

Children's Resource

This flexible resource can be used over the Lenten period with primary-aged children in your church either as part of a service, a children's group or as an online session. It has been created to be adaptable according to your setting.

All-age Talk

You will need:

- a bar of chocolate
- some toy building bricks or a toy house
- a clock
- a picture of Maryam and her family, available to download from tearfund.org/churchlent

Show the chocolate, bricks and clock and explain that today's talk is going to show how they are linked.

Start with the chocolate. Explain that the period of time leading up to Easter is called Lent. Lent lasts for forty days plus Sundays and it's during this time that we remember the forty days and nights that Jesus spent in the desert, which you can read about in Matthew 4. During this time, Jesus went without food and drink so, today, some Christians also give up something they normally enjoy during Lent as a way of showing dedication to God. Chocolate is one of the popular things people often give up.

Choosing to give certain things up for Lent can be a really good way of remembering everything that Jesus gave up for us and reminding ourselves of the good things that we have.

Show the bricks or toy house. Sometimes though people around the world have to give up things they love, not for Lent and not because they choose to but because something forces them to. Show the picture of Maryam and tell her story. Seven-year-old Maryam lives with her mum, dad, sister and two brothers in a camp in Iraq. When Maryam was four years old her family had to leave their home because of fighting in the village they lived in. They had to leave very quickly and had to give up their house and everything they had in it, including toys and clothes.

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The family travelled to another part of Iraq and have been living in a tent at the camp ever since. One thing the family hasn't given up is hope that they can one day return home when it's no longer dangerous. The family miss their home and they miss their relatives.

Life in the camp is very difficult for Maryam's family but last year Tearfund helped people there by providing them with some of the things they might need for the cold winter months, including warm clothes and shoes.

Maryam's mum, Abeer, said, 'The help I received meant I could get clothes for the children. They were very happy. Without those things, we wouldn't have had enough to get by. When we receive this kind of help, we feel like there is someone taking care of us.'

Show the clock and explain that, so far, we've been talking about giving things up but now we want to ask children to take something up. During Lent, could they take the time to pray for Maryam and other people around the world who have had to leave their homes? As Christians, we know that prayer changes things and they can help support the work of Tearfund by praying. Perhaps they could set an alarm each day to remind them to pray or put a sticky note on the bathroom mirror so prayers can be said while teeth are being brushed.

If your church is supporting Tearfund's Lent Appeal further, you could explain at this point how they can be involved. End your talk with a prayer.

A prayer for Maryam

Heavenly Father,

At this time of Lent we want to say thank you for the good things we enjoy.

We pray for people around the world who have had to give up their homes.

We pray that Maryam and her family have the things they need while they are at the camp,

And we pray that they might be able to return home one day.

Please help Tearfund to be able to help more families like Maryam's.

Amen.

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Activities to do at home or in children's groups

- Ask the children to think of something they would find difficult to give up during Lent. Read a child-friendly version of Jesus in the desert from Matthew 4:1-11 and talk about what they think of the story. Why did Jesus spend time in the desert? Why was it important? How do they think Jesus felt? Do they think giving up something at Lent to remember this time is a good idea? Why or why not?
- Using an atlas or a map, show the children where Iraq is. Talk about Maryam's story. What would the children ask Maryam if they met her?
- Use our activity sheet below to print and write a prayer for families like Maryam's who are away from home. You could also print out copies of the prayer for Maryam from the talk for children to decorate and use to pray.
- Maryam's mum, Abeer, said that receiving help from Tearfund made her feel like 'there is someone taking care of us'. Make a list of ideas of things children can do to help and take care of others. Could they make one of the things from the list happen?
- Could the children in your church support the work of Tearfund by raising funds for our Lent Appeal? Maybe they could be sponsored to sleep in a tent at home.

