

by Ryan Flanigan



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What Is Lent and Why Should We Practice It?

Lent is the season in the Church Year when followers of Jesus walk with him to his death and burial, so that we can participate fully with him in his resurrection. The season lasts forty days (not including Sundays). It begins Ash Wednesday and ends Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Sunday). It is a time for the church to **re-order** its life once again into the Story that defines who we are. We do so by simplifying our lives, centering on Christ, and joining together with others while we do it.

Lent is about **rhythm**. We are rhythmic creatures. We do things in sequences and steps, marching to the beats of drummers. The problem is, there are lots of drummers out there, pounding away to capture our attention, calling us to follow them and submit to their story. Lent is the Jesus drum, calling us back into the left-right-left of God's Story. If it's not Jesus' drum that we're marching to, it's someone else's. If it's not the Story of God that we're submitting our lives to, it is someone else's story.

So, Lent is also a time for the church to **renounce** all the other stories we have lived into, and to submit singularly to God's Story. But this is not a robotic submission. Robots don't have hearts. We march to the beats of drummers because we actually like the music they're playing. We desire the life they present to us, and so we follow them. With every beat and step we are being formed to look like the drummer we're following. This is why it's so important that we get in step with Jesus. We want to be like him.

In a phrase, Lent is a season to **renounce** and **re-order** our **rhythms** into Christ.





Lent for the Family: A Simple Guide

Renouncing and re-ordering our rhythms takes **practice**. Practices shape us into certain kinds of people who love certain kinds of things. The practice of Lent intends to spiritually transform us, to re-shape our desires toward the things of God. But it will only work if we submit our hearts and bodies to the practice.

This resource is designed to guide families and churches into a simple practice of Lent. **Card 1**: **Ash Wednesday - Week 1** (11 days) is meant to ease us into the season with directions in discerning a practice, instructions in creating a table centerpiece, and a short daily prayer. **Card 2: Week 2 - Holy Week** (5 weeks) consists of an in depth, yet still very simple, prayer and scripture guide. Both cards are self-explanatory and super user friendly so that anyone can pick one up and follow along. They are also generalized for annual use without the need for changing dates.

There are two PDF versions for each card. The **Ready-for-Print** cards (3 per page, front and back) can be printed on cardstock and handed out to your congregation. The **Ready-for-Web** files can be posted to your website for easy accessibility. It may also benefit folks who are new to Lent if you provided them with a copy of the **Intro** page: "What Is Lent and Why Should We Practice It?"

May our practice of Lent draw us deeper into the Story of God. May we enter faithfully into the death of Christ, so that our joy in the resurrection may be complete!





What Is Lent?

Lent simply means "springtime." For the church it is the 40 days leading up to Easter. During Lent we identify with the **Story of Israel**, which finds fulfillment in the **Story of Jesus**. We, like Israel, have fallen and wander around in the wilderness. And we, like Jesus, must wrestle in the desert of temptation. When we engage in this season the way faithful Christians have throughout the centuries, we **renounce** the stories of the world that we have let define us, and we **re-order** our lives into the story of God. This requires an emptying of ourselves and a willingness to slow down.

How to Use This Card

This card invites us to spend the first week and a half in Lent applying the brakes. We live in a 100-mile-an-hour culture that gives us very little space to think about these things. This is why our preparation for Easter involves focused **prayer** and deliberate **practices** that enable us to give ourselves over to God, to direct our desires toward him. This card is meant to help lead us in the soul cleansing (or spring cleaning!) this season calls for, especially in our homes. First, some directions in **discerning a practice**. Next, instructions in **creating a centerpiece**. And last, a short **daily prayer**.

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Discerning a Practice

The point of choosing a practice is not to prove anything, but rather to posture ourselves to give our desires over to God and receive from him. For some this might mean giving something up. Others may need to take something on. These questions may help you discern what kind of practice is right for you (adapted from author Rachel Held Evans):

- † Why should I give something up or take something on this season? How will this draw me closer to God and prepare me for Easter?
- † Is there a habit or sin in my life that repeatedly gets in the way of loving God, my neighbor, or myself? How do I address that habit over the next 40 days?
- † What are some things in my life that I tell myself I cannot live without, but I actually can? Can I abstain from one or two of them this season?
- † What activities and routines are already part of my daily life? How can I meet God in the midst of them?

