

LENT // A PRACTICE OF PREPARATION

ways to involve the whole family

Lent is a season of 40 days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter). The 40 days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin His ministry. We celebrate Lent as a reminder of what God has done and is doing - and as an opportunity to practice, in a physical way, living into that story. Just like we read to form our mind and work out to form our bodies, we can practice lent to help form our heart towards God.

FASTING// Commonly, Lent is celebrated by 40 days of fasting. Fasting can be a way to shift focus to prayer and reflection upon God's word, reminding us of what Christ has done for us. Some ways to get kids in on this tradition, are to fast only on certain days of the week or only certain types of food. Or think outside the box and fast from a specific show, TV or other technology, or give something away each day.

CRAFTING// Crafts are a great way to make larger concepts engaging to young children. Consider dying beans purple to match the liturgical color of the season and then using one bean a day to fill in a cross outline on a piece of paper. Each day as the kids glue on their bean, they can list one thing they're grateful for or you can read a scripture verse and talk about it.

STORIES/ This is a great time to talk about all of the Biblical events that lasted 40 days. 40 days of rain for Noah, Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days, the Israelites spied on the Promised Land for 40 days, Goliath spent 40 days taunting the Israelite army, the Prophet Elijah spent 40 days walking to Horeb, and in Jonah God gave 40 days for Nineveh to repent or be destroyed. Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness and after Easter, Jesus lived with and taught the disciples for 40 days until His ascension.

ALMS AND THANKS// Lent is an important time to turn to focused prayer for our families, churches, neighbors, and nation. This season lends itself well to focusing on serious prayer, but encourage kids to start with whatever is on their heart. Consider trying a prayer jar where you write down, on separate pieces of paper, the names of 40 people you would like to pray for as a family. Each day, choose from the jar and pray together for that person.

PLANTING// Another lasting tradition of Lent is planting and gardening. Resurrection gardens are small and include a tiny pot on its side to represent the empty tomb. Mound dirt as a hill, cover with grass seed, and let the kids make little crosses to go on the hill. Water through Lent and watch the grass grow. New life for the plants is a good way to talk about the new life we have as Christians.

BAPTISM// Since Lent is baptismal in nature (delving deeper into our faith and understanding of salvation through grace), it's a great time to discuss baptism in your family. Once your kids are ready to enter into a relationship with Jesus, you can talk about how immersion in water is a symbol of dying to a life without Christ and being resurrected to a new life with Him. Share the story of baptism found in Acts 8:26-40. If your kids (or you) would like to talk more about baptism, please let us know!