



small shifts

BIG FAITH

LENTEN PRACTICES TO
TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE



Resurrection
A UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Welcome to Small Shifts, Big Faith

Lent invites us to slow down, reflect on our faith and our lives, and open ourselves more fully to God's grace. This Lenten study explores how simple, purposeful practices can shape and transform faith over time. Rather than focusing on dramatic spiritual change, this study invites you into small, meaningful shifts—everyday practices that help us receive God's grace and respond through how we live.

Over these four weeks, we'll explore small shifts in how we eat, read scripture, pray, confess, and reconcile. Each week introduces paired practices—one that helps us **receive** God's grace and one that helps us **respond** through our daily lives.

This study is designed for use in small groups, Sunday School classes, or individual reflection. You don't need to be an expert or have everything figured out. All that's required is a willingness to begin—because small shifts, practiced faithfully, really can lead to big faith and transform your life.

Episode 1 — A Small Shift in How We Eat

Introduction



You're invited to explore how simple, purposeful Lenten practices—spiritual practices and Christian practices—can shape and transform your life. We're not talking about big, dramatic changes. Rather, small shifts made over time that have a big, big impact on your faith, your home, and your life.

During the season of Lent, the forty days leading up to Easter, we're looking at four small shifts in how we understand and practice to deepen our faith and deepen our relationship with Christ. Today, we focus on the shift in how we eat.

Food is deeply woven into our spiritual lives—often more than we realize. Some of the most important moments in scripture happen around a table: Passover, the feeding of the crowds, and Jesus' final meal with his disciples. In this first week, we explore how **feasting** and **fasting** are spiritual practices that shape us.

Two Key Insights

"I am the bread of life," Jesus says—reminding us that communion is not just a ritual, but a lived experience of grace and belonging (John 6:35). Feasting, and specifically communion, reminds us that God's love through Christ is given freely and abundantly.

"Fasting reveals, more than any other practice, the things that control us." Fasting gently reveals the things that control us and invites us to rely more deeply on God. Together, these practices help us receive and respond to grace.

Three Reflection Questions

1. When you think about food and faith, what memories or experiences come to mind? How has eating—or not eating—played a role in your spiritual life?
2. Which practice feels more natural to you right now: feasting (receiving God's love) or fasting (letting go and releasing control)? Why?
3. What do you notice about yourself—your habits, emotions, or dependencies—when your normal routines are disrupted?

Practice for the Week

Choose one small shift related to eating:

Feasting—Receive God’s grace intentionally. Participate in communion this week with added attentiveness or pause before a meal to give thanks slowly and deliberately.

Fasting—Give something up for a short, defined period—perhaps a meal, a type of food, or even a few hours. Use moments of hunger as an invitation to prayer and awareness of your dependence on God.

Spend Time in Prayer

Begin your morning and conclude your evening in prayer:¹

Morning Prayer

Holy One, in Christ you gave up everything to enter into solidarity with your people. Today, may I resist the temptation to constantly consume all that is around me. Help me resist: the tendency to get lost in social media, the hyperfocus on the way I look or appear to others, the temptation to compare myself to those around me, the urge to lash out or speak harshly to those around me. As I actively abstain from what is easy in our world, may my focus be on following Jesus more fully. Amen

Evening Prayer

God of mountains and valleys, deserts and dry places, I am grateful for the ways I have seen you today: for the people who remind me of your goodness, for the simple beauty of nature that reminds me of your presence, for the life-giving moments in my day when I felt close to you, for ways life is opening up and developing for me. As I resist the urge to busy my heart and mind constantly with all that is around me, may my attention be more fixed on the ways you work in my life. Amen.

¹ Source: The Methodist Book of Daily Prayer, Second Edition, 102.

