

Lenten meditation:

The less obvious and sometimes more costly forms of self-denial

Self-denial is a slippery discipline, especially at Lent, when Christians traditionally give up something they like to eat. Ages ago when believers gave up meat, eggs, and milk, they were suffering genuine hardship because they didn't have many other options in their diet.

Today, giving up a certain food is easy—there is always lots more to replace it. No meat, no problem. We've got fish and soy products, blender drinks and protein bars. In addition, there is always the thought lurking in the back of my mind that if I cut back on food a bit I might lose a few pounds.

There are other options for self-denial as we commemorate our Lord's 40 days in the desert as He began His earthly ministry. To add to your commemoration of Lent, or to begin now or anytime, consider these disciplines, that may not be as obvious as food, but can be quite difficult:

We can give up our time. We can give up our free time and spend more time with Jesus, in His word, or serving others. This can be a genuine sacrifice, because for those who work in ministry, there is little free time.

We can give up control of our words. This is hard for me. I love to give my opinion. For Lent I can give up my words so I can listen carefully.

We can give up feelings of resentment. Yes, the work we do is hard and few appreciate it, but no matter how difficult our day, our burdens are nothing compared to what Jesus bore for us.

Spend time alone with Jesus, as He did with His Father in the desert. Ask Him what He wants you to give up. Obey Him faithfully, in secret, and your Easter reward won't only be a few lost pounds, but a closer walk with your Savior.



"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

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