



With Jesus in the Wilderness

A Lenten Study Guide

How to use this Lent guide for groups

In the next forty days, until Easter Sunday on April 16, we are going to live in the season of Lent, when we can allow ourselves to step back from the distraction, clutter and noise that empty us of life and to seek Jesus who fills us with new life.

Lent is not only the time to give something up but also an invitation to pick up some holy habits. The setting of a connection or Lent group can help them take root in our lives.

This Lent guide invites you to explore 5 holy habits or spiritual disciplines:

Prayer

Fasting

Word

Compassion and justice

Silence

You can pick one discipline and keep it for the whole of Lent, or you can practice a different discipline each week. Do not try to master and perfect a discipline. The main reason why spiritual disciplines exist is to help create space in our lives where God can do his work of restoration and growth. It is not about performance; it is about making yourself available.

Each week's meeting has the following components:

1) Gather - it is a way to check-in with each other during Lent and encourage each other in the disciplines or focusing on the work of God in one's life.

2) Story - we receive great feedback for the "Our Stories" videos that we have been watching during the services. So, we thought that it would be a blessing to extend the idea to groups. I encourage you to start sharing and hearing about the deep work of God in the lives of your group members. Set aside 10-15 minutes each time you gather to hear some one's story, to get to know them better and see how Jesus is at work in them. I would suggest talking as a group during your first meeting and deciding who will share each week.

3) Word

4) Prayer

5) Spotlight on a spiritual discipline - this section provides ways to practice a particular discipline either for a week or for the whole time of Lent. So, I would suggest looking at all five spotlights and deciding on a strategy. Because, for instance, there is an option to read the whole Gospel of Mathew in 40 days following a plan, but it falls under the week three 'Word' discipline. So, acquaint yourself with all 5 spotlights and see if anything fits you.

You might want to try an exercise as a group. Prayer of Examen, for instance, can work really well instead of a Bible study.

You will find some additional materials and resources at the back of the booklet.

I would like to thank Dixie Daggett, our communications director, for formatting this guide and making it beautiful. She did the design for our previous booklets too.

May our Father richly bless your groups this season, and I am excited to see how the Lord Jesus will show up.

In Christ,

Yelena Pakhomova
Connection Groups Coordinator

Matthew 3:13-4:11(NIV)

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Week One

Gather

As you come together for your first meeting in this Lenten season, share about your experience of Lent.

Have you ever observed it or marked it in any way?

What do you sense God is asking you to “pick up” from Him and is there anything He would like you to “put down”?

Story

We have been making space in our Sunday services for people to share their stories, because we believe that we meaningfully journey together through Lent and life, only if we are growing in our relationships and understanding of one another. So, we invite you to extend this space to your connection groups.

Each week there will be an opportunity for someone in the group to share their story.

Do not stress about it, and feel free to share as you feel comfortable.

Take 10-15 minutes to invite people into your life along the lines of:

- Your faith journey or where you see God at work in your life at the moment,
- How you came to be in Vancouver and FBC,
- Something you are passionate about and find life giving,
- Or just share something that the Lord has laid on your heart lately.

It would be good to have people signed up for the next few weeks at the end of your time together, so that you can hear a story next week.





Word

For this first engagement with the temptations narrative, I suggest you try the “Swedish method.” It is a simple way of reading the Bible with others, which was developed by a Bible-reading group of students in Sweden. It uses symbols instead of pre-set questions and allows a free flow exploration of the passage in a group.





Use the symbols from the chart below to mark up the passage and to make corresponding notes if you want to.

Read Matthew 3:13-4:11 aloud.

Allow 10-15 minutes for each person to go over the passage on their own, while being on the lookout for the following:

	Something that “shines” to you from the passage, draws your attention?	
	Anything hard to understand, any questions?	
	How does this text relate to your personal life? Do you see any application?	
	What would you like to share with somebody else? Who will benefit from hearing what you’ve seen in the Bible today?	

After 10 minutes begin the discussion.

	1) In the first round, each person gets to share one of their ‘light bulbs’ with the group. It’s always interesting to discover what has impacted different people.
	2) In the second round, share one of the questions raised by the passage. When sharing your question, feel free to propose an approach to answering it, or you can interact with it as a group.
	3) In this round, each person gets to share one of their personal applications, or if this Scripture spoke to them in a particular way today.
	4) In the final round, share if there is a word of truth or encouragement you are taking away from this passage today? And who would you like to pass it on to either in person or prayer?

