

The SACRIFICE Support Group: Lenten Drama and Discussion

~ DISCUSSION GUIDE ~

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Change Notes

The Sacrifice Support Group: Lenten Drama and Discussion was retired in November, 2013, and was replaced by three new titles (see details in About the Author). Buyers of the original Kindle book are permitted to download and print the PDF script and discussion guide files, as stated in their version.

Script Revision April 22, 2013: The character of Pastor Chris was renamed Pastor Dale.

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Session One

Leader:

Can we give the age-old discipline of Lenten sacrifice fresh meaning by bringing the Lord personal offerings that have significant value and purpose? Here's a look at a fictional church group faced with that challenge.

Drama:

The Sacrifice Support Group, Act One (20 minutes)

Leader:

We'll look in on the Sacrifice Support Group in a later session to see how they fared with their "new and improved" Lenten intentions.

Over the coming days, let's prayerfully consider how we might enrich our Lenten worship with an approach to sacrifice that is centered on God and neighbor. Like the character of Pat in our drama, we may need to make some quiet time to allow the Holy Spirit to get a word in edgewise. And like the fictional Sacrifice Support Group, we'll meet again to discuss our progress and encourage one another.

Session Two

Answers to the refresher questions are provided in italics for the Leader's reference while guiding the discussion.

Leader:

1. In our first session, we met six fictional Christians who were challenged by their pastor to re-think their ideas about Lenten sacrifice. What did we learn about these characters and their previous Lenten practices?
 - *Sandy, who is always stressed during Lent because it coincides with her hectic income tax season, has previously given up sweets for Lent. But she treated herself to a big basket of candy as soon as Lent was over.*
 - *Catherine cut back on her shopping trips during Lent to save money for future spending sprees.*
 - *Melvin, the widowed father of several teenage sons, has always given up watching television during Lent. However, he recorded his programs to watch later, with the result that he hardly saw his boys for weeks after Easter.*
 - *Pat, the jokester of the group, was quite smug about abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent. Pat went to the seafood buffet instead.*
 - *Gina, a shy woman, gave up her fear and ministered to incarcerated women and their families.*
 - *Lee, the attorney, had never made any attempt to offer a Lenten sacrifice, believing Christians are hypocritical in the way they give things up for Lent.*
2. Do you see any truth in Lee's opinion that Christians make "self-serving sacrifices"?
3. What new or improved sacrifices did each member of the group commit to make?
 - *Sandy plans to give up sweets again. But she'll treat disadvantaged kids, not herself, to candy baskets this Easter.*
 - *Catherine, the shopaholic, will still cut back on recreational shopping, but she'll give the money she saves to charity. She might also volunteer to do shopping for other people.*
 - *Melvin will give up watching and recording TV during Lent to spend more time with his sons. He did not agree to read the Bible with them as Gina suggested.*
 - *Pat promised to give up making hurtful wisecracks.*
 - *Gina will repeat her jail ministry.*
 - *Lee will give up indifference, vowing to advocate for unborn babies.*

4. Whose sacrifice do you think will be the hardest for him/her to accomplish? The easiest? Why?
5. Which of these characters' planned sacrifices would pose the most difficulty for you? The least difficulty? Why?
6. Consider the things that the group is going to give up. How had those things come between them and God? Between them and other people?
7. The group observed that giving up fear, prejudice, anxiety, indifference and pride could free individuals to do good things. Can you think of other negative attitudes that hold Christians back from serving God and their neighbors?
8. Can you suggest some good sacrifice choices that were not mentioned in the drama?
9. The fictional Sacrifice Support Group members promised to call one another to account when they slipped up. How would you feel about giving and receiving that kind of input?

Session Three

Answers to the refresher questions are provided in italics for the Leader's reference while guiding the discussion.

Leader:

In our first session, we challenged ourselves to re-think the traditional discipline of Lenten sacrifice and to consider offering significant sacrifices with a godly purpose. We looked at a fictional church group who took up the same challenge. Now we're going to check on their progress.

Drama:

The Sacrifice Support Group, Act Two (20 minutes)

Leader:

1. How well did these characters succeed in carrying out their Lenten sacrifice commitments?
 - *Everyone succeeded.*
 - *Several were inspired to accomplish even more than they had planned.*
2. How did their Lenten activities benefit others?
 - *Incarcerated women and their children stayed in touch thanks to Gina's ministry and will receive Easter baskets and prayers from Sandy.*
 - *Homebound elderly ladies received shopping services and fellowship from Catherine.*
 - *Melvin's sons grew closer to him and were introduced to the Bible.*
 - *Everyone benefited from Pat giving up hurtful wisecracks. Disaster victims, the audience, and off-color comedians benefited from Pat's comedy performance.*
 - *At-risk babies and untold others benefited from Lee's work on Right to Life and Health Care campaigns. A troubled teen will be encouraged by Lee's mentoring.*
 - *The Sacrifice Support Group and Lee's confirmation student benefited from Sandy's prayers.*
 - *Gina's giving up fear brought subtle benefits to the entire Sacrifice Support Group. Pushing herself to speak up, Gina encouraged and gently provoked the others along good paths. She provided material support, too, delivering Sandy's Easter baskets and giving Melvin's family a study Bible.*

