



SOJOURN SPRING BRANCH

LENT GUIDE



A Focus on Scripture, Prayer, and Fasting
During the Season of Lent

WHAT IS LENT?

“Lent is the season on the church calendar that comes just before Easter. It is 40 days long (if you don’t count the Sundays, which are seen as “little easters.”) While there are many ways that Lent is described & observed, it is typically in preparation for Easter with a focus on fasting & meditating on the suffering of Jesus.” -Justin Whitmel Earley

For the purposes of Prayer and Fasting, we will highlight and practice three spiritual practices during Lent.

Step 1: Get participation with your Parish.

Follow up with your neighborhood parish and share what Prayer and Fasting Practices you will do during Lent.

Step 2: Review the Practices

Get familiar with the Prayer and Fasting practices and place them on a calendar so you can visualize the days and weeks during Lent.

Step 3: Embrace Community and Failure

Two of the main lessons is that the good life is the communal life, and that anything worth trying is hard and involves failure. This includes following Jesus. As for community, your parish meets every week to share experiences and pray. As for failure, you should remind each other that the goal is not to check off some habits, but to fail together, experience grace, learn and become formed more in the Gospel of Jesus.

Lent Pledge:

I, _____, will pursue the grace of Jesus to practice these Prayer and Fasting practices through the Lent season of 2024 in hopes of continuing these habits after Easter Sunday.

I commit to practicing some, if not all, of these habits such as:

- 1) reading Scripture before phone,*
- 2) kneeling prayer at morning and bedtime, and*
- 3) fasting from certain meals and certain comforts.*

1. DAILY SCRIPTURE READING BEFORE PHONE

“Refusing to check the phone until after reading a passage of Scripture is a way of replacing the question, ‘What do I need to do today?’ with a better one, ‘Who am I and who am I becoming?’ Daily immersion in the Scriptures resists the anxiety of emails, the anger of the news, and the envy of social media. Instead it forms us daily in our true identity as children of the King, dearly beloved.” -Justin Whitmel Earley

Use your own Bible reading plan or select Bible passage corresponding to the sermon series we will be preaching from at Sojourn through the life of Abraham.

___ Gen 11:27–12:9

___ Gen 12:10–20

___ Gen 13:1–18

___ Gen 14:1–24

___ Gen 15:1–21

___ Gen 16:1–16

___ Gen 17:1–27

___ Gen 18:1–15

___ Gen 18:16–33

___ Gen 19:1–38

___ Gen 20:1–18

___ Gen 21:1–34

___ Gen 22:1–24

___ Gen 23:1–20

___ Gen 24:1–67

___ Gen 25:1–11

Have more Lent days left? Read these passages again

2: KNEELING PRAYER AT MORNING & BEDTIME

“The world is made of words. Even small, repeated words have power... By framing our day in the words of prayer, we frame the day in love... Kneeling marks the moment with physicality and humility. If this is difficult to do, try gently turning up your palms, setting them on your knees, or walking to a window to pray.” -Justin Whitmel Earley

- **Short Prayers**

Morning:

*“God, I was made for your presence.
May this day be one I spend with you in all that I do.
Amen.”*

Bedtime:

*“Father, I was made to rest in your love.
May my body rest in sleep, and may my mind rest in your love.
Amen.”*

- **Pray the A.C.T.S. method for 5-10 minutes**

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication

- **Pray Valley of Vision Prayers**

Find Prayers on pages 7-13.

3. FAST FROM FOOD/COMFORT.

“We constantly seek to fill our emptiness with food and other comforts. We ignore our soul and our neighbor’s need by medicating with food and drink. Regular fasting exposes who we really are, reminds us of how broken the world is, and draws our eyes to how Jesus is redeeming all things.” -Justin Whitmel Earley

INDIVIDUALLY

1. An **Absolute Food Fast** is where you abstain from all food and all water for a certain period of time.

2. A **Solid Food Fast** is where you may drink juice and water, but choose not to eat solid food.

3. A **Partial Food Fast** is where you can choose to abstain from certain foods and drinks instead of complete abstinence.

Fasting Examples:

-Fast from Meals and use that time to feast on prayer or Bible reading.

4. A **Comfort Fast** is where you choose to abstain from a certain comfort that distracts you from prayer and Bible reading.

Fasting Examples:

-Fast from TV Shows and Movies and use that time to feast on prayer or Bible reading.

-Fast from Social Media and use that time to feast on Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness prayers.

-Fast from types of music and replace it by feasting on listening to the Bible.

-Fast from one hour of sleep to wake up one hour earlier the next day and journal prayers of thanksgiving.

COMMUNALLY

On the day that your parish meets, fast from food for breakfast and lunch and break your fast with a prayer of thanksgiving to God when you meet for your parish gathering.