Creating a Centerpiece

Something that may help you and your family enter into the story of Jesus this season is a symbolic table centerpiece (see image on front). You can gather a few simple materials and create this at some point during this first part of Lent: a bowl filled with sand (or dirt, stones, or marbles), 2 sticks lashed together to form a cross, a candle, and a stone marked with a symbol of Christ. Place the stone far from the cross, perhaps in another room. Then move the stone a little closer to the cross every week. (If you have younger children, you can hide it before each meal and let them find it for a special treat.)

Daily Prayer

† Begin with *silence*, followed by the *scriptures*:

Ash Wed	W	Psalm 51
	Th	Jonah 3:1-10 † Romans 1:1-7
	F	Jonah 4:1-11 † Romans 1:8-17
	Sa	Isaiah 58:1-12 † Matthew 18:1-7
Week 1	Su	Genesis 3:1-13 † Romans 5:12-17
	M	Genesis 4:1-16 † Hebrews 11:1-4
	Tu	Genesis 6:9-22 † Luke 17:20-27
	W	Genesis 8:16-9:7 † 1 Peter 3:18-22
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† Conclude with this *prayer*:

Father, you call us to surrender our stories to your Story. Help us to do so, and guide us by your Spirit as we enter the desert with Christ this season. Amen.

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Holy Spirit, we invite you to speak to our hearts, as we submit our lives to your Story. Amen.

† Read aloud the *scriptures* for the day:

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	M	Gen. 17:1-8 † Matt. 1:1-17
	Tu	Gen. 17:15-22 † Rom. 4:18-25
	W	Gen. 19:12-29 † 2 Pet. 2:4-9
	Th	Gen. 22:1-8 † John 1:25-35
	F	Gen. 22:9-14 † John 3:16-21
	Sa	Gen. 22:15-18 † Acts 3:11-26
Week 3	Su	Exod. 3:7-14, 4:10-17 † Heb. 11:24-28
	M	Exod. 5:1-4, 6:6-12 † 1 Pet. 2:9-10
	Tu	Exod. 12:21-23 † 1 Pet. 1:17-21
	W	Exod. 16:1-16 † John 6:25-40
	Th	Exod. 32:7-20 † Luke 23:32-34
	F	Num. 21:4-9 † John 3:1-15
	Sa	Num. 20:2-13 † Heb. 3:1-6
Week 4	Su	Num. 14:3-12 † John 10:22-39
	M	Josh. 1:1-9 † Matt. 28:16-20
	Tu	Josh. 3:7-17 † Matt. 23:1-12
	W	John. 24:1-3a, 14-25 † Matt. 25:1-13
	Th	Judg. 2:16-19 † Matt. 1:20-21
	F	Judg. 4:1-7 † Matt. 25:14-30
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Week 5	Su	1 Sam. 8:4-20 † Mark 3:20-35
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	Tu	1 Sam. 17:32-49 † Mark 4:35-41
	W	2 Sam. 5:1-10 † Mark 6:1-13
	Th	1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 † John 6:51-58
	F	1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43 † John 6:56-69
	Sa	Song 2:8-13 † Mark 7:1-23
Holy Week	Su	Zech. 9:9-12 † John 12:12-16
	M	Isa. 42:1-9 † John 12:1-11
	Tu	Isa. 49:1-7 † John 12:20-36
	W	Isa. 50:4-9a † John 13:21-32
Maundy	Th	Isa. 53 † John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Good	F	Psalm 22 † John 18-19
Holy	Sa	Job 14:1-14 † John 19:38-42

† Ask yourself or each other these *discussion* questions:

What stirred in your heart as you listened?
Where in your life do these Scriptures hit home?
How might God want you to respond?

† Conclude with this *prayer*:

Father, you call us to surrender our stories to your Story. Help us to do so, and guide us by your Spirit as we journey in the desert with Christ this season. Amen.

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	W	2 Sam. 5:1-10 † Mark 6:1-13
	Th	1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 † John 6:51-58
	F	1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43 † John 6:56-69
	Sa	Song 2:8-13 † Mark 7:1-23
Holy Week	Su	Zech. 9:9-12 † John 12:12-16
	M	Isa. 42:1-9 † John 12:1-11
	Tu	Isa. 49:1-7 † John 12:20-36
	W	Isa. 50:4-9a † John 13:21-32
Maundy	Th	Isa. 53 † John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Good	F	Psalm 22 † John 18-19
Holy	Sa	Job 14:1-14 † John 19:38-42

† Ask yourself or each other these *discussion* questions:

What stirred in your heart as you listened?
Where in your life do these Scriptures hit home?
How might God want you to respond?

