



# A Collection of Disciplines for Lent

The Reverend Gene Packwood

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On Ash Wednesday we are all invited to “observe a Holy Lent by self-examination, penitence (repentance—*Book of Common Prayer [BCP]*), prayer, fasting, almsgiving (self-denial—*BCP*) and by reading and meditating on the word of God.” (*Book of Alternative Services [BAS]* p282, *BCP* p612) In what follows I have collected the *BAS* Collects for Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent (for Year A) to use as a collection of devotional “observation platforms” for working a Holy Lent. Our usual Anglican practice for Daily Prayer is to pray Sunday’s Collect of the Day every day for the week following. This Devotional Collection for Lent will follow that pattern starting with the Collect for Ash Wednesday on February 17th. As one of your Lenten disciplines, read, pray and meditate on the Collect as many days as you can each week. Journaling your ruminations and discoveries can be a rich way of immersing yourself in the Holy Lent The LORD has in store for you.

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Rediscovering the Holy Spirit’s  
refreshing presence in our lives and in  
the church.



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# Ash Wednesday and the First Four Days of Lent

17-20 February

**Almighty and everlasting God,  
you despise nothing you have made  
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent.  
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins  
and acknowledging our brokenness,  
may obtain of you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. (BAS, p281)**

This Collect focusses on the first two of the six ways we are called to observe a Holy Lent: self-examination and penitence or repentance. Holy Lent self-examination requires my looking closely at my life, my behaviour and my relationships. It will expose and identify the selfish, sinful things I need to confess and of which I need to repent. To confess and turn my back on any sin in my life is to repent. To ask The LORD to create in me a new and contrite heart and to worthily lament and to grieve for my sins is to be penitent.

Use these first four days of Lent to begin a spiritual de-tox. Clear the decks. Experience the “perfect remission and forgiveness” this Collect promises. Consider whether The LORD may be calling you to make a formal confession in the presence of your Priest or Pastor or trusted friend sometime in Lent. The BAS provides a rationale and instructions (p166) and two versions of The Reconciliation of a Penitent (pp 167 and 171).

The *BCP* instructions tell us that this Collect is to be prayed every day in Lent after the Sunday Collects of the Day which follow in this collection. I recommend it as a fitting reminder to look for sins to lament and brokenness (wretchedness in the *BCP*) to acknowledge.

## FOR REFLECTION AS LENT BEGINS

*Examine yourself and ask The LORD to bring any unconfessed sins to mind. Listen. If nothing comes to mind, don't worry. Confess those which do come to mind. Use your words in prayer (see The Reconciliation of a Penitent references above).*

*In penitence ask the Holy Spirit to stir up and release any sorrow associated with the sins you have committed.*

*Receive and give thanks for the resulting perfect remission and forgiveness through Jesus.*

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## The Week of the First Sunday in Lent

21-27 February

**Almighty God,  
whose Son fasted forty days in the wilderness,  
and was tempted as we are but did not sin,  
give us grace to discipline ourselves  
in submission to your Spirit,  
that as you know our weakness,  
so we may know your power to save;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. (BAS, p286)**

Temptations will not diminish because it's Lent. Quite the opposite. They will abound because I'm making an effort. Grace is the Father's empowering presence to be who He calls me to be and to do what he calls me to do (James Ryle). To discipline myself is no fun—in "the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Therefore I lift my drooping Lenten disciplines, collect myself, strengthen my weak knees, and make straight paths for my feet (Heb 12.11-13) in submission to the Holy Spirit so the Father's power will be made known in my weakness. (2Cor 12.9) The word "submission" suggests I might have to do, or stop doing, something which goes against my natural inclinations.

Perhaps the simplest way to do this work is by following our LORD's example. We fast. Fasting is a great smoother on the heavenly way. To deny myself things upon

which I depend for sustenance and enjoyment is like an act of devotional performance art with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the audience—a devotional work of art which says it's You upon whom I depend and want to please. When I fast, I usually think of giving up things that I enjoy eating and drinking first. But there are other ways of fasting:

Do not let only the mouth fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands. (John Chrysostom)

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. (Isaiah 58.6-9a)

As usual, Jesus gives a most penetrating and evocative insight for followers:

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal. (John 6:27)

*FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK:*

From what may The LORD be calling you to fast this Lent?

In what new ways are you being called to discipline yourself in submission to His Spirit this week?

Ask The LORD to reveal the weaknesses in you through which He wants to reveal his saving power.

