

Ideas for Strengthening Your Faith During Lent

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, taught that God's grace can never be earned because it is freely given; yet, we should not idly wait to experience grace. Instead, we can eagerly expect to receive it as we engage in the means of grace. The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in us to hasten, strengthen, and confirm our faith so God's grace can work more fully in and through us.

Works of Piety are the things that we can do to nurture God's presence in our lives such as participation in small Bible study groups, prayer, worship, the Lord's Supper, Scripture reading and fasting/abstinence.

Works of Mercy are the things that we can do to share God's love with others such as giving to missions and being a part of efforts to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, welcome strangers, visit the sick, and be a peacemaker.

As you consider how God would have you to use the 40 days of Lent to grow in your faith and discipleship, consider these ideas:

- Spend time in solitude each day.
- Read a book for spiritual growth.
- Begin to keep a journal of prayer concerns, questions, reading.
- Focus on giving thanks rather than always asking in prayer.
- Find a way to go to bed earlier or sleep in so you can get enough rest.
- Make a list of people with whom you need to be reconciled. Pray for them and let Jesus guide you in your thinking and feeling toward them.
- Take one hour to inventory your priorities and plan how you will reorder them.
- Give up a grudge or a rehearsal of a past event.
- Forgive someone who has hurt you.
- Plan to visit or call a "shut-in" neighbor or church member weekly.
- Write a note of thanks and appreciation to a person who has touched your life.
- Listen and respond to Christ's call to serve others.
- Donate blood and remember Christ's blood that was shed on the cross.
- Say "NO" to something that is a waste of money and time.
- Pray to God to help you resist racial prejudice and to give you courage in opposing it.
- Work on using your words to build up rather than tear down others.
- Find a way to live out the baptismal promise to "resist evil, injustice, and oppression" in the power and liberty God gives us.

This Lenten season challenge yourself to try new works of piety and works of mercy as you strive to order your life around loving God and loving others.