



Depending on how you are participating in FaithGroups (individually, with another person, with your family, or with a group) you may want to adapt this guide. Here we propose some discussion questions to generate a dialogue between participants. They are not a 'checklist' to get through, but rather suggestions for conversation. Let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation as well.

We suggest that you begin and end with prayer, and that you read the readings, especially the Gospel, which we have attached on page 2. If you are doing this as a group, we advise choosing a facilitator, and we strongly suggest finishing with prayers of intercession for individuals and situations that may have been mentioned in the group. And of course, we would like for your group to affirm that discussion will remain confidential.

After an opening prayer, introductions if you are in a group, reading the gospel, and watching the video, these are the open ended questions we suggest:

1. What are you fasting from this Lent? How will you pray in solitude? What is your plan for almsgiving this season?
2. What are your motivations for fasting? Are they toward God alone, or are there ulterior motives? Fasting reminds us to rely on God alone. What do I rely on besides our Father?
3. Every year we propose that you ask someone who loves you what you should give up for Lent. They may not say chocolate, but perhaps some habit, personal peeve, attitude or behavior that you may need to change. Have you asked? If not, what do you think they will tell you?
4. Lent is a penitential season. Who do I need to reconcile with in my life? What wounds do I see in my relationships with other people that need to be healed? Remember how Jesus told us to love the enemy last Sunday.
5. In Second Corinthians, Paul writes that he is an ambassador for Christ, imploring others to be reconciled to God. How am I an ambassador for Christ? How do I implore others to return to God with my actions?

A reading from the book of the prophet, Joel

Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind him a blessing, Offerings and libations for the LORD, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion! proclaim a fast, call an assembly; Gather the people, notify the congregation; Assemble the elders, gather the children and the infants at the breast; Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep, And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach, with the nations ruling over them! Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters: We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says:

In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.

Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

A reading from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."