



Historical Background

Lent originated in the 2nd century AD as a short, intense fast for converts preparing for baptism at Easter. By the time of the Council of Nicea (325AD) it had grown into a 40-day observance from Ash Wednesday to Maundy Thursday. The word "Lent" comes from the Old English word *lencten*, meaning "springtime."

Biblical Foundation

The 40-day duration symbolizes Jesus fasting in the desert (Mt. 4:1-11), Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:28), and Elijah's journey to Horeb (1 Ki. 19:8).

The Journey to the Cross: Finding Meaning in Lent

For many in the evangelical community, the word "Lent" can feel a bit formal or even unfamiliar. The Bible does not use the word "Lent" nor directly command the observance of Lent. However, at First Congregational Church, we view this 40-day season (Ash Wednesday and leading to Easter) as a valuable "spiritual springtime"—a dedicated time to slow down, seek God's face, and prepare our hearts for the miracle of the Resurrection.

What is the "Lenten Principle"?

At its heart, Lent is about **passion for Christ** and a **pursuit of holiness**. It is a journey that mirrors Jesus' forty days of fasting in the wilderness, where He faced temptation and relied entirely on the Father. For us today, it's an opportunity to practice "dying to self" so that we might more fully live for Him.

How We Observe Lent Together

While some choose to give up a specific habit or food, the goal isn't just "giving something up"—it's about what we are *taking on*. We focus on three core pillars:

- **Repentance & Reflection:** We use the Bible to examine our lives, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where we need His grace.
- **Centrality of Prayer:** We commit to more intentional time in conversation with God, moving beyond our lists to be with him and truly listen for His voice.
- **Compassion for the Lost:** In line with our mission to "know Christ and make Him known," we use this season to practice acts of mercy and share the Good News with a hurting world.

A Season of Grace

It is important to remember that we do not observe Lent to earn God's favor. We are already fully loved and "finished" in Christ's work on the cross. Instead, we use these 40 days as a tool for **discipleship and spiritual maturity**. By clearing away the distractions of our daily routines, we create space for God to change our hearts.

Weekly Scripture Reading Plan: "Walking with Jesus"

For Lent 2026 (February 18 – April 5), we invite you to follow this weekly guide. Each week focuses on a theme that draws us closer to the heart of the Gospel.

Week	Theme	Primary Scripture Focus
Week 1	The Call to Repentance	Joel 2:12-13; Psalm 51
Week 2	Victory in the Wilderness	Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15-16
Week 3	The Light of the World	John 8:12; Psalm 27
Week 4	The Heart of Sacrifice	Isaiah 53; Romans 5:6-8
Week 5	The Cost of Discipleship	Mark 8:34-38; Philippians 3:10-11
Week 6	The Way of the Cross	Matthew 21:1-11 (Palm Sunday); Luke 23
Easter	The Victory of Life	Matthew 28; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

For individuals & families: Consider choosing one verse from each week to **memorize!**

Sources for further reading:

“Brief history of Lent”

<https://groundworkonline.com/blog/a-short-version-of-the-long-history-of-lent>