

THINKING ABOUT GIVING SOMETHING UP FOR LENT?

by Paul Davidson for the Education Team

That's certainly my first thought about Lent – it's a time to **give up** something I like. But what is Lent, and why do we celebrate it anyway?

Lent is the period of 40 days which leads up to Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and is a time of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing Lent, Christians replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. It is marked by fasting, both from food and festivities. Whereas Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus after his death on the cross, Lent recalls the events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion.

Nowadays, not many people would think of fasting for the whole of Lent. It is much more common now to give up something we enjoy, the sacrifice then being a reflection of Jesus' time in the wilderness, and a test of our self-discipline. When we then think about whatever it might be we are abstaining from, we can think about Jesus and His much greater sacrifice for us.

This year, why not try something a little different at Lent? Instead of giving up something like chocolate, wine or coffee for 40 days, why not give up 10 minutes of your time every day to read a passage from the Gospel of John? What better way to spend the run up to Easter, than by reading systematically through the Gospel story?

John's is a little different from the three other Gospels – a brief introduction is included below, which hopefully you will find helpful. And if you don't have access to a copy of John's Gospel, then please let us know and we can certainly supply you with one.

Introduction to the Gospel of John, taken from Bible Gateway

John presents Jesus as the Word, the Messiah and the incarnate Son of God, who has come to reveal the Father and bring eternal life to all who believe in him.

It's clear from the first paragraphs of this Gospel that the disciple John broke sharply from the styles of the other Gospel writers – Matthew, Mark and Luke. They focused on events, following Jesus through the bustling marketplaces and villages. Unlike them, John assumed that readers knew the basic facts about Jesus. Instead, he mulled over the profound meaning of what Jesus had said and done. The NIV Student Bible says the book of John reads as if it were written under a great shade tree by an author who had lots of time for reflection. In his first sentence, John highlights Christ's nature. John's book tells the story of the eternal Word who became flesh and dwelt with humanity. People often turn to the Gospel of John because it spells out so clearly the basics of the Christian faith. Jesus proves who he is, diagnoses humanity's problems, and bluntly describes what is necessary for everlasting life.



February

Ash Wednesday	1: 1-28
Thursday 18th	1: 29-51
Friday 19th	2: 1-23
Saturday 20th	3: 1-21
Sunday 21st	Rest
Monday 22nd	3: 22-36
Tuesday 23rd	4: 1-42
Wednesday 24th	4: 43-54
Thursday 25th	5: 1-29
Friday 26th	5: 30-47
Saturday 27th	6: 1-22
Sunday 28th	Rest

March

Monday 1st	6: 22-59
Tuesday 2nd	6: 60-71
Wednesday 3rd	7: 1-31
Thursday 4th	7: 32-52
Friday 5th	8: 1-30
Saturday 6th	8: 31-59
Sunday 7th	Rest
Monday 8th	9: 1-41
Tuesday 9th	10: 1-21
Wednesday 10th	10: 22-42
Thursday 11th	11: 1-27
Friday 12th	11: 28-57
Saturday 13th	12: 1-26
Sunday 14th	Rest
Monday 15th	12: 27-50

Tuesday 16th	13: 1-20
Wednesday 17th	13: 21-38
Thursday 18th	14: 1-14
Friday 19th	14: 15-31
Saturday 20th	15: 1-17
Sunday 21st	Rest
Monday 22nd	15: 18-27
Tuesday 23rd	16: 1-15
Wednesday 24th	16: 16-33
Thursday 25th	17: 1-26
Friday 26th	18: 1-24
Saturday 27th	18: 25-40
Sunday 28th	Rest
Monday 29th	19: 1-27
Tuesday 30th	19: 28-42
Wednesday 31st	20: 1-18

April

Thursday 1st	20: 19-30
Friday 2nd	21: 1-14
Saturday 3rd	21: 15-25
Sunday 4th	Easter Day

