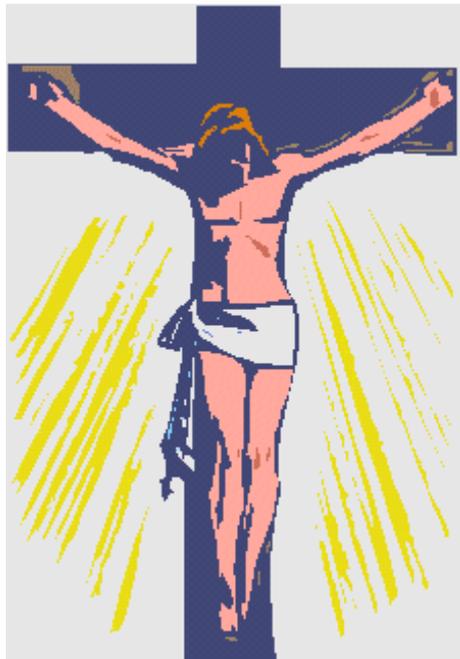


A Guide to Lent and Easter for Young People

What is Lent All About?

Easter is when we celebrate the rising of Jesus after his death on the cross. It is a great day: because of Easter, we don't have to be afraid, and we never have to be apart from God. But at one time, we *were* apart from God. We can learn about that time and about why Jesus died on the cross during a season called Lent.



Why did Jesus have to die?

When we do things that are hurtful to others or are rude to God, God says that we can't be close to him. And when we can't be near God, our hearts are not at rest. The Bible says, 'Everyone has done wrong and is far away from God' (Rom 3.23). Not only that, but without God's help, there is no way to get back to him. Without God's help, we are lost.

But on the first Easter Sunday, God said, "Even though people have done wrong and are far from me, Jesus has let himself be punished for the wrongs of the people. Jesus let himself get in trouble instead of them. Jesus died and *I was separated from him*. My own child took my anger instead of you. But now I am not angry anymore, and everything is forgiven. And though Jesus was dead, I have made him alive again, and we'll be together forever. ...

"Now," God says, "when you do something wrong and you feel like you are far from me, run to Jesus (this kind of running is not with your feet, but *with your imagination*). Jesus is the way back to me! Jesus has made my anger go away for ever. Run to Jesus and when you are near Him, you will be near to me also. I do love him, and I love you so very much. In fact, I love you so much that Jesus is my gift to you forever, so that whenever you are near Jesus, I will remember what he did to make my anger go away, and I will forgive you. This is how we can be close forever."

What is Lent good for? ...

God has given us a great and comforting gift. ... But **it's easy to forget what God has done for us**. We forget that it was because of our wrong that Jesus was punished. We are wrong when we try to make ourselves happy by eating lots of candy and junk food, by buying lots toys or watching too much TV. We fill up with all sorts of things, always hoping that they will make us happy, but it doesn't last very long. We just end up wanting more. We are never satisfied by these things.

During Lent, many Christians try to stop filling up with junk food and TV and all these other things to make room for God again. If we do this too, we can feel near to God again. If we clear away some of *our comforts* for a time,

there will be more room for God.

Some ways to remember what God did

Decide with an adult **what you can do to remember** how much Jesus gave up for you. Try to give up something each week. You could have a dessert-free day, or a dessert-free *week!* How about a TV-free week? If you give up dessert, or videos, or anything that costs, you could take the money your family saves, and help someone who doesn't have a home or job Can you think of other things you can give up for a few weeks?

Fill up with something good: spend some time learning about the days before Jesus died. **Read in your Bible** about how Jesus was arrested and crucified. Imagine what it would have been like to be with him at that time. Do the people who were with Jesus help him? Do they understand what is happening? Right before Jesus was arrested he was sad and wanted to pray, but the friends he brought with him fell asleep. Would you have been able to stay awake?



"The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me." (Matthew 26.38

[TEV](#))

Hope

But as you remember the reasons Jesus died, don't forget the most important thing ... Easter! Remember that Jesus was not beaten by death. **Jesus is the winner!** He is the only one strong enough to overpower death. That's why God sent him to save us.

Some Places to Read

You may want to read in a Children's Bible about the days leading up to Easter. Look up these bits (you may need to use an adult Bible):

Matthew 26
John 18; John 19. 1-30
