

MARBLE CONNECTION, LENT 2010

Lent is a beautiful time to dedicate yourself to spiritual practices. It is the traditional 40-day period (Wed., Feb. 17–Sat., Apr. 3—not including Sundays) leading up to the celebration of Easter. Lent is a time to go on an inner spiritual journey, just as Jesus spent 40 days alone in the wilderness before he began his own ministry (Matthew 4:1-11).

At Marble our Lenten theme this year is “HUNGER.” Hungers can be spiritual, emotional, and physical. Hungers lead us to the conclusion that we cannot always provide for ourselves everything that we need. Our hungers draw us to depend on others—on God above all, but also on friends and even strangers.

Here, you’ll find a “menu” of spiritual practices designed to help you become aware of your hunger during Lent.

God be with you on your journey!

Rev. David Lewicki

HOW TO USE THIS MENU

1. Read this hand-out; if you have questions about ANY of these practices, ask a Connection Servant Leader or Rev. Lewicki for guidance (emails on back).
2. Spend 3-5 days thinking about which practices you are called to take on.
3. Identify 1 other person who will be an “accountability partner” to help you stay faithful to your Lenten commitments. Preferable, someone who is “practicing lent”. Ask Rev. Lewicki if you need a partner.
4. On Ash Wednesday, February 17, make a covenant with God during worship, that you promise to seek God’s help in fulfilling your specific commitments.
5. Each day of Lent, keep a journal (or blog), documenting the ups and downs of your experience. Be honest. Be open. Be diligent.

MENU OF LENTEN PRACTICES

PHYSICAL HUNGER *fasting*

Fasting is a deep biblical tradition of unknown origins. It is a moral and religious discipline. Often it is connected to repentance and urgent supplication. It is always something done to glorify God. During Lent, it is taken on as a form of grounding and renewal. Discernment and sensitivity to God’s Spirit—the “deep calling out to deep”—becomes the center of the fast. It is an echo of Jesus’ own sojourn in the wilderness—we pray, be silent, and fast. **Remember: Sundays are NOT fast days, even in Lent.** Sundays are always celebrations of the Resurrection and you are to break your fast every Sunday.

Do not fast if your health does not permit it (if you have a heart condition or diabetes, or you are pregnant or nursing) and always drink plenty of fluids. If you choose to fast, you might choose one of the following options:

1. Eat only simple meals during Lent (all vegetarian, mostly rice & grains) - **OR** - abstain entirely from 1 meal per day.
2. Eat only rice, grains, and drink only water during Holy Week (after Palm Sunday worship through Easter morning).
3. Drink only water during Lent, eating a regular diet.
4. Throughout Lent, refrain from eating and drinking things you know aren’t good for you: soda, refined sugar, junk food, fast food, 2nd helpings, caffeine.

fasting etiquette

When you fast, you will occasionally be faced with a dilemma: someone offers you food (or something else) that you have eliminated from your life during Lent. Not everyone knows that you are fasting (nor should they—see the Scripture below). Just about the time that you are beginning to feel good about going without your daily dose of chocolate—or whatever—somebody comes along to offer it to you with all good intentions. What is the proper response?

Let humility be your guide. Resist the temptation to explain that you are fasting. If you can politely refuse without hurting the person’s feelings, then do so. But if someone has prepared something for you to bless you (a special desert at the end of a meal, cookies for a visit, or a big steak dinner right after you gave up meat), then perhaps the more humble response is to accept gratefully. After all, the point of Lent is not the elimination of a specific food, it is sacrifice. Sometimes the greater sacrifice is to give up the idea of a perfect day of fasting for the sake of another person.

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” MATTHEW 6.16-18

daily study and prayers

1. Participate in young adult Bible study every Friday (6-8pm) at Marble Church.
2. Read Sister Carol’s Lenten devotional (free at Marble switchboard) each day and pray for 10 minutes.
3. Pray with www.sacredspace.ie each day (morning, noon, or night).
4. Pray with the podcast “Pray-as-you-go” on iTunes each day (morning, noon, or night.)

worship

1. Sundays, 11 AM at Marble (regular Sunday worship).
2. Wednesdays, 6:15 PM at Marble (meditative Lenten worship).
3. Find another daily or weekly prayer service at a church near where you live or work

alternative fasting

Take the idea of the fast—abstaining from something in order to focus on God’s sustaining presence—and apply it to something in your life other than food. **For example:**

