



Week Four: The Healing of the Man Born Blind

Leader: In this session, we will focus on our spiritual blindness and how it hinders us from living in the light of Christ.

We live in a very visual society. A large majority of us are visual learners. But how much do we really see? Close your eyes for a moment. What color is the shirt of the person sitting next to you? Open your eyes and see if you were correct. Close your eyes again. What is hanging on the walls of this room? Open your eyes and check.

In the story of the Man Born Blind, Jesus heals the man's physical blindness to remind us of our spiritual blindness. Think about how you might be blind to the needs of those around you. How do you need Jesus to heal you?

Ice Breaker

Leader: Find a partner and sit across from that person. (Pause) Take one minute to notice everything you can about the other person. (Pause) Now, both of you turn and face away from your partner. Change three things about your appearance. (Pause) Turn and face your partner and see if you can figure out what has changed.

Prayer

Materials Needed:

Large candle Small taper candles with wax guard for each participant

Lighter

Copies of the Intercessions and Closing Prayer for the readers

Music (optional)

Preparation

Light a large candle and place it in the front of the room or in the center of a circle of chairs.

Distribute the small candles with wax guards to participants.

Dim the lights in the room.

Gather appropriate music (optional).

Leader: Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Loving God, source of all light.

We are Your people who have walked in darkness.

We long to have our eyes opened to all that You have planned for us. Give us eyes that see beyond ourselves – to see the needs of others. Allow us to see where You are calling us to serve in Your name.

We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: When we were Baptized, we received a candle and were instructed to “walk always as children of the light.” Living out the promises of our Baptism requires us to look beyond ourselves so we can serve the needs of others. But often times, we are blind to those needs, or perhaps we simply choose not to look at the struggles of others. When we began our Lenten journey about four weeks ago, we focused on our Baptismal call to help those in need – to be

missionaries. We can do that by praying for others, fasting from distractions and giving money or time to those in need.

Is there someone you know who may be struggling or have particular spiritual or material needs? Do you avoid these people even though you know they may need help? Is there someone for whom you want to be Christ’s light? What is preventing you from doing so?

When one particular person comes to mind to whom you will commit to bringing the light of Christ’s love, carry your unlit candle to the large candle in this room. Light your candle in honor of the person you just identified and then return to your seat. (Pause until all candles are lit.)

Leader: Mindful of the needs of others and our call to bear Christ’s, let us stand bring our prayers to the Lord. **Reader 1:**

For our world, that the beacon of hope from the heart of Jesus can lead all people. We pray... **Reader 2:** For our Church, that we see the work that still needs to be done. We pray...

Reader 1: For those who are still blind to the message of Jesus Christ. We pray...

Reader 2: For all those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit. (Pause for names) We pray...

Reader 1: For the missionaries who are bringing the message of Christ to those in need. We pray....

Reader 2: For ourselves, to never forget that we are all called to be missionary disciples by our prayers, actions and sacrifices. We pray....

Leader: Let us pray for all the intentions we hold in our hearts. (Pause) We pray...

Closing Prayer

(Leader invites two people to come forward to read the closing prayer.)

Leader: In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:8-14), he challenges people to live in the light of Christ.

Reader 1: Brothers and sisters:

You were once darkness,
But now you are light in the Lord.

Reader 2: Live as children of the light,

For light produces every kind of
goodness And righteousness and
truth.

Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Reader 1: Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;

Rather expose them, for it is shameful even to men-
tion The things done by them in secret;

For everything that becomes visible is light.

Reader 2: Therefore, it says:

Awake, O sleeper,
Arise from the
dead
And Christ will give you light."

Leader: The light is Christ is burning inside of you. As you extinguish your candle, walk forward as a child of Christ's light.



Week Five: The Raising of Lazarus

Leader: Today we will reflect on dying to sin so that we can be born into new life in Christ. We will hear the Scripture story of how Jesus called Lazarus to come back to life. The story reminds us that Lent is an opportunity to let Jesus transform our dead or dying faith and raise it to new life. Our job is to listen when Christ calls our name. We think of missionaries around the world who each day also bring the message of Jesus to others, offering them new life in Christ. How is God calling you to new life?

