

Activity: Search Me
Lent/Easter Season
By Karen Noal



FAMILY TIME
TRAINING

Teaching Goal: The forty days before Easter—Lent—is a time for self-examination, repentance and remembering the sacrifice of Jesus.

Scripture: Psalm 139:1, 23-24 “O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. Search me O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalm 26:2 “Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.”

Psalm 143:10 “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

Materials: Several pieces of paper
Fresh artichoke – boiled in water at least 30 minutes
Melted butter optional

In Advance: Just prior to your Family Time, cover and boil an artichoke in water for approximately 30 minutes.

- I. Play theme song
- II. Pray
- III. Review last lesson
- IV. Lesson and discussion

✓ Words written in **bold** are when the leader is speaking. Feel free to use your own words.

A. **Lent is a special time for Christians. During Lent we take time for self-examination and remember the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Self-examination means taking time to review: how we spend our time; our priorities; how we live the faith; our motives; our relationship with Jesus; etc.**

B. Begin with the following background on Ash Wednesday and Lent. **Lent is a 40-day period before Easter, and always begins on a Wednesday. During the days of the Old Testament, when people were sad or did something bad, they would sit in the dust, cover themselves with ashes and wear itchy rags. This was a way to show sadness and to say “Sorry” for their sins.**

Today, people don’t sit in the dust, cover themselves with ashes and wear itchy clothes. However, one day a year many people remember the Old Testament ways by putting ashes on their forehead in the shape of a cross. They use the sign of the cross as a reminder that Jesus died for their sins. A mark on the forehead used to be a sign of ownership. So the

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cross can also indicate that the person is a Christian who belongs to Jesus. Can you guess what they call this special day? (*Guesses*) Ash Wednesday. Can you figure out why it is called Ash Wednesday? *They use ashes and the day is always on Wednesday, the first day of Lent.*

What is Lent? Lent is a 40-day period before Easter. Forty is a number used many times in the Bible. Can you think of Bible stories that use the number 40? *It rained 40 days in the story of Noah and the ark. The Israelites wandered for 40 years in the desert; Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness; Jonah preached that God's judgment would come on the city of Nineveh in 40 days.*

During the 40 days of Lent, Christians take time to examine their lives and look at their relationship with Jesus. Plus, they choose to give up something important to them during the 40 days of Lent. Giving up something important is making a sacrifice. Our small sacrifice during Lent reminds us of the huge sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross. Some people give up a favorite food for the 40 days. Some give up habits like watching too much TV. Some will even go without food, a practice called fasting, for a period of time. Have you ever heard of fasting?

In addition to giving up something, the 40 days of Lent is a great time for adding good things to your life. Bible reading, prayer and exercise are activities that people may add or increase during Lent.

C. ACTIVITY #1: CAUTION: The tips of the artichoke are pointed and sharp. You may want to cut off the tips, especially if you are working with younger children.

This is a whole artichoke. It needs to be eaten carefully. Don't eat the outside leaves because they are bitter and hard. The part you want to eat is at the bottom of each individual leaf. Pull out one leaf at a time and taste the soft part on the bottom-end. Dip in butter for extra flavor.

Show the children how to pull a leaf off, dip in butter and eat. Use your front teeth to scrape the soft part of the artichoke into your mouth. Throw away the hard part of the leaf. – Everyone take a turn.

While the family tastes the artichoke read the scripture verses. **The hard, bitter part of the leaves represents sin in our lives. The more we sin without confessing and asking forgiveness the harder and more bitter our life becomes. Removing the leaves represents God taking away the sin when we ask for forgiveness. During Lent when we take time to examine our lives, we see our sin and ask for forgiveness, so God will pull away the hard and bitter parts of our lives. When we have pulled away the hard, bitter leaves we see the soft heart of the artichoke. The soft heart is good to eat. God wants to pull away the hard, bitter parts of our lives so others will see the good part inside.**

D. ACTIVITY #2: Give each person a piece of paper. Tear the paper in half. Was it hard to tear the paper? *No.* Give each person a second piece of paper. Fold the paper in half. Fold it in half again. Keep folding until you fold the paper 5 times. Wait. Now without unfolding the paper, tear it in half. Can you do it? *No.*

The paper represents sin in our lives. The folded paper represents multiple sins that can build up in our lives. Tearing the paper represents dealing with our sin. Lent reminds us to take time to see the sin in our lives confess it and accept God's forgiveness. When we don't take time to examine our lives, then sin can pile up and it is harder to deal with, just like it was much harder to tear the paper folded five times.

This year, during Lent, let's take time to examine our lives and ask God to show us what needs to change.

V. Memorize:

Let God pull your sins away
When your heart begins to stray

VI. Close in Prayer

VII. Pass It On: Make an extra copy of this lesson and *pass it on* to another family.