



Ten ways to Hold a Lenten Group

A Lenten group is a small gathering of family, friends or parishioners who come together once a week during Lent to deepen their relationship with Christ and one another, as preparation for Easter. Here are ten ways to gather.

1. The Lenten classic

The 'classic' Lenten program consists of a booklet with guided meditations, discussion questions and prayers. There are a range of programs and tapes available, each with their particular style and flavour, so shop around and find one which is suitable for your group.

2. Scripture sharing

No resources or tapes needed for this group. Just one book: the bible. Prayerfully read the Sunday Gospel of the coming week. Read it again. Share a word, thought or phrase which touched you. Let the word of God 'sink in.'

3. Pray with the saints

Buy a book of the saints and read a short excerpt at each gathering. This needn't be a long reading, just enough to spark a few thoughts and comments. Close with a short prayer, calling on this evening's saint to pray with you.

4. Praise and petition

In this group you gather to pray for a specific intention, something vitally important like the healing of a loved one or world peace. Begin each meeting by praising God, then move to prayers of petition. A different person each week prepares a simple method for leading the group in prayer.

5. Table topic

Hold a meal and share your responses to one tantalizing question. E.g., *Why are you still a Catholic? Or: If you had only a month to live how would you spend it?* If you rotate the group (a different home each week) don't let it become a gourmet competition. Keep the meal simple and focus on the company and conversation.

6. Meditative prayer

Don't talk. Just gather to pray silently. For an hour play beautiful meditative music, Taize or Gregorian chants. Darken the room and light candles. Open your hearts and let the Holy Spirit move.

7. Action group

Over the years Lenten groups have tended to focus on reflection and verbal sharing. There is another kind of group which is equally valid and which may be more appealing to men: action groups. Once a week, gather to 'do' something for others. E.g., mend a fence for an elderly parishioner, assist at a soup kitchen, clean up the grounds of the parish church. Start with a prayer and finish with a beer.

8. Prayer journey

Pilgrimage is a beautiful devotional practice in our tradition. Hold your own mini-pilgrimage on Sundays during Lent. Gather some friends and walk (run, cycle or ride) to a sacred place (a church, a shrine, the grave of a loved one). Pray as you go and say some special prayers upon arrival.

9. Family meals

Rather than go out to a meeting, stay in with the family and share a meal. Make it special. A festive table setting and candlelight. Placecards with each person's best quality written on the back. Whatever works for your family!

10. Make music

For the musically inclined, gather each week to sing and make music as your prayer to God. Your Lenten group could consist of a stately quartet or a six piece rock band.

Helpful Hint

Wherever the faithful gather, there is the Church. So when you get together, do so with a sense of your dignity as the body of the Christ. Welcome one another warmly, with reverence, honour. Pray for each other between meetings. Whatever you do together as a group, do it with great love and fidelity.

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