

# 40 QUESTIONS IN 40 MILES FOR 40 DAYS OF LENT: *A Lenten Journey*

A Potter's Inn Resource by  
**Stephen W. Smith**

Lent is a time for self-examination and reflection. It is the season of the 40 days leading up to Easter. In these 40 days, we are invited to look deeper and to look within. It is a time of preparation for the resurrection—that of Christ's but also our own resurrection. Lent is a time to reflect on the many ways we are dying to live.

## **40 Questions in 40 Miles for 40 Days of Lent:**

A Lenten Journey is a spiritual practice to engage the body, heart, mind and soul. In this exercise, we will use our minds to think; our hearts to reflect and our bodies to move our souls deeper in the season of Lent.

## **40 Days: *An Invitation to engage in the wilderness of life and Lent***

In 2023, Lent is February 22 through April 6. Why 40 days? 40 Days is the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, as we learn from the Gospel stories. The 40 Days of Lent replicate a wilderness journey, one of asking questions, reflection and prayer. As the days become longer in the Lenten Journey, we receive more light. The sun shines longer, giving more light and dispelling the long days of winter. Lent is often associated with giving something up during these 40 days—sugar, alcohol, activities and meetings, etc. The idea of giving up is meant to create space to allow one to focus and pray. In this exercise, we will give up some busyness, pre-occupation and mental overload in order to create some time to reflect, move

outward and inward and focus on one question a day to help us prepare our hearts for resurrection.

## **40 Miles: *An invitation to engage your body during Lent***

In the 40 Days of Lent, set a side time to try to walk one mile a day—one mile per day for the 40 days of Lent. If walking is a challenge, find some way to engage your body by kneeling, laying on the floor, sitting outside or some other way you feel appropriate to engage your physical self.

Most people can expect to walk a mile in 15 to 22 minutes, according to data gathered in a 2019 study spanning five decades. The average walking pace is 2.5 to 4 mph, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the United States. This is not a speed walk. This is a walk for the soul, so feel free to walk at a slower pace—a pace where you can hold a question in your heart as you walk.

Walking at a leisurely pace invites the mind to settle and the rhythm of one's pace can be a therapeutic way to clear the heart as well. Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian wrote, "Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Every day, I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it."

Even if you are physically limited in being able to walk one mile per day, we can be mindful of how our bodies help, aid and perhaps hinder us in our spiritual journey. If you're unable to walk a mile, move as you can or consider lying on the floor or bed and place your body in the shape of a cross, extending your arms.

## **40 Days: An Invitation to reflect during Lent**

What may be most missing in our world today is the time to reflect. By creating space to reflect and meditate, we will deepen our lives, anchor our hearts and care for our souls in the tumultuous, over-extended and harried times in which we live. Richard Foster, author and founder of Renovare, has written, “the world does not need busy people. The world needs deep people.” This is an exercise to choose depth over speed and to practice lingering over hurriedness.

Thomas Merton has wisely written, “The one thing necessary is a true interior and spiritual life, true growth, on my own, in depth, in a new direction. Whatever new direction God opens up for me. My job is to press forward, to grow interiorly, to pray, to break away from attachments and to defy fears, to grow in faith, which has its own solitude, to seek an entirely new perspective and new dimension in my life. To open up new horizons at any cost. To desire this and let the Holy Spirit take care of the rest. But really to desire this and work for it.” (Thomas Merton, *The Intimate Merton: His Life From His Journals*, 1999).

This is a journey to help us grow interiorly. It is an invitation to integrate our mind, hearts, bodies and souls in the season of Lent. The questions may help expose our attachments and illusions which we tend to develop and hold on to. This is a time to foster more inner freedom and prepare ourselves for Life—the life that Easter promises.

Questions allow us to reflect and invite us to form words in prayer—even if our prayer is wordless. Rainer Maria Rilke has reminded us so well of the power of questions:

*“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”*

This exercise is the journey of modern day pilgrims to search and pray for answers. In this exercise, take one question per day for the 40 days of Lent and let the question unfold as you walk, reflect and pray. Good questions help us expose what is inside of us and good questions invite us to go deeper. As we “live the questions” during Lent, we will take the time to ponder and pray over what bubbles up in our hearts. It could lead to tears of grief or joy. It may invite you to lament or praise. Trust the process and trust in the slow work of this exercise over the 40 days.

Take one question a day and let the one question be the focus of your reflection walk. There are 40 questions for you to use, one per day. Avoid the temptation to try to “do” more than one question a day. Linger with each question and think through angles, perspectives and cellular depth that the question will take you. Resist the temptation and urge to problem solve or fix what you discover that may be broken. Just become curious and more aware and accepting of what comes to you during this time.

