

FAST *TO* FEAST

Fast from judging others; feast on Christ dwelling in them.

Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.

Fast from anger; feast on patience.

Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.

Fast from worry; feast on trust.

Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.

Fast from negatives; feast on affirmatives.

Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.

Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.

Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal Truth.

Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.

Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence.

Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that undergirds.

Gentle God, during this season of fasting and feasting, gift us with your presence, so we can be a gift to others in carrying out your work. Amen.

LENT



40 DAYS
OF
SPIRITUAL
FITNESS

2023



*Just as our Bodies
need Physical Fitness
to be strengthened...*

*Our Souls need Spiritual Workouts
of sacrifices & discipline to grow...*

Embrace the Sacrifice

1773 Hawthorne Ave College Park, GA 30337

www.providencebc.com

Charles E. Nesbitt, Jr., Pastor

"What is the meaning of Lent?"

Lent is a period of fasting, moderation, and self-denial traditionally observed by Catholics and some Protestant denominations. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with Easter Sunday. The length of the Lenten fast was established in the 4th century as 46 days (40 days, not counting Sundays). During Lent, participants eat sparingly or give up a particular food or habit. It's not uncommon for people to give up smoking during Lent, or to swear off watching television or eating candy or telling lies. Its six weeks of self-discipline.

Lent began as a way for Catholics to remind themselves of the value of repentance. The austerity of the Lenten season was seen as similar to how people in the Old Testament fasted and repented in sackcloth and ashes (Esther 4:1-3; Jeremiah 6:26; Daniel 9:3).

However, over the centuries Lenten observances have developed a much more "sacramental" value. Many Catholics believe that giving something up for Lent is a way to attain God's blessing. But the Bible teaches that grace cannot be earned; grace is "the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17). Also, Jesus taught that fasting should be done discreetly: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen" (Matthew 6:16-18). Jesus' command to "wash your face" seems to conflict with the practice of rubbing ashes on one's face on Ash Wednesday.

#13: Give up focusing on yourself

Have you been in a season of focusing on yourself and your needs? Maybe your prayers have been centered on a need in your life or you've slipped into a self-focused season? Give up focusing on yourself for Lent, and be intentional about devoting your time and prayers to others.

#14: Give up 20 minutes at the end of the day

Stay up a little bit later or cut out 20 minutes of some other evening activity to spend time in prayer before bed.

Commit to the spiritual practice of a daily debrief with God to review your day.

#15: Give up your fear of praying out loud

Are you afraid to pray aloud?

Give up the thing that's holding you back – pride, fear, embarrassment.

Seek out opportunities to pray aloud with others, both friends and strangers.

Prayerfully something has been suggested here that will help you make this time of sacrificial offering to God meaningful in ways that will change your life eternally.

#9: Give up your favorite TV shows during the week

Do you love to kick back after work and watch a favorite TV show (or 3 or 4)? Or, maybe your TV is always on watching the news or sporting events?

Give up those weekday TV shows and instead spend that time digging into a Bible study or devotional.

#10: Give up resentment and anger

Has anger or resentment made a home in your heart? Lent is a great time to send them packing!

Spend the 40 days of Lent in prayer to forgive and let go of the anger and resentment. Dig deep with God over the sources and ask his help to heal your heart.

#11: Give up mindless social media

Don't think you can give up social media altogether? Then make it a more intentional and prayerful experience.

Instead of mindlessly scrolling through your feed, pause over each post and picture to pray over the person or headline you see.

#12: Give up comfort foods

Where you find comfort on the hard days? Do you reach for the ice cream, cookies, or fried food?

Give up these comfort foods and instead look for comfort in God alone. Seek God through prayer and scripture.

Fasting can be a good thing, and God is pleased when we repent of sinful habits. There's absolutely nothing wrong with setting aside some time to focus on Jesus' death and resurrection. However, repenting of sin is something we should be doing every day of the year, not just for the 46 days of Lent. The key is to focus on repenting of sin and consecrating oneself to God. Lent should not be a time of boasting of one's sacrifice or trying to earn God's favor or increasing His love. God's love for us could not be any greater than it already is.

I would like to suggest or present additional options of sacrifice for the Lenten season for us all to consider.

Worry: If you are going to worry then stop praying! I began with worry because for many this year has begun rough with all the many losses we all have experienced in some way or the other. The bible tells us in Phil. 4:6-7: Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. God has given us His word concerning worry or today's terminology **Stress**. I know you may say that this is easier said than done, however, I want to challenge us all to commit this action to God throughout the Lenten season and watch God move in ways we could only imagine.

In addition to worry I encourage you to examine the list of possibilities listed below to add to your sacrificial offering to God.

#1: Give up your daily Starbucks

Do you love to stop by Starbucks (or another local coffee shop in the mornings? What if you gave that up for Lent – and instead put the money you'd have spent on coffee toward food bank, youth department, Christian education departments.

#2: Give up lunch or breakfast

Not sure you can take on a big fast? Try a mini-fast. Skip breakfast or lunch once or twice a week.

Don't just fill that time with more work, though. Spend that time in prayer or reading your Bible.

#3: Give up Facebook or Instagram

Do you spend a lot of time on social media? Constantly checking the latest updates on Facebook or Instagram?

Give that up for Lent. Delete the app from your phone, so you're not as tempted.

Instead of checking your feed each morning, spend 10 minutes each day keeping a gratitude journal.

#4: Give up 30 minutes of sleep

Feel stretched for time for prayer and Bible study? For the season of Lent, commit to waking up at least 30 minutes earlier.

Set your alarm, brew a cup of coffee, and spent that extra 30 minutes with God before the rest of your house is up.

Consider a daily devotional to guide your time of study and prayer.

#5: Give up TV on Saturdays

How do you spend your weekend? Do you find yourself binge-watching Netflix on Saturday?

Try giving up TV on Saturdays (or all weekend) and instead spend that time volunteering. Check if the local food pantry, clothing resale, or Habitat for Humanity chapter have workdays you can join.

#6: Give up your car radio

Do you spend a lot of your day in the car driving to and from work, or shuttling kids from one activity to the next? Turn off the car radio and spend that time in prayer or listening to the audio Bible.

#7: Give up discretionary spending

Each time you're tempted to spend money on something that isn't a true NEED, say no.

Instead, set aside the amount you would have spent. At the end of Lent, donate the money you've saved.

#8: Give up yelling

Do you find yourself losing your temper and yelling – to your kids, to your spouse, to others?

Make a practice to be intentional about giving up yelling for Lent. Ask those close to you to be your accountability partners.

Each time you feel yourself start to yell, be intentional about quieting your voice and saying only kind words.