Episode 2 — A Small Shift in How We Read the Bible

Introduction



Throughout these forty days of Lent, we live into simple, purposeful practices that shape and transform our faith over time. Lent invites us to pause, prepare, repent and reflect, and deepen our faith. But it's easy to get stuck in a habit loop. Just one small shift—like a new practice—can make a big impact in our lives.

Today, we focus on the shift in how we read the Bible. The Bible is more than a book to be studied—it is a story meant to shape our lives. This week explores a shift from simply **reading** scripture to **living** it. When we engage scripture through study and devotion, we begin to see how God's story intersects with our own.

Two Key Insights

Scripture is meant to be read as part of a larger story, across the Old Testament and the New Testament, as we develop the habit of **reading**. In this practice, we study for understanding and insight as well as devotionally and in conversation with God, inviting God to speak to our hearts and minds.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount reminds us that faith is not just believed but embodied or practiced. It is **living** what we read in scripture, through humility, mercy, kindness, generosity, and love.

Three Reflection Questions

1. How would you describe your current relationship with the Bible—encouraging, confusing, meaningful, intimidating? When did that shift for you, or has it always felt that way? What experience or season shaped how you approach Scripture now?
2. What difference have you noticed between reading Scripture for information versus reading it prayerfully or devotionally? What would you want your relationship with the Bible to feel like, and what's standing in the gap between here and there?
3. Where do you sense an invitation to live out something you've read in scripture—through a habit, a relationship, or a decision?

Practice for the Week

Choose one small shift with how you read and live scripture:

- **Read five verses or five minutes** each day rather than aiming for a large section. Try reading Scripture slowly once this week, pausing to notice words or phrases that stand out.
- Choose a passage—such as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12)—and ask: **What would it look like to live this today?**

Spend Time in Prayer

Begin your morning and conclude your evening in prayer:²

Morning Prayer

God of the still small voice, today slow me down and calm my spirit so that I can hear you: calling me out of my comfort zone, prompting me to reach out to a friend, nudging me to speak up and make my voice known, convicting me to confront that which is unhealthy in my own life. May I be more attentive today to the ways your Spirit is speaking to me, and may I have the willingness to listen. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Mighty God, with a word you brought the creation into being and ever since you have been speaking life into existence. Thank you for the ways that you speak to me, for moments of realization and clarity, new insights and perspectives, reminders of encouragement and hope, challenges and circumstances that push me to grow or change. Open my ears, that I may hear your voice more clearly each day. Amen.

² Source: The Methodist Book of Daily Prayer, Second Edition, 96.

Episode 3 — A Small Shift in How We Pray

Introduction



This study explores how simple, purposeful Lenten practices—spiritual practices and Christian practices—can shape and transform your life. We focused on communion and fasting, then reading and living scripture. Today, we focus on a small shift in how we pray.

Prayer is central to the Christian life—and often one of the hardest practices to sustain. This week focuses on a small but meaningful shift: beginning simply and learning to listen as much as we speak.

Prayer is not about perfect words or constant activity. It's about relationship—talking with God honestly and listening attentively for God's presence and guidance.

Two Key Insights

“The real challenge isn't doing—it's starting.” Small beginnings lower resistance and open the door to deeper practice. One practice includes the two-minute rule. The idea behind the two-minute rule is that any new habit or practice should take less than two minutes to do. And once we get started, prayer, most simply, is speaking or **talking** with God.

Søren Kierkegaard is quoted, “A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is listening.” Prayer is also **listening**—creating space for God to speak, guide, and comfort.

Three Reflection Questions

1. What makes prayer difficult for you right now—time, distraction, uncertainty, or something else? When was the last time prayer felt natural or easy for you? What was different about that season of your life?
2. How does the idea of starting with just two minutes change how prayer feels to you? If you could be completely honest with God about why prayer feels hard right now, what would you say?
3. Reflect on the story told about Dr. King's experience with prayer. When have you sensed God's presence through speaking and through listening? Is there something you've been wanting to say to God but haven't been able to find the words for, or maybe haven't given yourself permission to say?

