



# SPX Small Groups

*Life is Better Together*



**Series Description** – Spring is a time when many people do some house cleaning - they clear out the clutter, toss what's worthless, and get organized. Lent (the word means "Spring") is a time to do some spiritual Spring cleaning - to clear out the attitudes, habits or practices that are cluttering up our souls and have become worthless or harmful to our faith. For forty days, the Lenten call is to 'return to God with our whole hearts'. This is a call to be more like Jesus - to act as he acted and to make choices the way he made choices. Specifically, we will discover how we can (1) choose God, (2) turn off the noise, (3) leave the past behind, (4) offer our brokenness to God, and (5) let go of fear and doubt.

## Suggested Session Outline

Gather/Catch up: How was your week?

Opening Prayer: Make one up of your own or use this prayer:

*Heavenly Father, we come to you today asking for your guidance, wisdom, and support as we begin our time together. Help us to engage in meaningful discussion; allow us to grow closer as a group and nurture the bonds of community.*

*As we journey through Lent, help us clear out the clutter that separates us from you, so we can return to you with our whole hearts. Help us to listen for your voice. Give us courage to leave sin and shame behind. Use our brokenness and wounds for your larger purposes and let our trust in you be complete, so fear and doubt no longer control us. Amen.*

Discuss: What did you take away from this week's message? Use the provided questions to dive deeper.

Resolutions: Is there anything you plan to do differently this week?

Closing prayer: Close your session with a prayer, making sure to find out whether anyone needs prayer in a specific area or for a specific person.

Week 1 – March 1 -1<sup>ST</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Spring Cleaning – Choose God

- 1) What is the messiest room in your house?
- 2) Does living with a mess bother you or do you not even notice it?
- 3) What stood out for you most in this week's message?
- 4) In the readings, how did the serpent try to convince Adam and Eve that God didn't have their best interests at heart? If you were Adam or Eve, would you have made the same choice? Why or why not?
- 5) Does it seem like God is setting up Adam and Eve to fail by putting a tree they can't touch in the garden?
- 6) In the Gospel, what temptations did the devil put before Jesus?
  - a. Why might these things have tempted Jesus?
  - b. Do any of these same things tempt you?
  - c. How did Jesus resist temptation – what tools did he use?
- 7) What temptations do you struggle with the most? Are the things that tempt you bad in and of themselves? If not, what makes them a temptation?
- 8) Does any form of clutter (material, mental/emotional, or schedule) come between you and God?
- 9) Have you taken on any Lenten practices that help you deal with any of these temptations or areas of clutter in your life?
- 10) How can you use this Lenten season to choose God first? How can we as your groupmates help you?

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**First Reading:** Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

**Second Reading:** Romans 5:12-19

**Gospel:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Week 2 – March 8 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**Spring Cleaning – Turn Off the Noise**

- 1) What is the longest period of silence you have in your day (besides sleep)?
- 2) Have you ever intentionally tried to be silent for a long period of time? How long? Was it successful?
- 3) What stood out for you most in this week's message?
- 4) Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain, converses with Moses and Elijah, and is transfigured before them.
  - a. What would it have been like to be there?
  - b. Why does Peter want to build tents?
  - c. Peter states that it is good that they are there. In what way?
  - d. Have you ever had a mountain top experience at which you wanted to linger? What happened?
- 5) The voice from the cloud states: "This is my beloved son – listen to him."
  - a. How do you make time to listen to Jesus in your life?
  - b. What means do you use?
- 6) One way to "listen to Jesus" is to read the bible. Do you ever pick up a bible?
  - a. If yes, describe when and how often.
  - b. If no, what holds you back? Have you considered using the reading guide for this series?
  - c. Do you have a favorite book or story from the bible?