Prayer

Pray in response to what you've been learning and hearing so far. And also pray for each other that in the next 5 weeks of Lent you encounter Jesus in a powerful and transforming way.

Spotlight on *Prayer as Spiritual Discipline*

One spiritual discipline will be highlighted each week. The suggested exercises are meant to help you focus on each particular discipline for a week, or even for the whole time of Lent.

During the following weeks, in your gathering time, you are invited to share your experience with a discipline or exercises. If you are not planning to try these exercises, think in what way this group can help you focus on Jesus during Lent.

- 1) **Set aside 5 to 10 minutes each day for prayer.** Find a time in your schedule that is free of interruption, when you can turn your thoughts to God. You may want to read a Bible verse and meditate on it, or you may want to spend the time talking with God about your needs and concerns. The idea is simply to set aside your busy activities (or not start them) and turn your attention to God.
- 2) **Pray the same prayer for ten minutes each day.** There is a tradition in the Eastern Church called "hesychasm," which is the practice of repeating a simple prayer over and over. The idea is to focus our thoughts on God so that God can enter our heart. You might like to try the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." Or use a verse from a psalm, e.g. "Create in me a clean heart, oh God" (Psalm 51:10)
- 3) **Write a prayer.** Take time to write a prayer as if it were a letter to God. Beginning with "Dear Lord," tell God your hopes and dreams, your worries, your needs. You may even want to confess your sins and ask for forgiveness. Most important, use the prayer to open the lines of communication between yourself and God. Do not write the prayer as though others would read it someday. Like a personal journal, keep your letter confidential so that you have the freedom to be honest. Once you are done, read and pray it every day until the next meeting.
- 4) **Try the Daily Examen.** It is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day to detect God's presence and discern His direction for you. The *Examen* is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience. It is a wonderful way of learning how to pray. Our youth group is using it once a month for a group prayer. Practice template can be found in the back of the Lent Guide.

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Week Two

Gather

As you come together, share how you are doing. What has your experience been so far in the Lenten journey? Where are you seeing God at work? Have you tried any exercises or practiced any particular discipline? Have you had any meaningful experiences of prayer recently?

Story (Name _____)

Listen to a story or share yours for 15-20 minutes.

Word

"With Jesus in the Wilderness" Round One

This round focuses on Matthew 4:1-4, but to get a good grasp of the first temptation, it is good to see it in the context of all three temptations and what preceded them.

Pray for your time together, and read Matthew 3:13-4:11 aloud.

Take 10-15 min to have a good look at the passage and notice the details Matthew gives:

- Who are the main characters? Mark the names that are applied to them.
- Underline the locations that Matthew mentions, paying attention to the indications of direction, e.g. "to," "into," "from."
- Circle all the references to time, e.g. "then," "forty," etc.
- Mark all the parallels, repetitions and contrasts you can find in the text, e.g. "to be baptized by John" (3:13) and "to be tempted by the devil" (4:1), it is both a parallel and contrast.
- Note anything that indicates "cause and effect," e.g. statements containing "If..."

Briefly share your observations.

Discussion questions:

- 1) Why did John resist baptizing Jesus? And why did Jesus need to be baptized by John?
- 2) What were the four things that happened as soon as Jesus was baptized? What was the significance of the dove and the voice?
- 3) Look up Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. How do you understand what the voice said about who Jesus is and what task He has received in light of those two texts?
- 4) Why did Jesus end up in the wilderness? Why wilderness and why fast?
- 5) What was the point of the first temptation in v.3?
- 6) How do you understand Jesus' response? What does it mean to live on every word that comes from the mouth of God? (You might want to look at Deuteronomy 8)

Complete the statements:

Jesus is _____.

The tempter wanted _____.

My takeaway from today is _____.

Prayer

Pray in response to what you've been learning and hearing so far. Pray for each other that this Lent you encounter Jesus in a powerful and transforming way.