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# The Week of the Second Sunday in Lent

28 February - 6 March

**Almighty God,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross,  
give us faith to perceive his glory,  
that being strengthened by his grace  
we may be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. (BAS, p288)**

Faith is one of the Manifestation Gifts of the Spirit (1Cor12.9), empowered by the Holy Spirit and apportioned to each one individually as He wills. (1Cor12.11) We need the eyes of Holy Spirit given Faith to see God's glory. An experience of God's glory may, or perhaps most often, frighten us at first. But remember the first thing God's messengers in the Bible say to the people they visit. "Do not be afraid." I suspect if we're not at least a little afraid, it may not be God's glory we're seeing.

I need the faith God provides to believe Jesus, when he said to His Father: "The glory which You gave Me I have given them" (John17:22). Them is me and you. St Paul writes of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col1:27).

Once we can perceive His glory, his grace will strengthen us for changing into His likeness from glory to glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Faith is what prompts and enables us to pray at all, let alone without ceasing (1Thes5.17)—day in, day out, dry or anointed, aware of answers, or not. Prayer is the engine that gets and keeps things moving on the road from glory to glory. The Holy Lent call to pray is a good jumper cable to crank it up again and keep it running. If you're looking for a place to start, or for something to keep your motor running, check out the various forms of Anglican Daily Prayer: p36 and following in the BAS, p. lvi in the BCP—your priest would be only too happy to help you figure out how to use these resources. Also, the Church of England has an excellent free app for Daily Prayer with readings built in here: <http://itunes.apple.com/app/id818491760>. You can also access it online here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-daily-prayer>.

FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK:

*Pray daily for the faith to perceive The Father's glory.*

*What are the present issues and areas in your life for which you need the gift of Faith?*

*In what areas of your life do you need God's strengthening grace?*

*In what ways do you need to be changed into Jesus' likeness?*

*List them and ASK (Ask, Seek, Knock—Mt7.7-8) for what you need daily.*

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## The Week of the Third Sunday in Lent

7-13 March

**Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life,  
may we always thirst for you,  
the spring of life and source of goodness;  
through him who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. (BAS, p289)**

“Let anyone who is thirsty,” said Jesus, “come to me” (John7.37). We all desperately need the water of eternal life only he can provide. At the risk of stating the obvious—directly or indirectly, Jesus is the spring of any and all spirit refreshing living waters. There is no other source for abundant life and goodness.

There are counterfeits. The father of lies is expert at running them off and, it's true, they can be tasty and a delight to the eyes (Gen3.6). But to drink from those springs leads to addiction, dysfunction, broken relationships, sin and death.

We are surrounded by people who are the victims of those counterfeits. The Holy Lent call to self-denial and almsgiving reminds us of our responsibility as those who have and enjoy “the spring of lie and source of goodness” to give generously to those in need. This over and above our tithe to God, our Father, from whom all things come, through our local congregation.

Observing a Holy Lent is a wonderful God-given way to collect ourselves and with the help of the Holy Spirit examine our thirsts and appetites to see where they lead—to the generosity arising from the spring of life and source of goodness, or to that which drains and spoils life and goodness.

*FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK:*

*What are you thirsty for more of in your life?*

*Where do you need more goodness in your life?*

*Who do you need to thank for being good to you?*

*What are the counterfeits that attract you?*

*To whom is God calling you to be especially good and generous this Lent?*

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## The Week of the Forth Sunday in Lent

*14-20 March*

**Almighty God,  
through the waters of baptism  
your Son has made us children of light.  
May we ever walk in his light  
and show forth your glory in the world;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. (BAS p291)**

How do I walk in His light? I have to get from where I am to the next stage in my journey as I follow Jesus. I have to put one devotional foot in front the other and move. Step by step. The half-dozen ways of observing a Holy Lent are six sure-footed steps to begin with as I make my way from glory to glory (2Cor3.18).

I know I've referred to them before, but there are another six brilliant steps in the *BCP*. I know I've mentioned them before, probably several times, but they're excellent and practical and worth repeating—the *RULE OF LIFE* on p555:

Every Christian man or woman should from time to time frame for himself a RULE OF LIFE in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel and the faith and order of the Church; wherein he may consider the following:

1. The regularity of his attendance at public worship and especially at the holy Communion.
2. The practice of private prayer, Bible-reading, and self-discipline.
3. Bringing the teaching and example of Christ into his everyday life.
4. The boldness of his spoken witness to his faith in Christ.
5. His personal service to the Church and the community.
6. The offering of money according to his means for the support of the work of the Church at home

...it's our own Anglican Freedom Five-Fifty-Five Walking in the Light of Jesus plan: go to church (regularly means more than once a year), practice spiritual disciplines, show forth God's glory, talk about your faith, serve, be faithful with your money.