Ice Breaker

Leader: Find a partner. Determine how many texts, emails, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter posts the two of you average in a day. (Allow time for sharing.)

Ask: How many post more than 50? Keep hands raised if you post more than 100? 200? Continue until you have one or two pairs with hands raised and ask them to share their totals.

Leader: Find another two people who send/post about the same number as the two of you. In your group of four, share the most unusual post/text you have ever seen. (Keep it appropriate.) What made it unusual? (Allow time for sharing.) What was the most important message you have ever received/seen? (Allow time for sharing.)

Ask: Would anyone like to share your most unusual post and why it was unusual? (Allow time for sharing.) What about the most important message you have received?

Leader: God sends us messages all the time. Some are unusual; all are important. So many of us are tuned into our phones and other electronic devices. We feel as though we can't live without them. We are so busy listening to the messages from others that sometimes we miss hearing the voice of God. Here's a challenge: Listen closely to the messages that God is sending this week. Keep a tally of how many messages you receive from God? How many are unusual? In what way is each important? More importantly, make it your mission to share those messages with others – as missionaries!

Small Groups Activity

Materials Needed:

Index cards (one for each participant)

Pencils or pens

Phones / computers / iPads

Leader: We are going to read part of a story from the Gospel of John. Listen for the message that Jesus is sending.

Read: John 11:41-45

Leader: Jesus tells Lazarus to “Come out.” What is the deeper message that Jesus is sending to Lazarus and the people who are gathered?

Imagine that Jesus wanted to send Lazarus a text. Write on the index card what that text message would be. Feel free to use current texting terms. (Allow time for writing and then ask participants to share their texts.)

Leader: During Lent, we are called to turn back to God – away from the ways or things we do that separate us from God

– and to live in Christ. Take a few minutes to write a text from Jesus on the card – a text that will remind you to live your faith each day, thus being a witness to others, a missionary for Jesus! (If appropriate and time allows, invite participants to share their texts.)

Prayer Service

Leader: Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God, You called Lazarus out of the tomb so he could live again.

Help us leave behind the things that prevent us from living freely in Your love. Raise our hearts to love You more.

Raise our thoughts to be like Yours.

Bring us out of the tomb and unwrap the sin that binds us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reader: Romans 6:1-4

Leader: We are going to take a few minutes to reflect on the reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. Close your eyes for a few minutes. (Pause) Imagine that you are alone in a small, dark room. How do you feel? What are you thinking? Are you warm or cold? Do you feel happy or sad? Spend a few minutes in that imaginary room. (Pause) Now imagine that Jesus is standing outside of the small room. You hear Him calling your name. What is the first thing you want to do? Do you want to answer? Do you want to leave the room or stay in the darkness? (Pause) Now imagine that you open the door to the room. What do you see? Is anyone waiting with Jesus? Take a moment to have a conversation with Jesus about your desire for new life? (Pause) Jesus now asks you to keep one word alive in your heart. What is that word? (Pause) When you are ready, I invite you to bring that word with you as you slowly open your eyes. (Pause)

Jesus has the words of everlasting life. In Baptism, we died with Him so we could be raised to new life. New life in Christ requires that we share His word with others.

Group Prayer

Leader: We know that as missionaries of Your love and light, Lord, we are called to share our faith in Jesus every day. And we know that we strengthen our faith when we share our experiences of Jesus. If you are comfortable, I invite you to share the one word you received from Jesus during the reflection. (Allow time for people to share.)

Leader: We gather all of these words together and pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father...

Leader: Loving God, You have rolled the stone away from our tombs of death and darkness. Bring us out of the tomb ready to experience Your resurrection with renewed hope. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As a sign of living together in the life of Christ, let us take a moment to offer each other a sign of Christ's peace.



