

# STICKY FAITH EVERY DAY

## Week 1: Notice

Daily Guide Extra: Introduction to Lent

# NOTICE

## Sticky Faith Every Day Daily Guide Extra

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### LENT:

*A 40-day journey of noticing God*

If you've heard of Lent before, chances are one of the first things that comes to mind is "giving something up," as in "I'm giving up chocolate for Lent."

That's sort of right. But not quite.

When you stop doing something you're used to doing (like eating dessert), you notice different things. Lent is like that. It's a season—40 days to be exact (not counting Sundays)—when the Church throughout the ages has chosen to pause and notice something. That "something" is the journey of Jesus to the cross. Alongside his journey, we're also called to notice our own journeys toward death and resurrection. In many traditions, Lent starts out with "Ash Wednesday," when many Christians choose to wear a cross or smudge of ashes on their foreheads or hands. This is a symbol that represents our death, or "mortality." It's a reminder of the pain, suffering, and loss that are part of life. It's a reminder to turn away from sin and toward God.

Sounds kind of morbid, doesn't it?

But here's the thing. "Lent" actually means "Spring"—you know, the season of new life. So in the midst of the bitter winter cold and all the death that might be around us, there's this uncanny hope that rebirth is possible.

## FAST:

*-subtract+add*

Lent often involves a form of “fasting”, which usually means some kind of hunger.

When most of us think “fast”, we think “speed”. You might be a fast runner or a fast test-taker. Ironically, the spiritual use of the word sort of means the opposite. Fasting is a “slow” thing. It makes us stop and notice something—something we’re missing, something we’re going without. Something we *subtract* from our lives. Like food.

Fasting may typically mean we avoid eating food, or certain kinds of food, for a set period of time. But fasting is a practice that goes beyond food. It can mean choosing to go without TV, Facebook, or Xbox. In fact, fasting is the opposite of *dieting*, which is about controlling our bodies for the sake of achieving a certain waist size or belly firmness. If that’s one of your goals, you should *absolutely not* fast from food, because it’s too easy to confuse the two (or celebrate one as a by-product of the other).

No, fasting isn’t about obsession with our bodies.

Here are a few other things fasting is NOT: It’s not punishing yourself for bad behavior. It’s not working to earn God’s favor, or doing something to please God. It’s much bigger than all that.

In fact, fasting isn’t just about subtracting for the sake of subtraction (which is what your math class might feel like most of the time). We subtract something so that we—or perhaps God—can *add* something new. In other words, what happens in the void left by whatever we choose to give up? If we give up an hour of video games, what do we do with those extra 60 minutes? If we give up lattes, what do we do with that money? Maybe it’s adding true hunger, a hunger for spiritual growth. Maybe it’s adding silence and stillness to a life full of noise and movement. Maybe we add prayer when we’re usually silent toward God. Maybe God adds passion for serving the poor where we’re usually pretty self-absorbed.

If all of this sounds intriguing, maybe you’d like to join in this 40-day journey of Lent together with other Jesus-followers around the world. Each week we’re going to give you ideas for becoming more aware of God in your everyday life. You can use them in whatever way is most helpful to you, though many people find that setting apart a particular time of day to pray and practice other disciplines helps them keep up a rhythm. As you consider the 40 days ahead, we encourage you to also think about what you might want to subtract and what you might want to *add* during the season of Lent to help you notice God more.