

## Introduction

The 40-day period of Lent is often linked to Jesus' experience in the desert following his baptism and before he began his preaching ministry (Mark 1:12-13). The story of the temptations (Matthew 4:1-11), and the idea of fasting for a long period, are both parts of the Lenten tradition. Here is an idea for an assembly to tell this story.

## Preparation

You will need some large round stones and some large rolls of bread; a tall tower (made out of duplo, lego or building bricks) and a magic wand; a map of the world or globe and an imitation sword; an underlay of felt in a desert-like colour. You will also need the three Bible quotes used by Jesus printed onto three cards (or ready to be displayed on a screen).

## Development

1. Lent is traditionally the time Christians get ready for the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Easter is so important that Christians need preparation space to think through what it really means. Lent is an important time in the Christian year to pause and reflect.
2. In the same way, Jesus went into the desert to pause and get ready for the work God wanted him to do. He was offered three other ways to bring God's kingdom into this world, but Jesus knew these weren't right. Jesus knew the choice to make, but it was a much harder choice (longer but necessary). Tell this story using the visuals.
3. Set out the desert-like underlay by unrolling it from right to left as you say the following words: *After Jesus was baptised, he went off alone into the desert. He spent a long time there praying and preparing for the work God had for him to do. He went without food for 40 days. At the end of this time God's enemy, Satan, tempted him with different ways that he could bring in God's Kingdom.*
4. Place the stones and rolls on to the underlay on your right (the children's left) as you say: *'Why not change stones to bread and feed everyone who is hungry?' he said. 'This will surely solve all the world's problems and bring in God's Kingdom.'*
5. Place the tower and the magic wand to the left of the stones and rolls on the underlay as you continue: *'Why not jump down from a high tower in Jerusalem and defy gravity by landing safely?' he said. 'This will surely guarantee that people will believe in you and bring in God's Kingdom.'*
6. Place the globe or map and the imitation sword on the underlay to the left of the tower and the wand, with the words: *'Why not crush all the bad in the world with my help so that everything is then ruled by you?' he said. 'This will surely bring in God's Kingdom.'*
7. Allow the children time to think about the symbols of the story in front of them and ask them what they think of these different ways of changing the world and making it more like heaven with questions like: *I wonder if full stomachs are really the way to a change people's hearts? I wonder if a miracle jump would really convert people? I wonder if crushing the opposition will*



*really bring peace and security to the world?*

8. After wondering about this for a while, introduce the three ways in which Jesus responds to these temptations. He uses verses from the Bible. Print these on three separate cards to read out or project them onto a screen, and then let the children decide where they should be placed in the story.

*'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.'*

*'Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.'*

*'Don't try to test the Lord your God.'*

9. So what is the way that Jesus takes to bring in God's Kingdom?  
Take the imitation sword and now turn it upside down (a sign of choosing not to fight) and, of course, the shape that it makes is that of a cross.
10. In a time of reflection put up the following question for the children to think about: *I wonder how the cross is the way to change the world, to draw people to believe and to create the kingdom of heaven in the midst of the kingdoms of the world?*