



A different kind of Lenten Fast

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*⁶ "This is the kind of fast day I'm after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts.
⁷ What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill clad, being available to your own families.
Isaiah 58:6-7, from The Message*

For years, I've jumped on the "what are you giving up for Lent?" bandwagon. Chocolate tends to be a favorite omission. After all, those chocolate eggs taste better on Easter morning after you haven't indulged for weeks. I once gave up FaceBook for Lent, since I spent way too much time on it; turns out, I not only didn't miss it much, but have never really gone back. From foods to habits, often our Lenten exclusions sound similar to New Year's Resolutions, something to let go of that will be better for us in the long run.

Yet, giving up something for Lent is meant to be a *spiritual* discipline, not a personal improvement project. Spiritual disciplines, in turn, are practices to bring us closer to God. Fasting is to let go of something to make more room in our lives and in our souls for God. When you find yourself craving that cup of coffee you've sworn off or reaching for the remote you said you wouldn't use, crave or reach for God instead.

We can also flip the "giving up for Lent" practice into a spiritual discipline of taking something on. This is more in line with God's words from Isaiah. Forget the chocolate and add a 2-minute prayer each day for a situation you've heard in the news. A friend once wrote a card every day in Lent to meaningful people in her life. If you need something more structured to guide you, there is the TREAD LIGHTLY FOR LENT Calendar from the PC(USA). [<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/tread-lightly-for-lent/>] It has a simple daily task with the theme of treading lightly on Creation.

Whatever you do or don't do, may this Lent bring you nearer to the heart of God.

Grace and Peace.

Lisa

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