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*Introduction  
to Lent*

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## INTRODUCTION TO LENT

Sacrifice is not a word most of us enjoy hearing, at least not in connection with ourselves. The truth is we all make sacrifices all day long, every day. And the question is not whether we must make sacrifices, the question is: what sacrifices are we making? Best case scenario, our sacrifice is something we want for ourselves but choose to give up for the sake of someone else. Worst case scenario, we make a foolish assessment and sacrifice something truly and profoundly valuable.

As C.S. Lewis wrote,

*“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”*

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We tend to keep our fingers tightly wrapped around what cannot compare to what He offers us.

In Psalm 51 King David wrestled with what godly sacrifice means, v.16

*“You will not be pleased with a burnt offering.<sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*

David knew that God wanted his heart, not perfunctory exercises in religion. In giving up our own agendas, desires and preferences, we recognize what we try to keep for ourselves comes from broken places. Making a choice to offer our broken selves in return for His abundant life, truly is no sacrifice. But in those moments of laying down what seems precious to us...the pain is real. Our sacrifices, made in faith and love, are transformational; we become more like Him. He entered pain for us to give Himself to us. He calls us to follow His example.

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In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus’ words to His disciples are sobering:

*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”*

**Lent is a season to practice the discipline of sacrifice. In doing so, we demonstrate our faith and our love.**

Lent is an opportunity to consciously fellowship with Christ in His suffering; making a way for more of Him with less of ourselves. In church history, Lent as a preparation for Easter became connected to fasting before baptism in remembrance of John the Baptist’s words “Make straight a way for the Lord.”

1John 1:23

***Self-denial and fasting detach me from earthly things and remind me of Jesus' sacrifice; opening space in my soul for the swelling of God's love.***

A choice to **not** observe ancient practices of fasting or self-denial may not mean you are sinning, but it could mean you are sacrificing the sweetness of deeper spiritual transformation.

Consider joining us on an adventure of sacrifice for the next 40 days, emptying ourselves to be filled by Him. Each week you will find a short meditation on this site with suggestions for fasting and a recipe to enjoy with your family or share with someone in need. We recommend a sundown to sundown fast this week in preparation for the next 6 weeks. Ask God for what would be most helpful to your life in Him and prayerfully consider what the Lord may be asking you to relinquish. Whether that is coffee, eating out, social media, a more traditional 24-hour food fast or something far more difficult is not what is important. Fasting is in vain if it is merely abstinence; it is meant to be an act of participation in Christ's work, through which He liberates us from dependence on anything but Him.

We wait in anticipation with you for the "swelling of His love" in our hearts and homes!

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**RESOURCES:**

*40 Days of Decrease* - Alicia Britt Chole  
*Taste and See* - Margaret Feinberg

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*Week Two:*  
**BACK TO WORK**

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## BACK TO WORK

Not long after Andrew and John met Jesus, they went back to work. Andrew with his brother Simon, whom Jesus renamed Peter, and John with his brother James and their dad Zebedee were fishermen. They had followed Jesus out of curiosity it seems for a day. But in Luke 5:1-11 we read about them living their same old, same old. All night long they had tossed their nets, circled their boats, slapped their oars and waited for a catch... without success. Tired and frustrated, Simon Peter made a choice to listen to Jesus and give it one more try.

***One more drop.***

***One more circle.***

***One more hope.***

Their nets filled to bursting. Obviously, Jesus was the right connection for success. What could they have been thinking about the future of their careers as fishermen?! But Peter responded with shock and with shame:

*“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”*

Peter must have been very aware of his inner struggle to trust, yet Jesus provided in abundance. Then, Jesus did something crazy no matter how you look at it. Jesus invited these fishermen into his mission of changing the world.

*“Peter, Andrew, James, John, follow me. We have bigger fish to fry!”*

Immediately, they left EVERYTHING, even that massive catch and followed.

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It is staggering to envision them rowing back to shore and walking off into the unknown horizon with a man they barely knew and who had “no place to lay his head.” I know by personal experience, that I would have been more likely to say:

*“Just let me get these fish to market, and turn the proceeds over to my family at least. Then, I’ll be right with you.”*

Experience with Jesus was mounting for them; they could no longer imagine just going back to work. The first four disciples entrusted themselves and their families to God’s care when they made that entirely impractical decision. This week consider fasting for a day, “self-promotion” or “self-provision”. This may be counter-instinctual, but I am sure you will find He is enough. Ever since God himself took a sabbath after His work of Creation, it’s been an important part of following Him.

