



LET GO *and*
LET GOD:
LENT 2011



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Lent: A Time for New Growth

By Tom Thorpe

What is Lent?

The term *Lent* comes from an Old English word meaning “spring,” the time of “lengthening of days.” During Lent we begin to see new plant and animal life as the earth emerges from winter and moves toward another fruitful summer season. As the earth appears to awaken and bring forth new life, we can, through our observance of Lent, awaken to new spiritual awareness as well.

Lent may have begun in about the fourth century of the Common Era as a time of preparation of Christian converts for baptism at Easter time. Slowly, Lent evolved into a time of prayer and fasting (abstaining from eating or following an austere, usually meatless regimen) that the entire Christian church observed as part of its preparation for Easter. Some Christian churches continue to observe Lent and some do not. Lenten practices vary, but usually include some form of self-discipline.



The Lenten observance in Christian churches of the Western world begins on Ash Wednesday. Lent is said to be a 40-day season, but Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent, so the actual time between Ash Wednesday and Easter is 46 days. In 2011, Ash Wednesday is observed in the Western Christian church on March 9. Easter is observed on April 24. The Lenten season concludes with Holy Week, the seven-day period immediately preceding Easter. Holy Week includes Palm Sunday, commemorating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem; Maundy Thursday (also known as Holy Thursday), commemorating Jesus' Last Supper with his 12 disciples; and Good Friday, commemorating Jesus' crucifixion and death.

Is Lent based on the Bible?

Lent has no basis in the Bible. It is a tradition that originated in the Christian church. The Bible does include stories of “times of preparation”—Jesus' temptations in the wilderness for 40 days and the Hebrews' wandering in the desert for 40 years—but nothing in Scripture directly relates to a Lenten season.

Why does Unity observe Lent?

Unity's founders, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, saw value in observing Lent from a Unity perspective. *Keep a True Lent* was compiled from Charles Fillmore's writings and lectures about Lent. Mr. Fillmore wrote: “Lent ... is a church institution embodying an exalted idea, the idea of cleansing and



disciplining both mind and body toward the end of making them more receptive to the Christ ideas. Like many other religious practices, it is too often observed in letter but not in spirit.”

The spirit of Lent inspired Fillmore. As was his practice with many of the ceremonies and symbols of the Christian church, he interpreted the practices of Lent metaphysically. That is to say, Fillmore looked at the practical spiritual significance of the Lenten observances of fasting in each individual's life. He wrote: “We must learn to deny our selfish impulses and be obedient to impulses of brotherly love. When we withdraw our attention, interest and support from the false and the unworthy, this is true fasting.”

He added: “When we give that same attention, interest and support to the enduring good, we are feasting on the things of the Spirit, and this is true prayer. When we have truly fasted in the Christ way, we have increased our ability to respond to God's good will.”

In Charles Fillmore's view, fasting and prayer (which he called feasting) become primarily spiritual rather than physical practices. Their purpose is to help us permanently release unproductive thinking and behavior patterns and to build up or reinforce Truth ideas until they become the guiding principles for every area of our lives.



1st Day of Lent

Ash Wednesday • March 9, 2011

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

—MATTHEW 16:19

In the midst of a spiritual awakening, I may discover that old thought patterns or habits seem to be inhibiting my growth. As I pray about them, I can release these mental, emotional or physical roadblocks and open the way to experience healing of mind, body and spirit.

During my times of reflection, I bless any troubling thoughts and let them go. This act of releasing prepares my mind for new, self-affirming, loving thoughts to take their place, and I focus my energy on these. As I “bind” them consciously, they become a part of who I am and I am renewed in mind and heart.

*I am filled with the
Christ Presence,
confident and sure
of my eternal
connection to God.*

