Forty Ideas for a New Kind of Lent

**What is Lent?**

* A 40 day period of preparation for Easter (46 when Sundays are included)
* Starts on Ash Wednesday (22nd Feb this year); ends at Easter
* A season of repentance

**A whole *season* of repentance?**

It’s not dreary or dreadful – it’s a wonderful opportunity!

* A spring-clean for the soul
* A chance to be intentional about deepening our relationship with God . . .
* . . . and others – family, friends, neighbours and strangers

**So how do I ‘do’ Lent? Or make it more than ‘giving up chocolate’?**

Lent is a really good time to stop and ask, “What are the things I’m facing towards, that mean I’m ending up with my back to God?” That question then extends into practice: what should I stop doing or start doing that will deepen my relationship with God and my commitment to making his kingdom come on earth? Doing Lent well will involve both individual commitment and (ideally) group practices and accountability. At its best, it is a discipleship training school. Journaling about your experiences, and evaluating them afterwards, will make them much more valuable.

A good starting point is to ask, “**What one thing could I do in the next 40 days that would change my life forever?**” If that doesn’t inspire anything interesting, then consider any of the following ideas (you could easily do more than one), or use them to get creative and come up with your own Lenten fast. You can do it alone, or make a group commitment – or a combination. You are limited only by your imagination, so get thinking, praying, talking – and doing!

1. Learn a new type of prayer practice (e.g. meditation, liturgical or the prayer of examen) and make a daily commitment to engage in it for Lent (try <http://commonprayer.net/about> and <http://www.rcdom.org.uk/documents/EXAMEN.pdf> for more information).
2. Start a spiritual journal, and write in it daily during Lent.
3. Ask God daily to show you the needs around you, expect that he will – and then actually offer to pray for those people, then and there.
4. Hold a worship service under the stars; or use this *Prayer for Creation* resource (<http://restoringeden.org/getinvolved/pray/lent-2011-pray-for-creation> ).
5. Give up meat, fish, or sweet or salty snacks for Lent; every time you wish you could have some, use that as a prayer prompt.
6. Go on a full or partial media fast.
7. Keep a 24 hour vow of silence; and / or go on a silent retreat weekend.
8. Plant a tree or start growing your own vegetables – onions are easy and are planted in March. No garden? No problem: spinach, lettuce and herbs are all very suited to indoor growing, are easy to look after and require little space.
9. Keep a gratitude log, and try not to repeat anything. Share your log with someone else. Give thanks in a new and creative way, sharing God’s abundance.
10. Don’t buy any consumer goods for 40 days; make any birthday presents you need. And / or organise a ‘swap-shop’ (clothes, toys, books) with friends.
11. Watch *The Story of Stuff* (<http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-stuff/> ) and decide how your household is going to reduce waste; start your new and better habits during Lent.
12. Don’t throw any food away during Lent (food waste facts: <http://www.feeding5k.org/food-waste-facts.php> ).
13. Eat only rice on one day of the week; or for a whole week (take a multivitamin in that case). Pray for the hungry and give the money you save to a food charity.
14. Open your home and prepare and share a meal with people you would not normally spend time with – colleagues, neighbours, asylum seekers . . .
15. Water matters (<http://www.charitywater.org/whywater/> ). Learn about saving water (<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/index.php> ) and try living 1 day with only 20 litres; pray for the women and children who walk up to 3 hours a day to get water; donate some money to a water charity.
16. Go on a bottled water fast (the Story of Stuff has more on this).
17. March 22nd is World Water Day (<http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/index.html> ) – organise an event to raise awareness (and money) where you live or work.
18. Reduce the length of time you spend in the shower by 1 minute (or more); that’s at least 45 mins of running water you’ll have saved by Easter!
19. As a small group, do Earth Ministry’s Lenten Prayer and Action Series (<http://earthministry.org/news/lenten-prayer-and-action-series> ).
20. Have2Give1: taking seriously God’s call to “love your neighbour as yourself”; sell half your possessions and give the money to charity (<http://jesusdojo.com/stories/have2give1> ).
21. Go on a prayer walk around the area where you live, or around a town in Luxembourg you don’t know at all. Chat with the people you meet.
22. Start composting (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/composting/index.php> ).
23. Calculate your carbon footprint, and take steps to reduce it (<http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx> ).
24. Find out how many forced labourers work for you (<http://slaveryfootprint.org/>); commit to changes in your lifestyle that reduce the number; become an International Justice Mission prayer partner (<http://www.ijm.org/get-involved/prayer-partner> ).
25. Every day during Lent, smile at everyone you have contact with and be intentional about being kinder than you need to be. Take the time to see Jesus in everyone’s eyes. Every day, let one person go ahead of you in a queue.
26. Write to a prisoner of conscience, or to a government, every week during Lent (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/how-you-can-help> )
27. Do Lent as a family using the *Love Life Live Lent* resources: <http://www.livelent.net/index.html>
28. Attend a ‘different’ worship service (Orthodox, Catholic, the synagogue…).
29. Walk around the Gare area of Luxembourg ville one evening; pray into the brokenness you witness; buy someone who’s cold a cup of hot coffee; talk to them; taste some food you’ve never had before from a local eatery.
30. Write a poem, paint or dance as an act of worship. Do something novel that will help you “taste and see” that God is good.
31. Join an open meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and befriend someone there (<http://www.aa-europe.net/countries/luxembourg.htm> for English-speaking groups).
32. Find out about voluntary work opportunities in Luxembourg, and commit to a project (<http://www.benevolat.public.lu/fr/index.html> )
33. Try writing only paper letters by hand; consider especially if there is anyone you need to say sorry to, and write to them to ask forgiveness. Forgive anyone you need to forgive. Thank God that he is “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love” (Psalm 145:8)
34. Learn to make a food you normally just buy the convenience version of: a whole dish, like curry; or bread or yogurt; or make your own ‘green’ detergents (<http://eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm> ).
35. Make an article of clothing for yourself or for someone else.
36. Wash someone’s feet on Maundy Thursday (Thursday before Easter; traditional commemoration of the Last Supper), then allow them to wash your feet.
37. Make a special study of the Passion narratives (the stories of Jesus’ last week); try using Imaginative Prayer: <http://ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/ignatian-contemplation-imaginative-prayer/>
38. Re-imagine your life: if you could dream up your life again, what would it look like? What are the things holding you back from living that dream? Are there steps you could take to get closer to that life in God’s kingdom? Take them.
39. Prepare for a 10km run; get sponsored for charity (<http://www.justgiving.com/>); teach others and advocate for that cause.
40. Prayerfully discern how you and your house could meaningfully keep a day of Sabbath rest, and then start keeping a Sabbath as a family.

*The LORD bless you and keep you;*

*the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;*

*the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.*

(Numbers 6:24-26)