BIBLE STUDIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH GROUPS FOR USE DURING LENT 2018

40ACTS 2018

WEDNESDAY 14 FEBRUARY TO SATURDAY 31 MARCH 2018

40ACTS THEME 2018: FAITH IN DEED

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Created by ***40acts*** brought to you by ***Stewardship*** and ***Energize*** brought to you by ***Urban Saints***

40acts.org.uk

Welcome to 40acts

15+
YEAR OLDS

WHAT IS 40ACTS?

40acts is a generosity challenge which invites people to do Lent a bit differently.

During the 40 days of Lent, 40acts participants will be invited to take part in 40 simple acts of generosity which will challenge them to 'do Lent generously' in 2018.

Lent marks a pivotal point in the history of the church, when Jesus prepared to give himself up as a sacrifice. Traditionally we mark Lent by giving something up, but what if it could be more than that? What if Lent was a preparation for a lifetime of big-heartedness?

Small acts of generosity, performed by thousands of people across the UK and beyond, have the power to make a big change to our communities, to our churches and, ultimately, to our world.

40acts and Energize have teamed up again to create this brand new resource: 'Faith in Deed' – a series of six sessions for 11–14s and six companion sessions for 15+ (although you will find that many of the activities would be suitable for either age group). This session can be used as an introduction to Lent, the Faith in Deed series and the 40acts initiative and is also suitable for young people 11–15+.

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

Each session is broken up into six different elements, and within each element there are several different activities and ideas that you can choose from (pick 'n' mix style) to create a meeting plan suitable for your particular group.

OVERVIEW

Leader's notes which summarise the overall theme, background information, key messages and take-home points.

WARMING UP

Ice-breaker activities and games to introduce the session's theme.

GETTING STARTED

Activities to get young people thinking about tonight's theme – why is this subject important.

DIGGING IN

Activities including sketches, stories and video clips to unpack what the Bible has to say about the theme.

RESPONSE

Activities to apply or consider what has been learnt. Some of the activities could be a memory verse or prayers.

TAKE AWAY

Reflecting back on the session, suggesting some of the 40acts generosity challenges to do either as individuals or as a group. Challenging the group to apply what they have learnt with other people.

All biblical quotes are taken from the NIV unless otherwise stated.

TIMELINE

Shrove Tuesday (13th February 2018)

The day before Lent begins is marked by Shrove Tuesday or 'Pancake Day'. This tradition stems from those who would finish up the food they had in their cupboards to prepare for the fast.

Ash Wednesday (14th February 2018)

The first day of Lent is Ash Wednesday – this is a time for remembering that humans are sinful and need God. In certain church traditions people have their foreheads marked with a cross made out of ash. Helpfully or unhelpfully (depending on your viewpoint) Ash Wednesday 2018 coincides with Valentine's Day.

Maundy Thursday (29th March 2018)

Maundy Thursday also falls in Lent. This is the Thursday before Easter when Christians remember how Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Some churches re-enact this ceremony.

Good Friday (30th March 2018), Easter Sunday (1st April 2018)

The Easter weekend, beginning on Good Friday, is a time to reflect on Jesus' death and what it means to Christians. Lent ends on Easter Sunday with the celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

Lenten traditions vary from denomination to denomination, and different countries have their own take on Lent.

THE BOOK OF JAMES

40acts 2018 takes its inspiration from the book of James and the inseparable connection between faith and deeds. While it's clear that we cannot earn our salvation or win God's approval by our own actions, James sets out a framework for the kind of practical, day-to-day living that springs from hearing God's word, obeying it and acting on it. As the saying goes, it's about 'walking the talk'.

FAITH IN DEED

Introductory Session

Created around Shrove Tuesday, this session should happen in the first week of Lent.

BIBLE VERSES

Matthew 4:1–11; Matthew 6:16–18; James 2:14–26

SESSION AIM

To introduce the idea of Lent as a time of preparation and to engage young people in the 40acts generosity challenge and how they can personally draw close to God during Lent.

LEADER'S NOTES

OVERVIEW

What do you think of when you hear the word 'Lent'? Pancakes, giving something up, Easter?

Lent does incorporate those things but there is also much more to this traditional time in the Church's calendar.

