

Small Group Guidelines & Expectations

To ensure a respectful, meaningful, and Christ-centered small group experience, it's helpful to establish clear expectations. Here are some suggested rules:

1. Respect Confidentiality

- What is shared in the group stays in the group.
- Avoid gossip or sharing others' personal stories outside the group.

2. Listen Actively

- Give full attention when someone is speaking.
- Avoid interrupting or side conversations.

3. Participate, But Don't Dominate

- Everyone should have an opportunity to share.
- Be mindful of how much you're speaking and allow space for others.

4. Stay on Topic

- Keep the discussion focused on the scripture, lesson, or theme.
- If a conversation drifts too far, the leader should gently refocus.

5. Be Honest and Open

- Share authentically but within your comfort level.
- Encourage each other without judgment.

6. No Fixing, Preaching, or Debating

- Offer encouragement rather than trying to "fix" someone's struggles.
- Avoid theological debates that could become divisive.

7. Be Punctual and Committed

- Arrive on time and be consistent in attending.
- If you can't make it, let the leader or group know in advance.

8. Respect Differences

- Everyone is on their own spiritual journey.
- Show kindness and understanding even when opinions differ.

9. Be Prayerful

- Pray for each other throughout the week.
- Approach discussions with a spirit of humility and openness to God.

Lenten Small Group

Session ONE • Fasting and Sacrifice • 60-90 Minutes

1. Welcome and Fellowship (10 minutes)

- Begin with a warm welcome and casual conversation.
- If applicable, share snacks or refreshments.
- Briefly check in with members about their week and Lenten practices.

2. Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- Lead a prayer inviting God's presence and guidance for the discussion.
- Include a moment of silence to center hearts and minds on Christ.

3. Scripture Reading (5 minutes)

- Read Matthew 4:1-11.
- Read the passage aloud (Use multiple readers for engagement).

4. Group Discussion (30-60 minutes)

- Instructions: Have a group discussions on 3-4 of the following questions. The bolded questions are great starters. If time permits check out the DEEPER DIVE questions at the end of the list.
 - Why do you think the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to fast and be tempted?
 - What does Jesus' responses to Satan teach us about relying on God's Word?
 - How does Jesus' 40-day fast prepare Him for His mission?
 - **What role does fasting play in your spiritual life? How does it draw you closer to God?**
 - Have you ever fasted (from food, distractions, or habits) and experienced spiritual growth from it?
 - Satan tempts Jesus with physical needs (bread), power (kingdoms), and testing God. Which of these temptations do you find most relatable in your own life?
 - How can Jesus' example help us overcome temptations during Lent?



- Jesus refuses to take the easy way out, choosing obedience to God instead. What sacrifices might God be calling you to make this Lent?
- How can we trust God more fully when we feel spiritually weak or tempted?
- How can fasting be more than just giving something up—how can it lead to deeper prayer and dependence on God?
- What practical steps can you take this Lent to resist temptation and grow spiritually?

Deeper Dive Questions

- What role does sacrifice play in your relationship with God?
- How does fasting (or giving something up) help you draw closer to Christ?
- Share an experience where a small sacrifice had a big impact on your faith journey.

5. Reflection and Response (5-10 minutes)

Each person pick one question and share

- What about today's discussion brings you hope?
- Share a "high and/or low" point from the week.
- Where did you see Jesus this week?

6. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray over any specific intentions or challenges shared by group members.
- Offer gratitude for the discussion and guidance as the group continues their Lenten journey.
- Conclude with a communal prayer like the Lord's Prayer.

7. Announcements and Sending (5 minutes)

- Share any upcoming events, readings, or service opportunities for Lent.
- Encourage members to check in with each other during the week and utilize their Lenten Journals.

The Temptation of Jesus.

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you' and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.