† Conclude with this *prayer*:

Father, you call us to surrender our stories to your Story. Help us to do so, and guide us by your Spirit as we journey in the desert with Christ this season. Amen.

[Card 2: Week 2 - Holy Week] [Back]



What Is Lent?

Lent simply means "springtime." For the church it is the 40 days leading up to Easter. During Lent we identify with the **Story of Israel**, which finds fulfillment in the **Story of Jesus**. We, like Israel, have fallen and wander around in the wilderness. And we, like Jesus, must wrestle in the desert of temptation. When we engage in this season the way faithful Christians have throughout the centuries, we **renounce** the stories of the world that we have let define us, and we **re-order** our lives into the story of God. This requires an emptying of ourselves and a willingness to slow down.

How to Use This Card

We spent the first week and a half in Lent applying the brakes and considering what it might look like in our lives to intentionally give ourselves over to God this season, directing our desires toward him. The first card helped us *discern a practice* and *create a centerpiece* to begin our "spring cleaning" in preparation for Easter. This card is simply meant to help us enter into God's story from Israel to Jesus. The **Daily Prayer** on the back of this card includes silence, prayer, song, scripture, and discussion. We encourage families, groups, or individuals to set aside time each day to surrender our stories to God's Story in this way. Dinner is an ideal time for this, but anytime is fine.

Daily Prayer

† Begin with *silence*, followed by this *prayer* (you may also open with a *song*, such as "Create in Me a Clean Heart" or "Give Us Clean Hands"):

Holy Spirit, we invite you to speak to our hearts, as we submit our lives to your Story. Amen.

† Read aloud the *scriptures* for the day:

Week 2	Su	Gen. 13:5-18 † Rom. 4:13-17
	M	Gen. 17:1-8 † Matt. 1:1-17
	Tu	Gen. 17:15-22 † Rom. 4:18-25
	W	Gen. 19:12-29 † 2 Pet. 2:4-9
	Th	Gen. 22:1-8 † John 1:25-35
	F	Gen. 22:9-14 † John 3:16-21
	Sa	Gen. 22:15-18 † Acts 3:11-26
Week 3	Su	Exod. 3:7-14, 4:10-17 † Heb. 11:24-28
	M	Exod. 5:1-4, 6:6-12 † 1 Pet. 2:9-10
	Tu	Exod. 12:21-23 † 1 Pet. 1:17-21
	W	Exod. 16:1-16 † John 6:25-40
	Th	Exod. 32:7-20 † Luke 23:32-34
	F	Num. 21:4-9 † John 3:1-15
	Sa	Num. 20:2-13 † Heb. 3:1-6
Week 4	Su	Num. 14:3-12 † John 10:22-39
	M	Josh. 1:1-9 † Matt. 28:16-20
	Tu	Josh. 3:7-17 † Matt. 23:1-12
	W	John. 24:1-3a, 14-25 † Matt. 25:1-13
	Th	Judg. 2:16-19 † Matt. 1:20-21
	F	Judg. 4:1-7 † Matt. 25:14-30
	Sa	Judg. 13:1-5, 24-25 † Luke 1:5-17
Week 5	Su	1 Sam. 8:4-20 † Mark 3:20-35
	M	1 Sam. 15:34–16:13 † Mark 4:26-34
	Tu	1 Sam. 17:32-49 † Mark 4:35-41
	W	2 Sam. 5:1-10 † Mark 6:1-13
	Th	1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 † John 6:51-58
	F	1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43 † John 6:56-69
	Sa	Song 2:8-13 † Mark 7:1-23
Holy Week	Su	Zech. 9:9-12 † John 12:12-16
	M	Isa. 42:1-9 † John 12:1-11
	Tu	Isa. 49:1-7 † John 12:20-36
	W	Isa. 50:4-9a † John 13:21-32
Maundy	Th	Isa. 53 † John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Good	F	Psalm 22 † John 18-19
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