

Lent and the Spiritual Disciplines

Depending upon which denomination you grew up in, Lent may or may not have been an important time in your spiritual life. **The season of Lent originated in the 4th century A.D., and it spans 40 weekdays beginning on Ash Wednesday.** The final week of Lent is called Holy Week and includes Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and concludes on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. Colors in the church are coordinated with the church calendar. During Lent, the colors you typically see in a sanctuary are purple, red violet or dark violet. These particular colors are chosen because they symbolize both the pain and suffering leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, as well as the suffering of sinful humanity. But, purple is also a royal color, and that very much represents our king Jesus. Black is often used on Good Friday and Holy Saturday to symbolize the darkness that sin brought to the world. Those of the Catholic faith are familiar with Lent because it's still very much a part of the church today. Not so much for those in the Protestant faith.

Before Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at the University of Wittenburg (Germany) in 1517, there was only one Christian church and everyone observed holy days, church feasts and the daily office in the same way. With the start of the Reformation, much of these observances were thrown out—because they were associated with “high church.” High church uses liturgical, ceremonial, traditional and Catholic elements in worship.

Today, however, some Protestant churches are finding that maybe they have thrown out “the baby with the bath water,” and are recovering some of these aspects of historical Christian tradition as a way to enrich their spiritual lives—especially

in a culture that is becoming incre



With that in mind, some Protestant Christians are putting a greater emphasis on Lent by praying and preparing themselves for Easter. Today, we can use this time for introspection, self-examination and repentance. **At Only By Prayer, we are going to begin a series on the spiritual disciplines to help equip you to prepare for Easter.** If you feel led to do so, you can incorporate some of these practices into your days throughout this season of Lent. We are looking forward to this journey and pray God will bless your through it.

We'll start tomorrow with the first spiritual discipline. Join us, won't you?

Pray on!

JVC

Some of this information is taken from "[The Season of Lent](#)" by Dennis Bratcher.

Growing Pains

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by

Jane VanOsdol

When I was growing up, I remember that frequently at night my sister Mary would run to our mom, crying because her legs ached so badly. Mom would rub her legs and soothe her by saying that it was just “growing pains” that hurt so badly. While it didn’t make her legs stop hurting, it helped to know that there was something good that would be coming out of this painful process.

I think that we can also get growing pains in our spiritual lives too. Last month, we talked about new beginnings. Well, when we take that step of faith and begin a new process in our lives, somewhere in the process we experience growing pains. We may begin to question our decision. “What was I thinking?” we moan. “I’m not nearly smart enough to do this.” Or, “Why did I join the prayer ministry? My prayers are not nearly as eloquent as John’s are.” Maybe two weeks into our commitment to get up 30 minutes earlier to pray, we are overcome by fatigue and discouragement.



First of all, this is normal. The enemy does not want us making any headway into our spiritual lives, and he will throw obstacles along our path. However, this is also the time that God calls us to grow up. We need to put aside childish ways and thinking and persevere in that commitment, with the assurance that God will bless this new direction in our lives. Our growing pains will produce a harvest in our prayer lives.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you that you bring growth out of the painful processes in our lives. May we no longer be like children, but grow up in all things into You. Amen.

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