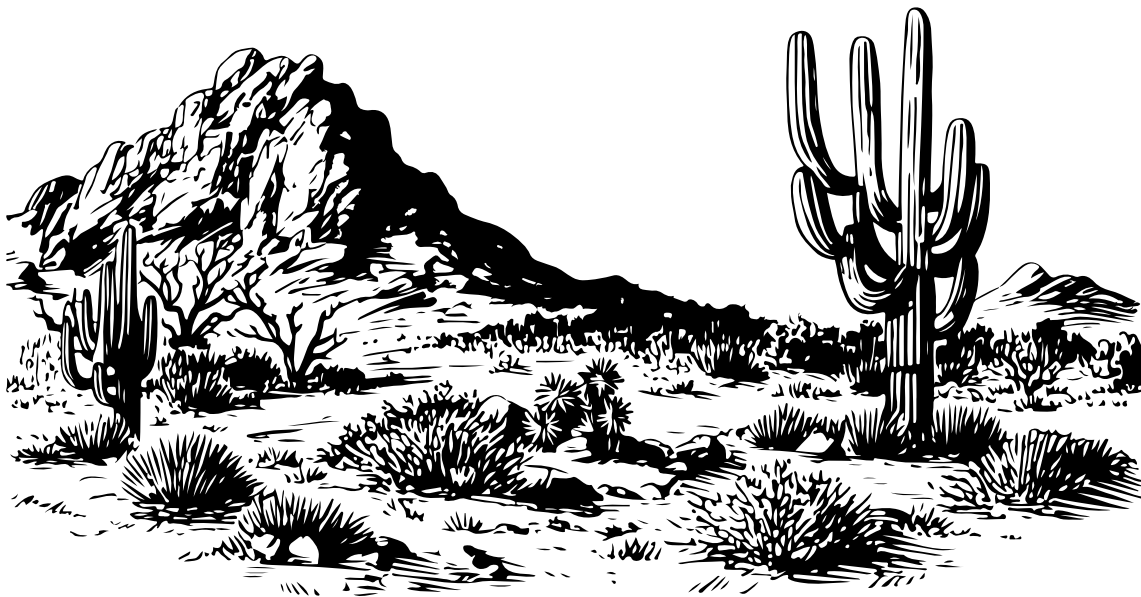


# LENT: A Helpful Guide

"LENT OFFERS US THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEEPEN OUR  
FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD."  
TREVOR HUDSON



## SUSTAIN: LENT GUIDE

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Lent is a season of reflection, preparation, and renewal. This guide is designed to help you slow down and engage this time with intention—whether you're new to Lent or have observed it for years.

Here are a few ways to use this guide meaningfully:

- Read it prayerfully. Move through the sections at a pace that allows you to reflect, noticing what resonates with you.
- Use it as a journal companion. Some questions are meant to be pondered, not rushed. Consider setting aside time each week to write out your thoughts.
- Engage it with community. If you're walking through Lent with a small group or spiritual friend, discuss the reflections together.
- Return to it throughout the season. Lent is a journey, and different insights may emerge as the weeks unfold. Come back to these questions as needed.
- Most of all, let this guide be a companion rather than a task. Lent is not about getting everything "right," but about creating space for God's presence.

May this season draw you deeper into the love and grace of Christ.

### OVERVIEW OF THE LENTEN SEASON

The season of Lent is a time-gift that helps prepare and ready us for the coming events of Good Friday and Easter—that we may come into those days with a greater sense of expectancy and presence. Lent, rooted in centuries of Christian tradition, begins with the symbolic imposition of ashes on our foreheads, a solemn reminder of our human finiteness and mortality. This ritual, dating back to ancient times, echoes the words from Genesis 3:19, "you are dust and to dust you will return," humbling us and grounding us in our shared human condition. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of a season dedicated to acknowledging our sinfulness and inviting God to search us, leading us into resurrection life. The ashes, historically linked to the Old Testament practice of covering oneself with ashes as a sign of repentance and mourning, serve as an outward symbol of an inward reality. Lenten disciplines such as fasting and abstinence have been practiced for centuries, creating space for reflection, repentance, and prayerful sacrifice. As we embrace these Lenten practices, we prepare ourselves to fully embrace the joy of the Feast of the Resurrection.

*Text inspired by the works of Ruth Haley Barton & Trevor Hudson*



## DISCERNING WHAT TO GIVE UP DURING LENT

**Many enter Lent asking, "What should I give up?" But a deeper question is, "What is God inviting me to release so that I can receive more of Him?" Consider these guiding reflections:**

- Since Christmas, has there been something in your daily life that has caught your attention? As you pray, ask God to show you some meaning of what this item/behavior could represent in this season.
- What is something that is providing you temporary relief or comfort in your daily life? What is your quick reach when you are upset or feeling alone? Do you sense an invitation to release this?
- What new rhythm or habit would allow you to live more within the Kingdom of God and deepen your friendship with Christ? Is there a particular item or action that limits this currently? How will the abstinence of this item/behavior impact your relationship with others and improve the quality of your relationships?

