



saying to you about your life. Let God teach you what God wants you to know so that you can live a full, loving, joyful life.

**3. Make Time for Disciplined Prayer:** Create a discipline for every day. It doesn't have to be hours in prayer. It can be 30 or 20 minutes. When you pray, consider using the Lord's Prayer as an outline for prayer, mulling on each part by praying it more intensively. For example:

- *"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name"* ~spend time praying that you would keep God's name holy, and that it would be holy in the world.
- *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* ~spend time asking God to help you bring God's kingdom and will into your life, and for both to become more a part of the world.
- *"Give us this day our daily bread"* ~ask God to take care not only of your physical needs, but all your needs: spiritual, emotional, relational, and so forth.
- You get the idea....

# What Do We Do for Lent?

*A Lenten Guide*

*The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish*



## TURNING LENT INTO A SEASON OF TRANSFORMATION

Lent *is* a season of transformation. It *is not* intended to be a time of gloom, dreariness, and dourness. That is the Lent of the past, a lenten understanding from the Dark Ages when life was dour and difficult.

Lent is meant to be a time to grow deeper in your faith and spirituality. So what you do during Lent should be devoted to growing. The following are some ideas of what you can do to grow closer to God and deepen in faith. As with anything, we encourage you to begin this process by praying over this list to see if any, a combination of several, or something else may be what God is calling you to do:

1. **Engage in a Fast:** In biblical times fasting (giving up food, water, and even sleep for a prescribed time) was seen as an essential part of prayer. The sacrifice of fasting made the prayer even more sacred, and it was considered a key element in connecting with God through faith. For example, all of the prophets fasted as part of their praying. Jesus and his disciples fasted and prayed. The early church chose new apostles only after prayer and fasting.

*Why should we fast?* The point of fasting is to learn that we live not by the stuff of the world, but “by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). When we fast, we give up something so that we can detach from it and learn to rely more upon God than on things. The point of fasting is to connect more intimately with God by letting go of the stuff that get in the way of our relationship with God—especially those things that we don’t suspect of interfering with our relationship with God.

*How do we fast?* Traditionally, fasting means giving up food for a certain period of time. It may mean giving up a meal, two meals, all meals for a day, or all meals for several days. It can also mean giving up a particular kind of food, such as meat, for a specified period of time. You can also fast from other things as a way of letting go of our dependence and obsession with them: radios, television, computers, alcohol, tobacco, soda, junk food, caffeine, and so much more. You might even try giving up video games, social media, mindless browsing of the internet, or other computer/web-based obsessions.

*Things to consider when preparing to fast:* Any fast needs to be discerned first. Ask God what God is calling you to relinquish in order to center more clearly upon God. Ask God how long God is calling on you to relinquish it. Only then engage in the fast. One caveat: if you are considering a food fast, or any fast that may impact your health, it is a good idea to check with your medical doctor first.

The key is that fasting is intimately connected with prayer. So when you fast, make sure you also take time for prayer.

2. **Read the Bible:** Many Christians don’t read the Bible because it’s intimidating. But here’s a simple, three-step process that may help during Lent:

*First*, start with the gospels and get to know them the best. Christians are Gospel-people. Begin with Matthew. If you finish it before the end of Lent, then move on to Mark. When Lent is over, consider moving on to Luke, John, and then on to Acts. To keep the discipline going. Then start all over again. Whenever you feel that you have the gospels down, move on to the rest of the letters of the New Testament. When you’re ready to go into the Old Testament, start with the psalms and Genesis, and move forward from there. Make this the beginning of a ten-year Bible-reading project.

*Second*, use a study Bible. It doesn’t matter all that much which kind you use. There are literally hundreds of good ones. A good, spiritually-oriented one is *The Life with God Bible*, but there are others such as *The Spiritual Formation Bible*, *The Women’s Devotional Bible*, *The Men’s Devotional Bible*, *The Harper Study Bible*, and so many more. The point is to pick a version and go with it. You’ll learn from any of them.

*Finally*, read “spiritually.” That means reading it slowly, reflectively, prayerfully. Take your Bible-reading in small chunks. You may spend 30 minutes with the Bible, but only read for ten minutes while you pray and think over what you’ve read. And you may only cover a chapter, a paragraph, a sentence. Break it up by reading what feels natural. You don’t have to just follow the chapters and numbers. The whole point is to read in a way that helps you hear what God is