

What is Lent All About? Let's Explore It!

Lent lasts for 40 days from Ash Wednesday until Easter Day. The number 40 is seen many times in the Bible and always symbolizes a time of testing such as Noah in the ark, the Israelites in the desert and Moses on the mountaintop. Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days.

Lent is about growing closer to God through his Son Jesus Christ. We do this by planning our Lenten discipline. A Lenten discipline doesn't have to be hard, but it should be a bit challenging. It should include 3 parts, and you should write it down to help you stay on track with it. I am including a work sheet you can use to write down your discipline. A great way to think about this is the beautiful prayer Day by Day, written by St. Richard of Chichester a long time ago, but it is still very meaningful today. We sing it in church (Hymn 654 in the 1982 Hymnal). It is also in the rock musical Godspell! and it is an easy prayer you could say or sing every day.

Day by day, dear Lord of thee three things I pray

To see thee more clearly, Love thee more dearly, Follow thee more nearly day by day.

To see Thee more clearly= We can get to know Jesus better by learning about his life and his teaching. What is one way you can think of doing that? Perhaps reading in the Bible stories about Jesus and going to church comes to mind. When you decide what to do, write it down!

To love Thee more dearly= How do we express our love for Jesus? We show God our love when we pray. Prayer is a conversation with God. You can tell him how much you love him, ask him to send his blessing to you and those you care about, ask for forgiveness when you do something wrong, and ask for any help you might need from him. Part of your discipline should be to pray every day. The Lord's Prayer is the prayer Jesus himself taught his disciples and it is a great prayer to say or sing each day. We also show our love by doing things for others with our time, our talents, or by giving our money to a cause that helps others such as a food bank or animal shelter. I am sure you will have wonderful ideas. When you decide, write it down!

To follow Thee more nearly= How do you follow Jesus? One of the ways we follow his example is to give up something, so we remember what Jesus gave up for us. Perhaps you don't eat a favorite food or treat throughout Lent or give up watching a TV program you like or playing less of a video game you enjoy. An activity that also lets us follow Jesus is to walk the Stations of the Cross which takes us through the events of Jesus' walk through Jerusalem to his crucifixion, his death on the cross and burial, and then his Resurrection on Easter. We do this on Fridays during Lent at church. You could make your own set of stations at home – if you want to do that. I can point you to some resources! Let me know! When you decide, write it down. Post your discipline choices somewhere you can look at them each day, like in your room or on the refrigerator. Remember you are doing this to grow closer to God and Easter will then be more joyful!

