

# Discovering God

Creating community, sharing faith



## Discovering Lent – Making choices

Discovering God is a new resource offering practical ideas for informal services and events where the focus is on creating community and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that the church is available to all.

We aim to provide a range of ideas over the year, introducing the seasons of the church year and aspects of Christian living, and also looking at other everyday events, issues and celebrations through a Christian perspective.

Underpinning the materials is an intention to gather together and with God, sharing experiences and stories, and learning together by providing resources that give an opportunity to develop:

- ♥ **empathy** – helping to understand others by listening to their stories
- ♥ **resilience** – learning to trust in God, to have a sense of being valued and protected
- ♥ **self-awareness** – developing a knowledge of ourselves, by asking questions, thinking and reflecting in order to grow
- ♥ **faithful living** – a conscious intention about how we act in our daily routines, with eyes open to see where we need to do God's work.

We urge leaders to act as facilitators, limiting time spent leading from the front, and encouraging people to participate and interact together in mixed age groups. The ideas will work in face to face gatherings, and with minimal adaptation for online use.

### Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme in the context of our everyday lives

Think back together to the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, when many of our choices were taken away. This situation made many people evaluate the choices they make and think carefully about what was truly important to them. We often forget the freedoms we have and the choices we are able to make each and every day – and that the choices we make can have an effect on other people.

- Discuss in small groups the various choices you make each day.
- Then think of and share examples where choices you have made have impacted somebody else.
- Finally consider together how other choices seem only to affect ourselves – but all the choices we make have consequences of some kind. Offer everyone the choice to have one chocolate/sweet to eat now – or to wait and have two at the end. What helps you to make your decision? Are you influenced by what others do?

Lord God, we have made so many choices already today:  
what to eat for breakfast;  
what to wear;  
what time to set off.  
Now we choose to gather here and worship you,  
hear us and guide us, O Lord.  
**Amen.**

### Discovering faith

Linking the introductory activities to the theme and Bible passage

#### What is Lent?

Lent is a season to reflect on Jesus' baptism and the start of his ministry, and to prepare for the celebration of his death and resurrection. A key element of this reflection is 'choice' – the choice to listen to Jesus, to become a disciple, to be baptized, and so on. So, we use Lent to examine the choices we make. Have our choices put obstacles between us and God? And if so, what are we going to do about it?

#### Bible passage Luke 4.1-13

In this passage, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism, for forty days of testing. This is a training camp that will prepare him for his future ministry.

#### Read and share

**You will need:** copies of the 'Temptation' story (see [WEB](#)).

Ask the group to think about 'baddies' from films and stories. What do they look and sound like? Ask them to do a baddie's laugh! Is it easy to spot a baddie? Read the 'Temptation' story, putting on a baddie's voice for the voice of the devil, either by reading it yourself or having volunteers if they are confident. Now reread it, shouting the devil's voice. Repeat the story once more, but this time make the devil sound very gentle and friendly. Talk about which of the voices was the more persuasive. In which voice was the tempter more difficult to spot?

#### What could we learn from this passage?

Jesus faced three tests. He refused to let material things distract him; the word of God offers far more strength and satisfaction. He resisted worldly power in order to embrace the kingdom of God. And would not put personal security above his mission; he chose the way of sacrificial love. Inspired by this, we can spend time thinking about the choices we make, avoiding the temptation to follow our own path rather than the one God sets before us. We have our own choices to make!



Display or share this image, to allow a moment for self-reflection:

- What choices might you make during Lent?
- How often do you consider the impact your choices have on others?
- Where does God come into your decision-making?
- You could also use the image as part of *Choices chat* to inspire the group discussion.

## Over to you

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. We don't include timings or age-differentiation; this is designed for all ages engaging together. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters (see key below) to help you plan, and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God. You can read more about spiritual styles from the 'Worship and learning support' menu on the [WEB](#).

Spiritual styles (as defined by David Csinos) key: **W**ord, **E**motion, **S**ymbol, **A**ction. Find out more [WEB](#) in Worship and learning support.

### Prayer post box **E S**

**You will need:** cereal boxes, magazines, strips of paper (in two colours) and glue.

Share out the boxes. Invite people to write on their box all the temptations they are going to try to resist during Lent and decorate it as they wish. Prepare slips of paper in two colours. Invite everyone to post slips of one colour into the box to represent each time they resist temptation, and to post slips of the second colour for each time they give in to temptation. Invite everyone to take their boxes home to use during Lent.

### Gus and Tom **W E S**

**You will need:** large sheets of paper, a washable ink pen.

Ask two people to lie down on the paper so you can draw round their outlines. Explain that you are going to call one figure GUS (which stands for Give Up Something) and the other TOM (Take On More). GUS and TOM are friends who help us to think about choices we can make during the season of Lent. Discuss together some of the things that we could give up doing during Lent.

Introduce the idea that giving up chocolate on its own may not mean very much, but what if we give the money we save to a good cause? Then discuss things we might take up for the weeks leading up to Easter. Write or draw the group's suggestions onto GUS and TOM and then display the characters on a wall.

### Choices chat **W E A**

Invite the group to think about choices in terms of materialism and consumerism, or use and abuse of power, and to suggest some current temptations that we all face. Take these into prayer, seeking God's help to make the right choices.

### Freedom to choose **E S**

Play the track, 'Freedom Reigns', Jesus Culture on *Come Away*, and think about the freedom that God gives us to make the right choice.

## Finish together

Before you end, come together to revisit the theme of making choices and to pray.

Did anyone wait until the end to receive two chocolates/sweets? Give them out and discuss how those people feel who had eaten theirs at the start. Did anyone's choice affect someone else? Would anyone change the choice they made, looking back?

Faithful God,  
we lay before you the choices and decisions we face.  
We recognise the struggles they represent  
and the need for thoughtfulness.  
We understand that some choices  
include loss while others give comfort.  
We understand that some choices  
include fear while others give courage.  
We understand that some choices  
include excitement or give joy.  
We understand that some choices  
include responsibility and give wisdom.  
We know that in whatever we decide,  
in you we live, and move, and have our being.  
**Amen.**

## Keeping in touch

You could keep the theme and exploration of Lent going, by a follow-up activity each week:



If you can, buy Fairtrade Easter eggs/gifts. This choice will make a difference to the farmers and workers who have produced them.



Use the time during Lent to evaluate how you spend your time and money, and see if there are changes you can make to reflect how we can think of others in the choices we make.



Choose to be thankful this Lent, remembering some of what was taken away this time last year. Each day, write down something that you are grateful for. Celebrate all these blessings on Easter Day.

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[WEB](#) Find the new 'Discovering God' series of themed all-age resources: 'Discovering Lent – Making choices' and 'Discovering Easter – Finding hope'. In the next issue, we explore 'Discovering Father's Day' and 'Discovering community'.