



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 3: Following Jesus  
Suggested Week of Use: March 15, 2026  
Core Passage: Matthew 16:13-26

### **News Story Summary**

Lent is a forty-day time of penitence leading up to the celebration of Easter. It was formalized at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. While sometimes associated with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox, many Protestant evangelical churches also observe the season. Along with prayer and fasting, the colors of Lent encourage reflection and repentance. Purple symbolizes the royalty of Jesus, while red represents His death and white highlights His resurrection. Earlier observances of Lent had strict guidelines for fasting and prayer. Even Protestant groups that don't observe Lent often encourage a focus on Jesus's suffering in the days leading up to Easter.

For more about this story, search "Who Celebrates Lent."

### **Engage**

To supplement the Engage activities, ask: *What do you know about the season of Lent?* Discuss responses and share the information from the news summary. Emphasize that Lent challenges believers to focus on the sufferings of Jesus. Note that Jesus spent a lot of time teaching His followers about His upcoming sufferings, but they didn't always understand. Ask: *When have you been misunderstood or misunderstood someone else? How did you correct the situation?* Discuss a few possible scenarios. Share that today's passage focuses on a pivotal time in Jesus's ministry as He shifted from preaching and healing to teaching about His death and resurrection. Explain that Jesus was preparing His disciples for a crisis of faith in their lives, and He didn't want them to misunderstand His words or His mission. Challenge adults to reflect on the impact Jesus's sufferings have on their lives each day.

### **Challenge**

To supplement the Challenge activities, ask: *Why do many Christians observe a season like Lent? What are some other practical ways we can remember and respond to Jesus's sufferings as we seek to follow Him well?* Discuss responses. Guide adults to read Matthew 16:24-26, inserting their own names. Ask: *What are some things that get in the way of following Jesus?* Lead adults to pray silently for those areas, asking God to help them follow Jesus daily with their whole heart, mind, and soul.