Lay down your nets, whatever they may be. Follow Him for a day into what only He holds for you. How? I don't know exactly. It is different for each of us.

But consider taking the day to:

*Stop working so hard to provide for yourself and/or the people you love. Stop spending mental and emotional energy on schemes to provide for yourself and/or the people you love. Follow Him into stillness. Follow Him into rest. Follow Him into delighting in what He has already given, and follow Him by offering Him your future.*

Maybe at the end of the day, enjoy a heart-healthy meal with some people that God cares for even more than you! The following recipe is recommended by Theresa Newman. I intend to make it with Tilapia, because apparently there is a type of tilapia called "St. Peter's fish" found in the Sea of Galilee. It is believed to be the kind of fish Jesus used to provide a temple tax for Peter. (Matthew 17:27)

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## HEALTHY FISH TACO BOWLS

Author: Ashley McCrary

Total Time: 15 minutes | Yield: 2 people



### INGREDIENTS

- 2 pieces Cod (or Tilapia)
- 2 cups cauliflower rice
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro (chopped)
- 1/4 cup red cabbage sliced or chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper (sliced)
- 1/2 cup guacamole
- 1 tsp ghee or butter
- 1/2 cup marinated onions
- 1 Roma Tomato (chopped)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper

### INSTRUCTIONS

Before cooking my fish, prep the bowl first, then cook the fish last. If you overcook Cod, it can get a bit chewy.

Prep your jalapenos, tomatoes, and cabbage on your cutting board.

Prepare marinated onions (1 small red onion sliced thin, 3/4 cup olive oil, 1 tbsp. of oregano and 1 tbsp of red wine vinegar.) I usually prepare mine the night before and pop in the fridge for best results.

Heat skillet with 1 tsp of ghee or oil over medium heat and add in your cauliflower rice. When the rice is almost done, add in cilantro and juice from one lime. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Remove your cauli rice and add to your serving bowls. Next, add your cod filets to the skillet with olive oil and cook 4 minutes on each side. Keep an eye on these and try not to overcook. It should be opaque and flake easily with a fork.

Build your bowl as desired (jalapenos, tomatoes, cabbage and guacamole) squeeze lime juice and sprinkle fresh cilantro over the top and serve.

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*Week Three:*  
**YOU DON'T LOVE ME**

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## YOU DON'T LOVE ME

### *“You don't love me.”*

It was said matter-of-factly and betrayed early marriage disillusionment.

I didn't think serving Phil a hot dog for lunch qualified as unloving or an excuse to imagine leaving his parent's household had been a questionable idea. But there it was, Oscar Mayer insulted him. Over the years, I've had to work hard at improving my culinary skills and expanding my go-to's. My creative side was briefly convinced that sooner or later my food experiments would produce a gastronomic wonder. NOT! Two things are clear: I must follow directions, and I must learn by putting myself around people who can teach me.

When I ask a hostess what I can bring, for everyone's safety, the answer is consistently “salad”. Until recently, I've been OK with that. I've embraced my limits to a degree and even the humiliation that comes with them. But now, the unthinkable has happened, I'm a grandmother. And sadly no grandchild will be endeared by mastering greens and olive oil. In my own, fond memories loom: Granny's fried chicken, Nan's yellow cake with chocolate icing, mom's apple pie, and we will cover Phil's family with all things perfectly Italian. But I'm having nightmares about my prodigy putting together a cookbook someday that reads: *Chapter 8 - Grandma Lolly's Lettuce*. Maybe by next year, I will have found my miracle recipe. Until then, I want to be a grandma who is remembered by the fruits of God's Spirit:

***“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*** Galatians 5:22-23.

Most of these, like cooking, do not come so naturally to me. I need to improve my spiritual skills. I need to put myself around the One who can teach me. The analogy is pretty obvious.

My life produces fruit from what has been nurtured. Planting and weeding are critical. A bumper crop of what nourishes me, can also feed others. The spiritual disciplines are practices in “being with” the Spirit. It is His work to nurture and tend to the weeds in our wild, rebellious hearts; but it is also mine.

