

Lenten Reflection: Liberation from Cages

A Call to Compassion for All Creation

Lent calls us to examine our lives, what we consume, how we live, and who bears the cost of our choices. It is a season of repentance, sacrifice, and preparation for new life. During this time, we are invited to fast not just from food, but from harm, injustice, and complicity in suffering.

Over 95% of South Africa's 25 million laying hens live their entire lives in battery cages—wire prisons so small each hen has less space than a sheet of A4 paper. They cannot spread their wings, build nests, or express any of their God-given natural behaviours. These hens are sentient beings, part of God's creation, denied their basic freedoms. The cruel confinement of battery cages strips them of dignity and causes immense suffering for cheaper eggs.

What the scripture says:

- *Isaiah 58:6-7* – "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter?"
- *Proverbs 12:10* – "The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel."

As people of faith, we are called to be stewards of creation—not exploiters. Genesis teaches us that God created animals and declared them "good." Our scriptures consistently remind us that compassion extends to *all* of God's creatures.

When we support systems that cause needless suffering, we betray our call to be image-bearers of God's love and justice. The cage-free movement is not just about animal welfare, it's about aligning our choices with our values of mercy, justice, and care for the vulnerable.

Lenten Practice:

Choose cage-free eggs; look for free-range, barn, organic, or pasture-raised eggs. Ask your retailers to stock only cage-free options.

Educate your congregation; share information about the suffering of caged hens and the importance of ethical food choices.

Support the #CageFreeSA campaign; encourage businesses and restaurants in your community to commit to sourcing only cage-free eggs. Pray for the end of battery cages and for a food system rooted in compassion, not cruelty.

Closing Prayer:



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Loving God, Creator of all life,

During this season of Lent, open our eyes to the suffering we cannot see and the systems we unknowingly support. Give us the courage to choose compassion over convenience, and justice over profit. Help us to break every yoke—for humans and animals alike—and to live as faithful stewards of your creation. May our choices reflect your love for all beings.

Amen.