

LENT

What would we give up for love?

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Southridge Lent Devotional | 2026

In the church calendar, Lent marks the season leading up to Easter. A common practice during Lent is to “give something up” – to fast from something like Jesus fasted in the desert.

That’s why people often ask: *What are you giving up for Lent?*

But Lent isn’t just about giving something up. It’s about giving something up to become more like Jesus. About giving something up to gain something else. About giving up anything and everything that keeps us from following Jesus’ way of love.

So, this Lent, we’re asking the question: *What would we give up for love?*

Jeff Martens
Formation Co-Lead Pastor

*Follow God’s example, therefore,
as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love,
just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us
as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Ephesians 5:1-2

Week 1: Giving Up... Self-Centredness

Read:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Reflect:

In what relationship in your life are you finding it most difficult to put the other person first? What about this relationship makes it so difficult?

What do you need to give up in order to value this person above yourself?

Practice:

Consider posting what you're "giving up" and what you're hoping "to gain" on our [Southridge Prayer Wall](#), as we prayerfully go on the journey of Lent together.

Example: *I am giving up _____ in hopes of gaining _____.*

Week 2: Giving Up... Falsehoods

Read:

[S]peaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:15

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour for we are all members of one body.

Ephesians 4:25

Reflect:

In what situations do you struggle to be fully honest? Who's a trustworthy friend you can confess this to in order to gain their encouragement and support?

Is there a situation or conflict in your life where you may not have the whole truth? How can you set aside assumptions you might be making?

Practice:

Try an honesty audit. Throughout your day, as often as you remember, evaluate each of your thoughts and words, asking yourself: *Is that wholly true?*

It's not an easy exercise. But the conscious effort can help us grow in recognizing "falsehoods" and learning to give them up to become more honest.

Week 3: Giving Up... Grudges

Read:

Get rid of bitterness, rage and anger... be kind and compassionate... forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:31-32

Love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:5

Reflect:

What do you think makes us want to hold tightly to grudges and unforgiveness?

How might holding a grudge be counter-productive to what we actually long for?

Practice:

Is there someone in your life you're holding a grudge toward or withholding forgiveness from? Offering forgiveness is not easy, is a journey over time, and may include boundaries or changes to a relationship. Yet, it is possible.

Following Jesus' instructions in [Matthew 18:15-16](#), try taking these first steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation in a strained relationship.

Week 4: Giving Up... Gossip

Read:

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up... that it may benefit those who listen.

Ephesians 4:29

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth.

1 Corinthians 13:6

Reflect:

In what environment or friendship circle are you most susceptible to falling into gossip or speaking negatively about others?

How can you pay more attention to conversations that verge on gossip – speaking less about others and speaking up when you hear gossip?

Practice:

To help overcome our tendency to speak negatively, take time to write a hand-written note of encouragement to someone this week. It may be especially worthwhile to write a note to someone you find challenging to get along with. Give careful thought and attention to what you truly appreciate about them.

Week 5: Giving Up... Lust

Read:

Don't allow love to turn into lust...

Ephesians 5:3

Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

Reflect:

How do our imaginations affect how we act and relate to each other?

While “lust” refers to unhealthy sexual desires, we can “fantasize” about many things. What do you tend to fantasize about?

Practice:

[Romans 12:2](#) says God transforms us by “changing the way we think.” Consider memorizing this verse as an ongoing meditation to help renew your thoughts.

Identify one trusted person in your life you can have a conversation with about “giving up lust” in order to walk together in the journey of growing in love.

Week 6: Giving Up... Giving Up

Read:

Bear with one another in love... make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:3-4

Love always protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:7

Reflect:

Is there a relationship in your life where you're tempted to "throw in the towel"?

How might staying faithful and persevering in the hardest moments in our relationships have the power to lead us deeper into the love of Jesus?

Practice:

Consider writing a note of "covenant" commitment to someone in your life – a friend, spouse, child, Life Group member. In your own words, put in writing how you want to stay committed and faithful through thick and thin.

If you haven't already, consider affirming your [Southridge church membership](#) as an expression of our mutual commitment to one another as a local church.

Live a life worthy of the calling you have received...

Ephesians 4:1

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,
let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.
And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus,
the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross,
scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:1-2