The Holy Spirit teaches, corrects, comforts, convicts and empowers us... but with our cooperation His work is more fruitful. So, the next Lent challenge is to ask someone near and dear, how they think of you.

**What fruits of His Spirit do they associate with your life? Is your life characterized by fruit that nourishes others and even the ones who will come after you? Let their answer guide you into your time with God. Does He need to weed something out? Does He need to plant more good seeds through His Word? Does He want to care for you in a way that you are resisting?**



(i.e. taking a Sabbath, spending 10 minutes a day in silence, turning off negative influences.) Perhaps consider fasting the distraction of technology for a day.

Experiment a little with ways that seem to open your heart and mind to Him, but remember, He's already given us some directions and hopefully people whose lives we can learn from.

***“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”*** Proverbs 4:23 ESV

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## FIG SALAD WITH POMEGRANATES

AUTHOR: TWOKOOKSINTHEKITCHEN.COM

Total Time: 15 minutes | Servings: 4



### INGREDIENTS

spring mix lettuce for 4 people (4-5 ounces)  
6 figs, fresh or dried, sliced into thin wedges  
1/4 cup pomegranate seeds (or more)  
1 avocado, peeled, cut into 1 inch pieces and tossed with 1 tsp. lemon juice  
2 oz goat cheese, crumbled (optional) firm ricotta ok instead

### ***Balsamic Dressing***

1/4 cup olive oil  
2 tbsp good balsamic vinegar  
1/2 tsp honey or maple syrup  
1/2 tsp minced garlic  
1/2 tsp Dijon mustard  
salt and pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

**EXTRACT POMEGRANATE SEEDS:** Roll pomegranate on counter to loosen seeds. Cut pomegranate in half. Taking the first half, hold pomegranate seed side down over a bowl. Smack the outside with a wooden spoon (hard!) to release the seeds. Repeat with the other half.

**MAKE BALSAMIC DRESSING:** Place all dressing ingredients in a lidded container. Shake until blended. Alternatively, whisk ingredients together until well blended.

**ASSEMBLE SALAD:** Place lettuce in a large, wide-mouthed bowl. Sprinkle over top the figs, avocado (if using), goat cheese (if using) and pomegranate seeds. Drizzle on dressing just before serving.

**MAKE AHEAD:** The salad can be assembled ahead of time and kept covered in the fridge. If using avocados, be sure to sprinkle them with a bit of lemon juice to keep them from turning brown. Or, better yet, cut them just before serving. Also add the balsamic dressing just before serving. Pomegranate seeds can be stored ahead as well.

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*Week Four:*  
**THE BONES OF OUR SOULS**

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## THE BONES OF OUR SOULS

***“Having memories is a bit like having bones. Bones determine the structure of our body; memories determine the structure of our souls.” Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Invitations from God* p.168***

My childhood is filled with memories that have strengthened my soul. I have written many times about my early foundations of faith and love and happy beginnings. But one of the greatest gifts of coming to know God through the work of Jesus is the hope that no matter what memories have shaped us, we all have the same opportunity to offer our memories to God, to be re-shaped by His love. I recently read *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* by Miroslav Volf, in which he shares his own process of reshaping memories that threatened his soul. He calls it “re-remembering”.

Mr. Volf had a choice of what to do with bad memories.

So did Israel.

The Isarelites are a people whose history is riddled with the bones of injustice and the consequences of losing faith. Broken, dry, and in some cases scattered and dead beyond hope...God raised the Israelites again and again; knitting them back into a people meant to share His life with the world. Then He commanded them to remember God’s mighty acts on their behalf by repeated celebrations-

Perhaps most significant is Passover.

400 years of oppression in Egypt ...that’s quite a lot of re-remembering!

How did Israel focus on what God was doing and would do with their pain?  
They celebrated His miraculous deliverance.

Moses and his sister, Miriam, led the nation in celebrating mutual hope in God’s mighty work.

*“God is my strength, God is my song, and yes! God is my salvation...” (paraphrase from Exodus 15:2)*

## WEEK FOUR

Though freed from their physical chains, memories of Egypt could have kept them enslaved in their souls. Israel turned their hearts to Him in praise for His work in helping His people. "You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance..." Exodus 15:17 NIV

Slavery in Egypt, abuse, neglect, oppression was no longer their identity...