Lent is the 40-day period preceding Easter Sunday. During this time many people fast – traditionally from something essential rather than a luxury. They do this to help them concentrate on the passion of Jesus and to identify with Jesus' time in the wilderness. There are three spiritual disciplines associated with Lent: prayer, fasting and giving. Many Christians use Lent as a time to focus on these aspects of their spiritual life. The 40acts campaign particularly focuses on the third of these spiritual disciplines – giving - and it asks the questions 'What if Lent could be about more than just giving stuff up?' and 'What if it could be a time of radical generosity as well as spiritual discipline?' Over the last eight years, 40acts has become a movement of over 100,000 people on a mission to impact their communities, and this is a great project to engage young people in, whatever their level of faith.

The theme for 40acts 2018 is **Faith in Deed** and uses the book of James to explore how Christians are called not only to a life of faith but also of action.

For young people with little or no faith, this is a great opportunity to begin to understand that Christianity is a hands-on faith that calls us up to not only believe but to demonstrate God's love through practical service. For young people who are further on in their faith journey, this is a brilliant opportunity for them to be challenged to put their faith into action and, in doing so, to grow in confidence.

PANCAKE RACE

WARMING UP

GAME

EQUIPMENT

Pancakes (which can be bought already made from a supermarket), frying pans

DURATION: 10 MINS.

Organise your group into two or more even teams. Give each team a frying pan with a pancake in it.

Have the young people run a relay race whilst flipping the pancakes. Encourage them to flip them as many times as possible with extra points for height and style!

THE POINT

Just for fun.

PANCAKE PICTURES

WARMING UP

ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT

Microwaveable pancakes, microwave, a selection of toppings (e.g. chocolate drops, sweets, chocolate sauce, sprinkles, etc), paper plates, spoons

DURATION: 15 MINS.

Lay all the ingredients out on a clean table before the young people arrive.

Warm up the pancakes in the microwave and hand them out to the young people on paper plates. Give them five minutes to turn their pancake into a work of art using the toppings you have provided.

Quickly judge to find the most beautiful pancake picture and then eat the art!

THE POINT

Just for fun.

FLIPPIN' PANCAKES

WARMING UP

ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT

Some cold, ready-made pancakes (shop bought are fine), four frying pans, pancake syrup, sauce pots (i.e. small cups you would put sauce in at a fast-food restaurant)

DURATION: 10 MINS.

This would make a great up-front game.

Ask for two pairs of volunteers and give each player a frying pan. Stand each pair so they are facing each other at whatever distance you think reasonable. One half of the pair will be the 'thrower' who, using the frying pan and without moving their feet, has to toss pancakes to their partner who has to catch them in their pan. When they catch a pancake, they have to eat it and then drink a cup of syrup – only when they have done this can their partner throw another pancake. You will need a supply of pancakes in reach of the throwers and a number of cups of syrup near the catchers. Any pancakes that hit the floor are out of the game and should not be eaten. The winning team will be the pair who have eaten the most pancakes and syrup in the time you allocated.

THE POINT

Just for fun.

PULLING A FAST ONE

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSSION

EQUIPMENT

Pictures or objects that represent the following: chocolate, TV, crisps, computer games, mobile phones, DVDs, magazines and anything else that your group are into

DURATION: 20 MINS.

Ask your young people what they understand by the term 'fasting'. Explain that 'fasting' is going without something for a while. Usually we apply this word to food but it could be used to describe anything that people decide to deprive themselves of.

Explain that at Lent many people choose to fast – ask if any of your young people have ever given anything up for Lent.

Show your young people the objects/pictures that you have brought in. Ask them to rate on a scale of 1–10 how hard they think it would be to go without each item for 40 days.

Explain to your group that fasting at Lent is not about making people miserable or giving something up for the challenge of it! Rather, people fast at Lent to make a bit more room in their lives for God. They try to fill the extra time that fasting gives them with things that will help them reflect on all that Jesus has done for us, and to bless other people.

End by asking you group to spend a moment thinking about how they could make a bit more room to think about God over the weeks before Easter.

THE POINT

To consider why people fast at Lent.

SHUT OUT THAT TUNE!

GETTING STARTED

ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT

As many ways of playing music tracks all at the same time as you can arrange (if you are a techno whiz – or know one – you may be able to devise a way of doing this from one laptop, but a number of music players spaced round the room would also work), paper, pens

DURATION: 10 MINS

The idea is to play as many music tracks as you can, loudly and simultaneously, and get the group to write down as many as they can identify. To ensure that this isn't completely impossible, make sure you choose music that many of the group are likely to know. If possible, you could play the tracks again, reducing the number that are being played each time. Is it easier to identify the songs when there are fewer playing? See if more of the young people are able to identify the music this time.

