

JOURNEY WITH JESUS TO EASTER

Lenten Prayer and Fasting Guide

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a season in the Christian liturgical calendar traditionally observed as a time of reflection, repentance, and preparation for the celebration of Easter. Spanning 40 days (not including Sundays), it has traditionally begun on Ash Wednesday and concluded on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. This period is modeled after Jesus' 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), a time in which he resisted temptation and prepared for his public ministry.

The origins of Lent date back to the early centuries of the Christian church. By the fourth century, the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) had formalized Lent as a period of 40 days of prayer and fasting. While some Protestant traditions moved away from observing Lent after the Reformation, the season has experienced a revival in recent years, even among evangelicals, as a meaningful rhythm in the Christian life.

At its heart, Lent is about spiritual renewal. It is a season to turn away from sin and toward Christ, aligning our hearts with the gospel. Far from being a ritual of empty religiosity, Lent can be a season that revitalizes our faith, strengthens our love for God and others, and reminds us of the hope we have in Christ.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Lenten Prayer & Fasting Guide is a companion to the devotional *Behold: Following Jesus from Gethsemane and Golgotha to the Empty Grave*, by David Daniels. The two will be used together as we walk through Lent as a church. Each day of Lent you will read a chapter from *Behold* and incorporate this guide as you reflect and pray.

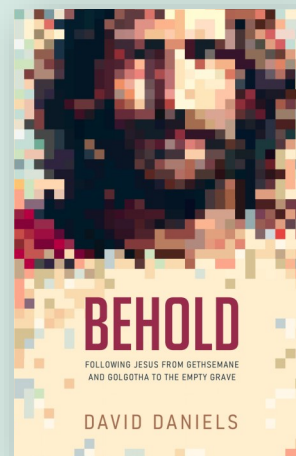
Before you begin this journey, you should decide how you plan to fast through this Lenten season. From a Christian perspective, fasting is intentionally abstaining from something for spiritual purposes. Though fasting most often involves abstaining from food, it could also include the removal of other activities like sports, media, hobbies, etc. Ask the Spirit to guide you as you choose your fast. Here are some fasting examples:

- ◆ Fast from lunch a couple days a week and use that time for extra Bible reading and prayer
- ◆ Fast from food a 24-hour period once a week during Lent
- ◆ Fast from sweets, meat, coffee or alcohol
- ◆ Fast from social media, TV, or music

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

As you practice the discipline of this daily devotion, consider the following:

- ◆ Walk through this Lenten Prayer & Fasting guide with others in your family or community.
- ◆ If you miss a day, don't worry about it. Jump back in the next day. Don't get discouraged and give up.
- ◆ If you've never fasted, start small (e.g., one meal a week). If you've fasted before, stretch yourself a little.
- ◆ Consider using a journal through this time to write down what the Lord is teaching you.



DAILY GUIDE

Each day of the Lenten season, follow this simple plan:

OPENING PRAYER

As you begin your time with the Lord today, pray something like this:

Father, I ask that you open more of my heart and my mind to you – your grace, your truth, your will. Remove from me the distractions of the world and let me behold “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Amen.

READ THE DEVOTIONAL

Don't rush through reading the devotional. Allow the illustrations and explanation of each text help you understand it better.

MEDITATE UPON THE TEXT

As you read the devotional, also meditate upon the Scripture passage. Take time to slowly read the text and consider Christ's journey towards the cross. One way to do this well is to reflect upon how the text answers the 3 Living Questions:

1. What does this Scripture teach about God?
2. What does this Scripture teach about people?
3. How is this Scripture leading me to love God more deeply (in mind, in heart, in spirit, in body, in actions)?

CLOSING PRAYER

Take this time to walk through the ACTS model of prayer (Adoration-Confession-Thanksgiving-Supplication). Allow the words you just read from *Behold* and the Scripture passage to guide you through Adoration, Confession, and Thanksgiving. As you enter into Supplication (asking God to *supply* a need), bring your requests before the Lord for yourself, your loved ones, our church, our community, our nation, and the world. Keep in mind how Jesus led us to chiefly pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10).



CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH