

A full-page background image featuring a dead, bleached tree with intricate, leafless branches on the right side. The ground is a vast, flat expanse of parched, cracked earth, with a horizon line visible in the distance. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, creating a somber and desolate atmosphere.

FROM EXODUS TO EASTER

A Reading Guide for Lent & Easter

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HISTORY OF LENT & THE PURPOSE OF SELF-DENIAL

FROM EXODUS TO EASTER

Why Exodus?

The book of Exodus has often been read during the Lenten season because of how many of its themes overlap: humility, needing redemption, following after God, and seeing him at work. It also parallels in many ways the life of Christ and the gospel. Jesus endures a wilderness season similar to Israel. We are redeemed and delivered from sin like Israel was from Egypt. Jesus becomes our Passover. Israel was led into obedience to God through the giving of the Ten Commandments, and we are led into obedience by following after Jesus.

THE CHURCH (LITURGICAL) CALENDAR

For most of us today, our calendars revolve around national holidays, school semesters and breaks, sports, nature's seasons, a work week and weekend, or our ongoing commitments. This means on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis we tend to live by the beat of the drum played by the world around us. We get caught up in the busyness and ordinary routines of living this way. As a result, we rarely set aside time, days or seasons, to focus on specific aspects of our Christian faith. Our calendar, schedules, and lives end up being set by our agenda or the agenda of the world and not necessarily set by Jesus.

While the liturgical calendar has been around since the early Church, many followers of Jesus are returning to it. The return isn't out of legalistic obligation but to establish intentional times to set their minds on Jesus and practice spiritual disciplines they otherwise might neglect. Each season, week, or day revolves around something in the life of Christ, and with each season we have opportunities to lean into biblical practices and postures conforming us into his image. The value in leveraging a Church calendar is we get to calibrate our calendar, our traditions, and our habits on Christ and the Word.

LENT

Lent is a season within the Church calendar intended to prepare our hearts for Easter. Lent gives us six weeks to consider Christ's humility in the wilderness temptation and his human trials as we move towards Good Friday and Easter. During this season, we follow Jesus by pursuing humility in our own lives, believing he must come before us. As John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Lent is a season to prepare our hearts for Christ's victory won at the cross (Good Friday) and tomb (Easter). It's a season of humble honesty about our sin and neediness so we can better rest in the work of Jesus on our behalf. **Lent is "first and foremost about the gospel making its way deeper into our**

lives.¹ During this season, the Christian follows Jesus by pursuing humility in our own life, believing he must come before us. As John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Some primary rituals and rhythms of Lent include humility, confession and repentance, dependent prayer, Bible meditation, fasting and self-denial, and rehearsing the gospel. The Christian faith isn’t merely intellectual, but it’s also an embodied, lived out faith. That means the growing hunger of a growling stomach through fasting and prayer can teach us in felt ways about spiritual hunger, weakness, need, God’s provision, and what it means to be fed. These spiritual practices aim to create certain spiritual postures: humility, dependence and trust, and a hunger for God.

The gospel isn’t opposed to rituals, fasting or self-denial, but it puts them in their proper place. We learn to say “no” to some things temporarily so we can say “yes” to what leads to thirsting after Jesus above all else. We make room for him by setting aside anything taking too high a priority.

It’s not a time of penance where we pay for sin, prove our sincerity, or earn God’s favor. As self-examination leads to humble confession, it points us away from self-sufficiency and towards needing and trusting in Jesus. We might fast or abstain from certain things, but we do so from a position of acceptance by God’s grace. Though humbled by our weakness, we find joy and hope by directing our gaze to the mighty and merciful Jesus.

Lent awakens us to our sinfulness and weakness, which ultimately humbles us and creates a desperate dependence. It leads us to Good Friday and Easter where we find that need and desire met through a perfectly righteous Savior who died to pay for our sins and rose to bring us new life. The bitterness of Lent makes the gospel sweet. Humility precedes exaltation. Confession makes room for joy. That’s what this season is all about.

SELF-DENIAL & FASTING

Like any discipline, fasting and self-denial can be misused. All good things are prone to misunderstanding and misuse. Our hope in this guide is that any self-denial through fasting is done meaningfully, purposely, wisely, and graciously.

As we suggest forms of self-denial or fasting, see it as a means to clear something from our life to make room for Jesus. We miss out if we focus only on what we give up. We give up something in order to take up something. We willingly give up good things to better experience the best of things. We create margin in our schedules, we clear clutter from our lives, and we crowd out noisy distractions in our heart so there is space for us to again taste and see the glory, grace, and goodness of Jesus.

¹ The Village Church, “[Seasons, 2018-2019: Enter the Story of Jesus](https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/guides/seasons),” 6. <https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/guides/seasons> 11/5/18.

TEACHING SELF-DENIAL TO CHILDREN

BY HEIDI SWEET

Without a doubt, the most dreaded aisle in the grocery store for a parent is the checkout aisle. It's the store's last attempt to get you to purchase the things you swore to yourself on January 1 you would never eat again, much less feed your children. And no matter where your children are sitting when you enter this aisle, they seem to acquire eagle eyes to spot the candy and six extra arms to reach it.

Then the begging begins. You begin by saying "Not today," followed by an emphatic "I said, not today." And then depending on how long of a grocery trip this has been, you either end with a "No!" heard from aisles 1 to 24, or a final "I've had such a long day" caving, followed by a head nod and an eye-roll from the clerk. Making it even better, you know you will repeat the same grocery trip next week.

How do you break this vicious cycle of the begging child and the wits-end parent?

The first thing you realize when raising kids is that parenting is a process, not an event. From the beginning of time, we have resisted saying "no" to things that were not for our good, leading Eve to take the first bite of the apple and Adam following with the second mouthful.

Seek to follow God's self-glorifying commands aimed at our good, including "Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me daily" (Luke 9:23). In speaking to his followers, Christ referred to a main characteristic of his disciples, the ability to deny oneself, or the ability to say "no" to anything other than Christ. Our lives are filled with desires for both bad and good things, or even people that can take our focus off our life's mission – to follow Christ.

Be an example. Begin by saying "no" to yourself first. Children mimic what you say, followed by what you do. Identify anything in your life that could steal your affections and attention away from God. Test yourself through restriction from these things for a time, filling it with prayer and devotion to God's Word. Some examples may be coffee, social media, or even exercise. If you regularly pursue a habit of testing your heart's ultimate wants/desires, your kids will follow your example. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no," starting in your life first.

Don't just say "no" to say "no." God asks us to deny ourselves for a purpose that is eternal not temporal. The practice of spiritual fasting or self-denial is not intended for worldly pursuits. Do not confuse your kids' understanding of fasting as means of losing weight or even getting healthy. Spiritual fasting is to deny ourselves, preventing idols from creeping into our lives.

Teach your children to say "no" to themselves. Seek their best by helping them identify idols—anything they will sin to get or sin when they don't get. Remind them that God disciplines those he loves (Hebrew 12:4-11). Help them find joy in not being ruled by anything or anyone that is not God. Just like us, children need to know true joy comes when we learn to "deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus." There is freedom for us all when we learn to just say "no."

The background image is a full-page photograph. The top half shows a dark, heavy sky with swirling, grey clouds. The bottom half shows a vast, flat, dry landscape with a cracked, parched earth in shades of tan and brown. The horizon line is visible in the distance. The text is overlaid on the lower portion of the image.

READING PLAN & FASTING GUIDE

MARCH

WEDNESDAY 06	THURSDAY 07	FRIDAY 08	SATURDAY 09	SUNDAY 10	MONDAY 11	TUESDAY 12
Exodus 1	Exodus 2	Exodus 3	Exodus 4	Exodus 5	Exodus 6	Exodus 7
Ash Wednesday						
WEDNESDAY 13	THURSDAY 14	FRIDAY 15	SATURDAY 16	SUNDAY 17	MONDAY 18	TUESDAY 19
Exodus 8	Exodus 9	Exodus 10	Exodus 11	Exodus 12	Exodus 13	Exodus 14
WEDNESDAY 20	THURSDAY 21	FRIDAY 22	SATURDAY 23	SUNDAY 24	MONDAY 25	TUESDAY 26
Exodus 15	Exodus 16	Exodus 17	Exodus 18	Exodus 19	Exodus 20	Exodus 21
WEDNESDAY 27	THURSDAY 28	FRIDAY 29	SATURDAY 30	SUNDAY 31	MONDAY 1	TUESDAY 2
Exodus 22	Exodus 23	Exodus 24	Exodus 25	Exodus 26	Exodus 27	Exodus 28

APRIL

WEDNESDAY 03	THURSDAY 04	FRIDAY 05	SATURDAY 06	SUNDAY 07	MONDAY 08	TUESDAY 09
Exodus 29	Exodus 30	Exodus 31	Exodus 32	Exodus 33	Exodus 34	Exodus 35 - 36
WEDNESDAY 10	THURSDAY 11	FRIDAY 12	SATURDAY 13	SUNDAY 14	MONDAY 15	TUESDAY 16
Exodus 37	Exodus 38	Exodus 39	Exodus 40	Luke 19:28 - 44 Palm Sunday	Luke 19:45 - 48 Holy Week	Luke 20:1 - 40 Holy Week
WEDNESDAY 17	THURSDAY 18	FRIDAY 19	SATURDAY 20	SUNDAY 21		
Luke 21: 1 - 38 Holy Week	Luke 22: 1 - 65 Maundy Thursday	Luke 22:66 - 23:56 Good Friday		Luke 24:1 - 52 Easter Sunday		

LENT FASTING GUIDE

Weekly Readings & Suggested Fasts

Below are possible fasts for each week, including what to put off and put on. Fasting is about giving something up so you can take on or focus on something else. Some of these might apply more than others, so use these ideas in appropriate ways to help you grow in Christ. All can be done alone, but many of them can be done with others.

WEEK 1

Suggested Fast: Replacing Food with Prayer

Food is a wonderful gift from God and is to be enjoyed with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:4-5). Both in the Bible and throughout church history, self-denial through fasting usually involved giving up food. Not because food was bad but because short-term physical hunger can expose idols while cultivating a spiritual hunger.² On rare occasions, fasting meant not eating for extended periods (Matt. 4:1), but often it involved giving up food for a short period. We recommend using time you normally would have spent eating to pray, read your Bible, and reflect.

Practical Ideas

- Pick one meal a day this week to fast from and use that time for prayer, praying over your Bible reading, and reflecting on God's Word and work in your life.
- Take one day this week to fast for 24 hours, using times you normally would be eating to pursue Christ.
- Find a friend or group of friends to fast with and use that time to pray together or for one another.
- When you do eat next, reflect on how much more grateful you are for food and give thanks.

WEEK 2

Suggested Fast: Replacing Sleep with Bible Meditation³

Sleep is another good gift, and often we neglect sleep to our detriment. Sleep reminds us we're creatures, forcing us to relinquish control and trust in God. For some, sleep can be an idol and giving up some sleep might help guard your heart from idolizing it.

Practical Ideas

- Set your alarm thirty-minutes or an hour earlier than normal, then use that time for extended reading, prayer, and meditation on the Bible.

² Use appropriate wisdom. Don't fast if you're not healthy or your doctor would not currently advise it. If you need to eat, eat.

³ Similar to food, we're not suggesting you ignore common sense, medical advice, or give up sleep entirely.

- Use the additional time one day to meet with a friend to read the Bible and pray together.
- If married or if you have children, use some of this time to prioritize reading together as a family.

WEEK 3

Suggested Fast: Replacing TV & Movies with Intentionality

TV and movies aren't essential like food and sleep, but they're not inherently wrong. The goal here is to clear them out of your life for one week to make room for even better things. This week we're suggesting saying no to TV and movies so you can say yes to things that intentionally deepen your walk with Christ.

Practical Ideas

- Use the time you normally would have watched TV or movies to pray. Pray over Bible passages you're reading each day. Spend time confessing sin, giving thanks, lamenting brokenness and injustice, and asking God to work in specific ways.
- Read the Bible and pray together with family, your roommates, or those in your small group.
- Replace a portion of your TV time with time reading a good Christian book.
- Practice hospitality by inviting an unbeliever into your home for a meal to build the relationship.

WEEK 4

Suggested Fast: Replacing Social Media & Internet Browsing with Confession & Thanksgiving

Social media and the internet take up more time throughout the day than we'd like to admit. We often fill empty moments with these things. For this week, consider decluttering your life by fasting from social media and the internet (apart from necessary work and tasks) in order to say 'Yes' to confession and thanksgiving.

Through confession we admit to God our need for cleansing and change through his gospel and power. As we consider God's grace, mercy, and help we give thanks. Throughout the day we have plenty of reasons to give thanks as we consider all God's blessings, plan, promises, help, and work.

Practical Ideas

- Whether it's throughout the day or at certain times (first thing in the morning, at night, etc.), replace social media and the internet with confession and thanksgiving.
- Spend extended time meditating on God's Word and in prayer, asking God to reveal any areas of your life that don't reflect Christ. Confess these things and ask God to change and strengthen you.
- Instead of getting on your phone during moments of waiting, reflect on God's work, truth, and blessings in your life. Consider keeping a gratitude list to help you praise God.

WEEK 5

Suggested Fast: Replacing (non-essential) Shopping with Serving & Giving

It's easy to spend money on ourselves or family. We see things we want, and we get them. While that's not a bad thing, taking a season to practice self-denial by refraining from additional purchases can be a good way to guard our heart against materialism, greed, and entitlement. As you say no to non-essential shopping this week, use that extra time and money to serve others or generously give to someone.

Practical Ideas

- Serve someone this week: a neighbor, a local organization or ministry, your church, offer to help babysit for someone, write encouraging notes to people, or make a meal to bring to someone.
- Help a person or family you know going through a difficult season—unemployed, increased expenses, medical bills, car problems, new child, etc.—by giving to them financially. Ask them if there's a way you can bless them or reach out to your church to see if there's someone you might help.
- Purge items in your home and give away things to others. That could include giving items away to a local organization or offering people specific things you have that they might use.

WEEK 6

Suggested Fast: Replacing (Your Pick) with Reflection & Rest

In this week before beginning the Passion Week, choose one thing you can fast from to clear out time, space, or attention to reflect on and rest in God. That could include something from a prior week or something new: radio and music, sweets or desserts, caffeine or a favorite beverage, a non-essential hobby, extra-commitments and unnecessary busyness, video games, etc. As you set aside this thing, allow that opportunity of self-denial and increased margin lead you to reflect on God's goodness in your life and rest in him.

Practical Ideas

- Use those times when you would normally do or enjoy what you're giving up and consider the faithfulness of God, his grace, power, and the good news of the gospel.
- Journal or write down reflections about what God has been teaching you, what you see in his Word, prayer items, a thanksgiving list, areas you've confessed, or ways to encourage others.
- Intentionally rest with any extra margin. Rest by not working when you don't have to, saying "No" to extra commitments, and fighting back against normal busyness. Rest by rehearsing the gospel and how it provides peace and rest as it frees us from having to earn God's favor or be in control. Rest by finding joy in God by seeking him in Word, prayer, singing, and giving thanks.



EXODUS, LENT & EASTER RESOURCES

EXODUS & LENT RESOURCES

EXODUS RESOURCES

- [Exodus for You](#) by Tim Chester
- [The God Who Makes Himself Known](#) by W. Ross Blackburn
- The Bible Project videos from thebibleproject.com. [Exodus 1-18 \(Part 1\)](#) and [Exodus 19-40 \(Part 2\)](#)
- [Kids Read Truth: Exodus Story Cards](#) from shereadstruth.com
- Bring your children to the College Park Fishers Wednesday [Equip class](#) on the tabernacle, or attend our Sunday morning class [Studying Exodus](#).
- [Questions to Ask When Studying the Bible](#) by Dustin Crowe

LENT RESOURCES

- [Journey to the Cross](#) by Will Walker
- [The Passion of the King](#) by Russ Ramsey
- [The Glory of the Cross](#) by Tim Chester
- [Lenten Lights](#), devotional readings from desiringgod.org
- [Lent: History, Cautions, and Benefits](#) by Dustin Crowe at indycrowe.com
- [Thoughts about Lent](#) by Michael Horton

EASTER ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

EASTER RESOURCES

- [Treasuring God in Our Traditions](#) by Noel Piper (free e-book). See pages 91-100 for Holy Week and Easter.
- [How to Prepare for Easter with Your Family](#) blog by Noel Piper
- [Make the Most of Holy Week](#) blog by David Mathis
- [Love to the Uttermost](#) by John Piper (free devotional)
- [Why Easter?](#) by Barbara Reaoch (children's devotional)
- [The Easter Story for Children](#) by Max Lucado
- [The Parable of the Lily](#) by Liz Curtis Higgs

EASTER ACTIVITIES

- [Christ-Centered Easter Ideas for Families](#) from faithfulmoms.org
- [10 Ways to Teach Kids About Easter](#) from leeanngtaylor.com
- Make [Resurrection Cookies](#) from crosswalk.com
- Plant an Easter lily and talk about ways it pictures resurrection (buried bulbs spring into life; petals look like trumpets announcing victory; colors of white symbolizing purity and new life; etc.)



COLLEGE PARK CHURCH FISHERS