

# Choose Your Own Lent-venture

**WHO:** When it comes to family we know there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all description. Even within individual homes the make up of family can change from day to day or week to week - maybe you have a kid home from college, maybe grandparents are visiting, maybe you have friends over for dinner. We will often use phrases like "you and your family" but know that whether your family is you, or includes a partner, kids, or a group of friends, we want you to know that you are valued and worthy, and an important part of this community. In this guide you'll find a break down for each piece that includes three ideas or prompts that we hope will provide something for everyone. Choose which one fits your context best each week, or blend one or more together to find the right fit for you. Where there's only one option offered we believe that it would work for whatever your context.

- **Solo, adults, teens** // 7th grade and up, done as a group or individually
- **Young kids** // Toddler - 1st grade
- **Older kids** // 2nd - 6th grade

**WHEN:** The when is up to you. Use this guide as an invitation to add some faith practice into the rhythms of your family, or to support those that already exist. For some families you might need structure - pick a time & day each week to spend in devotion together. For others, it's all about fluidity. Where are those sabbath margins that exist within the week? There is no right answer to this; find what works best for you in this season.

**WHAT:** Each week we will provide you with a recommend reading from scripture, some reflection thoughts, and then some ideas or prompts for prayer, fasting, and service. We invite you to pick and choose which areas you focus on each week. Some families may choose to focus on prayer each week. For others, finding ways to be in service together might be appealing. Maybe you're a traditionalist, and you want to add some depth to your Lenten practice of fasting. Or perhaps, you want to mix and match; one week you look at prayer, another week service, back to prayer, then maybe some fasting, etc. Maybe different people in your family want to try different things. Again, we invite you to find what works for and blesses your family. We also want to speak grace into our all-or-nothing culture. Did you miss a week? Didn't have space to think about it until week 4? This study is an invitation into practice - not perfection. Be blessed, and know that the Spirit is at work in our imperfection.

# Week 1 | Sin Enters the Story

**Full Readings:** Genesis 3, Romans 5:12-21

**Shorter Readings:** Genesis 3:6-21, Romans 5:18-21

**Reflection:** Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, and the familiar reminder of "dust you are, and to dust you will return" (Gen. 3:19). Our readings above are the story of Adam and Eve's fall into sin, and through them, also ours. It is in this response that God makes known the cost of sin - death. It's easy to look at this passage and see an angry parent doling out consequences of disobedience. But take another look and you'll see grace given here as well. Before God condemns them, God gives the promise of a Savior (v.15); before God casts them out of the garden, God provides for their needs (v.21). The activities this week seek to draw us into the duality of law and gospel present in this reading, but also our own daily walk with Christ. Choose which one(s) you and your family want to do during week one of your Choose Your Own Lent-venture.

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## Prayer // Confession & Gratitude

Lent is a season of repentance and reflection. The readings this week draw us into the story of original sin - but also to the gift of Christ as payment for sin. As mentioned above we see the punishments of God for Adam and Eve's disobedience, but we also see his care for them. Our prayer activities this week draw us into a practice of confession for those places where we too disobey God, but also of gratitude and praise for those places where God still provides for our care and needs.

## Adults/Teens

- **Journal prompt:** Reflect on the moments this week where you have disobeyed God. Then go through those you've highlighted and think through the ways that God has still cared for you in that space. Where do you see God's faithfulness to you?
- **Prayer:** Lord, you have created and loved me as your child. Forgive me for the times and places where I fall short of your love - specifically \_\_\_\_\_. Help me to turn my heart back to you so that I might better reflect your love in this world. Thank you for your mercy and grace, and your faithfulness to me through \_\_\_\_\_. Bless me and forgive me O Holy Lord. Amen."

# Week 1

## Prayer // Confession & Gratitude, cont.



### Young Kids // Toddler - 1st grade

For younger kids, sin as a concept can be a little abstract. This prayer activity can help them connect it to something tangible. You will need playdough or clay.

- Help child(ren) think of a time when they didn't listen this week; when they disobeyed you or God (Bonus, lead them by doing yours as an example).
- Help them to shape their playdough into something that connects with that moment.
- Once everyone has completed their shape, hold the items in your hand and have them repeat after you as you pray: Dear Jesus (Dear Jesus), Thank you for loving us (Thank you for loving us), Forgive us when we sin (Forgive us when we sin), help us to love like you (help us to love like you) Amen (Amen).
- Then shape the playdough into a heart, and close your time with this blessing. Make the sign of the cross on foreheads and say, "You are a forgiven child of God, be at peace." Help kids do it back to you.

### Older Kids // 2nd - 6th grade

When talking with older kids about the bible story above, highlight that when Adam and Eve sinned, they created a divide between them and God that only Jesus could make whole again. Talk with them about how we sin and turn away from God in our lives (this can be specific, like cheating in a game, or general like pride in self). Each day join them in praying this prayer - this can be said individually or all together.

