



Youth Group Lesson on Lent

Note: This game uses a lot of games and activities, which work great with youth groups. However, if your group isn't in to games all that much, then just use the teaching segments as a guideline for a more interactive experience.

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

This lesson is designed to help make the centuries-old tradition of Lent more meaningful for today's youth.

It helps students to understand that Lent is not just about self-denial for its own sake, but that it can be a time of meaningful sacrifice, service, and self-reflection.

This lesson is designed for a small group but can easily be adapted to larger groups.

For larger groups, divide students into teams and have them send a representative up for each of the games.

The games are used to break up the lesson to keep students engaged, and are meant to reinforce the theme of the lesson (Lent is about giving something up to achieve a greater good).

The way this works is that students (or teams) start out with a prize (candy works well) and, with each new game, have the option of giving up their prize for the opportunity to win extra candy or prizes if they win the next game.

(It looks and sounds a lot like gambling, but “spin” it so that it is about giving up something small to achieve a greater good).

SUPPLIES:

- Computer or tablet (one that can be connected to a projector or big screen TV if you have a large group)
- Scratch paper or personal white boards and pens/markers for quiz
- Cotton balls
- Petroleum jelly
- Paper bowls
- Straws
- Q-tips
- Highlighter markers
- M&M's or Skittles
- Candy

OPENING GAME: Deal or No Deal

Use an online version of the once-popular game show like this one:

<http://www.thebestofflash.com/demos/mysterymoneygame/mysterymoneygamepreview.html>

The rules of the game will vary depending on which site you use, but should be pretty self-explanatory.

Have students (individually, or a representative from each team) take turns playing the game.

As each student/team finishes their turn, give them a piece of candy.

At this point, they can choose to eat the candy now or save it to use in the next game.

ACTIVITY: Lent Quiz

Before you begin with the quiz, offer the students the opportunity to give up their piece of candy they received after the previous game.

If they give up their candy and win the quiz game, then they get their piece back plus two more.

If they keep their original candy, they get one piece for winning. (Give up something small to achieve a greater good)

Give students a piece of paper or whiteboard and a writing utensil.

Ask them the following questions and have them write down their answers.

Go over the answers at the end.

The winner gets a piece of candy (or two, if they gave up their candy before the game).

1. How long does Lent last? (40 days)
2. When does it begin? (Ash Wednesday)
3. What is "Fat Tuesday"? (A day to indulge before fasting)
4. What does Lent commemorate? (Christ's 40 days in the desert)
5. What is the purpose of Lent? (spiritual renewal)
6. What day of the week does not count in the 40 days of Lent? (Sundays)
7. When does Lent end? (Easter Sunday)

MINI-GAME: Sticky, Fluffy Noses

Before the game, offer students the chance to give up one piece of candy for the chance to get two pieces if they win the game.

Set up two tables about 25 feet apart.

On each table place a paper bowl for each student playing the game.

In the bowls on one table place five to ten cotton balls, and on the rim put a glob of petroleum jelly.

The object of the game is for students to get all the cotton balls from the bowl on the table into the bowl on the other table.

They do this by dabbing jelly on their noses and sticking their noses in the bowl of cotton balls and getting a cotton ball to stick to their noses.

They then walk over to the other table and get the ball to drop into their bowl on the other table.

They may not use their hands in any of this.

If they drop a cotton ball before putting into their bowl, they must pick it up (they can use their hands for this) and put it back in the starting bowl.

The winner is the first to get all their cotton balls from one bowl to the other.

LESSON 1: What is Lent? Why do we celebrate it by giving things up?

Lent is a time of self-reflection and self-denial in preparation for the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection during Holy Week.

Before Jesus began his earthly ministry, he spent 40 days in the wilderness (Luke 4: 1-13; read this with the youth if you like).

We don't know much about that time, other than the fact that he fasted and prayed and was tempted by the devil.

So, in the same way, we ought to spend time fasting and praying in preparation for our ministry of bringing the good news of the risen Christ to the world.

Our celebration of Holy Week often coincides on the calendar with the Jewish celebration of Passover.

In preparation for Passover, our Jewish friends must do a thorough cleaning of their houses and kitchens and get rid of all their old food.

The Passover meal must be prepared with all new and fresh ingredients.

In the same way, we ought to use this time of Lent to do some "spring cleaning" ourselves.

Traditionally, Christians will fast from something (usually certain foods or drink or certain activities) during the 40 days of Lent (with the exception of Sundays, which is a weekly celebration of Christ's resurrection).

This is to remind us of the great sacrifice that Christ made for us.

Jesus gave up so much to restore our relationship to God (Philippians 2), is it too much to ask of us to give something up for 40 days?

