

Creative things to give up for LENT

By Dynamic Catholic

When was the last time you had a really memorable Lent? Or even a life-changing Lent? So often, we just give up something like chocolate like we always have, without giving it much thought. And we don't really stick to it. Or if we do manage to get to Easter without eating said chocolate, we realize we haven't really grown spiritually since the beginning of Lent. And isn't that actually the point?

When we make ourselves available to God, incredible things can happen. That's what can make Lent so powerful.

The point of giving something up, of fasting, is to cultivate the inner life. When we fast, we realize how truly dependent on God we are. We open our hearts, our minds, and our bodies to God's love in our lives. We look at the ways that we need to grow and dedicate ourselves to becoming a-better-version-of-ourselves. And when we make ourselves available to God, incredible things can happen. That's what can make Lent so powerful.

But you can take it one step further. Don't just give something up. There is also great value in doing something for Lent. It's the perfect time not only to abandon self-destructive habits, but also to form new life-giving habits, habits that can extend beyond the 40 days of Lent. Give something up, eliminate a bad habit from your life, and then fill that gap intentionally. Look at how you can become a-better-version-of-yourself and commit to a new good habit.

Below are two lists. One is a list of things to give up for Lent, and the other is a list of life-giving habits. I invite you this Lent to pick one from each list. Just one from each list. Give something up, then fill the gap.

THINGS TO GIVE UP FOR LENT

Don't eat what you want.

Matthew Kelly talks about the power of never leaving the dinner table without making an act of self-denial. Take that to heart at every meal this Lent. If you want waffles for breakfast, make eggs instead. Instead of drinking orange juice, drink water.

Give something away—every day.

I have a friend with a very large wardrobe. One year, she decided to give away one article of clothing each day during Lent. A couple times each week, it had to be something she really liked and wanted to keep. Maybe it's not your wardrobe that needs cleaning out, but consider giving something away each day, or each week, during Lent.

Don't interrupt people.

One of my co-workers gave me this idea, and I could certainly benefit from trying it. I fall into this habit far too often. We could probably all do well to spend more time listening, and less time interjecting.

Stop complaining.

I did this one Lent when I was a college student. In fact, my entire household of girls did it together. What a difference it made in our community, in our relationships with one another. We had to be far more intentional. We had to find constructive ways to talk about our difficulties, and we looked for the good in people instead of focusing on any inconvenience we'd experienced.

Don't waste downtime.

We all have it every day, when we're waiting in line, at a stoplight, in between classes or meetings, waiting to meet someone, etc. I don't know about you, but I go to my phone so easily. You don't have to give up social media or the like entirely, but you can be intentional about not using it during those times. Take that time instead to pray, to breathe, to reach out to someone around you. You'll be amazed at the difference it can make in your day.

WHAT TO DO FOR LENT

Spend time in the classroom of silence.

Each day during Lent one year, I spent one hour in complete silence, phone and all electronics completely off. Set a timer in your kitchen, then forget about it. Spend the time however you want. I usually prayed a Rosary, read some Scripture, and then read a little bit of a good spiritual book. Wow. That time was so well spent. Maybe you can do an hour, or maybe you can do 10 minutes. But take the time for silence and reflection each day.

Do BEST LENT EVER.

This is a free email program that will guide you on an incredible 40-day journey to become the-best-version-of-yourself. The short, daily videos from Matthew Kelly are both inspiring and practical. It'll take you 5 minutes a day. It's well worth your time.

Read the Gospels.

Pick a Gospel and read a passage each day during Lent. It is in reading the Gospels that we can realize that Jesus is not just a historical figure. He is alive and with us in everything we do.

Sit in church with Jesus.

Stop by a church for a few moments each day during Lent. Sitting in a quiet, empty church is a beautiful experience. Just you and God. There is something powerful about that.

Do an act of love every day.

Send a kind note to a loved one, do a good deed for a stranger, volunteer, post something inspiring on social media. It doesn't have to be big—just do something each day.

So, what two habits are going to lead you to your best Lent ever this year?