

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUMMARY

As Lent begins, this sermon launches a new journey through Luke's gospel by calling us to "prepare the way for Jesus." Drawing on John the Baptist's message in Luke 3, it explores how God speaks into a messy world, calls for real repentance that shows up in everyday life, and ultimately leads us to Jesus—the one who truly transforms us. Lent, we're reminded, is not about earning God's favour, but about making space for Jesus to reshape our hearts, our practices, and our life together as we walk with him toward the cross and resurrection.

SHARE

Think about a time when you had to prepare for something important—a guest arriving, a big event, or a significant life change. What did that preparation look like, and how did it change your normal routine?

READ

Read **Luke 3:1-18** together out loud as a group.

DISCUSS

Feel free to pick/choose what is most helpful for you. Remember, the goal is to have rich, relational, authentic, Jesus-centered discussions.

1. What stood out to you the most about the sermon?

2. In Luke 3:1-6, why do you think Luke begins by listing all the political and religious leaders before telling us that "the word of God came to John"? What theological point is Luke making about where and how God speaks? How does the location—the wilderness, the lowest point on earth—add meaning to John's message?

3. John quotes Isaiah 40:3-5 about valleys being filled, mountains leveled, crooked paths straightened, and rough places made smooth. Pastor Steve said these aren't about landscaping but heart work. Looking at verses Luke 3:7-9, what specific "heart work" does John call people to do?

4. The sermon emphasized that “true repentance begins inwardly, but it always moves outwardly.” When the crowds asked John in Luke 3:10-14, “What should we do?” his answers were strikingly ordinary. What tasks does he call them to do? Why do you think John’s instructions were so practical rather than more “spiritual”? What does this teach us about the nature of repentance?

5. Pastor Steve connected John’s message to two of Cornerstone’s Guiding Priorities: building bridges across differences and joining God in the neighbourhood. How does genuine repentance shape not just our personal lives but our shared life and mission as a church? What might this look like practically in our context here in the eastern GTA?

6. In verses 15-18, John makes it clear he’s not the Messiah—he points people to Jesus, who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. The sermon described this as Jesus “sifting and refining, removing what destroys life so that new life can flourish.” What’s the difference between John’s water baptism and Jesus’ baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire? What is the importance of John refusing the spotlight and pointing to Jesus?

7. The sermon challenged us to ask: “If someone watched how I treat people, handle money, use influence, or speak about others, would repentance actually be visible?” This Lent, what is one specific area where God might be calling you to show visible repentance—where valleys need filling, mountains need leveling, or crooked paths need straightening?

NEXT STEPS:

1. **Make (or review) your Lent commitment:** If you haven’t already, prayerfully consider what you will give up and what spiritual practice you will take up during Lent (February 18 - April 2). Be specific and detailed in your commitment.

2. **Join “A Space to Pray Along the Way”:** Consider attending one or more of the Thursday evening **prayer gatherings** (Feb 26, Mar 12, Mar 26, 7:00-8:30 PM in the Youth Lounge) to pray for Cornerstone, our community, and each other during this Lenten journey.

3. **Practice visible repentance:** Choose one practical action from John’s instructions (sharing resources, practicing fairness, showing contentment, or treating others with kindness) and commit to doing it this week.

4. **Use a Lenten devotional:** Download the **Lectio 365** app or access “Preparing our Hearts for Easter” (Tim Keller) or “Lent for Everyone” (Tom Wright) on the **Bible app** to guide your daily time with Jesus.

5. **Check out Lent videos now on RightNow Media:** Explore additional Lenten resources and video studies available through RightNow Media to deepen your journey this season.

PRAY:

Spend time praying together as a group:

- **Confession:** Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where valleys need filling, mountains need leveling, or crooked paths need straightening in your lives. Confess these to God together.
- **For each other:** Pray for one another's Lenten commitments—that God would give grace, strength, and perseverance to follow through.
- **For Cornerstone:** Pray for our church as we live into our four Guiding Priorities, especially building bridges across difference and joining God in the neighbourhood.
- **For transformation:** Ask Jesus to baptize your group afresh with the Holy Spirit and fire—to purify, refine, and transform you into people who reflect his love and grace.

CONNECT:

Check out **The Hub** at Cornerstone for upcoming community events, workshops, and opportunities to join God in the neighbourhood. Consider how your small group might participate together in serving our wider community in York Region and the eastern GTA during this Lenten season.

CLOSING:

As we journey through Lent together, remember: repentance is not a dead end—it's a doorway. May we walk through that doorway together, preparing our hearts for the celebration of the cross and empty tomb, and fixing our eyes on Jesus anew.