



"What are the rules for giving things up during Lent?"

I've had several people ask me the past couple of weeks about what to give up for Lent. Like meat or things made with yeast (sin is compared to yeast in the Bible) or "whatever." My answer was that Lent is a "made-up" thing, so you can pretty much "make up" what you want to give up. What I mean by that is that Lent is something that is not found in the Bible. You'll never find God giving a command like: "Thou shalt give up something for forty days before Easter!"

It's easy to get the idea that because "we always do it that way," it must have been commanded by God. In reality, there are lots of things we do in church that are human traditions that are neither expressly commanded nor forbidden by God. In other words, ceremonies that fall under the category of Christian liberty.

But, just because God doesn't command us to observe Lent doesn't mean Lent is a bad thing. The folks who came up with the idea had a good reason for it. Lent is a forty-day time when we prepare for celebrating Jesus' victory over sin, death and Satan on Easter. Lent is typically a somber time when we're reminded of our sinfulness - our tendency to do the opposite of what God's designed us to do. It makes perfect sense to prepare for Easter by being reminded of our sin. I mean, how can you celebrate Jesus' victory over sin unless you first admit that you need someone to save you from it?!!!

One way we typically "get in shape" for our Easter celebration is by repenting - turning away from sin and walking in God's ways.

You may try to get in shape during Lent by "giving something up" or by "taking something up." But don't do either one as a sort of 40-day punishment. That's the wrong idea! Jesus took your punishment, so you don't have to. Use the 40 days of Lent to develop the habit of PERMANENTLY "giving up" (quitting) something or by "taking up" (starting) something

And I'd recommend that if you're going to give up something or take up something, make it something more meaningful than meat or yeast or pop or coffee or chocolate. Figure out something to give up that is keeping you from - what's the goal of a disciple? - becoming more like Jesus. Or figure out something to take up that will help you become more like Jesus.

A suggestion: Try adding one of these to your Lenten schedule:

- ]/ Wednesday Evening Lenten Devotion from 6:00-6:45 at church. (You can come for soup and sandwich supper before that from 5:00-5:55.)
- ]/ "I Can Only Imagine" small group Bible study (See the place / time options elsewhere in this Newsletter.)

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)