

In-N-Out Small Groups

Week 1 (Meeting Mar 15 to 21)

Group Start at Small Group:

- **Pray this prayer together:** “O Lord, we come together today for the sake of growing as your disciples and exercising spiritual care of one another. As we continue our Lenten journey, show us the specific places where repentance is needed in our lives. Show us also how we may grow closer to you and how we may better support each other, that your whole Church may be united in your praise and in your love for all – through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”
- **Introductions:** Everyone give your name, when you first came to St. Peter.

Questions (prep ahead individually, then discuss at Small Group)

1. In our very first devotion from the start of Lent (pp.1-3), Lucado notes that Jesus’s journey to Jerusalem would bring suffering and heartache. This Lent, are you coming out of any such places in your own life? Journeying toward one? Or is it the opposite – you are presently in a season of joy? What is “the road” like for *you*, at this moment?

2. In that same devotion, Lucado highlights Jesus’ *purposefulness* or *intentionality*: ultimately, Jesus was going to Jerusalem to embrace the Cross out of love for both His Father and us. Pastor Clark also preached on intentionality on the first Sunday of Lent. Do you find it hard or easy to be “intentional” about growing as a Christian? What helps you be more intentional, when you are?

3. The second devotion (pp.4-6) featured Mary anointing Jesus with expensive perfume with no regard for the social or personal consequences. Lucado calls this “extravagant, risky, chance-taking love” (5) and encourages us not to miss opportunities to offer the same. Have you ever “taken a chance” to connect to another human being – a family member, a friend, or a stranger – with surprisingly joyful results?

4. Likewise, have you, like Mary, ever “taken a chance” in offering love *to the Lord* with surprisingly joyful results? [Maybe you tried a practice that made you nervous (fasting, washing feet, etc) or joined a ministry team or volunteer effort that pushed you beyond your comfort zone; or maybe you chose to do what you felt God was asking even though it risked judgment from others or consequences for your future; or...]

5. The fourth devotion (pp.10-12) focuses on Christ washing his disciples' feet. On that Maundy Thursday, Jesus also gave us the command to love each other, just as he has loved us. This command brings us to a theme of these first two weeks of small group: "spiritual care." Talk about what spiritual care for each other at church *should* look like. What connects *spiritual* care to care in general—and what makes it different? What are the basic acts of spiritual care we all should do? Has there ever been a time when someone else, maybe at St. Peter, did something that really showed you what spiritual care can be?

6. In devotion seven (pp.19-21), Lucado notices how Jesus calls Judas "friend" and treats him well even as Judas betrays him. He then links this to our lives: "[Jesus] didn't justify or minimize what Judas did. Nor did he release Judas from his choice. But he did look eye to eye with his betrayer and try to understand. / As long you hate your enemy, a jail door is closed and a prisoner is taken. But when you try to understand and release your foe from your hatred, then the prisoner is released—and that prisoner is you" (21). What exactly does it look like to hold this balance – i.e., not to justify or minimize sins yet still release hatred, show love, and try to understand? Are there ever sins we cannot or *should* not "try to understand"?

7. In the same devotion, Lucado remarks that one of the reasons Jesus continues to love is that "[Jesus] could see something we can't. He knew Judas had been seduced by a powerful foe. He was aware of the wiles of Satan's whispers. He knew how hard it was for Judas to do what is right" (21). In John 9, Jesus also talks about how all sinners are often simply *blind* to what is right and true and good. How might all this help us love (and understand?) sinful human beings, day to day?

8. **[PLEASE REFER HERE ONLY TO DEVOTIONS 1-15, pp.1-48; DON'T GO FURTHER "TO CALVARY"]**. One of the main strengths of this devotional is that Lucado brings more detail to everything from Jesus cleansing the temple, to his time in the Garden of Gethsemane, to what Pilate, the soldiers, and Simon of Cyrene might have felt. Out of all the devotions "leading up to Calvary," what details really made you think, or see the story more vividly or in a new way? What made you feel particularly "close" to Jesus? Cite a detail or even come with a couple of sentences to share that had a big impact for you.

Briefly take prayer requests, then close with this *act of spiritual care, intercessory prayer*: "O Lord, we thank you for meeting here with us this day. You have heard the prayers we have offered; work in each as only you can. And may the things we have discussed today bear fruit in our lives, that we might receive all that Jesus is with all that we are. In His Name, Amen."