God's people were being given a new inheritance.

As they breathed the air of freedom, they sang: "Let God rule forever!"

God's people celebrated being ruled by no one but Him.

And what celebration is not linked to music and to food?

God gave them song.

God also gave them food.

The Isrealites were to remember God's deliverance with the meal of their Exodus: unleavened bread and unblemished lamb. Commanded not to break the bones of the animal or allow the bread to rise, their meal became a celebration of the journey toward restoration, wholeness and a future as His people. (Exodus 12)

*"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel..." vv. 14-15*

**This week try fasting bitter remembrances.**

**Leaven is just flour, water and TIME.**

**Spend some time asking God to make your memories a way of "crossing over" into the inheritance He has for you. This will take focus and practice...you cannot be casual about it.**

**BUT**

**what would you rather rise in your heart,**

**resentment and cynicism over the difficult things that have been done to you or by you ?**

**Or joy over the difficult things that have been done for you?**

**Let Him RE-member you...**

**knit you back together,**

**and claim you again**

**as His.**

Then try the bread that marked God's work of deliverance. There can be no wasted time in this recipe. Casual kneading will make the bread rise.

Focus and practice!

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# MATZAH

**AUTHOR: ALLRECIPES.COM**

Total Time: 28 minutes | Servings: 8



## INGREDIENTS

1 teaspoon all-purpose flour for dusting  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
1/3 cup water, or more if needed  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or as needed (optional)  
1 teaspoon olive oil, or as needed (optional)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Making matzah breads kosher for Passover requires using special Passover flour that has been guarded from contact with liquids.

The cook is allowed no longer than 18 minutes from the point they combine the flour and water to when they remove the matzah from the oven in order for it to be considered fit for Passover. Of course, non-kosher cooks may bake at a more leisurely pace if desired.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Move an oven rack near the top of oven and preheat oven to 475 degrees F (245 degrees C). Preheat a heavy baking sheet in the oven.

Dust a clean work surface and a rolling pin with 1 teaspoon flour, or as needed. Place 1 cup of flour into a mixing bowl; set a timer for about 16 minutes (18 minutes maximum).

Start the timer; pour the water, about 1 table-spoon at a time, into the flour. Stir the water and flour together with a fork until the dough forms a rough ball, remove the dough to the prepared work surface, knead rapidly and firmly until smooth, about 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Divide the dough into four equal pieces; cut each piece in half again to get 8 pieces total.

Swiftly roll each piece into a ball. Roll each piece of dough out into a 5-inch pancake, dusting the top and rolling pin with flour as needed. Gradually roll the pancakes out to a size of about 8 inches, increasing the size of each by about 1 inch, then letting the dough rest for a few seconds before rolling again to the finished size. Roll from the center out. The bread rounds should be very thin. Using a fork, quickly pierce each bread about 25 times, all over, to prevent rising. The holes should go completely through the bread. Flip the bread over, and pierce each piece another 25 times with the fork.

With at least 5 minutes left on the timer, remove the hot baking sheet from the preheated oven, and place the rounds onto the baking sheet. Place the baking sheet onto the rack near the top of the oven, and bake for 2 minutes; turn the breads over and bake an additional 2 minutes, until the matzot are lightly browned and crisp.

Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Lightly anoint each matzah with olive oil, using a brush, and sprinkle generously with salt.



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# GRAIN-FREE FLATBREAD

**AUTHOR: ACLEANBAKE.COM**

Total Time: 35 minutes | Servings: 3



## INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup tapioca flour  
1/4 cup coconut flour  
2 Tablespoons almond flour  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
pinch salt  
1 large egg  
3/4 cup milk of choice  
Oil, for cooking

## NOTES

The trick to success is to keep the pan at the right moderate temperature and let the flatbreads cook slowly so that they cook through without burning.

Some signs that your pan is too hot are...

- if the breads crack and break when you try to spread the batter over the bottom of the pan
- if the inside of the flatbreads are gummy
- if the outside of the breads are cooked and the insides are still wet/liquid

If you think the pan is too hot, simply turn off the flame and let it cool for a few minutes before cooking the remaining batter.

You can double this recipe, but you may need to add about 2 Tablespoons of milk about halfway through the cooking process if it thickens up too much.

Ideally, instead of doubling, simply make two batches.

