Topic: Why is Lent 40 days long?

*Grades: 1-6*

Length: 45-60 min.

Materials needed:

* Smartboard (for viewing bible story)
* Worksheets (provided below)
* Song (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wutmEjdbedE>)

Resources:

<http://www.40day.com/40_in_the_bible.html>

<http://www.christiancrafters.com/lesson_forty-days-wilderness.html>

<http://ministry-to-children.com/jesus-overcomes-temptations-coloring-pages/>

<http://www.silk.net/RelEd/gospel-mark-1-c.htm>

Students will be able to:

* Understand why Lent is 40 days long
* Think about ways to resist temptation
* Make a Lenten commitment

PROCEDURE

Introduction:

* Begin class with prayer (either your own or the one below)
* *Lord, during this Lenten season, may we remember you and all the sacrifices you made for us. Whenever we are faced with difficult decisions and temptation, help us to turn to you and remember to choose the choice that will make you smile. Thank you for your strength and graces. (Take 3-5 prayer intentions) We ask this in your name. Amen.*
* Play the song: Open the Eyes (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wutmEjdbedE>)
* Allow for a few moments of silent individual prayer

Body:

* Lead the students through a discussion asking:
  + What day does Lent start? (Ash Wednesday)
  + What day does Lent end? (Holy Saturday is the last day/Easter Sunday is the first day of the Easter season)
  + How many days long is Lent? (40)
* Depending on the grade, have the students count how many days there are from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday by either counting from a calendar, or counting the weeks and multiplying by 7 days in a week. Either way, the students should find that there are more than 40 days from the beginning to the end of Lent.
* Ask for ideas why they just found more than 40 days of Lent, when we know there are only supposed to be 40 days? They should be lead to know that is it because we do not count Sundays during the days of Lent.
  + Lent is a time for us to remember Jesus’ passion and death for us. It is a time of sorrow and penance. But on Sundays, we attend mass and remember the miracle of Jesus’ resurrection. It is a day we celebrate, so we exclude it from the days of Lent.
  + You may choose to re-count, excluding the Sundays so that the students can see for sure that there are 40 days without Sundays.
* Why is Lent 40 days long? What is special about the number 40? Where do we see it in the bible?
  + It rained for 40 days and 40 nights when God flooded the earth. Noah, who built the ark, finally opened the window to the ark 40 days after it started raining.
  + Moses was on the mountain with God for 40 days when God gave Moses the 10 commandments.
  + Jonah, from Jonah and the whale, warned the city of Ninevah that they had 40 days to repent from their wicked ways
  + Most importantly, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying.
* Read the story of Jesus being tempted during his 40 days in the wilderness.
  + <http://www.thebricktestament.com/the_life_of_jesus/satan_tempts_jesus/mk01_12pmt04_01.html>
  + In the first temptation, Jesus teaches us whom to trust for our daily needs; God is the one who promises to care for us, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19.
  + In the second temptation, Jesus teaches us humility. The gifts God has given us are not to be used to show how great we are or what we've accomplished, but to show how great God is and what he can do through a life committed to serving him! Let your light shine...to praise the Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)
  + In the third temptation, Jesus teaches us that following him means self-denial. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)
* Every Lent, we should make some sort of commitment to God, that we will better ourselves in some way. Some people give things up, while others take on something extra to make God smile. We know that there will be times during the 40 days that we will be tempted to break out commitment, but this reading gives us three things to think about that will help us fight that temptation.
* Remember that (1) God will provide for all of our needs, (2) that we must be humble, and that the good things we do are because God gives us the graces to do them, and (3) that we must have self-denial—each time we do this, we will be stronger against temptations.
* Allow students to fill out the worksheet, and color if there is time.

Closure:

* End the class in a prayer of thanksgiving and asking for strength for their Lenten journey.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*My Lenten Commitment*

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When I am tempted I will remember:

1. That God will provide for all my needs
2. To be humble
3. To deny myself

