

Lent: Learning to Love

By Beth Beall

Lent reminds us to share God's love with all living creatures while they are alive on this earth. Listen to a story by a child named Chris, and then choose an activity to help you practice love during this season of Lent.



For

Just for Kids

Season

Winter

Needed

Story on page three below, yeast and flour and sugar and salt and one egg, *or* paper and pen/pencil/marker

Activity Plan

1. Prayer helps us to quiet down and listen for God. Begin this activity by praying the prayer below. Or, you might want to pray using words that come from your own heart.

Holy One, You are the God of all my days. You were with me at my beginning, and you will be with me at my end. Help me to love others during all the days in-between, especially during these days of Lent. Amen.

2. Read the story entitled *Lent: A Time for Love* on page three, below.
3. After you've read the story, pick one or more of the following questions to think about on your own or with someone else.
 - I wonder which parts of the story you like the best?
 - I wonder if Chris and her family remind you of any families you know?
 - Chris' mom told her that every person and animal has a beginning and an end. I wonder if you've ever been present when a person or animal was born or when they died? If so, what was that like for you?
 - Chris' mom also said that, in-between the beginning and the end, we get to love people and animals and they get to love us. Who are some of the people and animals you love? Who are some of the people and animals who love you?

4. Try one or more of these activities during the season of Lent:

Bake Pretzels. Did you know that praying for others is a way to share love with them? When we pray, we can imagine God's arms wrapping a hug around that person or animal. The shape of

pretzels can remind us to pray, because one way to pray is to cross our arms and touch each shoulder with the opposite hand. Bake some pretzels today, and as you bake them, think about some of the people or animals you want to share God's love with.

- Ingredients needed: 1 package of yeast, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. warm water, 1 T. sugar, 1 T. salt, 4 c. flour, 1 egg
- **With the help of an adult, preheat oven to 425-degrees.**
- Mix the yeast, water, sugar and salt in a large bowl. Stir in the flour, and knead until the dough is smooth. Shape into the form of arms crossed in prayer, and place on a lightly oiled baking sheet. Brush the dough with a beaten egg to give it a shiny finish. Sprinkle the top with some salt, and bake for 15 minutes. **Ask an adult to help you as put the pretzels into the oven and again when you take them out.**

Prayer for the Death of a Pet. Maybe you or one of your friends knows what it's like to have a pet die. In our story on page three, Chris learns that every person and animal has a beginning and an end, and that we get to love them in-between. But loving people or animals in-between their beginning and end doesn't make it easier for us when they die. Some people find that prayer helps. This is a prayer you might write down and give to a friend if their pet dies. Or maybe a pet has died in your family, and you'd like to say this prayer.

"O Lord our God, we feel sad. [Name of pet] has died, and we miss him/her very much. Help us to remember the good times with [N]. We are thankful for the good life we were able to give to him/her.

"Thank you for creating [N] and for letting us love him/her. We tried our best to take care of [N] while he/she was alive. Now we ask You to take care of him/her in his/her death.

"You gave him/her to us, and now we give him/her back to You. We pray that [N] would find a new home in Your loving embrace. Help us to keep loving all of Your creatures for as long as we live.

"All this we pray in the name of Jesus, Amen."

Make your own list of ways to show love during Lent. Take a piece of paper, like Chris did, and at the top of the paper write, "How I Will Show Love During Lent." Then let your imagination run wild! There are forty days in Lent—six weeks in Lent altogether. So maybe you'd like to make a list of six ways that you can show love. If you need help coming up with ideas, talk with a parent or a friend. Maybe they'll want to make a list too!



Lent: A Time for Love by Chris

Quietly, we gathered around my grandma's bed. There were seven of us grandchildren, and Grandpa wanted all of us to be there. "Just make a circle around her," Grandpa said in a gentle voice. "Make a circle and say some loving words to your grandma." The fingers of my right hand traced the interlocking circles on Grandma's quilt. As my fingers moved, I felt where her ankle rested under the sheets, and I remembered the time that she had put ice on my sprained ankle.

"Thank you for taking care of me, Grandma," I whispered. My older brother James said, "Thank you for baking my favorite cookies." "I love the smell of your powder, Grandma," said my baby sister. We kept talking to her. Grandpa smiled, and it even looked like he was crying a little. I don't know how long we stood around Grandma. But finally Grandpa told us to go into the other room, where our parents were. We said goodbye to Grandma, and I rubbed her foot one last time.

I sat on Dad's lap in the living room and rested my head against his chest. Dad and Mom had told us that Grandma was dying, and that today was our chance to say goodbye. Grandma hadn't opened her eyes, but I think she heard us. "And Chris, even if her ears couldn't hear you, her heart heard you," Dad said.

At school the next day we talked about superpowers. The teacher asked which superpower we would each like to have. I said I wanted to fly. Some kids wanted to be invisible. Some kids wanted to have x-ray vision. My friend, Jordyn, said she wanted to be able to live forever. I had never thought of that as a superpower, but when Jordyn said it, I realized how cool it would be.

I went home from school that day and told my mom about the superpower Jordyn wanted. Mom smiled and said, "It does sound pretty amazing. I sure wish Grandma could live longer. But every person and animal has a beginning and an end. In-between, we get to love them and they get to love us."

Next Sunday in church, I looked around at the new decorations. The priest said we were in the special season of Lent, the season of getting ready for Easter. The church was decorated with lots of dark purple fabrics. The purple looked strong and serious and important to me. I asked Dad for a piece of paper and a pen, and I wrote down these words at the top of the page: "How I will show love during Lent." Around me people stood up to sing a song, and later on the priest talked for a while. But I just kept writing and writing. I thought about ways I could be more loving to my sister and brothers, and to our pet. I also thought about how I could be more loving to kids at school that I didn't really like. I wrote all of it down.

As we started to drive home from church, Mom said to me, "I saw that you were busy writing. Do you want to tell us about it?" I passed my paper up to Mom. Then I said from the back seat, "If everything has a beginning and an end, I want to help make the in-between better for people and animals. So that's what I'll do in Lent."

Four days later my Grandma died. I drew a picture for her, and Grandpa said he would tuck it into her hands, so that she would be buried with it. When my family got home from Grandma's funeral,



Dad made sandwiches for us to eat and we all sat down together. I told everyone that my heart hurt. Dad said kindly, "You did such a good job of loving Grandma. That's why your heart hurts. The only thing to do is to keep on loving others." Then Dad got up from the table without saying anything, which I thought was kind of rude. A minute later he returned with several pens and pieces of paper in his hands. "Let's each do what Chris did, and make our own lists for how we can show more love to people and animals this Lent." I looked at Mom and smiled as I said, "Because every person and animal has a beginning and an end. We get to love them in-between, and they get to love us."

