

Preparing for More

A reading guide for Lent

For thousands of years Christians have practiced the discipline of fasting during Lent. This year we join in that ancient and world wide tradition — but we do so with a very clear understanding of why we fast.

When we think of fasting, we probably first go to the “letting go” part. The aspect of fasting where we stop eating something, or withhold from watching TV, or give up a favorite hobby. But to understand fasting in its fullest sense, we have to realize that we let go of something *so that* we can take in something better. To put it another way, fasting creates the space our hearts need to receive more of what God wants to give us.

One of the most significant ways we can receive from God is by immersing ourselves in the Scriptures. To that end, we’ve put together this reading guide for Lent. We want God’s Word to show us what we need to let go of — and what God wants to give to us in its place.



A few final notes:

- The readings are set up so that the days leading up to Sunday (Thurs. through Sat.) prepare us for the Sunday readings and message. The days flowing out from Sunday (Mon. through Wed.) reflect upon the Sunday readings.
- There are multiple Scripture passages listed each day. You can choose to read all of them, or simply pick one. There’s no right or wrong way.
- Also — one Psalm, or part of a Psalm, will be repeated over multiple days. This may seem redundant, but repeating the same passage over time can help it sink in and give opportunity for deeper understanding.

May your mind be renewed and your character deepened as we journey towards Easter together!

Lent Week 1: February 18–25

W	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 51:1-17 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
Th	Psalm 25:1-10 1 John 1:3-10
F	Psalm 25:1-10 2 Timothy 4:1-5
Sa	Psalm 25:1-10 Psalm 32 Matthew 9:2-13
Su	<i>First Sunday in Lent, February 22</i> Genesis 9:8-17 Psalm 25:1-10 1 Peter 3:18-22 <i>Passage we'll be preaching on: Mark 1:9-15</i>
M	Psalm 77 Ephesians 2:1-10
Tu	Psalm 77 1 Peter 3:8-18a
W	Psalm 77 Matthew 4:1-11

For reflection:

Before Jesus' ministry ever began — even before his time in the wilderness — came his baptism and the incredible words of affirmation: “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.” As you read different passages this week, be listening for God's affirming words of love and promise *to you*. What has God given to you? Take a moment to write these things down and take the note with you during the day. Or simply repeat those words in prayer.

What shapes your identity? What makes you feel valuable? Your work? Your intellect? Your accomplishments? Is it the things you have? Or your position at work or home? Reflect this week on what contributes to your identity, and then listen for the things God's Word tells you about who you are.

The call of the prophets and psalmists this week is unified: “Come back! Turn around, and return to your God!” The same call goes out to us. As we begin Lent, in what ways do you need to ‘turn around’? Are there habits, thoughts, ideas that you need to let go of? Name those things specifically and let this be a week of letting go — of turning around. We invite and challenge you to spend time each day of Lent (it could be just 10 minutes) reading and reflecting on the Scripture(s) for that day. Each week of this guide has a few thoughts for reflection. Use them if they're helpful; but if they are not, simply spend a few minutes with a passage(s) and let God say whatever God wants to say.