

Does the word **“Lent”** mean anything to you? As is often the case with the English language, a word can mean several, often very different things, unless it is taken in context.

Let me give you some simple examples:

“ACT,” could mean: to “do” something / could also mean

Act in law / or part of a play as in “an act.”

“BREAK,” could mean to take a time out. It also could mean pain, as in a broken bone. And of course don’t forget the word that sounds just the same “BRAKE,” meaning to slow down. As we become older we do quite a bit of that!

“FIGURE,” as in ‘the body,’ (you should have seen me when I was 25....well, perhaps not) or as in, ‘a number’ or as in, ‘to understand...to figure things out...!’ You get the idea I am sure.

‘LENT’ in the context that I am speaking is of course the period of time in the Christian calendar spanning the 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Easter Sunday. When you gorged on pancakes and maple syrup last Tuesday, little did you know that you might be called to account for that self indulgence. Lent is also a time in the year when the days begin to lengthen and we look forward to the arrival of spring, and the return of new life and growth.

The number of days, 40, is symbolic of the forty years which the Israelites spent going through the desert and being ‘set apart’ as they tried to find a new homeland. Lent is also a time when Christians remember the forty days and nights that their prophet Jesus spent alone in the desert. It was for him a “time-out;” a time to be away from the normal worries and cares of life, and Jesus used this opportunity to prepare for what he would do with the rest of his life.

Taking a time-out is a good thing for many of us who tend to become wrapped up in our daily living, letting important things like relationships take second place to lesser priorities which we have perhaps unwittingly begun to focus on, at the expense of the other. Lent for me is a brief period in a year of my life when I want to take a time out to think about things which I may need to do in my life to make it:

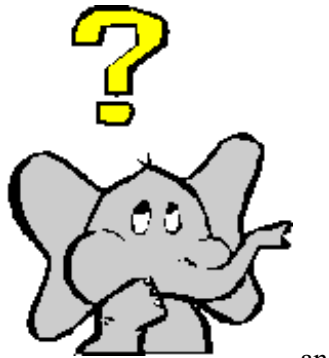
More balanced,

Less stressed,

Healthier,

Consider my relationships with others, especially loved ones close to me, and many more important things besides. It is only by taking a deliberate period of time and setting the goal of focusing my mind on these parts of my life that I can effectively manage them.

Different times, different places, and yet in the actions of Jesus recorded in the Bible, we see him integrating the needs of his Body, his Mind and his Spirit to prepare



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himself for the times that lay ahead, and this is a lesson which we would all do well to consider – whether we are believers or not. WHY?

Well, we almost always achieve enhanced results in a project when we commit our actions to a specific start time and a specific end time. The period of Lent is just that. A segment of time with a known beginning (Wednesday February 21st.) and a known ending (Sunday April 8th.) By the time that you receive Des’s Mirror we will be about one week into this season, yet not too late to consider a project of our own. What might that be? Obviously I cannot answer that for you, but if I were George Underhill I might be thinking about how in summer 2007 I could entice more of the elusive fish living in Smith’s Bay on to my hook and voila....into my fryer. If I were Doug Murphy I might be thinking about how to lower my golf handicap again this coming golf season. If I werewell I am not, and of course in some ways I am avoiding the more serious and beneficial consequences of pondering my actions and how they affect my life...today, tomorrow and

Now before I go too far along the road of thought, let me share with you a method of doing this which is to be found in William Bridges book, ‘The Way of Transition.’ He speaks of making a visual MAP of your entire life or any segment of it e.g. the past ten years. As you draw your life out before you as a ‘road,’ mark on your road:

- The beginning of the period of time.
 - Crossroads where you faced a big decision and made a significant choice.
 - Side-roads that were attractive, but you didn’t explore.
 - Sharp curves where you changed direction completely. (Were you steering round an obstacle or did you suddenly discover a new destination?)
 - Places which came to a dead end.
 - Significant mileposts (birth of a child, marriage, loss, achievements etc)
 - Sites of wonderful experiences.
 - Destinations which you were headed toward and yet somehow bypassed them.
 - Detours.
 - Places where you broke down or ran off the road or collided with another traveler.
 - The places; communities on your route (name them and reflect on how you came to be there).
- Doing an exercise like this over a period of weeks may not be quite as exciting as counting fish but its benefit will not, I promise you place any more inches around your waistline and hey...may even help to do the opposite, if that is your goal.

Shalom

Pastor Ian.