Spotlight on *Fasting as Spiritual Discipline*

- 1) **Go a day without saying anything negative, fasting from criticalness.** In the morning, ask the Holy Spirit to “set a guard over your mouth” (Psalm 141:3), preventing you from saying anything negative. Be ruthless about this! Do not let even the slightest hint of criticism or judgment come out of your mouth. You may find yourself in situations that call for an honest appraisal; for example, you may be asked what you think about something. Be honest, but do not be critical. Instead, search for ways to be positive about everything around you and be ready to give compliments as often as you can.
- 2) **Unplug.** Refrain from using TV, Facebook, Twitter, Netflix, or any other social media. This is perhaps the single best way to carve out some extra time in your day for prayer and meditation. Or select a social media and plan how you can use it this week, or for the whole season of Lent, in a more life-giving and meaningful way, not consuming information, and sometimes people, but creating and encouraging. Not consuming information and, sometimes people, but creating and encouraging.
- 3) **Give up eating out for 5 weeks and donate the money you save.**
- 4) **Purge of all your excess stuff and donate the best of it.**
- 5) **Try a 24-hour partial fast.** (Note that there are some people who for physical reasons should not fast from food). When we fast, we are saying no to the uncontrolled appetites of our body and thereby gaining mastery over them. The practice of fasting also reveals hidden traits – anger, selfishness, inability to delay gratification, laziness, and so on – which can become areas for change (and growth) in the future. A simple way to begin is to fast from lunch to lunch, skipping dinner and breakfast in between. After eating lunch on the first day, do not eat a full meal until lunch on the second day. During the 24 hours, drink plenty of water, and at mealtimes drink a glass of fruit juice if you want. Remember, in the fasting you are “feasting” upon God.

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Week Three

Gather

As you gather, check in with each other. What have you been learning about Jesus in the wilderness and about yourself in the last couple of weeks? Any highlights or low points in your Lenten journey? Have you ever tried fasting and was it meaningful or not meaningful for you?

Story (Name _____)

Word

"With Jesus in the Wilderness" Round Two

Pray and read Matthew 4:1-7 aloud.

Discover:

- What strikes you in today's passage?
- Look at how Matthew describes the second temptation and compare it with the first one. What similarities and what differences do you see?

Reflect:

- Why do you think the tempter begins his first and second temptation with "If you are the Son of God"?
- Is there any significance in the devil's taking Jesus to Jerusalem and placing Him on the highest point of the temple?
- Why does the devil quote Psalm 91? Feel free to look up the psalm and find the part the tempter uses in this story.
- What is the purpose of this temptation? How is it similar (or maybe not) to Genesis 3:1-7?
- What do you think of Jesus' response? In what ways would yielding to this temptation have been putting the Lord God to the test?

Complete the statements as you see fit:

The tempter wanted to make Jesus doubt His identity as the Son of God

The devil wants me to doubt my identity as a child of God

Prayer

Respond to what you have been learning and talking about in prayer. And also pray for each other that during Lent you will encounter Jesus in a powerful and transforming way and that the Spirit will strengthen you to resist the tempter.

Spotlight on *Word as Spiritual Discipline*

- 1) **Memorize a verse or passage of Scripture.** Memorizing Scripture allows God's word to take root in your thought-life and your inner heart. It is easier to memorize one phrase at a time than all at once. Keep adding phrases and saying the verse or passage to yourself throughout the day until you can repeat it from memory. You can choose to memorize Matthew 3:13-4:11, or Psalm 51:1-17, or Psalm 103:1-5.
- 2) **Read one of the shorter books of the Bible out loud.** The Gospels, and even Paul's letters, were read aloud to the early Christians in their gathered communities. Read one of Paul's shorter letters (e.g. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians) out loud to yourself. Imagine how the Christians listening to those words for the first time felt and responded.
- 3) **Read through one whole Gospel before Easter Sunday, so that you can enter Easter Sunday with the story of Jesus fresh in your heart and mind and see how it speaks into your life at the moment.** (The reading plan for the Gospel of Matthew is in the Spotlight Resources section at the end of the Lent Guide).
- 4) **Read through and reflect on the Sermon on the Mount once a week until Easter Sunday.** Listen to what the Spirit is saying to you personally. (Matthew 5, 6, 7)

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Week Four

Gather

As you gather, talk about what you have been learning about Jesus in the wilderness, temptations and yourself in the last few weeks. Have you tried any exercises from the previous week? What is your favorite way to interact with the Bible? And what do you find difficult?

Story (Name _____)

Word

"With Jesus in the Wilderness" Round Three

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time together, and read Matthew 4:8-11 aloud.

Observe:

- Do you find anything striking in this last temptation?
- Look at particular details that unite or distinguish the three temptations. What do you notice? What parallels does Matt 4:8-11 have with the previous two temptations? Some repeated ideas or words? And what is different this time?
- Have you noticed that the angels are mentioned twice? 😊
- Notice how the evil one is named or addressed in each instance: tempter, devil (meaning "accuser"), and Satan ("enemy" or "adversary").

