

# “Giving it Up? Fasting During Great Lent in the Armenian Church”

## Article Study Guide for Adults

Great Lent, or *Medz Bahk*, the church’s 40-Day fasting season leading up to Holy Week and Easter is popularly known as a time to “give something up.” Whatever you’re “giving up” for Lent—or if you’ve already given up on the Lenten fast itself—you may be surprised to learn the Armenian Church’s traditional understanding of Great Lent: how our ancestors fasted and why.

**Read:** Bishop Daniel’s full article on Great Lent [www.bit.ly/3oFTkjt](http://www.bit.ly/3oFTkjt)

**Listen:** Eric Vozzy interviews Bishop Daniel about Lent <https://bit.ly/3GFr5Ry>

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+ OPENING PRAYER +

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### Discuss

1. What is your experience of fasting, either as a spiritual practice or as a dietary choice? What was the outcome? Was there any spiritual benefit to either approach? Why or why not?
2. *“We invest our time and money in other temporary diversions. We play with our gadgets. We buy shoes. We try to fill spiritual voids with material things. In a word, instead of recognizing the eternal gift of God’s love in Jesus Christ and grabbing it, we turn away from it through our actions, words, and daily decisions.”*

In his article, Bishop Daniel makes clear the heart and spirit of fasting, that it is less about “giving up” and more paring away excess to make room for God. How do you identify with the struggles he mentions and what do you personally address them? What tools or resources – faith, people, practices, disciplines – can you apply to navigate those distractions from which we seek nourishment?

3. *“God is not interested in our petty offerings, and he surely takes no satisfaction in people depriving themselves, much less hurting themselves. What God wants is us. If there is any sacrifice that God desires from me it is not this or that offering or ritual, but the complete consecration of my entire life to God.”*

Read Mark 12:33 and Psalm 50:16-17. Expand on St. Mark and King David; what does it mean to offer your entire life to God? Does this “complete consecration” happen in a moment? Is it a process, a journey? Talk about your personal experience.

4. Rather than asking what we can temporarily “give up,” Bishop Daniel encourages his readers to ask questions such as: *What can I relinquish to simplify my life and make it more Christ-like? What is holding me back from devoting myself more wholeheartedly to the Lord? What am I overindulging in? What is sucking up time that I could better use for the sake of more Christian pursuits?*

Is there a specific question that resonates with you? Why? What other prayerful questions will lead you to the true meaning of Lenten fasting?

### Final Thoughts

5. *“The church fathers...never backed down from the conviction that every Christian should join the church in the Lenten fast—not because it is a law or sacred tradition, not because it pleases God, but because it builds up the church and that is what pleases God.”*

How can our parish fast as a community throughout the Church year, keeping each other accountable and providing opportunities to share our faith experience?

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+ CLOSING PRAYER +

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