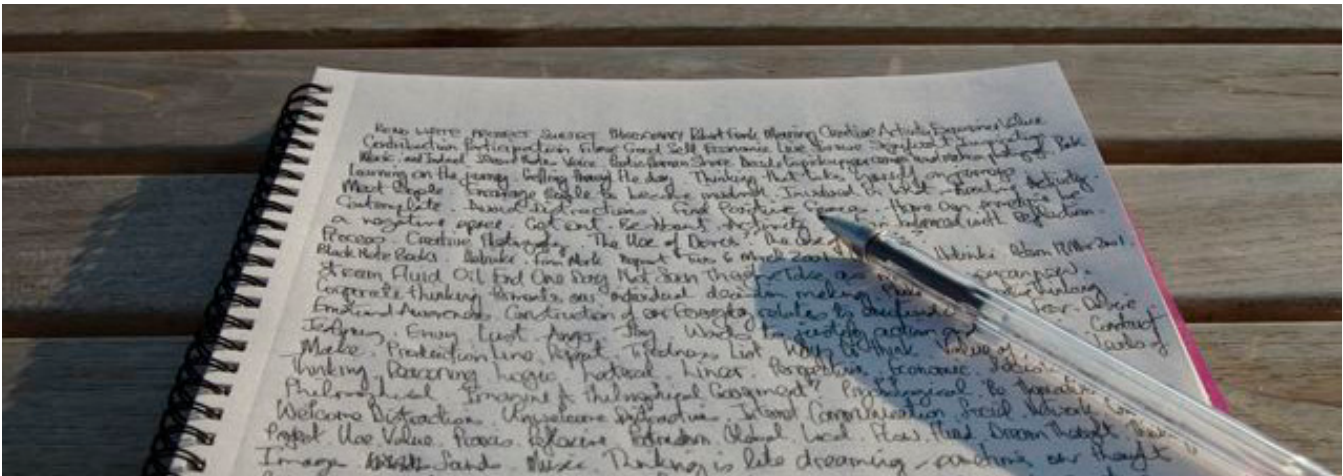
1. Unplug from electronic media: TV, movies, computer, email (set an autoresponder), Internet, catalogs, cell phone (leave your cell phone off when appropriate), handhelds, video games, and other technology.
2. You may want to fast from certain relationships, or people in general, choosing instead to walk only with God for a period. You may also fast from social events, parties, or clubs, if you regularly go out for entertainment.



journaling or blogging

Make daily entries during Lent, following a period of prayer. **Keep coming back to the questions:**

1. How am I hungry?
2. How does Christ offer to satisfy my hunger? How do I refuse what Christ offers and in doing so, perpetuate my own hunger?
3. Read Matthew 4:1-11: Jesus was tempted in the desert as he fasted. How does physical hunger lead to spiritual hunger, or vice versa?
4. What is your relationship to food? What is the relationship to food of the people around you? Of others in other parts of the world?



personal reflection

We are not independent—not in God’s design for the world. We depend on others for our emotional needs: friendship, intimacy, care, loyalty, support, forgiveness. **Consider your relationships during Lent:**

1. Reflect and pray about a romantic relationship in your life—a current relationship or one that has ended. What effect does the relationship have on you? What does the relationship teach you about yourself and your emotional needs and hungers you bring to relationships? How do you seek to meet the emotional needs of another person in a relationship?
2. Reflect and pray about your relationship(s) to parents and/or family members. Choose one or two family members. How are you connected to them right now? What is the nature of the distance between you? Are you too far away? Too close? Which direction are you heading? How do you communicate your needs to them? How do they communicate their needs to you?
3. Jesus faced temptations in the wilderness during his 40 days: what temptations confront you? Pray about your addictions. What needs have too much control over your life and your decisions? Drugs or alcohol? Sex or pornography? The need to be liked? The need to excel at your workplace? The need to please someone else or to live up to someone else’s expectations? The need to be right? How, with God’s daily help, can you, like Jesus, say “no” to your addiction? How, with God’s help, can you say “yes” to another way of life?
4. Reflect and pray about your emotional life. Do you spend too much time in one emotional place? Are you always sad? Do you feel a full range of emotions? Ask God to help you find balance and fullness in your emotional life, that you might experience and savor a full range of emotions every week.

acts of justice and kindness

God puts in us a hunger to do justice and to love righteousness. What can you DO to satisfy the hunger of others during Lent?

1. Eat & drink differently, feed others.

If you are fasting from food or drink, you are saving money. Keep track. If 25 people from church or your workplace redirect \$5 from food or other expenses each of the 40 days of Lent, you could sponsor a well through Charity:Water which would provide 250 people with a permanent source of clean drinking water. (www.charitywater.org)

Redirecting \$3 from food each of the 40 days of Lent will provide a family of 3 in NYC with food for 10 weeks through Food Bank for New York City (\$0.96/\$1 go to food) (www.foodbanknyc.org)

5. Share the Word

Make a commitment to share the Good News of God with people that you meet or people that you know. Tell them of the God who "fills the hungry with good things." Tell them about the Bread of Life, Jesus, who feeds our bodies and our souls. You don't need special "talking points." You don't need to know all the answers. Just tell them about your journey, and the God you know right now. Evangelism is "one hungry person telling another hungry person where they found bread."

2. Research Hunger in Your City

Do you know which organizations feed hungry people in your neighborhood? Call the Hunger Hotline at 1-866-888-8777. Go online and do research. Make a visit to your closest soup kitchen/food bank/food pantry to see what they do. Help out. Donate time, money, prayers. Make feeding hungry people local and personal.

3. Be direct, feed someone

Do you know someone who is hungry or food insecure? Make a commitment to help them eat better. This could mean buying them a meal. It could mean helping them find access to free or reduced cost meals or groceries. It could mean helping them develop job skills so that they can make more money. It could mean helping them access public benefits to which they are entitled but are not receiving, like food stamps.

4. Listen

Can you make a concerted effort to listen to one person a day whom you might otherwise ignore? Can you help satisfy their human desire to be recognized and heard?

GOT QUESTIONS?

minister

Rev. David Lewicki
dlewicki@marblechurch.org
212-686-2770

Call or email to schedule an appointment

Marble
Collegiate Church
Where good things happen.

1 West 29th Street (@5th Ave), NYC
www.marblechurch.org

servant leaders

Greg Angelo
gregorytangelo@gmail.com

Lauro Bucko
laurabucko@hotmail.com

Matt Beams
matthewbeams@gmail.com

Christine Seekamp
christine.seekamp@gmail.com

Brian Murphy
bgmurphy@gmail.com

Heather Metcalfe
hmetcalfe_us@yahoo.com