SHARE WITH YOUR PARISH

What Bible passages will you be reading before picking up your phone?

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What prayer method will you be praying (Valley of Vision prayers, A.C.T.S., etc.)?

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What are you fasting? How often are you fasting? What will you feast on?

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PRAYERS

"SEARCHER OF HEARTS,

It is a good day to me when thou
givest me
 a glimpse of myself;
Sin is my greatest evil,
 but thou art my greatest good;
I have cause to loathe myself,
 and not to seek self-honour,
 for no one desires to commend his
own dunghill.
My country, family, church
 fare worse because of my sins,
 for sinners bring judgment in thinking
 sins are small,
 or that God is not angry with them.
Let me not take other good men as my
example,
 and think I am good because I am
like them,
For all good men are not so good as
thou desirest,
 are not always consistent,
 do not always follow holiness,
 do not feel eternal good in sore
affliction.

Show me how to know when a thing is
evil
 which I think is right and good,
 how to know when what is lawful
 comes from an evil principle,
 such as desire for reputation or
wealth by usury.
Give me grace to recall my needs,
 my lack of knowing thy will in
Scripture,
 of wisdom to guide others,
 of daily repentance, want of which
keeps thee
 at bay,
 of the spirit of prayer, having words
 without love,
 of zeal for thy glory, seeking my own
ends,
 of joy in thee and thy will,
 of love to others.
And let me not lay my pipe
 too short of the fountain,
 never touching the eternal spring,
 never drawing down water from
above.

Amen."

**-"Self-Knowledge" from The Valley
of Vision.**

"LORD JESUS,

Give me a deeper repentance,
a horror of sin,
a dread of its approach;
Help me chastely to flee it,
and jealously to resolve that my heart
shall be thine alone.
Give me a deeper trust,
that I may lose myself to find myself
in thee,
the ground of my rest,
the spring of my being.
Give me a deeper knowledge of
thyself
as Saviour, Master, Lord, and King.
Give me deeper power in private
prayer,
more sweetness in thy Word,
more steadfast grip on its truth.
Give me deeper holiness in speech,
thought, action,
and let me not seek moral virtue
apart from thee.

Plough deep in me, great Lord,
heavenly Husbandman,
that my being may be a tilled field,
the roots of grace spreading far and
wide,
until thou alone art seen in me,
thy beauty golden like summer
harvest,
thy fruitfulness as autumn plenty.
I have no Master but thee,
no law but thy will,
no delight but thyself,
no wealth but that thou givest,
no good but that thou blessest,
no peace but that thou bestowest.
I am nothing but that thou makest me,
I have nothing but that I receive from
thee,
I can be nothing but that grace adorns
me.
Quarry me deep, dear Lord,
and then fill me to overflowing
with living water.

Amen."

**-“The Deeps” from The Valley of
Vision.**

"O GOD OF GRACE,

Thou hast imputed my sin to my substitute,
and hast imputed his righteousness
to my soul,
clothing me with a bridegroom's robe,
decking me with jewels of holiness.
But in my Christian walk I am still in rags;
my best prayers are stained with sin;
my penitential tears are so much impurity;
my confessions of wrong are so many aggravations of sin;
my receiving the Spirit is tainted with selfishness.

I need to repent of my repentance;
I need my tears to be washed;
I have no robe to bring to cover my sins,
no loom to weave my own righteousness;
I am always standing clothed in filthy garments,
and by grace am always receiving change of raiment,

for thou dost always justify the ungodly;
I am always going into the far country,
and always returning home as a prodigal,
always saying, Father, forgive me,
and thou art always bringing forth the best robe.
Every morning let me wear it,
every evening return in it,
go out to the day's work in it,
be married in it,
be wound in death in it,
stand before the great white throne in it,
enter heaven in it shining as the sun.
Grant me never to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin,
the exceeding righteousness of salvation,
the exceeding glory of Christ,
the exceeding beauty of holiness,
the exceeding wonder of grace.

Amen."

-"Continual Repentance" from The Valley of Vision.

"ETERNAL FATHER,

Thou art good beyond all thought,
 But I am vile, wretched, miserable,
blind;
My lips are ready to confess,
 but my heart is slow to feel,
 and my ways reluctant to amend.
I bring my soul to thee;
 break it, wound it, bend it, mould it.
Unmask to me sin's deformity,
 that I may hate it, abhor it, flee from
it.
My faculties have been a weapon of
revolt
 against thee;
 as a rebel I have misused my
strength,
 and served the foul adversary of thy
kingdom.
Give me grace to bewail my insensate
folly,
Grant me to know that the way of
transgressors
 is hard,
 that evil paths are wretched paths,
 that to depart from thee is to lose all
good.
I have seen the purity and beauty of
thy perfect law,
 the happiness of those in whose
heart it reigns,

 the calm dignity of the walk to which
it calls,
 yet I daily violate and contemn its
precepts.
Thy loving Spirit strives within me,
 brings me Scripture warnings,
 speaks in startling providences,
 allures by secret whispers,
 yet I choose devices and desires to
my own hurt,
 impiously resent, grieve,
 and provoke him to abandon me.
All these sins I mourn, lament, and for
them
 cry pardon.
Work in me more profound and
abiding repentance;
Give me the fullness of a godly grief
 that trembles and fears,
 yet ever trusts and loves,
 which is ever powerful, and ever
confident;
Grant that through the tears of
repentance
 I may see more clearly the brightness
 and glories of the saving cross.

