

CTV's Guide to Lent 2010

A Guide for Families and Individuals



**TUNING IN TO
GOD'S RHYTHMS
THROUGH LENT
AND HOLY WEEK**

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13-14

A Christian Sense of Time



What time of year is it? Well for us it's wintertime. It's just after Valentines Day and President's weekend. We

are somewhere in the middle between Christmas and Easter or spring break. In many ways this is a blah time of year, unless you like to go to the mountains to ski. Yet this is a special time if we will listen for the Story of Christ.

Every year the Christian calendar walks us through the journey from the birth of Christ to the birth of his community, which we call the Church. The journey begins in the weeks leading up to Christmas and ends a month or so after Easter. This way of thinking reminds us of what Christ has done. It also invites us to experience him in fresh ways. By marking time differently, we connect our faith with the seasons of the year (we move from late autumn, through winter and into spring, a fitting parallel for the Christ journey).



If you are a parent...

1. Start new traditions that reinforce the story and practices of faith for our families. Traditions can be very powerful in the life of a family, especially when they are invested with spiritual meaning.
2. Use the winter to spring process as a living and memorable illustration of the Christ journey with our kids.
3. Keep the conversation going: Most of what we do for kids at CTV is intentionally given

to them at their level. Sometimes it's good for them to be exposed to life with God at the adult level. When we bring our children to special church services where they watch us worship and participate, it can inspire them to ask: "What does all of this mean?" This was one of the points of the ancient Jewish feast of Passover. (Exodus 12:25-26)

Lent

Lent refers to the 40-day period of time leading up to Easter. (The 40 days do not include Sundays). In Genesis, it rained for 40 days and both Moses and Jesus spent 40-day periods of time alone with God. **It is meant to be a serious season of reflection as we prepare to walk with Jesus through the journey of Holy Week.**

The general theme of the season of Lent is **repentance**. This is a time when we examine our lives before God, let go of sin, and embrace the new way He wants us to live. This self-examination points us towards the cross of Good Friday and the Resurrection of Easter, where our sins are forgiven and Jesus proves he can empower us in a new life.

When Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" he held out an epiphany vision for his followers. But he also warned that if we lose our "saltiness," we are worthless. Lent is a time when we focus on "getting salty"—by inviting God to change us.

This year we marked the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday with a new series called "The End of Guilt." None of us like to feel guilty. All of us associate feelings of guilt with church and God. So God gets a bad "rep"—the one who enjoys the guilt. And church becomes the place

where people are beaten down and shamed into conformity.

Interestingly, God longs for us to live **GUILT-FREE** lives as we experience the forgiveness and change-power of Christ. Guilt is a place we need to visit on the road to the life God has for us, but it should not be a place we stay. It need not be a defining element of our identity or faith.

THREE PRIMARY PRACTICES OF LENT

The three primary practices of the season of Lent are **prayer, fasting, and doing acts of kindness**. We draw from the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:1-18 as our guide.

PRAYER—The season of Lent is meant to be a season of focused prayer as we examine our lives and prepare for “the more” that Jesus wants to give us. We live in the following promise through our prayers: “If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:9 NLT)”

- **PRAYER STATIONS**

During this season, there are prayer stations in the auditorium, where we can write our prayers and nail them to the cross. This connects our prayers with Christ’s suffering during holy week.

- **PRAYER ROOM**

After both services, Pastor Chip and others will be available to pray with you in Community Room 2.

- **STUDY THE LORD’S PRAYER**

During this season you may also find it helpful to meditate on the

Lord’s Prayer as a model or pattern for your praying. (Listen to Rock Solid in Prayer online @ http://chitv.org/News_and_Events.html)

“Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.” Matthew 6:9-13

The following Psalms may also be helpful guides in your prayers: Psalms 32, 51, 139:23-24

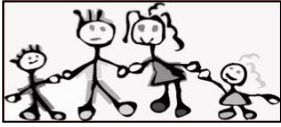


If you are a parent...

- Consider teaching your kids the Lord’s Prayer—take it apart theme by theme and give a prize if they can memorize it
- Take them into the auditorium on Sundays and have them write a prayer/nail it to the cross.

FASTING—Some of us have personally “given up something for lent” or known someone who did. This expression may give the impression that we give things up (fast) to please God or earn favors from him. This is not the intention of fasting during Lent. The point is to give up something in our lives that tends to crowd out God. In fasting, we find ways to empty our lives of distractions, attachments, and clutter that keep us from drawing closer to God. Examples could be certain foods, TV, other forms of media or entertainment, certain hobbies, or other

things we lean on when we are down or distressed.



If you are a parent...

Depending on the age and understanding level of your kids, consider helping them identify something they could fast from and a way they could use that time (space) to journal or pray.

DOING ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR THE POOR—

The final theme of lent is giving to those in need. Giving is a way we cement our repentance into our lives.

Pray and answer the following questions:

- How can you show kindness to the people you live with, work with, and play with?
- How is God inviting you to do more for those in need? Consider going on a trip to Mexico (Sign-ups are going on now for May's trip).



If you are a parent...

- Have a kindness contest for one week in your family, awarding prizes at the end.
- Brainstorm something your whole family can do together to show kindness to someone in need.
- Consider sponsoring a child in need (see compassion.com).
- Consider participating in a Good Neighbors Project—look for projects coming out soon (see goodneighborshomerepair.org).

Holy Week

Holy Week is just around the corner. Get ready now by placing the following dates on your calendar:

MAUNDY THURSDAY DINNERS—APRIL 1

During this evening, we divide up into smaller groups and enjoy a last-supper sampling in people's homes, followed by a regular dinner. This is a great chance to join in the more intimate setting of a meal like Jesus had with his followers the night before he died. It is also a chance to understand the rich meaning and symbolism behind the communion. Sign-ups to start in March.

GOOD FRIDAY WALK—APRIL 2

During this evening (anytime from 4 to 9 pm), come for a special interactive self-guided tour that will prepare our hearts as we reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us. This will be a wonderful experience for you to bring your family, friends, and neighbors.

EASTER—APRIL 4

During this Sunday morning, we celebrate the great reversal—from the confusion of Maundy Thursday, to the despair of Good Friday, to the miracle of new life and hope reborn through Jesus' resurrection.



If you are a parent...

Plan ahead to make room in your calendar for your family to participate in all of the experiences of Holy Week, both Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday will be kid-friendly.