## WHAT TO TAKE ON DURING LENT

**Lent is not only about giving something up; it is also about taking something on—practices that cultivate awareness, gratitude, and deeper relationship with God.**

- A daily rhythm of silence and prayer (even five minutes of stillness before God)
- Lectio Divina (slow, reflective reading of Scripture)
- Practicing kindness (choosing daily moments of generosity, presence, or encouragement)
- Simplifying your life (intentionally reducing distractions to focus on what truly matters)
- Serving others (finding ways to tangibly embody Christ's love during this season)

What might God be inviting you to embrace in this season?



## 5 REMINDERS FOR LENT

1. Readiness and preparedness for the coming of Good Friday and Easter is one of the fruits of Lent. May we deeply understand our own need for resurrection and life with God through the death and resurrection of Christ. As Trevor Hudson states, "May we not be surprised by the arrival of Good Friday and Easter."
2. Read Scripture. Possibly, linger in the Gospel stories (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) that resonate with your life in Christ and His journey on earth. Follow Him into the 40 days in the wilderness, listen deeply to the Sermon on the Mount or walk with the disciples and share in their questions to Jesus.
3. Don't complicate it. Lent is not a time to punish ourselves or go to extremes, but more-so to lovingly consider what would help us to receive love and care for others more freely.
4. Remember that Lent is not about perfection or strict rules, but about experiencing God and deepening our relationship with Him. If you feel like you "failed" at Lent, remember it's not about successfully completing a fast but noticing what's happening within you and your relationship with God.
5. Time & space. Consider selecting a particular time and space where you will spend time in prayer, reflection and friendly conversation with God this season.

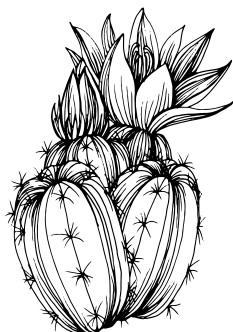
## HELPFUL REFLECTIONS TO CONTEMPLATE & JOURNAL

- The word "Lent" has origins from the word "springtime". What do you sense God has been preparing you for during the winter season? What is starting to break through the cold ground?
- How have I grown closer to God in the past year? In what ways have I grown distant from God?
- What are some habits or behaviors that I need to begin releasing during this season of Lent?
- What are some ways that I can serve others during Lent? How can I show love and kindness to those around me, especially those who are in need?
- What are some areas of my life where I am holding onto control, instead of inviting God into for His care and help?
- How can I use this season of Lent to deepen my relationship with God? What spiritual practices or disciplines can I incorporate into my daily life to draw closer to Him?



## QUOTES ON THE LENTEN SEASON

- "Unfortunately, the practice of entering into the Lenten season has often been reduced to the question: "What are you giving up for Lent?" This is a fine question, but it can only take us so far. The real question of the Lenten season is: How will I find ways to return to God with all my heart?" - Ruth Haley Barton
- "Lent is a time for discipline, for confession, for honesty, not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing but because he wants us to know the joy of being cleaned out, ready for all the good things he now has in store." - NT Wright
- "Lent strips us of everything that is not us. In that sense, Lent is not a chore. It is an opportunity for profound grace by a God who longs to love us at our core, not in our false projected self which desire influence and accolades, but in our truest, most humble and dependent self, once lost but now found in the wilderness of Lent." - Chuck DeGroat
- "In the wilderness, there is a quiet produced by the stripping away. It can be wonderful, and it can also be maddening. One of the reasons that God takes us into the wilderness is to speak to us. It is in the quiet that we can hear His still small voice. It is also in the quiet that we may begin to notice things in us rising to the surface... things that had been suppressed or stuffed down by the noise of life as we'd known it." - Ted Wueste
- "The Christian calendar allows us time to admit the reality that things are not the way they are supposed to be, a reality our hearts know all too well. Easter is all about the hope of the resurrection, but there can be no resurrection without death first. It can be so tempting to jump ahead in the story, to focus on the joy of the resurrection and skip over the agony of the cross." - Tish Harrison Warren



## PRAYERS FOR LENT

Dear God, I am so afraid to open my clenched fists! Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to? Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me. - Thomas Merton

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer. Amen. - Book of Common Prayer

What might your prayer be for this Lenten season? What do you sense God is inviting you to see and notice with Him?  
Feel free to consider and write it below:

