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## "I'm giving up Lent for Lent."

That's what one of my best friends says every Ash Wednesday. She lives where Lent happens in the "cabin fever" time of late winter. She sees Lent as nothing but a time of gloom and doom.

Lent isn't worthwhile, as far as she is concerned.

### Lent Is More Than Gloom

Yet Christians have observed Lent for centuries. Does that mean millions of people have loved to be gloomy for six-and-a-half weeks before Easter? No. Instead, it suggests that observing Lent can be worthwhile.

Lent began centuries ago as a time of preparation for Easter.

In the early church, adult candidates for Baptism spent the 40 days before Easter (not counting Sundays) as a special time of intense instruction. They were preparing to be received into church membership at the Easter Vigil, the Saturday night before Easter Day.

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## Make Lent Worthwhile

How can we, hundreds of years later, make Lent worth our time and energy?

Here are some ideas:

✝ *Worship often.* During Lent many congregations expand their worship schedule beyond the weekend. They offer special services on Ash Wednesday and during Holy Week. Others set aside midweek days for worship.

Take advantage of these extra opportunities to gain more insight into God's love for us in Jesus Christ, and to grow in your faith. Travel spiritually with other Christians to Jerusalem for Holy Week. Give thanks that there Jesus suffered and died for the forgiveness of sins.

✝ *Read the Scriptures.* If you don't read the Bible daily at present, Lent is a great time to start. Ask your pastor or a Christian friend you respect for suggested ways to begin. Read one of the gospels during Lent, or all four Gospel accounts of the suffering and death of Jesus (Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23; John 18–19).

✝ *Pray.* Lent can be a time to strengthen prayer life. Use 3x5-inch cards, listing persons and concerns that you wish to pray about. Then pray daily for them. (Using the same time each day for reading the Bible and praying will help get you in the habit.)

✝ *Remember the hungry.* Some persons "give up" something during Lent, to remind them of what Jesus gave up to be our Savior.

You may want to try that. You may wish to skip one meal each week during Lent, giving the money saved to world hunger relief or a local food pantry.

✝ *Remember the poor.* Lent also has been a time when Christians especially remember the poor. Ancient believers called it "alms-giving." Find one way in which you show Christian love by serving those who are less fortunate than you.

Is Lent worth it? That depends on your viewpoint.

Lent can be a spiritually gloomy time.

## A Spiritual Springtime

Lent can be a time to quietly meditate on the marvel that Jesus went to the cross to suffer and die for our sins. His sacrifice is the special focus of Holy Week, at the end of Lent.

As we thank Jesus, we respond by finding ways to make Lent worthwhile and it becomes a spiritual springtime.

“Springtime” is probably what the word “Lent” originally meant. When Lent is a spiritual springtime for us, it’s worth it!

Read: Isaiah 53:10; Colossians 2:6–15

**LENT** is the period of 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter, not counting the Sundays.



**LENT** is more than a tradition of the church that asks us to “give up” something to prove our devotion.



**LENT** focuses our attention on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ to pay for our sins.



**LENT** becomes a “spiritual springtime” as we find ways to make it worthwhile.



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