

“Whatever you choose - adding or subtracting - the point is to do something that feeds your soul without draining your energy or making you resent the time. Be realistic, keep it simple and enjoy!”

A Conversation

Many years ago I explained to my rector that I didn't like giving up something for Lent. “I don't quite see the connection,” I said. “What does giving up chocolate have to do with my spiritual life?” Wise man that he was, and still is, he replied, “There may not be a connection for you. Why don't you take on something instead?”

And so I did, and so I still do. And it works for me. Maybe it will for you too. If your church makes recommendations to members for Lenten disciplines you might consider including some of the ones below.

Read as a Lenten Discipline

This could be on your own, with a family member, in a group or on a social site like Goodreads. I've done this a number of years and my books have ranged from spiritual and religious to fiction. Some of my favorites have been:

- *Reconciliation: Preparing for Confession in the Episcopal Church* by Martin Smith
- *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* by Joan Chittister
- *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives* by Wayne Mueller
- *The Return of Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* by Henri Nouwen

In fiction, I've just finished *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, and I think it would be a wonderful Lenten book.

Feed the artist in you

Yes, you have one in there! If you're like me, you just need to give yourself permission to not be Picasso or Jane Austen and then you'll be fine! **Write.** Try journaling; write some memoir or stories from your life; start a blog even if it is only for you. Sign up for Tumblr and read the blogs there and start your own. My husband and daughter and I did this - just the 3 of us - for Advent and it was wonderful. We shared photos around daily themes for each day of Advent.

Paint. I recommend Roger Hutchison's "[The Painting Table](#)." Take photographs and share them with friends and family. Garden - indoors or out depending on where you live.

Build Relationships

Commit to dinner one or more times a week with family or friends. Keep it simple. It can be fast food, take out, pot luck... the point is time together. **Invite** someone you don't see often to lunch - maybe a different friend each week. This could also be someone you'd like to know better. **Write a card** or call someone each week. **Volunteer.** Visit at local retirement homes; drive folks to doctor's appointments or to the grocery store.

Care for yourself

There are many ways to deepen spirituality by caring for your body, mind, and soul. Commit to an **exercise** regimen - if this is new for you, keep it simple and easy. Take a spiritual **retreat** during Lent. It can be ½ day, a day or even a full weekend. Find a spiritual director and schedule an appointment. **Get out** of the office during the day - walk around the block, go out for lunch, sit in the park. **Sleep.**

Gretchen Ziegenhals has a wonderful [article](#) on finding sanctuary as a means to renew our leadership. **Worship.** This can be hard for those who are employed by the church or have volunteer positions that make Sundays very busy. Perhaps you can attend a morning or evening service at another church near you where you can sit quietly and worship.

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Carolyn Moomaw Chilton writes and blogs as a spiritual discipline and an invitation to conversation with others. She is currently on staff at Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia as the Assistant for Evangelism and Stewardship.

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