Help Kids Count Down to Easter With a Simple Paper Chain

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The most confusing season of the church calendar for my kids has always been Lent. The first year that they were old enough to engage this season, I remember them constantly asking, “Is it Easter now?” And we were still only a week in! Last year, I realized the problem: Lent is long.

At 46 days (when you include Sundays), Lent is almost twice as long as Advent. And while almost everyone has some type of Advent calendar that shows the progress to Christmas, we don’t always display something similar for Lent. As I imagined how my children experienced the season of Lent, I realized how frustrating it must have been for them.

They heard, “Lent is a time before Easter.” But having no way to track how much time there was between the start of Lent and Easter Sunday, they were constantly wondering whether or not Easter was here.

Paper chains to the rescue! We tried this for the first time last year and it worked perfectly. At the beginning of Lent my kids commented on how long the chain was and how we still had a long time until Easter. But as the chain got shorter and shorter, they recognized that Easter was getting closer and closer.

Here’s how we made our paper chain:

1. We had a ton of paper grocery bags in the house, so we decided to use those to make our chain. To start, I cut the two biggest sides of the bag into two large rectangles. If you don’t have paper bags to recycle, white paper works just as well.
2. Next we decorated the bags. We used simple washable paints and dot markers to cover them with color. If you want to keep things really simple, use colorful construction paper and skip the painting. My kids were a little hesitant to cut apart their art in the next step, so make sure you explain to your kids what will come next!
3. Once the paint had dried, I cut the rectangles into approximately 2-inch (5cm) x 10-inch (25cm) strips (though any size that can be formed into a circle would work). I cut 47 strips because we wanted one for each day of Lentandone for Easter Sunday.
4. Next we made our chain! I find that taping the strips together works best. Start with one strip of paper, taping the ends together to make a circle. Then get another strip of paper, thread it through your circle, and attach its ends to make another circle. Repeat this process until you’ve attached all your strips of paper to your chain.
5. If you want, you can write something on the inside of your strips before you connect them to each other. Here are a few suggestions:
	1. **Dates**: I find it helpful to include the month and day on each strip so we can make sure we are keeping up with our countdown.
	2. **Include reference numbers for**[**God’s Big Story cards**](https://www.faithaliveresources.org/Products/037040/gods-big-story-cards.aspx): This faith nurture game encourages adults and kids to have fun as they learn about God's story together. If you start at card #88, “Jesus Is Baptized,” and do the activities on one card each day of Lent, you’ll make your way to card #134, “Jesus Is Alive,” on Easter Sunday.
	3. **Write in story titles from the Jesus Storybook Bible Lent Reading Plan**: [Sally Lloyd-Jones](https://www.sallylloyd-jones.com/) releases a plan to read through the Jesus Storybook Bible during Lent each year. Sign up for her newsletter to be notified when this year’s plan is available.
	4. **Add Bible passages**: Lent is a great time to read through one of the gospels. You could use [this Bible Reading Plan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eOxq8RC4UY3TaTePOWzR4bLzSQzdQfwh/view?usp=sharing) to read through the gospels of Mark and John during Lent.

If you want to keep things simple, just connect your chain and skip writing something inside the links. If you do include the readings, remember that Lent is quite a bit longer than Advent and give yourself grace if you’re not keeping up with things.

Hang your chain in a high-traffic area of your house so that your whole family can watch it shorten throughout Lent. You may want to have your kids take turns removing the chain each day. Enjoy this wonderful way to count down to Easter!

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