

Assemblies – Lent 2 – myfishbites.com

What is Lent?

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/lent_1.shtml)

Lent is the period of six weeks leading up to Easter, the most important festival in the Christian calendar. It starts on Ash Wednesday and climaxes during Easter Week. It lasts a total of 40 days, not including Sundays.

Lent started in the 4th Century: it was introduced to encourage a return to self-discipline. At that time, baptisms normally took place on Easter Day and members of the church would join those preparing for baptism by fasting for several weeks beforehand.

The day before Lent starts is Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day. Festivities take place in many cities all over the world. People dress up, wear masks, parade and dance in the streets. Lent is a time of preparation for Easter.

What are the origins of the words 'Shrove Tuesday' and 'Lent'?

Shrove Tuesday comes from the word *to shrive* which means to confess one's sins. Lent comes from the old Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, meaning Spring.

Story of Giving Up Something

Many Christians believe that by giving up something for Lent, they will get closer to God, hear from him and be changed..

If you don't like either of these 2 stories below (both true), insert your own story of giving up something and it leading to something better..

1. There was a man who had been going out with a girl for ages. He thought she was the right girl for him and that they'd get married. One day she split up with him. He was totally devastated and didn't know how there could be anyone else in the world for him. But a few months later he met another woman who was even more amazing. They got married and have been married for many years, really happily.

2. My brother was killed when he was working out in Africa. He was working with a project called Echoes in Katoka, Congo. Unfortunately when he was going for a holiday at the end of his time, he was killed when the car he was in crashed. At the time, I was nowhere with God and had been involved in gangs and some bad stuff. I was lost and didn't know who I was. Basically I was a bit of a scally. But the day I heard he'd been killed, I said, 'God I need you in my life, change me, help me, I can't do this without you.' God totally changed me, turned me around and has given me so many experiences in life. I've done loads of amazing stuff, travelled all over the place, done music, been on stage, helped young people and loads more. Although my brother died, something else was born in me and has been so amazing.

Why do Christians do Lent?

Gradually Christians began to associate the fast with the 40 day period when Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray in preparation for his ministry. During this time he was tempted several times by Satan, but resisted.

Jesus needed to have time alone with God to prepare for the task that lay before him - his ministry and eventual crucifixion. During this time he would be given the strength to overcome any temptation.

So today.. Christians identify themselves with Jesus. A Christian means a Christ follower, a disciple. We may think it's weird but we all follow different people, whether in the world of music, sport, entertainment or an area that we're into..

So who do you follow?

You have a choice here.. You can (a) ask people who their role model / idol is, (b) take a look at the latest iTunes top 10 downloads / streamed music.

Dress someone up

For this, I asked a student beforehand if he'd mind putting on some hip-hop clothing. I took in some baggy jeans, Timberland boots, some 'bling' (chains), a baseball hat, an NFL jersey, a big hoody, a baggy coat and a handheld radio mic.

I asked the student if he was now a rapper, an MC. He said no (phew!) The point is that wearing the gear doesn't make you an MC. Just because you look like something or someone, wear the right gear, and speak like them - doesn't make you something or someone.

Point (feel free to adapt this)

Christians believe that being a follower of Jesus means more than dressing up like him. After all, in all the pictures Jesus seems to be wearing a big white dress and it just wouldn't look good!! But it's more than that. Christians follow Jesus because they believe he has changed their hearts, not because they have to obey lots of religious rules. Christians who follow Lent do so because they want more of God so they can share his love with people around them. Today, make a decision that you will look out for and care for people around you, just as Jesus loves you.

My adaptation - was about value and the fact that the staff in school want to look out for you, want the best for you and to encourage you. They are showing love for you (the students..)

Back to Lent (have some chocolates / candy with you)

Say - Thing is, now it's Lent, I've got this chocolate and I just don't know what to do with it. It's a real struggle (walking up and down) because it's just such a waste.. Give out some chocolate (only if your school is chilled with this, most are now 'healthy eating' schools..!)