

**LENTEN DISCIPLINES** ---- From the Whitney February Newsletter

## **Things to do to observe a holy Lent.**

“Observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word.” (From the Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Disciplines used in the Ash Wednesday Service). I would add a fourth piece to that—to observe a Holy Lent by self-sacrifice and service to others.

During Lent, you are invited to pick one of the four parts of observing a Holy Lent and work to strengthen that spiritual discipline. Suggestions are below.

### **Self-examination and Repentance**

1. **What do the words self-examination and repentance even mean?** Look them up in the dictionary. Write down your own sense of what these words mean.
2. **Ponder some of the scriptures that talk about self-examination and repentance**
  - a. 2 Corinthians 13:5
  - b. Galatians 6:3-4
  - c. 1 John 1:7-9
  - d. Romans 7:14-25
  - e. Psalm 51:1-4
  - f. Matthew 4:16-17
  - g. 2 Chronicles 7:12-15
3. **Practice the Examen during Lent.**
  - a. Become aware of God’s presence.
  - b. Review the day with gratitude
  - c. Pay attention to your emotions.
  - d. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
  - e. Look toward tomorrow. **(For more information go to [The Daily Examen - IgnatianSpirituality.com](http://TheDailyExamen-IgnatianSpirituality.com))**
4. **Walk through a cemetery.** May it remind you that we are but dust and to dust we shall return.
5. **“Walk” the labyrinth.** Use the labyrinth resource that you will receive in the mail from the church. It will have a finger labyrinth you can use. During Holy Week (March 28-April 3), there will be a labyrinth set up at the church for you to walk.

### **Prayer, fasting and self-denial**

1. **Drink only water through Lent** – Figure out how much money you would have spent on other beverages (coffee, soda, etc.) and donate that money to a charity that provides clean water to a place that needs it.
2. **Write 40 letters** – Write a letter to 40 people who have made a significant influence on you (one a day for each day in Lent). If 40 is overwhelming, write 6 – one each week during Lent.
3. **Pray your way through Lent** – Make a list of your family and friends (or you could use your Facebook Friend list) Divide the list into 40 days. Before each day send a personal message to each person asking for their prayer requests. If they reply, lift up their request. If they do not, lift up general prayers for that person.

4. **Fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday** with only one simple meal during the day, usually without meat. **Refrain from eating meat on all Fridays in Lent**, substituting fish for example.
5. **Eliminate a food or food group for the entire season.** Especially consider saving rich and fatty foods for Easter. Don't just give up something that you have to give up for your doctor or diet anyway. Make your fast a voluntary self-denial (i.e., discipline) that you offer to God in prayer
6. **Abstain from or limit a favorite activity** (television, movies, etc.) for the entire season, and spend more time in prayer, Bible study, and reading devotional material.

## Read and meditate on God's Holy Word

- 1) **Read through one of the Gospels in 40 days.** Take the number of chapters in the gospel and divide by 40. Then read about that much every day.
- 2) **Lent photo-a-day** – Create a list of words for each day of Lent and challenge a group of friends, or your church, or maybe just your family to take a picture each day of something that represents that word to them.
- 3) **Take up a daily devotional**  
Read a daily devotional that offers a Scripture reading, short reflection, and prayer for each day. Call the church office for a copy of *The UpperRoom Daily Devotional* or go to [The Upper Room](#) for daily on-line devotions.
- 4) **Regular Bible reading**  
Set aside a time of day to read the Scriptures. Reading the Psalms is a good place to start. You can also use the 40 day reading guide to read through the Gospel of Mark during Lent.
- 5) **Practice Lectio Divina.** Lectio Divina, “divine reading,” is a way to connect with God’s word through prayer. It’s sometimes described as reading scripture with the “ear of the heart.” This website has a good guide to practice this ancient practice. [How to Pray the Basic Lectio Divina Steps | Prayer & Possibilities \(prayerandpossibilities.com\)](#)

## Self-sacrifice and service of love to others

1. **Look up the meaning of self-sacrifice and service.** What is your reaction to these two words? How does the idea of doing these things in love change your reaction?
2. **Choose a service of love to do.** Use Matthew 25:31-40 and Luke 4:18-19 as guides for choosing to do a service of love.
3. **Be nice to someone.** Go out of your way to do something nice for somebody at least once a week during Lent.
4. **Giving of your resources to help others.** Make a donation (whether financial or something tangible that is needed) for those in need through the church or through a local agency (Interfaith Sanctuary, Idaho Food Bank, CATCH: charitable assistance to communities homeless, etc).