3. What did each character personally gain from the experience? How did each one grow?

- *As Sandy shifted her focus to others, she found relief from job stress and unhealthy snacking. She learned that her prayers are a valuable gift.*
- *Catherine became less self-indulgent, too. She has no family, so the friendships she developed in her shopping ministry probably filled a lonely void.*
- *Melvin is closer to his sons. He gained personal insights from his new Bible study and took a big step toward shaking his television habit. He learned that he can be entertained in a more wholesome manner than his adult cable shows.*
- *Pat gained compassion and self-awareness. She learned kinder ways to express her God-given sense of humor, finding a comedy ministry. She learned to call on the Holy Spirit for help.*
- *Although Gina appeared to have the least to learn because she was already making a mature Lenten sacrifice, she bloomed into a respected, quietly assertive leader within the group.*
- *After initially trying to bargain her way out of her impulsive sacrifice commitment, Lee left her “white-collar comfort zone” to mentor a difficult confirmation student. Lee stands to gain a close relationship with both the student and the Holy Spirit. Lee learned that her compassionate heart can be more valuable to the Lord than her professional credentials.*

4. Did the six characters feel relieved that their Lenten sacrificial obligation was nearly over?

- *No. They found that their sacrifices were less painful than they expected and that the benefits outweighed their personal discomfort.*
- *They all chose to make the discipline of sacrifice a permanent part of their lives.*
- *They decided to continue meeting for mutual support and encouragement.*

Leader's Closing Benediction:

As Pastor Dale said to the Sacrifice Support Group:

"Let me send you on your way with a few words of blessing borrowed from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. 'God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Do not put out the Spirit's fire. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.' Amen."

Session Two Handout

1. In the first session, you met six fictional Christians who were challenged by their pastor to re-think their ideas about Lenten sacrifice. What did you learn about these characters and their previous Lenten practices?

- Sandy*
- Catherine*
- Melvin*
- Pat*
- Gina*
- Lee*

2. Do you see any truth in Lee's opinion that Christians make "self-serving sacrifices"?

3. What new or improved sacrifices did each member of the group commit to make?

- Sandy*
- Catherine*
- Melvin*
- Pat*
- Gina*
- Lee*

4. Whose sacrifice do you think will be the hardest for him/her to accomplish? Why?

The easiest? Why?

5. Which of these characters' planned sacrifices would pose the most difficulty, and the least difficulty, for you? Why?

- *Most*
- *Least*

6. Consider the things that the group is going to give up. How had those things come between them and God?

Between them and other people?

7. The group observed that giving up fear, prejudice, anxiety, indifference and pride could free individuals to do good things. Can you think of other negative attitudes that hold Christians back from serving God and their neighbors?

8. Can you suggest some good sacrifice choices that were not mentioned in the drama?

9. The fictional Sacrifice Support Group members promised to call one another to account when they slipped up. How would you feel about giving and receiving that kind of input?

Session Three Handout

1. How well did the Sacrifice Support Group characters succeed in carrying out their Lenten sacrifice commitments?

- Sandy*
- Catherine*
- Melvin*
- Pat*
- Gina*
- Lee*

2. How did their Lenten activities benefit others?

- Sandy*
- Catherine*
- Melvin*
- Pat*
- Gina*
- Lee*

3. What did each character personally gain from the experience? How did each one grow?

- *Sandy*
- *Catherine*
- *Melvin*
- *Pat*
- *Gina*
- *Lee*

4. Did the six characters feel relieved that their Lenten sacrificial obligation was nearly over?

About the Author

Linda Bonney Olin is a veteran leader of Bible studies and Sunday school programs for adults and children. She has been a certified lay speaker in the United Methodist Church since 1997, creating a wealth of sketches, songs, sermons, puppet plays, and special event programs for her own congregation and other churches. Her poems and devotions have appeared in literary and devotional magazines, anthologies, and online publications.

Visit www.LindaBonneyOlin.com to contact Linda, learn about her and her work, and find a variety of resources for music, ministry, writing, and more.

More books by Linda Bonney Olin are available on Amazon.com:

Songs for the Lord: A Book of Twenty-four Original Hymns and Faith Songs

A collection of Christian songs in a variety of styles. Includes sheet music and companion Bible verses. Kindle.

The Sacrifice Support Group: A Dramatic Comedy for Lent

Play script only. Kindle or paperback.

Giving It Up for Lent—Leader Guide: Bible Study, Drama, Discussion

Complete five-to-seven-session Bible study on Lenten sacrifice, featuring *The Sacrifice Support Group*. Paperback.

Giving It Up for Lent—Workbook: Bible Study, Drama, Discussion

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