MINI-GAME: Q-tip Shooting Gallery

Before the game, ask participants if they want to give up one piece of candy for the chance at winning two pieces in this game.

Stand five to seven highlighter markers up on a table, placing them in a line about two inches apart from each other.

Place them near the edge of one of the long sides of the table.

Give each player a straw and ten Q-tips.

Taking turns, players will stand or squat on the side of the table opposite the markers.

They use the straw like a peashooter to try to knock over the markers with the Q-tips.

The player who knocks over the most markers is the winner.

In the event of a tie, place one marker in the middle (lengthwise) of the table and have the two players who tied go to either end of the table.

In this "sudden death" showdown, the players will shoot their Q-tips simultaneously at the marker.

The one to knock it over is the winner.

LESSON 2: Ideas of Lent: Fasting, Feasting, & Service

Below are some ideas for your students on ways they can celebrate Lent and make it a meaningful experience for themselves.

If they choose to give something up, it should not be for its own sake, but rather for the sake of gaining something greater (like the candy prizes with the games).

There are some great ideas also listed on these webpages:

<http://youthspecialties.com/blog/20-odd-lent-ideas-for-your-students-infographic/>

<http://youthspecialties.com/blog/20-more-odd-lent-ideas-for-students/>

Celebrating Lent is not just about giving things up; it can also be about adding good things to our lives, as well as about serving others.

Encourage your students to make a thoughtful choice that will provide them a meaningful Lenten experience.

Ideas of things they can fast from:

- **Social Media.** Giving it up altogether may be difficult since many students use social media for school or athletic purposes, but perhaps limiting their use is a good start.
- **Texting.** Like social media, texting does have its practical purposes and is necessary in many situations, but encourage students to call their friends and family members rather than texting them.

A phone call is much more personal and meaningful.

- **Junk food.** If students are in the habit of buying a soda or candy bar or coffee drink on a regular basis, encourage them to give that up for Lent.

Also encourage them to use the money they would have spent on junk food to help others.

Perhaps they can treat a friend to a soda or coffee drink, or they can donate the money to Heifer International or some other charity.

- **Sarcasm.** This can be a tough one for students, but attempting to give this up can encourage students to think about what they say and to look for ways to lift others up.
- **Sleeping in.** Emphasize again, that students should not do this for its own sake, but should use that extra time on Saturday mornings to do something meaningful and productive.

Ideas of things they can feast on:

- **Reading the Bible.** Encourage students to set aside time each day for reading their Bibles, if they don't do so already.

The Gospels are a good place to start during the Lenten season.

- **Memorizing Bible Verses.** Students can memorize a verse a day, or a verse a week.

Give them suggestions of some of your favorite verses to start with.

- **Prayer.** Students should set aside a time each day for prayer, whether in the morning when they first get up or at night before bed. Or perhaps during passing period between classes.
- **Time with family.** It can be difficult for families to connect with all the busyness in everyone's schedules.

Parents will appreciate the initiative if their students want to set aside time for family.

Ideas for service:

- **Do your siblings' chores once a week.** Not as a trade of chores, but simply to do something nice for a sibling.
- **Treat someone to a soda/coffee.** When out with friends, students can offer to pay for their friends' treats.

- **Write a thank you note to one of your teachers.** Teachers get a lot of calls and emails from parents and students complaining about things. A thank you note will be very appreciated.
- **Help a neighbor with yard work.** Offer to rake leaves or cut the grass or shovel the sidewalk.
- **Bake cookies for an elderly member of the church.** A small gesture like this will be very meaningful for both the giver and receiver.

MINI-GAME: Sucking up candy

Before the game, ask participants if they want to give up one piece of candy for the chance at winning two pieces in this game.

Or, since this is the final game, you can offer a larger candy bar for the winner.

Using a similar set-up as the first game, put about ten M&M's or Skittles in a bowl on one table and an empty bowl on the other table.

Give each player a straw.

They must use the straw to “grab” the candy by sucking through the straw and carry the candy to the empty bowl on the other table.

If they drop any candy, they must take it back to the beginning.

The first player to get all their candy from one bowl to the other is the winner.

SMALL GROUPS: How will you celebrate Lent?

Break into small groups and have students brainstorm ideas of what they might want to give up for Lent.

Remind them that whatever they choose should be meaningful to them and beneficial to others.

Give each student a note card and writing utensil.

If they decide to make a commitment during Lent (feasting, fasting, or service) have them write that commitment on the card along with their name and phone number or email address.

Have the small group leaders collect the cards, then call, text, or email the students during the week to see how their commitment is going.

This will provide students with some encouragement and accountability in their decisions.