Wash one another's feet after dinner.\*



#### April 2

Today is Good Friday. Attend church and/or pray the Stations of the Cross.\*



#### April 3

Today is Holy Saturday. Fast from screens and spend the day preparing your heart and home for Easter.\*



### April 4

Today is Easter Sunday. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Celebrate and feast.

February 17: At an Ash Wednesday service, the priest or pastor will place ashes on your forehead, invoking God's curse in Genesis 3, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." It is a call to remember our mortality and fallenness as we begin the Lenten season. If you do not attend a church that offers this type of service or cannot attend due to Covid restrictions, consider reading Genesis 3 as a family and repeating "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return" to one another.

February 19: "Blessing Bags" can be kept in the car and given out to homeless people as you encounter someone in need. Suggestions for what to include are granola bars, bottled water, bandages, nail clippers, socks, mints, toothbrushes, lotion and other toiletries, and a handwritten prayer.

February 27: A prayer walk need not be formal; it can just be time outdoors to talk with the Lord. However, if you are interested, this would be the perfect opportunity to visit a prayer garden, or an outdoor Stations of the Cross.

March 6: The Jesus Prayer is an ancient prayer that originated with the Dessert Fathers and Mothers in the 5th century, and is prayed mostly commonly today in Eastern churches. Its scriptural basis is Luke 18:9-14, where the Pharisee prays, thanking God that he is not like other sinners, but the Publican demonstrates humility, praying "Have mercy on me, a sinner." This prayer is said often during Lent, a season of penitence.

March 10: Making the sign of the cross or "crossing oneself" is not an empty gesture, or a sign of rote religion. It is a physical way of reminding ourselves that we are crucified with Christ, and of marking ourselves as Christ's own. At the beginning of Lent, our foreheads are marked with an ashen cross to remind us of our own mortality, and as we cross ourselves throughout Lent (and always), we remind ourselves that we are following in the way of the cross. The gesture itself can be a silent prayer, or you might choose to add "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" as a spoken expression of faith in the triune Lord.

How do you do it? Western Christians most commonly cross themselves by bringing together the thumb with the pointer and middle fingers and touching them to your

- 1. Head (center of forehead)
- 2. Heart (center of chest)
- 3. Left shoulder
- 4. Right shoulder

March 15: Cutting back on waste for the day acknowledges our sin against God's creation by wasting and polluting it. Some ways to cut back on waste: eat at home or pack food, use reusable dinnerware, cloth napkins instead of paper, and washcloths instead of paper towels.

March 17: St. Patrick was born off the coast of northwest Britain around 390 AD, into a family of Christians—his grandfather was a priest, and his father was a deacon. When Patrick was sixteen, he was captured by a band of Irish pirates, and carried off to Ireland where he was forced to work as a shepherd. After six years in captivity, Patrick escaped and caught a ship back to Britain, where he entered into holy orders and eventually became a bishop.

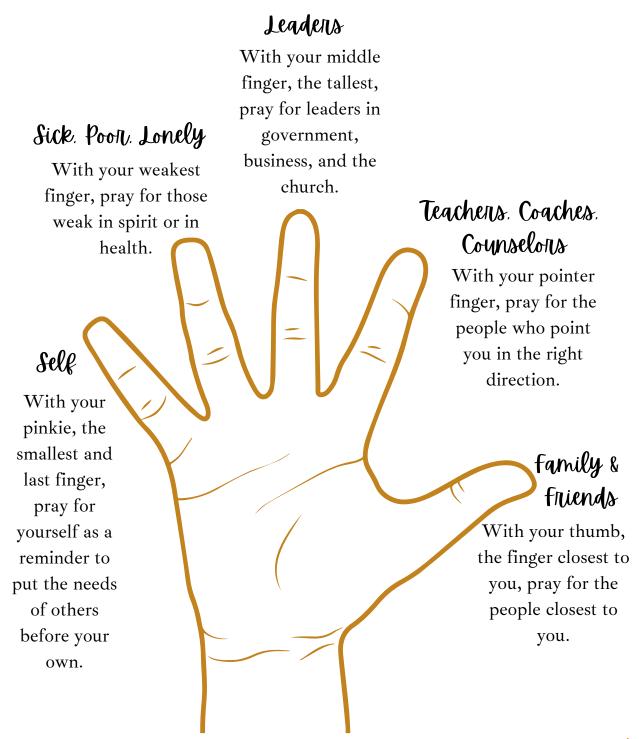
At some point after his return, Patrick had a vision of an Irishman named Victoricus, who beckoned him to "come back and walk among us." Patrick took this as a sign from God that he was to return to Ireland—this time not as a slave, but as a missionary, preaching the Gospel to the very people who had enslaved him.

