



Leader Guide – Weekly Gathering

Joel 2:12-32 • February 18, 2007 • by Irma List

Opening (5 minutes)

Take time as leaders to welcome people and set a tone of joy and openness in community.

Check-in Time (15 minutes)

Have you slept soundly this week? Have you dreamed any dreams? What is a dream you can remember having recently?

Centering Worship (10 minutes)

Read Psalm 91 out loud slowly. You may want to read it from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson for some new thoughts and perspectives. Leave a few moments for silence.

Sharing (15 minutes)

Questions you might use during this time:

- Where have you experienced God this week?
- What stood out to you as you used the exercises this week?
- What exercise or section of Scripture caught your attention and why?
- Ask group members to look back over their journals and share some things that catch their attention.
- Ask group members to look back at the last worship gathering on Sunday. Where did they experience God?
- What did you notice (sense, feel, think, learn) this week as we gathered for worship?
- How did God show up in your life this week?
- How have you been intentional in creating space to listen to Christ this week?
- How have you noticed Christ calling you to “live out love” this week?

Group Listening Practice (40 minutes)

Need: Song “I Give You My Heart,” paper, pens available.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 21. Lent is the 40-day period just before Easter. It is traditionally a time of repentance and heart preparation for the Easter celebration.

Share together for a few moments:

- What has been your experience of Lent?
- What has been a part of this season for you in the past?
- How does your preparation for Easter compare with preparation for Christmas?
- Why do you think this is the case?

Read the following quote from Henry Nouwen:

“I am certainly not ready for Lent yet. Christmas seems just behind us, and Lent seems an unwelcomed guest. I could use a few more weeks to get ready for this season of repentance, prayer, and preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus.... Lent is a time of returning to God. It is a time to confess how we keep looking for joy, peace, and satisfaction in the many people and things surrounding us, without really

finding what we desire. Only God can give us what we want. So we must be reconciled with God, as Paul says, and let that reconciliation be the basis of our relationships with others. Lent is a time of refocusing, of re-entering the place of truth, of reclaiming our true identity." (*Sabbatical Journey*)

Now invite people to listen as you read this quote again, then ask them to share what spoke to them or what they noticed.

Leave time for people to share.

This is an ideal opportunity to stand in agreement as a group in whatever disciplines people wish to practice during Lent. Hand out blank paper, or have people write in their journal, and give five minutes for everyone to write down his or her own sense of direction for this season. Emphasize preparation of the heart, an examination of our life that humbles us before the great, patient love of God.

Questions to consider during this time of reflection:

- Do you feel led to fast from or "give up" anything?
- What do you desire to read or in what ways do you feel led to pray?
- Are there other ways to be intentional, such as choosing a certain time of day to pray during this season?

Leave space to write and reflect.

Encourage people to share with one other person in the group what they feel led to focus on during Lent and if they want support/accountability in these areas?

What practices do we would want to experience together as a group during this time of year?

Close the time by listening to the song "I Give You My Heart" as a way to offer our lives to Christ.

Closing (5 minutes)

Remind people to be open to what God wants to do in them this season of Easter.