Practice for the Week

Choose one small shift in how you pray:

- Pray for **two minutes a day**. Find a consistent time in your day and set a calendar or phone reminder to pause and pray. Once this week, sit in silence for one minute and simply listen.
- Use the **fivefold prayer pattern** (praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, yielding), to deepen your time of prayer with God.

Spend Time in Prayer

Begin your morning and conclude your evening in prayer:³

Morning Prayer

Ever-present God, you are always listening to your children and call me to make my hopes and petitions known to you. Today, I name that which weighs heavy on my heart: for that which I need today, for those in my life hurting or suffering, for decisions or choices I am facing, for local, national and global leaders, for your people far away who are often overlooked, underserved, or treated unjustly. Hear my prayers, O God, and help me to listen to the ways you are speaking back into my life. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Sovereign God, you see fit to move, speak, and show your presence in your own way and at your own time. Help me to look back and see that even today, you are active in my life. I am grateful for the ways that today you: supported me, guided me, confronted me, helped me not feel alone, opened my eyes, softened my heart. As I speak to you, may I also more readily listen to the ways you are speaking to me. Amen.

³ Source: The Methodist Book of Daily Prayer, Second Edition, 109.

Episode 4 — A Small Shift in How We Relate

Introduction



We've continued to explore how simple, purposeful Lenten practices—spiritual practices and Christian practices—can shape and transform your life. Previously, small shifts in understanding and practice—communion and fasting, reading and living scripture, talking and listening in prayer, focused our attention on how small shifts made over time that have a big, big impact on your faith, your home, and your life.

This final episode invites us to explore one more shift. Today, we focus on the shift in how we relate. Specifically, **confession** and **reconciliation** are practices that help restore our relationships—with God, ourselves, and others—and draw us more deeply into a transformed life and world.

Two Key Insights

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, encouraged early Methodists to meet in small groups where they would ask each other, "How is it with your soul?" They created space for honest conversation about struggles and growth. They would also ask, "What sins have you committed this week?" The practice of confession is sometimes public or takes place within a community of worship. The practice of **confession** is also something that happens within us and in our relationship to God.

God reconciles us through Christ and calls us to participate in that work (2 Corinthians 5:18). Reconciliation isn't easy. It requires humility to admit fault and grace to forgive. Reconciliation may happen quickly; sometimes it's a long process. And sometimes, despite our best efforts, reconciliation may not be possible until all participants are ready. When we practice reconciliation, we participate in God's work of restoring all things.

Three Reflection Questions

1. What makes confession uncomfortable or difficult in your own life? How has confession released you from guilt, shame, and burden?
2. Reflect on the story about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. How have honesty and vulnerability—either given or received—led to healing or freedom?
3. Is there a relationship where reconciliation feels needed, even if it feels challenging?

Practice for the Week

Choose one small shift in how you relate:

- Practice **confession** in prayer or worship, asking God to reveal ways in which you've missed the mark. Trust that God has forgiven you.
- If appropriate, take one step toward **reconciliation**: a conversation, a note, or an apology without conditions.

Spend Time in Prayer

Begin your morning and conclude your evening in prayer:⁴

Morning Prayer

Gracious God, you meet my mistakes and sin with grace and forgiveness. Remind me today to follow your example by assuming the best in those around me, speaking honestly to those who disappoint me, offering forgiveness to those who hurt me, reconciling relationships if and where possible. Lord, just as you have forgiven me, embolden me to forgive those around me. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Compassionate God, thank you for the ways you offer me grace, forgive my sin, and give me new chances to serve you. I am aware of your forgiveness today: through people who love me even when I disappoint, in the second chances I received, in opportunities to help others even though I am imperfect, with clean slates to write new stories. God, thank you for forgiving me my trespasses today and helping me to forgive those who trespass against me. Amen.

⁴ Source: The Methodist Book of Daily Prayer, Second Edition, 123.