THE
ESSENTIALS
IN WORSHIP
TOOLKIT



4 BEST PRACTICES FOR LEADING WORSHIP FOR LENT

worshiptraining

INTRODUCTION

What is Lent all about?

Lent begins Ash Wednesday, six and a half weeks before Easter.

Lent is a season that spans from Ash Wednesday all the way through the Thursday of Holy Week, or the week that culminates in the first day of the week that is Easter Sunday. We move with Jesus through the crowds as he heals and delivers, and faces terrible opposition from those he loves.

Lent is a season of personal evaluation, a time to mourn our brokenness and to seek to know ourselves as God knows us. We open ourselves to vulnerable prayer, confession, and action, welcoming God to right our hearts just as He is righting the world toward the culmination of New Creation to come.

INTRODUCTION

1. Plan ahead.
2. Consider the cross.
3. Integrate readings.
4. Resist celebrating Easter…yet.

PRACTICE 1 - PLAN AHEAD

Plan ahead.

Lent is a time for focusing on a few themes that we don't focus on with the same intensity at other times of the year. Planning ahead for Lent is a great, rich opportunity to turn the attention of the congregation to worshipping the God who suffered, gave his life, and died for all of us.

This is your opportunity to begin to dig deep into the rich Scripture passages, hymns, songs, and readings that surround the experience of Lent.

Don't wait till the last minute. Leading your congregation well through Lent can prepare them for an anticipated, and joyful, Easter celebration.

PRACTICE 2 - CONSIDER THE CROSS

Consider the cross.

The cross, and the Old Testament passages that point to a suffering Messiah, are all relevant to the Lenten experience. This is a great opportunity for you as a worship leader to begin to understand what the cross is all about.

Many incredible books have been written on just the topic of the cross. Ask your pastor for a favorite of theirs, or do some searching online for a great Lent devotional.

The more in touch you are with the cross, the more your prayers, words, and between-song-sharing will reflect insights into the suffering of Christ.

PRACTICE 3 - INTEGRATE READINGS

Integrate readings.

Worship is about more than songs. This is the perfect time to begin to use responsive readings and select Scriptures that can guide your church into a fresh experience of the cross.

Lent is a season of personal repentance, and awareness of our relationships with God, others, creation – and even ourselves. Reflecting on areas of our lives in which we've gone astray, or lost our awareness of "losing our lives in order to find them," is a vital yearly process for the Christian.

PRACTICE 4 - RESIST CELEBRATING EASTER…YET

Resist celebrating Easter…yet.

Just like a child loves to anticipate the full re-reading of a favorite book, and not just the wonderful ending of the story, so too an extended celebration of Lent can build anticipation that makes Easter even more meaningful to your congregation.

Resist the temptation to talk about the resurrection, use explicitly Easter songs, or read Scriptures that allude to that part of the great Story. Allow your congregation to linger in Christ's "way of suffering" (via dolorosa) – it will make the celebration of Easter all the more meaningful.

ACTION STEPS

> Try at least one idea for Lent.

Plan your Lent services and song selections far before Lent begins (on Ash Wednesday). Consider the cross personally, and choose to grow in your understanding of its meaning for the Christian.

Integrate readings and Scriptures into your worship set that point your congregation to themes of personal reflection and repentance.

Finally, resist celebrating Easter…yet. The time for focus on the resurrection is just around the corner.

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