- Stand and begin by facing one direction, and say "**God, you created and loved me. But I turned away from you when I \_\_\_\_\_** (insert a sin(s) here)."
- Turn so you are facing the other way. Say "**Lord forgive me when I sin, and help me to change so that I might love as you have loved me. Thank you for blessing me with \_\_\_\_\_** (insert something here that is a blessing that connects with the sin, in our example above that could be game to play, or friends)."
- Turn the other way around. Say "**Praise to you God, for your goodness and mercy. Amen**"

To take this one step further, take turns then making the sign of the cross on foreheads and saying "You are a forgiven child of God, be at peace."

# Week 1



## Fasting Week 1 // Microwave & Convenience

Our reading from Genesis includes God's response to Adam & Eve sinning in the garden. Part of the punishment they receive is that they will toil for their food (v.17-19). Before sin, Adam and Eve were in fellowship with God, and they had their pick of fruit (except for one tree). In the fall they had to work for their food, and there was a separation between them and God. Later, when Jesus begins his public ministry and preaches the beatitudes, He calls us to hunger and thirst for something so much richer than food without thorns or work, but for righteousness - to be right with God (Matthew 5:6). Our text from Romans (v.21) reminds us that it is in Christ alone that we receive that gift of grace. This week as you practice fasting are there places where you can let go of the convenience of meal preparation and reflect our need to toil for food - and the ways that God provides for us still despite it.

### Adults, teens

Abstain from using the microwave to reheat meals. What changes to schedule or meals need to happen to avoid using convenience items in the preparation? How does unrushed time preparing your food draw you closer into an appreciation for the food? Where is convenience a necessity? How does this highlight the brokenness in our world?

### Young kids // Toddler - 1st grade

Deconstruct a favorite snack - help young kids start to understand the work that goes into the things that they enjoy eating by seeing all the steps and processes that go into it. Use this example of applesauce as a guide:

- Have the child hold the packaged applesauce and an apple. Ask them if they are the same thing. How do they think one becomes the other?
- Together make homemade applesauce - have them participate in the washing of the apples, and removing any stickers. Measuring ingredients and mashing the cooked apples. Older young kids may even be able to help with the peeling and coring of the apples. Full instructions can be found here: <https://cookingwithkids.org/recipe/applesauce/>.
- Talk about how before sin we didn't need to work for food, but part of our punishment for sin is that we now need to work for the food we eat. What do they think food was like for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?

### Older kids // 2nd - 6th grade

Make a meal together - ideally one that has many steps (like homemade pizza, lasagna, or chili). Often in this development stage children can start to develop a sense of expectation, and maybe even entitlement. By working together to create a meal they can gain insight into the work that goes into feeding a family. You can take this experience further by talking about food supply chains (how do we get tomatoes in Minnesota in March), or the cost of food - how do your hours at the office translate to meals on their plate. How does food connect people today? What do they think it was like for Adam and Eve to walk in communion with God before sin?

# Week 1



## Service (Almsgiving) Week 1 // Clothing & Coverings

The reading from Genesis this week reminds us that Adam & Eve's first awareness of their sin was their nakedness (v7), and God's first sacrificial act in their care for them was to create garments of skin for them, from the very animals he had just created (v21). Eventually God would clothe them with something even greater, the blood of His Son, Jesus (Galatians 3:27). This week's act of service is to donate clothing - God sacrificed his creation to provide coverage and care for Adam and Eve, what can you sacrifice to provide care for others?

This week's activities can be done by all ages.

**From your closet:** Many of our closets are full of items we no longer wear, or need. Use this week as a chance to go through your excess and pull out those items in good condition that could be given to bless others. If you want to take this practice further, what item would be a sacrifice for you to donate? Often we only donate the cast offs or duplicate items - perhaps this is an opportunity to practice sacrificial giving. The links below provide some ideas for where to donate clothing:

- Professional Attire: Dress for Success <https://www.dressforsuccesstwincities.org/>
- Clothing & Outerwear: Josephs' Closet <https://www.josephscoatmn.org/>

**New Items:** During March & April we are hosting a drive for Arrive Ministries, an organization that supports refugees arriving in Minnesota. One of the items that they have need of is bedding (Twin & Full Sheets; blankets, quilts or comforters; Pillows & pillow cases). Purchased items can be placed in the collection boxes in the narthex. If doing this as a family, bring children with you to purchase the items - what design, or kind of blanket would make them feel safe and welcomed when arriving to a new place? Before donating the items, pray over them for the families and individuals that might receive them. Not local? Look for a refugee arrival organization to donate to within your own community. Need help finding one? Let us know and we'll be happy to help you search!

- To learn more about Arrive Ministries: <https://arriveministries.org/>

**Created:** Tie-blankets are some of the most comforting blankets. Just heavy enough to provide some extra comfort, soft, and usually colorful. The Children's Hospital of Minnesota gifts their patients a new blanket for their stay, and to take home with them. As a family, create a blanket (or more than one) to donate and help a child feel comfort. Invite kids to help pick out fabric. As you tie the ends together pray for the child who will receive it, and talk about how God provides care for us as his children. Blankets should be 1.5yds x 1.5yds, or 2.5yards x 2.5 yards.

- Instructions on how to make a blanket visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8bkaa2>
- Donation Instructions & Hours: <https://tinyurl.com/uyx8n7bk>