Yield: 3 flatbreads, but multiply as necessary

## INSTRUCTIONS

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients (flours, baking soda and salt). Set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk the egg, then whisk in the milk.

Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and stir to combine and eliminate any clumps. Stir just enough, but try not to overmix. You don't want air bubbles in your bread!

Preheat a heavy-bottom 6" skillet (e.g. cast iron) over medium heat.

Add just enough oil to cover the bottom of the pan (I recommend a nonstick spray if you have one - the less grease you use, the better, so use just enough to prevent sticking).

Pour 6 Tablespoons of batter into the pan and quickly and gently shake/tilt the pan to spread the batter into a thin, even layer across the bottom of the pan. It's ok if the batter looks too thin; the flatbreads will rise slightly during cooking. Cook slowly over medium heat for several minutes until the bottom is firm and golden. Flip and cook until the other side is equally cooked and the inside of the bread is cooked through (not gummy).

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*Week Five:*  
**THE SALT OF THE EARTH**

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## THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Bread, more specifically unleavened bread - did anyone try it? I don't know how a week of such wide-spread "lockdown" could still be so busy! "What took up the week?" I ask myself. Well for one thing, grocery shopping. I traveled a bit to the next county west, where the shelves aren't yet decimated and they play uplifting music while you shop. In all the scrambling to readjust just about everything in our schedules, I never made the bread from last week's Lent Devotional!

So this week we are going to get even more basic than bread! You must all have salt on hand at least! I will share a link to the Redmond Salt Mine website instead of a recipe this week. Let's do what we can to keep people working for companies other than Amazon...I don't think they will miss your salt order too much! Yes, unless you order a lot, you will have to pay shipping charges; so maybe share an order with a friend or three, slip on those plastic gloves and leave it on their doorsteps.

One thing about salt,  
food-preserving, flavor-enhancing salt:  
the miners must dig deep for it.  
And during this time, so must we.  
Where does the ability to preserve and protect what must last, in the midst of all we must let go of, come from?  
Where does the ability to enhance the good that IS present in times that are lacking, or worse, intensely bitter, come from?

Jesus called upon His disciples to dig deep and allow His presence to be stirred up and shaken into a world that was losing the vibrancy of relationship with Him...

becoming stale, life-less, bitter.

*"YOU are the salt of the earth," He said in Matthew 5:13 (ESV).*

And with this word, after relaying a list of seeming oxymorons, He highlighted the blessings in what seemed more like curses.

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit"!***

***"Blessed are those who mourn"!***

***"Blessed are the meek"!***

***"Blessed are the hungry"!***

***"Blessed are the persecuted"!***

(paraphrased from Matthew 5)



## Huh?

Sometimes we are misjudged when we respond to deep pain with a statement of truth, as if it's insensitive and superficial.

The truth is, the truth is only superficial when it doesn't sink in and down. Digging for the blessing in what feels like a curse is not superficial...

the truth of blessings hidden in sadness, loss, oppression and hunger is deep indeed. So deep that we simply cannot get there on our own.

His Spirit must "unearth" the treasures He has for us. His "Holy" Spirit is "Holy" because His Spirit is unlike anything or anyone else that we have ever interacted with! His Spirit is holy because His Spirit is not corrupted by circumstances or encounters with evil. For sure, this virus is from evil. But evil will never rob God of His power to preserve and enhance life and all that is truly good and beautiful.

Our ways of seeing this work are challenged for sure...

But why are the "poor in spirit" considered blessed? Because they know their own poverty of spirit and desperately depend on His.

He remains when we are shaken and stirred.

He enhances sweetness that overcomes bitterness.

Ask Him this week to work the deep and lasting power of His presence through your heart and mind so that the peace He gives you will bring peace and life to the ones on the other side of the phone, or the screen, or the door.

Try giving up salt entirely from a meal or all meals for a day...the absence of flavor will make you desperate for the Shaker!

Taste and see that indeed the Lord IS good IN you, and the world needs all He is IN you, today. And check out a real salt mine on youtube or order some "Real Salt" at [redmond.life](http://redmond.life)

*"Love never gives up...Love takes pleasure in the flowering of the truth...trusts God always. Love always looks for the best...and never looks back."* **(paraphrased from 1 Corinthians 13, The Message)**