

## Prayer Guide: Returning 2 God / Lent 1

**WHAT IS LENT...**Lent is among the oldest observances of the Christian church. Its roots reach as far back as the second century, when new believers preparing for Easter baptism were called to a season of fasting, prayer, and self-examination.

By the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, a forty-day fast before Easter had become normative across the church—its length echoing Israel's forty years in the wilderness, Moses' forty days on Sinai, and Jesus' forty days of temptation in the desert. The word itself comes from an Old English word for spring, *lencten*—a season of lengthening days, of what was buried beginning to stir.

For the desert fathers of Egypt, it was a plunge into holy silence. For the medieval church, it was the communal heartbeat of the year—fasting from meat, lighting candles, walking the Stations of the Cross. For the Reformers who retained it, it remained a scaffold for examining the soul. For the modern church, it is a counter-cultural act: deliberately slowing down, stripping away, and attending to what is most real.

What Lent has always offered the people of God is this: a structured space to slow down to reflect, to return to God, and invite God to lead us toward the Resurrection life.

“Across the centuries, people have reflected on the slow work of God, the patient, hidden, steady ways God form his people. Character takes time, healing takes time. Learning to trust God’s ways and leadership takes time. Lent invites us into this way of being formed. Through practices like fasting, silence, and reflection, Lent helps us make space for the Spirit to do what we cannot manufacture in ourselves” (KC Underground prayer guide).

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

#### Psalm 90 excerpts

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.*

<sup>2</sup> *Before the mountains were born  
or you brought forth the whole world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

<sup>3</sup> *You turn people back to dust,*

*saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”*

<sup>4</sup> *A thousand years in your sight*

*are like a day that has just gone by,  
or like a watch in the night.*

<sup>5</sup> *Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death  
— they are like the new grass of the morning:*

<sup>6</sup> *In the morning it springs up new,  
but by evening it is dry and withered.*

<sup>8</sup> *You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your presence...*

<sup>10</sup> *Our days may come to seventy years,  
or eighty, if our strength endures;  
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,  
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.*

<sup>12</sup> *Teach us to number our days,  
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

<sup>13</sup> *Relent, Lord! How long will it be?  
Have compassion on your servants.*

<sup>14</sup> *Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing  
love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our  
days.*

<sup>15</sup> *Make us glad for as many days as you have  
afflicted us,  
for as many years as we have seen trouble.*

<sup>16</sup> *May your deeds be shown to your servants,  
your splendor to their children.*

<sup>17</sup> *May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us;  
establish the work of our hands for us—  
yes, establish the work of our hands.*

#### Joel 2:12-13

*“Even now,” declares the Lord,  
“return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”*

<sup>13</sup> *Rend your heart and not your garments.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in love,  
and he relents from sending calamity.*

#### Revelation 2:4-5

<sup>4</sup> *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the  
love you had at first.* <sup>5</sup> *Consider how far you have  
fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If  
you do not repent, I will come to you and remove  
your lampstand from its place.*

### PRAYER PROMPTS

- Holy Spirit lead me in a time of confession. Reveal to me disobedience through my actions or inactions or areas I have forsaken Jesus as my first love. Shepherd me into repentance.

- Acknowledge your limits. Name the places you rely on your own strength, speed, competence or control. Rest in the reality that you are not God. What do you need to release to God and trust him with?
- Pray through Psalm 90 above.
- Holy Spirit, is there anything or anyway you would like me to fast in this season (not to earn God's love, but to heighten attentiveness and focus on intimacy with Jesus).

### **INTERCEDE FOR OUR COLLECTIVE (network)**

Pray that UGTN would enter Lent with humility and open hearts to God's forming work. Ask Holy Spirit to slow us down, calm our striving, and awaken a holy attentiveness. Pray that each house church, family, missional team and dinner table would welcome the slow work of God, trusting that He will lead us step by step deeper into Resurrection Life.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Jesus, we enter this season from dust and to dust we return. Search us. Slow us. Reclaim our attention, allegiance, and affection. Let these forty days be a wilderness where we discover You. Strip away striving. Heal what is broken. Reorient what has drifted. Make us a people who fast with joy and pray without ceasing, who carry Your cross and trust Your resurrection. You are our Treasure. You are our Lord. You are our Life. Amen.

**fyi:** this guide has been curated from some original work, some has been adapted from KC Underground prayer guide with permission, and some has been contextualized and reframed from Claude ai.