Explain that when there is a lot of noise going on, it is difficult to hear properly. When we are busy it is difficult to hear God talking to us, which is why at Lent we make a special effort to spend quiet time with God.

THE POINT

This activity helps young people to recognise that sometimes we need to turn off some of the distractions in order to hear God better.

40 THINGS

GETTING STARTED

ACTIVITY

EQUIPMENT

Pens, paper with numbers 1–40 printed/written on, a prize for the winning team

DURATION: 15 MINS.

Divide the group into teams and give them a sheet of paper and pen. Explain that Lent is the 40 days preceding Easter Sunday and you want the groups to write down 40 things that they associate with this period of time. Depending on your group's knowledge you may want to give them some hints to get them started. If you want to be very tough (and accurate) you may not allow them to include things specifically associated with Easter Sunday, but you could be more lenient if your group is likely to struggle. Start a timer and give them two or three minutes (no more) to complete their list. Once the time is up go round the groups in turn and ask them to read out one thing from their list – if that thing appears on anyone else's list then everyone must cross it out from their list and no one scores; if in your judgment the thing is associated with Lent and is unique (i.e. no one else has it on their list) then they score a point. Go round the teams until all the unique items have been revealed and the list exhausted. Award a prize to the winning team.

THE POINT

To introduce the theme of Lent and identify things that are associated with it.

SHROVE TUESDAY

FOOD AND COOKING

EQUIPMENT

Frying pans and hob, flour, eggs, salt, milk, oil for frying, kitchen paper, cling film, pancake recipe sheet, four large self-adhesive stickers

DURATION: 30 MINS.

Write clearly one of the following verses on each sticker and stick them on the ingredients as follows:

Egg box – *…if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come…* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Flour – *…'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'* (Matthew 4:4)

Salt – *'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.'* (Matthew 5:13)

Milk Carton – *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.* (1 Timothy 5:22)

- Why do we eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday?

Before we answer that question we are going to make some pancake batter – because the key to good pancakes is to let the batter stand for a while!

Give out the recipe sheets and get your group to mix up their batter, and then place it in a fridge if you have one or a cool place to stand.

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Lent begins. It was traditionally the day everyone went to confession – an old word for confession is 'shriving', which is where the name comes from.

It was also traditional on this day to use up all the ingredients in the store cupboard which were forbidden during Lent. In England this was done by making pancakes. This is why Shrove Tuesday is also called 'Pancake Day'. We still eat pancakes on this day even though most people no longer fast during Lent.

As you have discovered, there are four ingredients for pancakes. You may have noticed that the ingredients have verses from the Bible written on them. This is because each of the ingredients is symbolic of something to do with Lent:

Eggs are a symbol of creation – Jesus redeems creation through his death and resurrection

Flour is a symbol of life – the main ingredient of bread, flour reminds us that God is the source of our life

Salt is a symbol of wholesomeness – God requires us to be like salt in the world, making things whole

Milk is a symbol of purity – Lent is a time for repenting of our sins and making a new start with God

Get your group to make some pancakes using the batter they prepared earlier. When they are ready to eat, ask them to imagine how much more they would enjoy the pancakes if this were the last time they ate anything except vegetables for 40 days!

THE POINT

To explain the reason for 'Pancake Day' and what this tradition has to do with Lent.

PREPARING THE WAY

DIGGING IN

BIBLE STUDY

EQUIPMENT

Bibles, paper, pens

DURATION: 20 MINS.

Split your group into four and give each group a piece of paper and pens. You are going to ask them to brainstorm on the theme of 'How to prepare for…' Each group will have a different scenario, and must think of as many things as they can which one might do to prepare for that scenario.

The scenarios are:

- Going to an interview
- Going out to celebrate a close friend's birthday
- Competing in a sporting event
- Travelling to another country

Allow ten minutes or so for the groups to brainstorm and write down their ideas. Then ask each group to shout out what their scenario was and how they are going to prepare for it. Encourage other groups to contribute their own ideas too.

Almost everything we do in life requires some kind of preparation. Often we do this without thinking – like putting on our clothes before we leave the house, or brushing our teeth before we go to bed.

- How do we prepare for time with God? Do we prepare for time with God?

Jesus understood that preparation was important spiritually as well as physically. Before he began his ministry of teaching and healing he spent 40 days in solitude, fasting. Read about this in Matthew 4:1–11.