Reflect:

- 1) Each of the temptations had a particular condition or ("created") circumstances. The stones/bread temptation was set in the context of extreme hunger; "throw yourself down" was suggested on the highest point of the temple. What are the circumstances corresponding to the temptation this time?

- 2) "All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me." What does Satan want? And do you think he has what he is offering?
- 3) Why would this be a temptation for Jesus?
- 4) How does Jesus respond to the devil? (Compare Deut. 6:13, 10:20) And what is the effect of His response?

Apply:

Share what you have learned through the sermons series and Bible studies about the nature of temptation and about Jesus. In what ways have you been challenged? What encouraged you? How does Jesus' struggle help you in your struggle?

Prayer

Pray and praise Jesus in response to this passage. And also lift each other in prayer.

Spotlight on *Compassion and Social Justice as Spiritual Discipline*

- 1) **Try the Ecological Examen suggested in the Spotlight Resources at the back.** It is a way to examine the way we treat God's creation and become mindful of the little ways we daily interact with it.
- 2) **Read the news and pray for the refugees.** Ask yourself or reflect together with others on the following questions:
 - Have you ever been a stranger? Describe some of the feelings you had. Did anyone welcome you? Describe that experience.
 - Have you ever been unjustly treated? Have you seen another person being oppressed? How did you respond?
- 3) **Consider or talk to a friend** about some factors that keep you personally from getting involved in social justice activities.
- 4) **Join the Doing Justice Group** at FBC for one of their Thursdays at Duncan Hall, FBC. Meeting dates: March 9, March 23, April 6, April 20, May 4, May 18, June 1.
- 5) **Write a kind, encouraging letter.** This may seem like a small task, but it can work miracles. Take time to write a letter that tells someone how important he or she is to you. We seldom let people know how much they are appreciated. "Anxiety weighs down the human heart, but a good word cheers it up" (Proverbs 12:25).
- 6) **Get outside! Commit to spending at least 20 minutes a day outside – walking, meditating, taking pictures, journaling.** Be reminded of and experience, the transition in nature from winter to spring, while reflecting on the beauty and order of God's creation, how God takes us all through seasons, and that his world and your life are ultimately His.

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Week Five

Gather

How has your Lent journey been so far? Share any highlights or low points. Have you looked into any exercises for engaging Scripture as a spiritual discipline from the previous week? What is your favorite way to interact with the Bible? Any particular passages that spoke to you lately or something you struggle with?

Story (Name _____)

Listen to a story or share yours for 15-20 minutes.

Word

"With Jesus in the Wilderness" via *Lectio Divina*.

Now as we have had a chance to look at the testing narrative at length, you are invited to engage it using lectio divina, a contemplative approach to Bible reading and listening. It is less about us getting a Scripture passage analyzed and more about letting God speak to us through His written Word. It is not about information, but transformation.

During the next 30 minutes or so, we will enter into the rhythm of listening to the text, silently reflecting on it, and then sharing how it speaks to us.

Assume a comfortable position and pray, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your experience and asking Him to open your heart to what God wants to say to you through it.

Have one person slowly read Matthew 3:13-4:11.

- Listen attentively and prayerfully.
- Have the person read the text again. This time listen for a particular word or phrase that jumps out at you or speaks directly to you.

Take a couple of minutes of silence and then share what your word or phrase is, without elaborating on it.

Reflect on how this word/phrase touches your life.

- Have the passage read again. Try entering the text using your imagination. Imagine yourself in the wilderness with Jesus, exhausted and hungry, going through the three rounds of testing. What do you see, hear or smell?
- In the time of silence (3-5 min) following the reading, ponder this word or phrase that spoke to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you why this particular word is for you.

Share your reflections with the group on how this word/phrase connects with your life.

Respond in prayer.

Prayer is the natural response arising from listening and meditating on the Word of God.

- You can pray for each other out loud based on what people shared during the time of reflection
- Or spend 3-5 minutes in silent prayer.

Rest in gratitude and the words of truth and hope.

- The passage is read one final time.
- In 2-3 minutes of silence following the reading, simply sit in the presence of the Lord, letting Him draw close to you and minister to your spirit. It is just a space to sit silently with God; you do not have to do anything. Just be there in front of the Word and the One who speaks it.

The facilitator can close the group's lectio by simply saying, "Thank you, Lord, for your word to us today. Amen."

