

# LENT

Entering into Jesus' Suffering:  
His Glory, Our Joy



# Dear RHC,

What do **you** think about Lent?

*"I think it's about fasting and giving to the poor."*

*"Isn't it a Catholic tradition?"*

*"I don't know much about it. I'd like to learn more."*

*"It feels too legalistic for me."*

*"It's about giving up something I like to spend more time with God."*

These are some of the ways RHCers have responded to this question. Wherever you are at, we're grateful you picked up this booklet to explore more as we aim to grow together in this upcoming season.

## Church Seasons

As with Advent, we want to be intentional about observing Lent.

**Advent was about *anticipating and longing*.** We were learning to be a people who wait in hope for our Saviour who came once and will come again.

The 4 weeks of Advent led us into Christmas.

**Lent is about *entering with Christ in His suffering*.** We are learning to be a people who recognise the counterfeit gods<sup>1</sup> of our hearts, how desperately in need of a Saviour we are, and to rejoice in Christ's resurrection power.

The 40 days of Lent (starting 14 Feb) will lead us into Good Friday and Easter.

Lent has been observed by the church for centuries. Isn't it wonderful to know that we are part of the universal church—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, observing this season together to delight in Jesus?

<sup>1</sup>*"A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living."*

Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods



## Observing Lent by Looking Godward & Outward

We are mindful of the culture we swim in, particularly in Singapore with our societal ideals of comfort, pragmatism, and materialism. Lent is counter-cultural—it is a rhythm in our church calendar to help us respond to the Gospel through practising spiritual disciplines. We want to encourage us as a church to practise Lent by looking **Godward through prayer & fasting**, and **outward through compassion & mercy**. In the following pages are some questions and practical steps that we hope will help guide or be a starting point for how you can observe Lent this year.

Church, we are in the midst of our Philippians series where we've been grappling with suffering. Paul writes: *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake (1:29)*. Will you join us as we endeavour to be shaped by spiritual disciplines in the 40 days starting on Wednesday, 14 February? Not seeing them as burdensome or to be avoided, but as opportunities to enter with Christ in his suffering? We pray that God would meet us not just individually, but corporately, as a local church who truly desires to seek Him as our greatest need and joy.

Much love,  
Jacob on behalf of the RHC elders



# Looking Godward

## Through Prayer & Fasting



Prayer and fasting go hand-in-hand.

Our goal for prayer is to grow in our **reliance and delight for God**.

Paul Miller in *A Praying Church* writes:

*"I do these morning prayer times not from discipline but from **learned desperation**. I am constant in corporate prayer because the Jesus communities I'm in are **constant in need**. I have no interest in doing anything that hasn't been prayed for and prayed over. What I pray over lasts, and what I don't pray over doesn't last. But there's more: A Jesus community is characterized by wonder, and the conduit to that is prayer. I've seen what happens when the Spirit of Jesus inhabits a community—everything starts to sparkle."*

*"Praying together is not a luxury, nor is something just for "spiritual" Christians; it's the very **breath of the church**."*

*"When we grasp the simplicity of **prayer -> Spirit -> Jesus -> wonder**, then praying together won't be just another burden; it will be the activity that transforms all your burdens."*

Our goal for fasting is to **reduce our reliance on the things of this world** and **redirect our desires toward God**. Secular fasting is a denial of self; Christian fasting is a dependence on God. We like how a devotional by Immanuel Nashville Church has described it:

*Along with prayer, fasting is not merely a religious ritual or intermittent forgoing of food. It is a practice of dependence and worship. And while not everyone can wisely or healthily fast from food, each of us can fast from some voluntary pleasure and turn that desire toward God, our provider. When we fast we:*

- *forfeit good things, not evil things*
- *keep our preferences and desires sharp and on high alert*
- *are reminded of our desperate need for God*
- *experience a reminder of the aching and longing we often suppress within our souls*
- *turn our appetites and desires toward God, the inexhaustible source of goodness*

*Fasting is a gift that helps sharpen our awareness of God and His goodness. We are not fasting in order to gain God's attention but in order for us to be more aware of Him and His eagerness to supply our every need in Christ for His glory and our joy.*

## Reflection

1. Consider how you approach prayer. Do you tend to focus on yourself or a particular type of prayer (e.g. petitions)? How could you be conscious about expanding who you pray for and the types of prayers you make?
2. Consider how God may be leading you to fast during this season. Perhaps it is something we find difficult to live without (e.g. skipping a meal) or something we find comfort in to relax (e.g. media or alcohol), how can you fast and turn to God in reliance instead?
3. Consider, what are you reliant on? What are some familiar comforts? What aspects of your life do you feel that you could consider a fast during the season of Lent?

## Practical Steps for Prayer

### Individually

- Try practising different types of prayer (e.g. adoration, thanksgiving, petition, intercession)
- Try praying prayers written by saints of old (note: Examples can be found in the recommended Lent Devotional)

### Corporately

- Pray with your CG-mates or in your 1-to-1 bible reading groups
- Join our church prayer rhythms:
  - **Prayer and Worship Night** (Fast starting Thurs, 29 Feb and we will be breaking fast together at 7.00pm, Fri, 1 Mar in the Studios. Meet for prayer & worship on both evenings from 8.00pm-9.15pm in the ballroom)
  - **Post-service prayer** (Sundays after services in the front of the ballroom)
  - **Midweek evening prayer** (2nd & 4th Thurs of the month, 7.00pm-8.00pm in Studios 7-8)
  - **Lunchtime prayer** (1st Wed of the month, 12.00pm-12.30pm in Studios 7-8)

## Practical Steps for Fasting

- Fast from 1 meal a day where your hunger for food can be turned into a time of prayer of sustenance from God. Take that mealtime to meet up / call a CG-mate or friend who is also fasting and pray together.
- Fast from a selected media that you may turn to in order to de-stress and find joy in. Each time you want to check it (ie, Instagram / Tik Tok / YouTube / Netflix), turn that into a cue to talk with God instead.

