

During the Lenten Season, many people are in the habit of “giving something up” as a way to be penitential.

I once had a co-worker who gave up alcohol for Lent but only from Sunday through Thursday. I asked her why only Sunday through Thursday and she seriously felt missing happy hour all week was sacrifice enough. And honestly, the whole office suffered for her sacrifice. She had a somewhat cranky personality and turned out that it was worse when she was sober.

As a Baptist, we did not observe the Lenten Season, we just “did” Easter. So when I converted to Roman Catholicism at the time of my first marriage, I learned about religious practices from my former in-laws. One of things that they observed was that whatever you gave up for Lent, you could have on Sunday. My former mother-in-law was very strict with keeping “rules”. During Lent, she would give up Beer all week long but stay up until Midnight on Saturday so that she could have a beer as soon as it was “legal”..

For me, the Lenten Season is a time of reassessment. This is when I examine my personal and spiritual being and try to make changes to be a better me. Since I am a Sugaraholic, I used to give up Chocolate and dessert to work towards a more healthy lifestyle. During times of high stress, some of you may have heard me cry out “I need Sugar”.

A few years ago, I decided to try another tactic to make to changes in my life. I live too much inside my head, fretting and worrying about what is the right thing and end up doing nothing or less than nothing. And I spend too much time and energy focusing on what I am doing wrong and on everything that I am not. This year I gave up being myself. And I have developed a new mantra to help me focus. You have heard of WWJD – What Would Jesus Do? I use WWDP – What would Debbie Palmer Do? Deb is my example of someone who takes charge and pushes forward in life, always tries to do the right thing no matter how she feels. This is actually the second year I am doing this.

If Deb is saying yes to something I’m not sure about, I also say yes even if I am afraid.

By saying yes, I live more and do more. In the past year I have learned to play mah jongg and I am taking art lessons in painting, drawing, and pottery. And I have had opportunity to get to know some really interesting people. All these things would not have happened if I hadn’t said yes.

Is it my goal to be Deb Palmer? No, I will never have the energy to keep up with that but I hope to find a level that elevates who I am and helps me live and love more. When I am a loving person to myself, it is so much easier to love and care for those around me. Which is all God wants us to experience. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Let yourself experience the love that is waiting for you.