Amen."

-“Yet I Sin” from The Valley of Vision.

"SOVEREIGN LORD,

When clouds of darkness, atheism, and
unbelief come to me,
I see thy purpose of love
in withdrawing the Spirit that I might
prize
him more,
in chastening me for my confidence in
past successes, that my wound of
secret
godlessness might be cured.
Help me to humble myself before thee
by seeing the vanity of honour
as a conceit of men's minds,
as standing between me and thee;
by seeing that thy will must alone be
done,
as much in denying as in giving
spiritual enjoyments;
by seeing that my heart is nothing but
evil,
mind, mouth, life void of thee;
by seeing that sin and Satan are
allowed power
in me that I might know my sin, be
humbled,
and gain strength thereby;
by seeing that unbelief shuts thee from
me,
so that I sense not thy majesty, power,
mercy,
or love.
Then possess me, for thou only art
good
and worthy.

Thou dost not play in convincing me of
sin,
Satan did not play in tempting me to
it,
I do not play when I sink in deep mire,
for sin is no game, no toy, no bauble;
Let me never forget that the
heinousness of sin lies
not so much in the nature of the sin
committed,
as in the greatness of the Person
sinned against.
When I am afraid of evils to come,
comfort me,
by showing me
that in myself I am a dying,
condemned wretch,
but that in Christ I am reconciled,
made alive,
and satisfied;
that I am feeble and unable to do any
good,
but that in him I can do all things;
that what I now have in Christ is mine
in part,
but shortly I shall have it perfectly in
heaven.

Amen."

**-“Humiliation” from The Valley of
Vision.**

"O CHANGELESS GOD,

Under the conviction of thy Spirit I
learn that

the more I do, the worse I am,
the more I know, the less I know,
the more holiness I have, the more
sinful I am,
the more I love, the more there is to
love.

O wretched man that I am!

O Lord,

I have a wild heart,
and cannot stand before thee;
I am like a bird before a man.
How little I love thy truth and ways!
I neglect prayer,
by thinking I have prayed enough
and earnestly,
by knowing thou hast saved my soul.
Of all hypocrites, grant that I may not
be
an evangelical hypocrite,
who sins more safely because grace
abounds,
who tells his lusts that Christ's blood
cleanseth them,
who reasons that God cannot cast
him into hell,
for he is saved,
who loves evangelical preaching,

churches,

Christians, but lives unholily.
My mind is a bucket without a bottom,
with no spiritual understanding,
no desire for the Lord's Day,
ever learning but never reaching the
truth,
always at the gospel-well but never
holding water.
My conscience is without conviction or
contrition,
with nothing to repent of.
My will is without power of decision or
resolution.
My heart is without affection, and full
of leaks.
My memory has no retention,
so I forget easily the lessons learned,
and thy truths seep away.
Give me a broken heart that yet carries
home
the water of grace.

Amen."

**-“Paradoxes” from The Valley of
Vision.**

"O LORD,

No day of my life has passed that has not

proved me guilty in thy sight.

Prayers have been uttered from a prayerless heart;

Praise has been often praiseless sound;

My best services are filthy rags.

Blessed Jesus, let me find a covert in thy appeasing wounds.

Though my sins rise to heaven thy merits soar above them;

Though unrighteousness weighs me down to hell, thy righteousness exalts me to thy throne.

All things in me call for my rejection, All things in thee plead my acceptance.

I appeal from the throne of perfect justice

to thy throne of boundless grace. Grant me to hear thy voice assuring me:

that by thy stripes I am healed,
that thou wast bruised for my iniquities,
that thou hast been made sin for me

that I might be righteous in thee,
that my grievous sins, my manifold sins,
are all forgiven,
buried in the ocean of thy concealing blood.

I am guilty, but pardoned,
lost, but saved,
wandering, but found,
sinning, but cleansed.

Give me perpetual broken-heartedness,

Keep me always clinging to thy cross,
Flood me every moment with descending grace,

Open to me the springs of divine knowledge,

sparkling like crystal,
flowing clear and unsullied
through my wilderness of life.

Amen."

-"The Broken Heart" from The Valley of Vision.