# Looking Outward

## Through Compassion & Mercy

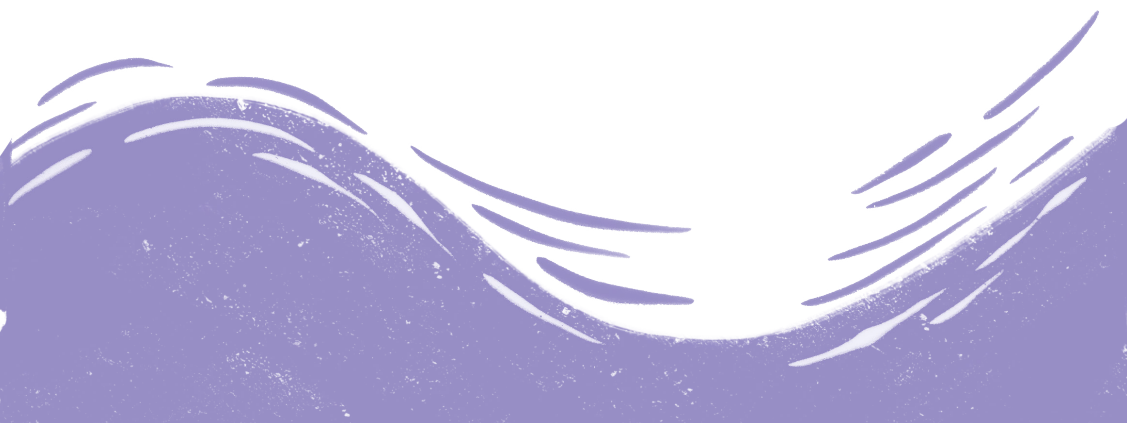
Our goal for Compassion & Mercy: to **love our neighbours, especially those suffering and in need**, as Christ loves us. To be attentive to the suffering and needs around us, present with the love of Christ, and willing to respond by giving generously of our time, talents, and resources.

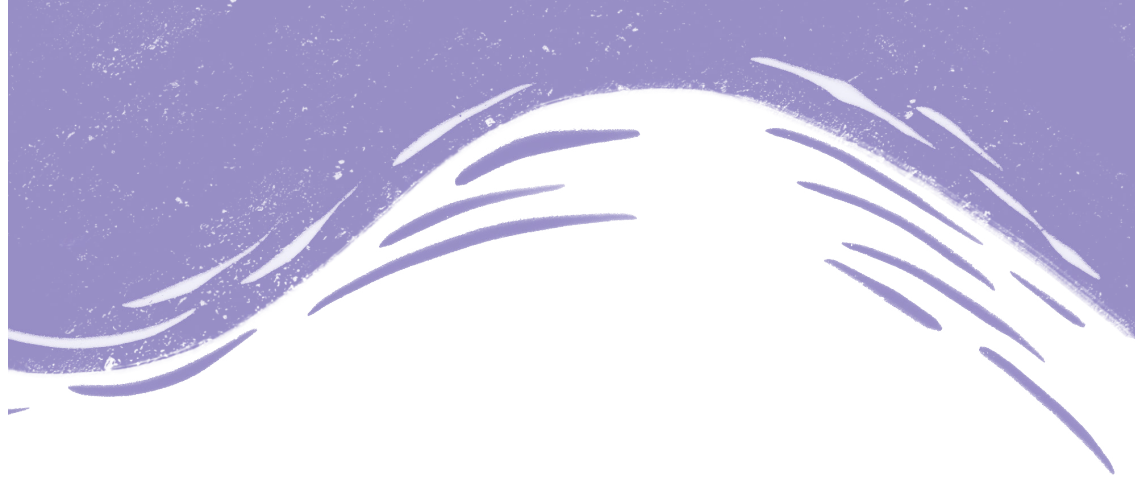
### Reflection

1. How does reflecting on the mercy you've received from Christ compel you to show mercy to those in need around you?
2. What tends to prevent you from showing compassion & mercy to those in need? Bring these before God and ask Him to speak His truth into them.

### Practical Steps

- Read and meditate on:
  - the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- Set aside 10 minutes in your week to:
  - Arrive early to church—quiet your heart and ask the Lord to open your eyes to or bring to mind those in the church body who may be suffering or in need in some way. Pray over what you notice.
  - Walk around the neighbourhood where you live or work—observe and notice people, pay attention to needs and even injustices that may stand out to you. Try to consider different layers of practical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Pray over what you notice.



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- Take one intentional step forward to respond to a need (consider whether it's committing a portion of your time, lending some of your skills/talents, or sharing a slice of your resources)
    - e.g. chat to someone you know who is actively extending compassion/mercy to those in need and ask how you can help; introduce yourself to someone you noticed on your walk; set aside time to pray or resources to support our kingdom partners (stay tuned for more info about our Easter Sacrificial Offering)
  - Learn more about our Mercy & Justice Ministry:

**Read** more details in our M&J Ministry booklet:



**Watch** our volunteers share what M&J looks like in everyday, tangible ways:



# Recommended Resources



## Articles to help us learn more:

- o *Why Bother with Lent*
- o *How Observing Lent Can Help You Grow in Christ*
- o *Prayer is a Gospel Privilege*
- o *Fasting Isn't for the Spiritually Elite. It's for the Hurting*
- o *Obligation, Stewardship, and the Poor*



## RHC Spotify playlist: for Lent



## Recommended Lent devotional:

*Journey to the Cross: Devotions for Lent*  
by Will Walker & Kendal Haug