- How do you think Jesus felt during this time?
- If Jesus was perfect, why do you think he still chose to spend time in preparation for his ministry?

Jesus' time in the desert does not sound like it was much fun. He was alone and hungry, and facing what he must have known was a huge challenge. On top of all that, he was tempted and had to resist doubts about his relationship with God and his future.

If Jesus was the perfect Son of God and he still felt the need to prepare to do God's work, how much more important is it for us to spend time preparing to meet with God?

- Lent is a time of preparation for meeting with God. What could you do this Lent to prepare for Easter?

Fasting is one way Jesus chose to prepare himself for his work. There are many ways of fasting. The principle is the same with all of them, however: to simplify our daily routine in a way that helps us create space for God, and to remove something which we depend on in order to remind us that we only truly depend on God. This might mean eating less often, or eating simpler food – it might mean giving up the TV or PlayStation one night a week and reading the Bible instead.

- What kind of fast could be helpful to your relationship with God?

However we choose to prepare for our ongoing journey with God, we need to bear in mind Jesus' instruction not to do it in such a way that it brings us attention or praise from other people.

Read Matthew 6:16–18.

Finally, suggest that another way of preparing for Easter is to shift our focus away from ourselves and on to other people. This follows on from talking about fasting – as we give stuff up it creates opportunities to bless other people with our resources and time. Explain that this is what the 40acts campaign aims to do.

Read James 2:14–26

Ask the group to say what they think James is saying in this passage. This may be a good point to explain that James is not saying that our salvation is dependent upon our good deeds but that faith and deeds go hand in hand. This will be unpacked more in the Faith in Deed series but it is worth highlighting this point as early as possible and repeating it along the way as it is a passage which is open to misinterpretation.

THE POINT

To introduce the idea of Lent as a time of preparation, and to explore some ways of preparing ourselves to meet with God.

PRETZEL PRAYERS

RESPONSE

PRAYER

EQUIPMENT

Pretzels (use dough pretzels if you can get them)

DURATION: 10 MINS.

Begin by handing out pretzels to your group.

Explain that the early Christians kept a strict fast during Lent. They would not eat dairy products, meat or eggs. So they made small breads from water, flour and salt. As a reminder that Lent was a time for prayer, they shaped these breads in the form of crossed arms, which is how they prayed. They called the breads bracellae which means 'little arms'. The Germans later called them 'pretzels'. Even today some people make and eat pretzels as a reminder to pray.

Tell your young people that you want them to hold onto their pretzel as they pray. Show them this traditional (but slightly updated) Lent prayer:

Mighty and merciful God, place in us the fire of love and let its cleansing flame burn away our sins so we can worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

You could read the prayer all together or spend a few moments in quiet to allow your group to think about the words. This would also be a great opportunity to pray for any commitments that the group are going to make either individually or as a group.

End by eating the pretzels!

THE POINT

To encourage reflection and prayer and uplift any commitments the group are making.

TXT ME

RESPONSE

MEMORY VERSE

EQUIPMENT

A means to display the Scripture so everyone can see it, each letter of the text version of the Scripture written on a separate piece of paper or card (and enough sets for young people to work in pairs or small groups), ideally a young person with a phone in each group.

DURATION: 5 MINS.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8)

Display the above scripture long enough for the young people to have a go at memorising it and remove it from sight.

Give a set of letters to each pair/group of young people and say that when you say 'go' they need to lay them out to create a text message version of the scripture they have just seen. They must

use all the letters provided. Once they have completed this all the group should either stand up, or as an added dimension, you could make the winning pair/team the first who can complete the verse correctly and text it to a friend or relative.

The correct version should be:

Drw nr 2 Gd + He wll drw nr 2 u J4:8

THE POINT

To learn a scripture that relates to the purpose of Lent and, if appropriate, have the courage to bless someone else by sharing the scripture with them as a text.

40ACTS

TAKE AWAY

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

EQUIPMENT

Information from the 40acts website

DURATION: 10 MINS.

Visit ***40acts.org.uk*** and collate some information about the history of 40acts and this year's challenges. You may want to suggest how your group or individuals could engage with this campaign and, of course, invite suggestions from your young people. You may also want to have a discussion on how else the group or individuals may choose to draw close to God during Lent. If appropriate pray together over any plans that you have (maybe using the Pretzel Prayers item).

THE POINT

To offer the opportunity for young people to engage in the 40acts initiative and/or reflect on how they can personally draw close to God during Lent.