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Maryam's story

What is it like where you live? Maybe you live in a block of flats or maybe in a house. Maybe you even live in a castle. Draw your home here:

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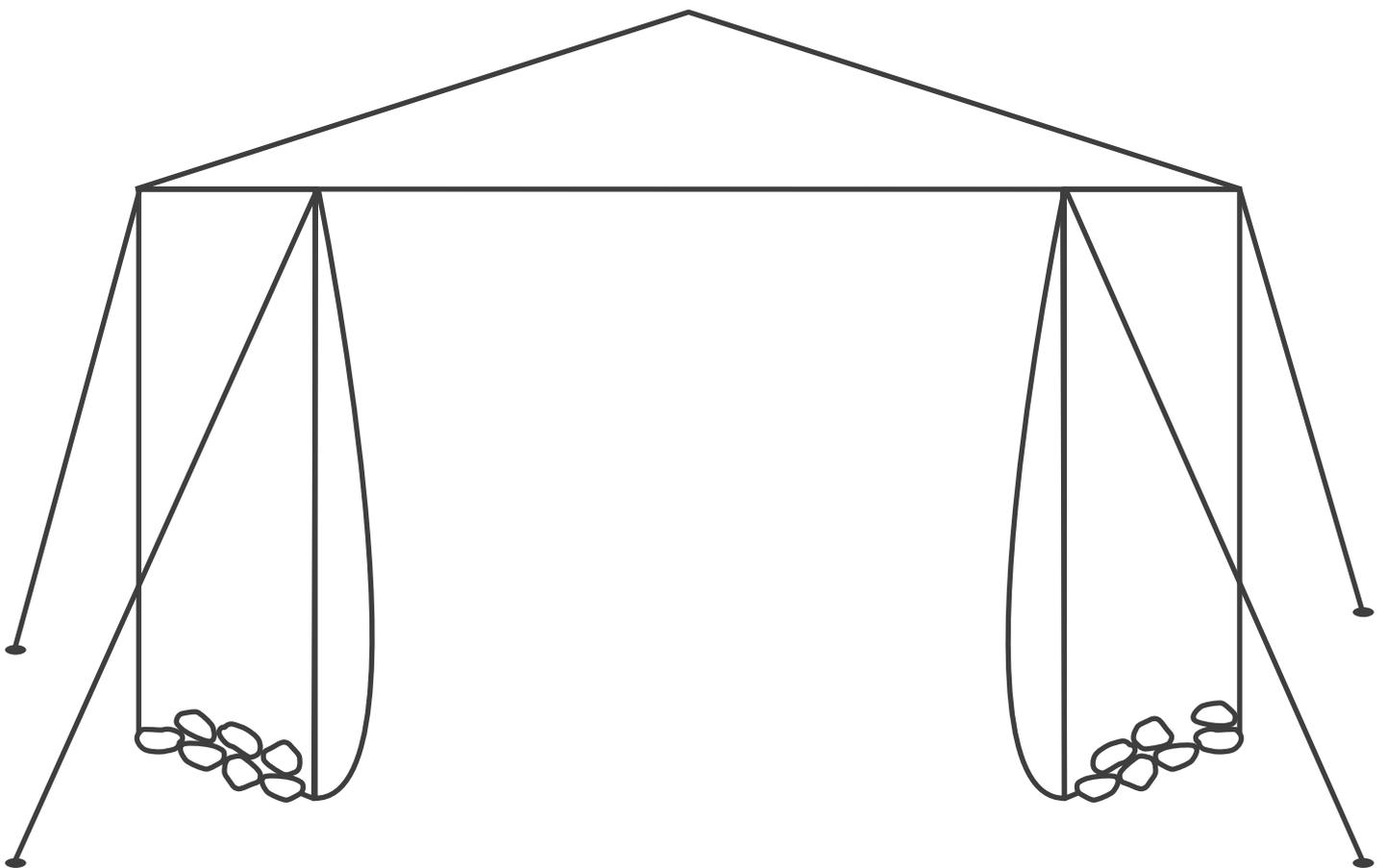
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Maryam's story



Maryam is seven years old. She used to live in a house but fighting in her village meant that her family had to leave their home quickly, leaving everything they had behind. Maryam's family is living in a tent in a camp at the moment, but they hope that one day they can return to their village. Tearfund is a charity who have helped Maryam's family get warm clothes for the winter.

Can you write or draw a prayer for Maryam inside the tent below? Then put your picture somewhere that will remind you to pray for people who have had to leave their home.



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