

## House Group Notes - Thinking together about Lent

Many Churches around the world use Lent – the 40 days before Easter to – as an opportunity to focus on the central event of Christianity, the death and resurrection Jesus and what it means to us as believers. This is not something we're big on at Portswood but this year we're giving house groups the opportunity to consider the significance of Lent. This would give groups and individuals an opportunity to use the time as a prompt to get closer to the Lord who died for us and show his love to others.

### Ideas for Interaction

- Discuss the different feelings, ideas and reactions people in the group have to 'Lent'.
- Are there arguments 'for' and 'against' taking it very seriously, or ignoring it altogether?

The Passover was the central event of Israel's history. It was their rescue from slavery on the night that judgment came on Egypt and they were saved from this because of the Lamb-sacrifice they made, and their trust in God as they painted the Lamb's blood on the doorway to their houses. (Exodus 12:1-7,14-20). They were to remember this each year with a feast which was preceded by 7 days of preparation when they were to eat bread without yeast. So the idea of taking time to 'prepare' for something that reminds a community of such a defining and central event and the meaning behind it is not necessarily 'unbiblical'?

### Ideas for Interaction

- What do you think about the idea of intentionally preparing for the celebrating of Easter?
- Are there reasons why this is particularly important for us in our culture at this time?
- How do you think it might affect our lives if we were to do this more intentionally?

**1Cor.5:7-8** In the NT it's very clear that Jesus is our Passover Lamb, his death brought us rescue, forgiveness and a new life with God. In this passage we're encouraged to remember that and celebrate not just the truth of the event, presumably Paul means Communion here, but prepare for it by removing 'malice and wickedness' from our lives which can be filled instead with 'sincerity and truth.'

Many Christians see Lent as a time to take a good look at what Jesus has done on the Cross for us considering the reasons why he did this, the overwhelming love of God and the sinful state we're in. This is something that we can do as we pray, taking the time to be with Christ, perhaps in a special focused way leading up to Easter. The story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42) points us to the priority of stopping to listen to Jesus.

### Ideas for Interaction

- How much do you need to make time to 'be with Jesus' and why?
- What challenges do we face in making that happen?
- How could we help each other?

It's not a coincidence that Luke's next episode is about prayer and includes the model prayer Jesus gave us to pray. (Luke 11:1-4) Our response to Jesus as we reflect on the cross and battle sin in our lives reminds us of Jesus' temptations in the desert when he prayed and fasted and defeated Satan. Something he would again do for us on the cross.

### Ideas for Action

#### 1. For our own spiritual health – read and reflect and pray.

Various Christian organizations are offering daily devotional material for Lent eg LICC - <http://www.licc.org.uk/prayerworks/join-the-journey/jointhepoweroflove/>, and Evangelical Alliance have a useful list here: <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/resources-for-lent-and-easter.cfm>

We'll be posting a **weekly reflection on the Portswood Blog** – a look at the events of the cross through the words Jesus spoke in the midst of it all. If people would like that they can get it by going to the website or 'liking' the new facebook page and turning on 'notifications'. That way automatic emails will arrive when the blogs appear.

## Ideas for Action

### 2. To share with others

In Mark 10:45 Jesus connects his mission 'to give his life as a ransom' with his ministry as the servant King, 'to serve'. John in ch 13 'gets this' big-time as he introduces Jesus washing the disciples' feet as the lowliest slave sign-posting this act as a demonstration of the extent of his love for them en route to the cross. So as we focus on the servant king who gave his life as our ransom so why not serve others in some way?

There are many ideas 'out there' which you could do individually or as a group, reporting back. For example Stewardship's forty acts of kindness <http://www.40acts.org.uk/> video here

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y-2uVqjda8&utm_source=Stewardship&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=5315423_40acts+-+five+days+to+go%21&utm_content=YOUTUBE)

[2uVqjda8&utm\\_source=Stewardship&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=5315423\\_40acts+-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y-2uVqjda8&utm_source=Stewardship&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=5315423_40acts+-+five+days+to+go%21&utm_content=YOUTUBE)

[+five+days+to+go%21&utm\\_content=YOUTUBE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y-2uVqjda8&utm_source=Stewardship&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=5315423_40acts+-+five+days+to+go%21&utm_content=YOUTUBE) or make up your own. One Church in Southampton lived on the benefits level after mortgage etc and gave what they saved to SCRATCH or SCM Basics Bank. There are

loads of zany ideas here - <http://lifeteen.com/what-to-give-up-25-creative-ideas-for-lent/>

Someone on fb I came across is offering to clean 40 neighbours' cars during Lent – though I think he's also fundraising?

Whatever you do as a group – help each other – keep in touch – don't forget that it might also be an opportunity to be a blessing on your frontlines.

Remember Lent is not about giving up something to make you a better person – even though that's how a lot of people do see it. Rather as believers and followers of Jesus we're creating space in our lives to focus on Jesus and what he's done for us, from that place we want to be like him and serve others.

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