Week Six: Holy Week

Leader: What are some big celebrations that we enjoy in our country? (Allow time for responses.) If necessary, suggest a few examples, such as, the Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Labor Day, etc.) What are some activities or traditions that take place in the week before those events? (Pause for responses.)

In this session, we will look at the events our Church celebrates in anticipation of the holiest day of our year as Christians: Easter. How do you plan to end your Lenten journey and enter into the celebrations of this blessed week?

Ice Breaker: Human Calendar

Leader: We are going to form a human calendar. When I say go, you need to line up in the order of your birthdays beginning with January 1 through December 31. You must do this WITHOUT TALKING. Ready? Go. (Allow time for people to line up and remind them to do so without talking. When they seem finished, ask the first person to say his/her birthday. Go through the line to see if they are in order.)

Leader: Our Church has a calendar, and this is a big week in that calendar. The events happen in order. Each of your small groups will be given the name of one of the events. Your task is to learn about the event, and then develop a commercial that helps us understand what the event is about, how they each call us to be missionary disciples, and why we should come to Church to this week to celebrate it. Remember it is the story of the Passion, Death and

Resurrection of our Lord – the events of this Holy Week – that missionaries proclaim throughout the world, offering so many who live a Good Friday existence the hope and joy of Easter Sunday.

Small Group Activity: Create a Holy Week Commercial

Materials Needed:

Brief descriptions of the major events of Holy Week:

Palm Sunday

Holy Thursday

Good Friday

Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday

Note: Each small group is given one event for which they will create a 30-second commercial that will help young people understand the purpose of the celebration, how they each call us to be part of the event, and then be prepared to share the experience with others. Keep in mind that although each event is seen separately – one event per commercial – it is the complete story of Holy Week that is told by missionaries, bringing the hope of Easter to so many living in our often Good Friday world. These commercials could be live skits or recorded, and then projected to the group. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for groups to work. When all groups have finished, they will present to the large group.

Large Group Activity: Commercial Break

Leader: We will now take a journey through Holy Week. By watching the commercials, we will hopefully gain a deeper understanding of the events of the week, and how they call us to bring the message of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection to a world of need – to announce that message as missionaries. Likewise we will see why it is important for us to celebrate these together, as Church. (Allow time for all commercials. At the conclusion, transition to prayer.)

Prayer Service

Materials Needed:

Copies of John 8:31-32 on 8.5 x 11 paper

Pencils

Music

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God as we begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of Life,

You sent Your Son to be with us,

knowing that He would endure great suffering.

Help us enter into that suffering so we that we may rise to new life in Him. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Leader: Our Lenten journey is coming to an end. We have spent time changing our hearts, welcoming the outcast, thirsting for living water, searching for light, dying to sin, praying, fasting, almsgiving, and renewing our hearts. During this Holy Week, we will celebrate denial and acceptance, friendship and alienation, and death and life. In order to enter fully into this mystery and celebration, let us prepare ourselves by listening to a short passage from the Gospel of John.

Reader: John 8: 31-32

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Leader: Each of you has a copy of the Scripture passage we just heard. Take your copy and a pencil and find a place in this room where you can be alone. (Pause for participants to get settled.) I invite you to take some time to remain in God's word. Read the passage quietly and circle any words or phrases that speak to you. Think about your

Lenten journey and write your thoughts on paper. Ask yourself, "What has set me free?" (Allow five to 10 minutes for reflection. Play music if available. Re-gather the group and ask participants to stand in a circle.)

Leader: As we bring our prayer to a close, think about one word that describes your Lenten journey, or your feelings about Holy Week. (Pause for a moment.) As our prayer moves around the circle, I invite you to share your word with this group. If for some reason you do not want to share your word, you can just say "pass." I'll start. (Leader shares word and allows the prayer to move around the circle.)

Leader: Let us gather all of these words together and very slowly pray the prayer that Jesus taught us. Our Father...

Leader: Jesus knew He was going to leave His friends and wanted to assure them that His Spirit would be with them. So, as we end our prayer and enter Holy Week, let us offer each other that same assurance as we share a sign of Christ's peace.