

## Jump-Start Lent

By Julie Filby

Jump-start your family's Lenten observance with a lesson in generosity (almsgiving). Pick any week or two during Lent and collect coins. Purchase a gas card with what you gather, and donate it to someone in need.

### For

Young Family

### Season

Spring, during Lent

### Needed

Container to money, such as a box, jar, or plastic food container

Optional: materials to decorate the container, such as crayons, markers, stickers, glitter glue

### Activity Plan

1. Gather in a comfortable space and say this prayer aloud:

*Generous Creator, help us to be more generous in sharing what you have provided for our use with people who are in need. Thank you for all you give us each day, and especially for sending your Son, Jesus, with your gift of saving love. Amen.*

2. Explain that during the season of Lent—Ash Wednesday through Palm Sunday—Christians traditionally do three things to prepare to celebrate Christ's resurrection at Easter: pray, fast, and give alms. *Almsgiving* is another way of saying "giving to people who are in need."
3. One thing some people may take for granted is the ability to buy a tank of gas for the family car. Buying gasoline is a true hardship for people who are enduring hard times and as gas prices climb.
4. Pick a week or two during Lent for your Jump-Start activity. Put a box, jar, or plastic food container on your family dining table. Explain that you will work as a family to save money to use to buy a gas card for someone who needs help buying gas for his or her car. Optional: Decorate the container with pictures or words to convey the significance of the season, such as crosses, images of Jesus, symbols of love, or pictures of cars.
5. On the days you designate, encourage each member of your family to make a donation of coins or currency to your container. Ideas for children: donate part of allowance or birthday money, earn money by doing chores or odd jobs for neighbors. Ideas for adults: give up a daily coffee break or dine-out meal. Encourage one another to make a Lenten sacrifice to contribute the money.
6. Each day of your Jump-Start project, pray for those who will receive the card. For example: "Dear God, bless the people who will benefit from this donation. Keep them warm and safe, and help get them where they need to go. Amen."
7. Once your chosen timeframe is up, use the money collected to purchase a gas card. Discuss if there is someone your family knows who would appreciate this gift (a family member out of work, a friend who's looking for a job, a person driving long distances for medical treatment). Or you might choose to give it to a social service agency or a stranger you see at the gas station.

