



I've heard of Easter, but
What is Lent?

Do you mean, like "I lent you a pencil?"

No. We don't mean "lent" in the sense of "to let someone borrow something." We are actually talking about LENT, the season of the Church calendar that comes between Epiphany and Easter.

That's when people give up something like meat and stuff on Fridays—right?

Unfortunately that is what most people think. Actually, in the second century AD, Christians began to have a time of fasting and prayer a few days before Easter to help those who would be baptized on Easter Sunday (they called them "catechumens" or "new Christians learning about Jesus) to focus and prepare for their baptism. This later was expanded to "40 days" because of all the "40 day" periods mentioned in scripture, but especially in honor of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

This time of preparation, prayer, and fasting for catechumens was then expanded to include the entire church. Unfortunately, like many good ideas, it was then declared that a good Christian **must** fast (and perform several other tasks), and they turned what was once a good idea for a time of focused repentance into something that people did (and often do) to try and earn favor with God. When Lent is practiced in this manner, then it is an abomination to God because it is man trying to earn salvation rather than looking to and relying upon God's Grace through Jesus Christ.

Lent has been so misused, why does your church still practice it?

This is a very honest and appropriate question. One of the best responses to

to this question comes from Martin Luther. Several Christians during the Reformation wanted to stop practicing Lent. To this Luther responded, "Lent, Palm Sunday, and Holy Week shall be retained, not to force anyone to fast, but to preserve the Passion history and the Gospels appointed for that season" (LW 53:90) What Luther was saying is this: We need to have a times when we especially remember and think about the sufferings of Jesus—what he endured for us because of our sin. However, any ways to help us focus (such as fasting) should be voluntary and no one should be forced to fast or anything else during this time. Luther also thought having a time during the church calendar that was set aside each year for this purpose would also be helpful.

So, should we participate in Lent or not?

That depends upon what you mean. Do you mean, "Do I still need to go to church during the church season of Lent and take Holy Communion?" Yes. We all still need Grace from God's Word and Sacrament. But if you mean, "Should we demand people practice certain forms in particular ways during Lent?" No. Most certainly not.

I want to "Remember Jesus' sufferings for me" during Lent. Any ideas on how?

1. Remember that anything you do is to help you focus your thoughts on Jesus Christ and will not earn your salvation with God.
2. Use the resources the church has available to help you focus, such a special worship services, devotional material and the like.
3. Rather than "giving up" something for lent, think about something you can "give" to someone else and use the opportunity to remember what Jesus gave for you.
4. If you do decide to fast, don't make a big deal about it. Perform it quietly as Christ mentioned in Mark 6:16-18. Use it as a tool to focus on Christ, not a way to make you look "more spiritual" to others.
5. Above all, remember that Lent should be all about Jesus and what He did (and does) for you. It's not about you. It's about Him

If you have more questions about Lent or Christianity, please contact us:

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