I have provided a way to cut the questions into smaller blocks making it easier to take the question with you on your one mile walk.

You can look at it, sit with it, perhaps noting key words or phrases you want to remember. You may find this option helpful.

At the end of your walk, you may want to record your reflection or key words or phrases that surfaced in your journal or the space provided.

Before you “take off” on your walk, become aware of what you’re about to do. Be quiet. Ask for God’s help and guidance. Move slowly, noticing what your senses draw your toward and what you see, notice or feel.

Before you embark on your one mile walk each day of Lent, center yourself with some deep cleansing breaths. Become mindful of what you might need to let go of in order to use this time well for your own reflection. If you are pre-occupied with something, or obsessed with a task that needs your attention, simply make a note of what needs your attention and then pick “it” back up after you take your contemplative walk.

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## **40 Questions for Your Lenten Journey**

Here are 40 questions, one for each day of the Lenten Journey to reflect upon for a few moments each day during your walk of one mile. An optional way to use the questions is provided where you can cut each question into small cards and take with you on the walk. *(See the following pages for that option and use scissors to cut the questions into small cards to take with you).*

**Day 1:**  
What feels most important in my life right now?

**Day 2:**  
What or who is grabbing my attention—dominating or capturing my thoughts and mind?

**Day 3:**  
What or who is begging for my energy, physical, emotional and spiritual output?

**Day 4:**  
What do I need to set aside in order to become more fully alive?

**Day 5:**  
What is saving my life right now?

**Day 6:**  
How am I participating in the death season of my life? This is about dreams, positions, relationships, stages that feel like a dying; a giving up; or a relinquishment.

**Day 7:**  
What am I being invited to let go of right now? This is about relinquishing control and embracing a relinquishment. Consider turning your palms up as you sit or walk and imagine releasing whatever or whomever comes to mind and heart.

**Day 8:**  
What season am I in right now spiritually (winter, spring, summer or fall) as you ponder the metaphor of times and stages of your life now? What does this mean?

**Day 9:**  
Where am I experiencing desolation in my life now?

**Day 10:**

What is bringing me consolation now and how can I move towards consolation more?

**Day 11:**

Where does Jesus seem to be lingering? This is about an area of your life where Jesus seems to be more distant than close; more removed than present; more not showing up than experiencing the abiding presence of Christ?

**Day 12:**

Think about the big reason or purpose you are alive right now. What is your big why? Why are you alive? What does this question stir?

**Day 13:**

What feels missing or lacking in my life now?

**Day 14:**

Where am I holding anxiety in my body and what is this about?

**Day 15:**

How might I move towards experiencing deeper peace now?

**Day 16:**

Do I feel seen in my life now? Who in my life really sees me?

**Day 17:**

Do I feel wanted in my life now? Who wants me?

**Day 18:**

Do I feel listened to? Is someone caring to notice and practice deep listening with me? Whom?

**Day 19:**

What makes it difficult for me to experience the love of God during Lent?

**Day 20:**

Do I self-reference in conversations—making sure I share my feelings, my opinions, my perspectives and my thoughts when asked or not? How can I die to self-referencing in the remaining days of Lent?

**Day 21:**

Where do I feel most vulnerable in my life right now?

**Day 22:**

What am I in awe of in these days of Lent?

**Day 23:**

What is my body telling me in these days of Lent?

**Day 24:**

What is my heart telling me in these days of Lent?

**Day 25:**

How can I practice self-compassion in the midst of Lent?

**Day 26:**

What would it look like for me to become more aware of those who are in need around me?

**Day 27:**

Are your inner longings pointing you toward God or away from God?

**Day 28:**

Where and how is your soul suffering?

**Day 29:**

How can you become more curious about your faith and journey towards Easter?

**Day 30:**

What would it look like for you to practice self-acceptance?

**Day 31:**

**What do you want?**

**Day 32:**

**What in you needs to come back to life?**

**Day 33:**

**In these days of Lent, what are you seeking?**

**Day 34:**

**What area of your life do you both want and need more clarity and discernment?**

**Day 35:**

**What is God asking of you?**

**Day 36:**

**What would accepting your past look like in this season of Lent?**

**Day 37:**

**What is preventing me from coming into life—feeling more alive?**

**Day 38:**


**What are your expectations for life in a post-Easter journey?**

**Day 39:**

**How have the past 39 days of reflection been for you?**

**Day 40:**

**What would it mean and look like to live a more resurrected life?**



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