

Leading Through Lent

As we begin Lent, you might encounter some pushback from your group members. Whether it's hesitation about fasting or the feeling that Lent is too religious, it's natural for people to push back when asked to change their habits.

Our goal is to help them see this not as a heavy burden, but as a **tool for decluttering** their spiritual lives. Below are some common reactions and guidance for reframing the conversation. Some of the conversations may be hard or uncomfortable, but they don't have to be. Encourage your members to be honest about their reactions, and to ask all the questions about the how and the why. Acknowledge that people have a range of feelings about fasting. Remind them that Jesus calls us to be shaped and fully formed into His image. Jesus invites us to fast, knowing that it is hard and that His grace is sufficient to train us and grow us.

Common Reactions

This feels too Catholic or legalistic.

Remind them that the goal isn't checking a box. It's an honest posture of surrender. Lent is about what we give up to make space in our lives to meditate on the magnitude of Jesus's sacrificial work on the cross.

I can't fast; it's too hard.

Acknowledge that in our modern culture, we rarely experience sacrifice for our faith. However, spiritual growth often happens in the midst of discomfort. Choosing to give something up for 40 days and engaging in a weekly fast isn't about being perfect—it's about training our hearts. A little discomfort now acts as a catalyst, exposing how much we rely on ourselves rather than on God.

I don't see how one day of fasting helps.

One art lesson doesn't make you the next Picasso, but it is the beginning of a journey towards becoming an artist. Fasting one day a week may not seem like much, but it's the **cumulative effect** of steady obedience that results in dramatic change. We aren't looking for quick fixes, but transformation, becoming more like Christ Jesus.

I prefer to keep my faith private.

Scripture teaches that while our faith is personal, it is not private. It was never meant to be a solo journey. It's important to acknowledge that it's hard to share honestly. No one wants to be seen as less than, but we find healing in relationships by bringing our struggles into the light with

others. We stand on the truth that God wastes nothing, and that includes all of your story, not just the good parts. God can't use our story if we don't share it.

When leading your group, don't miss the point. Help your people move from thinking about the details of **deprivation** to the **anticipation** of God's work in them.

Emptying for More Jesus: Explain that this is a season of intentional emptying. We aren't just making ourselves empty; we are making room for the abundance of Christ's grace.

Focus on the Why: When we feel the hunger for what we've given up, we let it prompt us to hunger for God instead.

Rely on the Word: Encourage them not to simply read the Word, but to let the Word read them.
Ask: What am I learning about myself in this passage that needs change? How am I being challenged to repent? How am I being charged to obey?

Keep it Simple: If someone is still very resistant, encourage them to explore what is at the root of it. Suggest they start small. Even giving up one minor comfort can reveal a lot about the things we cling to that distract us from God.