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**First Reading:** Genesis 12:1-4A  
**Second Reading:** 2 Timothy 1:8B-10  
**Gospel:** Matthew 17:1-9

Week 3 – March 15 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

Spring Cleaning – Leave the Past Behind

- 1) Do you tend to keep mementos from long ago? Do you ever look at them?
- 2) What stood out for you most in this week's message?
- 3) In the Gospel, why was the woman at the well in the heat of midday? How was she viewed by her neighbors at the beginning of the story?
- 4) If God loves everyone even though we sin, why did Jesus bring up the women's previous marriages? Was it *painful* to her that he mentioned them? Was it *helpful* to her that he mentioned them?
- 5) It seems like the woman was able to leave her shame behind when she goes off into the town to tell her neighbors about Jesus. What was the turning point for her that allowed her to suddenly be so bold?
- 6) Are there events in your past that shape your behavior today (for good or for bad)?
- 7) Which name do you prefer for the Sacrament – Confession, Penance or Reconciliation?
- 8) What is the hardest part of going to Confession/Penance/Reconciliation? What benefit do you receive from going?
- 9) How frequently do you like to go to Confession/Penance/Reconciliation? Do you tend to a set schedule or go on an as-needed basis?
- 10) Have you ever moved beyond a painful episode from your past (whether a result of your or another person's sin or simply unfortunate circumstances)? How were you able to leave the past behind? Were there things you did or people that were helpful to you in that process?

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**First Reading:** Exodus 17:3-7

**Second Reading:** Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

**Gospel:** John 4:5-42

**Week 4 – March 22 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**Spring Cleaning: Offer Your Brokenness to God**

- 1) If something of yours breaks, do you tend to repair it or replace it?
- 2) What stood out for you most in this week's message?
- 3) In the Gospel, there is a debate as to whose sin caused the man blindness, based on an assumption that bad fortune was a result of sin.
  - a. Do you think God punishes sin with things like illness or bad fortune?
  - b. What explanation did Jesus offer for the man's blindness?
  - c. A modern way of expressing a similar assumption might be that a person has "bad karma" as a result of bad choices or evil intent. Are beliefs about a person's "Karma" compatible with belief in Jesus? Why or why not?
- 4) In the Gospel, the fact that the man is healed isn't seen as a cause for rejoicing, instead the Pharisees use it to make a case against Jesus. Why did they struggle to see God's hand at work in that healing?
- 5) Are there parts of your life that the world would look at as broken? Do they feel broken to you?
- 6) Has something that felt broken at one point in your life become a source of strength or blessing at another point in your life? Has God ever used your brokenness for the benefit of others? How can you put your woundedness in the service of others?
- 7) The blind man who is healed gradually grows in understanding of who Jesus is, leading him to worship Jesus. How had your own understanding of who Jesus is grown over the years? How do you worship Jesus?
- 8) What blindness or problem do you need Jesus to take away, heal or use for a greater good?

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**First Reading:** 1 Samuel 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A

**Second Reading:** Ephesians 5:8-14

**Gospel:** John 9:1-41

**Week 5 – March 29 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**Spring Cleaning – Let Go of Fear and Doubt**

- 1) What is something other people seem to do easily, but scares you?
- 2) What stood out for you most in this week's message?
- 3) As opposed to strangers he meets, Jesus loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus before the story starts. Why does he not immediately return when he hears that Lazarus is ill?
- 4) Both Martha and Mary state: "if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Why? What did they think Jesus could have done?
- 5) Have you ever wanted to cry out – Lord if you were here, this terrible thing/death would not have happened? What was happening? Did Jesus help you?
- 6) Imagine Jesus were standing in front of you and said "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" How would you respond to him?
- 7) Depending on circumstances, sometimes death seems to be a peaceful transition and at other times an utter tragedy.
  - a. Does your faith give you hope when another has died?
  - b. How has your faith shaped your attitude toward your own death?
- 8) Does your faith in Jesus make a big enough difference in your life that you want to invite others to come to know Jesus? How do you go about inviting them? Have your past invitations been met with openness, disinterest, skepticism or even hostility?
- 9) Who would you like to invite to faith in Jesus? Is something holding you back? Is something needed for you to begin?

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**First Reading:** Ezekiel 37:12-14  
**Second Reading:** Romans 8:8-11  
**Gospel:** John 11:1-45