

Giving Up or Taking Up?

Listening to Key103 on the radio the other morning, whilst trying to bring myself round, I was quite sure I heard the DJ say that giving something up for Lent wasn't just for Christians. I was a little taken aback! I thought this season in the Church calendar might be the one thing that Tesco hadn't got hold of. It's difficult to market giving things up for Lent: "Don't buy all our lovely things; in fact, stay well clear - this is the worst place for you to be right now!"

It does seem, though, that this period genuinely features in many people's calendars as a particular point in the year to re-invigorate the diet, move away from an overly alcohol-fuelled lifestyle, or just calming down a bit. None of these are bad things and we might be doing similar, but surely our reasoning should be different?

The "giving up" approach is not to be frowned upon. If we choose the right elements of our life and approach them for reasons other than losing weight, it can really create space and focus in our lives and minds. Philippians chapter 2 reminds us that Christ "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant....He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross". Christ gave up everything and so a little emptying of our own lives can be no bad thing, too. We might even prefer the simplicity!

There is another angle to take. Introduce a new, positive emphasis in your life. "40acts" is a great way in giving all kinds of possibilities: 40 days of giving back, doing good and living generously (visit 40acts.org.uk). I know we're well into Lent already, but it's not too late to give something new a try! Or perhaps some Lenten reading? Set aside some time, somewhere and read. Ask friends at church what's inspired them, and maybe even borrow it from them!

Whatever you've decided, stick with it and I pray that you find the Spirit renews your faith as you walk the path of Jesus.

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