Passing the peace and prayer

As this might be your last meeting if you are in a Lent group, take the time to speak a word of encouragement to other members individually, mentioning gratefully how you have seen God at work in their lives and through their stories. For example, "Steve, I want to encourage you in your ability to help others, and I thank God for what he has done and continues to do in your life."

Pray for each other and as you feel led.

This week concludes our Lent journey together, but the Lent itself is not over. It finishes on Easter Sunday, April 16. Next week you are invited to enter into the Easter story together as a church family, attending the different Easter services that will tell the story of the passion of Christ and proclaim the good news of the resurrection.

Spotlight on *Silence & Solitude as Spiritual Discipline*

As we are nearing the Holy week, it is an appropriate time to engage in some period of silence, solitude, and reflection.

Richard Foster says, "Without silence, there is no solitude. Though silence sometimes involves the absence of speech it always involves the act of listening. Simply to refrain from talking, without a heart listening to God, is not silence."

At the same time, in silence and solitude we learn how to speak well. Foster continues, "The disciplined person is the person who can do what needs to be done when it needs to be done...If we are silent when we should speak, we are not living in the discipline of silence. If we speak when we should be silent, we again miss the mark." (*Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster).

- 1) **Spend 5 to 10 minutes each day in silence.** Carve out a time that is free from interruption and use this time to be silent. While letting silence and its peace wash over you, pray without words. Very close friends can communicate without words; try this with God. Simply enjoy God's presence, God's loving arms wrapped around you.
- 2) **Reflect on the different kinds of overactivity that affect you.** Are your social media connectivity and the demands over phone and email overloading your life? How can you arrange for times of quiet and separation from your daily obligations? And what will point you to God in such times? Come up with two ways of how you can build periods of silence and solitude into your daily routine. Try practicing it this week.
- 3) **Write down which relationships in your life could be strengthened by a time of solitude.** Ask God to enable you to commit to those relationships and set aside some time for solitude.
- 4) **Exercise the discipline of silence with someone close to you, a spouse or a coworker or another family member with whom you spend a lot of time.** Agree to be silent together for a time, listening to what God wants to say about your relationship.
- 5) **Plan a day or even a silent spiritual retreat.** Reflect on the difficulties and blessings of this experience. What did you learn about yourself and your relationships (to God and others) during this solitary time?

Spotlight Resources

Lenten Prayers

✠

Almighty God,
whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit
to be tempted by Satan;
Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations;
and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us,
let each one find you mighty to save;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Prayer)

✠

O Lord,
The house of my soul is narrow;
enlarge it that you may enter in.
It is ruinous, O repair it!
It displeases Your sight.
I confess it, I know.
But who shall cleanse it,
to whom shall I cry
but to you?
Cleanse me
from my secret faults, O Lord,
and spare Your servant
from strange sins. (*St. Augustine, AD 354-430*)

✠



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.
(*Prayer of St. Francis*)



Daily Examen of Consciousness

Get into a quiet space, free from distractions to connect with God. Turn off your cell phone. Have your journal and Bible at hand, and take a minute to still your body, heart, and mind as you enter the Examen.

1) Recall you are in the presence of God.

This first step of the Examen reminds us of a foundational truth: God has never left us; we just forget God is there. Stop and remember God's presence around you, in your circumstances, and acknowledge the Holy Spirit's work within you. Before you move on, write down any thoughts, feelings, or observations as you reconnect to God's presence.

2) Look at your day with gratitude.

Most of the time it's easier to remember what is not going right, what we don't have, who's not "for" us, and how we have let God down. This step helps you raise your eyes and heart to the God who has blessed you beyond measure. The point is to shift the focus off yourself as the false center of the universe and redirect your attention toward the true God of the Universe, thanking Him for who He is.

3) Ask for help from the Holy Spirit.

Intentionally invite the Holy Spirit to guide this time. Too often our own voices and vices guide our thoughts and decisions. This vital step orients our spirit toward the Spirit of light and truth. It acknowledges our dependence on God to instruct, guide, correct, and speak to us.

4) Review your day.

This step helps you to notice God's presence with you in your day. Approach it like you are watching a movie of your day. Scene by scene, hour by hour, remember the sights, sounds, smells, conversations, internal thoughts, and intimate feelings of the moments from your day.

Use these questions to discern your actions and awareness of God throughout your day.

- What were the highs—what was most life-giving?
- What were the lows—what was most life-depleting?
- When did I fail?
- When did I love?
- Do I observe any habits or life patterns?
- When did I see evidence of God's presence?