St. Patrick's Breastplate is a prayer of protection traditionally attributed to St. Patrick. The most popular section of this prayer is as follows:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.

Amen.

March 20: The "Five Finger Prayer" is a simple and tangible way to pray using your fingers as a reminder.



March 25: The Feast of the Annunciation celebrates the Angel Gabriel's pronouncement to Mary that she would bear a child and he would be the Son of God—Emmanuel, "God with us." The feast falls on March 25, exactly nine months before Christmas Day, because that is exactly how long an infant spends in the womb. Below is a simple children's lesson on the annunciation.

#### Children's Lesson

Today is the Feast of the Annunciation. Annunciation is a big word. It means to say something important, to proclaim big news. Annunciation means to announce.

In the Bible, God sends messengers from Heaven down to earth to share news with the people. These messengers are called Angels. The word Angel means messenger.

One of the Angels in the Bible is named Gabriel. And he announced the most important news of all time. He told Mary that she would give birth to Jesus. This is the greatest news anyone every received. God came to earth to live and die and rise again so that we can live with God forever, too!

Now, I'm going to let you in on a cool secret. We celebrate the Annunciation on March 25. It takes nine months for a mother to grow a baby in her belly. What day comes nine months after March 25? December 25—Christmas! There are nine months between March 25 and December 25. Nine months between the Annunciation and Christmas. Nine months to grow a baby.

And here's what's so incredible. It's not just Mary who gets to bring Jesus into the world. We do, too! Jesus lived inside of Mary, and he lives inside of us. Not in our bellies, but in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. When we love others like Jesus, we bring him into the world just like Mary did all those many years ago.

**March 26:** It is traditional to abstain from meat every Friday, and especially on Good Friday and Ash Wednesday.

March 29: Matthew 21 tells us that on Monday of Holy Week, Jesus entered the Temple Courts and cleared them of the traders who were selling sacrificial animals. Just as Jesus uncluttered the Temple on Holy Monday, your family can take an intentional step to simplify your life by packing up items to give to charity.

March 30: A traditional Lenten prayer repeated over and over in the Stations of the Cross liturgy is "We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world." Today, as we pray this prayer, we think of Mary, adoring the Lord as she poured expensive perfume at his feet, annointing him in preparation for his burial so that by his holy cross he would redeem the world.

April 1: Many churches offer a Maundy Thursday service that includes a simple dinner of soup and bread. If you don't plan to attend church, consider having your own soup and bread supper at home. During dinner, read John's account of the Last Supper and Jesus washing his disciples feet in John 13:1-20. After dinner, take turns washing one another's feet.

**April 2:** Many churches offer a Good Friday service. If you are unable to attend, consider praying the Stations of the Cross at home. Other ways to observe Good Friday are by abstaining from meat, wearing black, and holding silence between 12-3pm, when Jesus hung on the cross.

**April 3:** On Holy Saturday, Jesus is in the grave. It is both a time for mourning, but also a time of Easter hope. Consider waiting until this day to decorate your home for Easter, dye eggs and prepare. Remember, Easter is a season that lasts eight weeks, so there's no rush to decorate!