Notice that the Bible reading which is included as one of the six Lenten spiritual disciplines is also included in this all-year-round Rule of Life. Rightly so. The Bible is our manual—a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Ps 119.105). It is our template for living a faithful life. Among other things, God's Word Written is

- Upright (Ps 33.4)
- Our hope (Ps 119.81, 114)
- At work in us (1 Thes 2.13)
- Living and active (Heb 4.12)

God's Word written also

- Gives us Life (Ps 119.25)
- Strengthens us (Ps 119.28)
- Gives us understanding (Ps 119.169)
- To be Glorified (Acts 13.48)
- Prevails (Acts 19.20).



It's worth the time and effort to read it—systematically and repeatedly—so it can get at you and soak into your spirit. You will find good Lenten lectionaries in both the *BAS* (p458 - we're in Year 2) and the *BCP* (p xxii), or they are both online at <https://lectionary.anglican.ca/>. There is less reading in the *BAS* version.

Read it and reap!

*FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK*

*Do a spiritual step count. Are you stepping out with all twelve—Holy Lent and Freedom Five-Fifty-Five?*

*What steps do you need to add?*

*Make a plan.*

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## The Week of the Fifth Sunday in Lent

*21-27 March*

**Almighty God,  
your Son came into the world  
to free us all from sin and death.  
Breathe upon us with the power of your Spirit,  
that we may be raised to new life in Christ,  
and serve you in holiness and righteousness all our days;  
through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. (BAS, p293)**

We're getting close. After the collected disciplines of the last few weeks we pray for the breath of God to breathe Holy Spirit power into us and to establish His insights, promises and purposes in our hearts, minds and bodies.

Jesus breathes on his people still. People like us. With power. Power which raises us to new life so we can serve The LORD in holiness and righteousness all our days. Power to hear words of knowledge and wisdom in our spirits, to have faith, to heal, work miracles, prophesy, distinguish between spirits which are of God or not, to speak in various kinds of tongues and to interpret them—all for the common good and to build up the church. Jesus breathed Holy Spirit power appoints apostles, prophets, teachers, helpers and administrators (1Cor12.28),

servers, exhorters, generous givers, leaders, people who are gifted in doing acts of mercy (Ro12.8), evangelists and shepherds—equipping the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ (Eph4.11-12).

Body building is what we're doing as we reflect on and pray these Lenten collects.

#### FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK

*Read about the Gifts of the Spirit in 1Cor12 and Ro12.6-8. Notice that “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1Cor12.7). That includes you. Which ones have been given to you? Which would you like? Ask The LORD (and ask someone else to pray for The LORD) to breathe on you with the power of His Spirit so His full gifting will be released in you.*

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## Sunday of The Passion

28 March

**Almighty and everliving God,  
in tender love for all our human race  
you sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ  
to take our flesh  
and suffer death upon a cruel cross.  
May we follow the example of his great humility,  
and share in the glory of his resurrection;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. (BAS, p299)**

**T**his week brings Lent to its radiant Resurrection Easter crescendo. Not only is there this Collect for the Sunday of the Passion above, but there are Collects for each day of Holy Week (two sets of them!—see the BAS, p301 and following; and the BCP, p154 and following).

In the days of film cameras, I used to make my own photographic prints in a makeshift darkroom. Using an enlarger, I would shine light through an image negative on to photographic paper, place the paper in a tray full of developer, watch the image appear as if by magic on the white surface of the paper. Once the image was

completely developed, I would transfer the paper into a tray of fixer which would stop the developing process and fix the image so it could be used in a frame or album. A poorly fixed image will fade over time.

Working through this Devotional Collection has been rather like you and I immersing ourselves, our souls and bodies, in a divine developing tray where, as we prayed in week two, we've been changed into his likeness—not perfectly or completely, but we're closer and clearer than we were on Ash Wednesday. Now that newly enhanced likeness has developed, we need the “fixer” of the Father's breath and the power of the Holy Spirit to confirm and preserve the new likeness as we are raised to the new life in Jesus the Father promised. After the collected disciplines of the last few weeks we pray for the breath of God to breathe Holy Spirit power into us and to establish His insights, promises and purposes in our hearts, minds and bodies.

*FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK*

*How are you being called to follow Jesus' example in humility?*

*How have you become more like Jesus this Lent?*

*How might you ensure this newly developed image does not fade?*

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I hope this Collection of Disciplines has enriched and blessed your Lent and will provide some good, juicy insights for your walk through Holy Week. When they come, may your Easter celebrations be bright and joyful.

The LORD is risen! Alleluia!!

Gene+



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