(Mindy Caliguire, Soul Searching (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 48.)

Remember to review your day by listening to the truth and love from the Spirit.

5) **Reconcile and resolve.**

This final step brings closure to the *Examen* through focusing on the future. It points us to course correction, righting wrongs, and a fresh start. It points us back to the abundant life Jesus came to offer. Take some time to consider where you might need to reconcile with God or another person and resolve to make it right as quickly as possible.

End your Examen with the Lord's Prayer.

Shorter Daily Examen

- *God, thank you* -

I thank you, God, for always being with me,
but especially I am grateful that
you are with me right now.

- *God, send your Holy Spirit upon me* -

God, let the Holy Spirit enlighten my mind
and warm my heart that I may know
where and how we have been together this day.

- *God, let me look at my day* -

God, where have I felt your presence,
seen your face, heard your word this day?
God, where have I ignored you, run from you,
perhaps even rejected you this day?

- *God, let me be grateful and ask forgiveness* -

God, I thank you for the times this day
we have been together
and we have worked together.
God, I am sorry for the ways that I have offended you
by what I have done or what I did not do.

- *God, stay close* -

God, I ask that you draw me ever closer
to you this day and tomorrow.
God, you are the God of my life!
Thank you.

(From *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* by David Fleming, SJ)

Ecological Examen (for Compassion and Justice)

(based on examen by Joseph Carver, SJ)

All creation reflects the beauty and blessing of God's image.

- 1) Where was I most aware of this today?
- 2) Can I identify and pin-point how I made a conscious effort to care for God's creation during this day?
- 3) What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my care for creation?
- 4) How can I repair breaks in my relationship with creation, in my unspoken sense of superiority?
- 5) As I imagine tomorrow, I ask for the grace to see the Incarnate Christ in the dynamic interconnections of all Creation.
- 6) Conclude with the Lord's Prayer or one of the following psalms:

Psalm 148:1-6 (NIV)

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for at his command they were created,
and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

Amen.

Psalm 65:9-13 (NIRV)

Lord,

You take care of the land and water it.

You make it able to grow many crops.

You fill your streams with water.

You do that to provide the people with grain.

That's what you have decided to do for the land.

You water its rows.

You smooth out its bumps.

You soften it with showers.

And you bless its crops.

You bring the year to a close with huge crops.

You provide more than enough food.

The grass grows thick even in the desert.

The hills are dressed with gladness.

The meadows are covered with flocks and herds.

The valleys are dressed with grain.

They sing and shout for joy.

Amen.

The exercises for spiritual disciplines were adapted from the Renovare resources for individuals and groups compiled and written by Richard J. Foster, Emily Griffin, James Bryan Smith, and Lynda Graybeal.

Reading the GOSPEL of Matthew during LENT

01-Mar. 1:1-25
02-Mar. 2:1-23
03-Mar. 3:1-17
04-Mar. 4:1-25
05-Mar. REST

06-Mar. 5:1-19
07-Mar. 5:20-48
08-Mar. 6:1-34
09-Mar. 7:1-29
10-Mar. 8:1-34
11-Mar. 9:1-38
12-Mar. REST

13-Mar. 10:1-25
14-Mar. 10:26-42
15-Mar. 11:1-30
16-Mar. 12:1-21
17-Mar. 12:22-50
18-Mar. 13:1-23
19-Mar. REST

20-Mar. 13:24-58
21-Mar. 14:1-36
22-Mar. 15:1-20
23-Mar. 15:21-39
24-Mar. 16:1-28
25-Mar. 17:1-27
26-Mar. REST

27-Mar. 18:1-35
28-Mar. 19:1-30
29-Mar. 20:1-34
30-Mar. 21:1-22
31-Mar. 21:23-46
01-Apr. 22:1-22
02-Apr. REST

03-Apr. 22:23-46
04-Apr. 23:1-39
05-Apr. 24:1-25
06-Apr. 24:26-51
07-Apr. 25:1-39
08-Apr. 25:31-46
09-Apr. REST

10-Apr. 26:1-25
11-Apr. 26:26-46
12-Apr. 26:47-75
13-Apr. 27:1-38
14-Apr. 27:39-66
15-Apr. 28:1-20

16-Apr. EASTER

(<https://alifegivinglent.wordpress.com/2017/03/01/reading-the-gospel-of-matthew-through-lent-2017/>)



First Baptist Church
Connection Groups