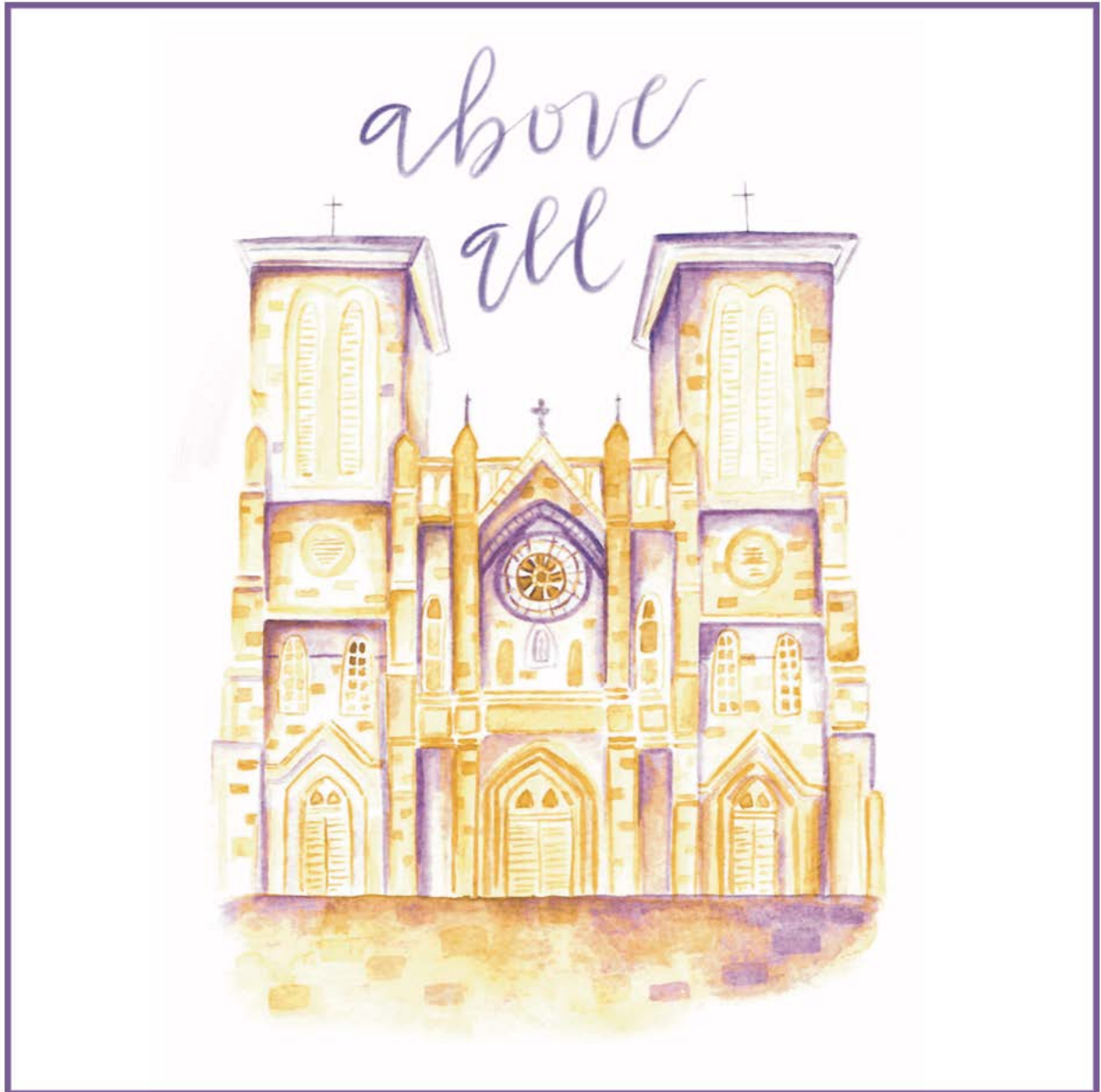
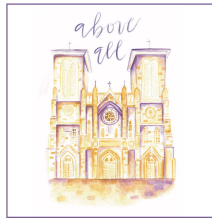


GATHER A GROUP
for
Above All





GATHER A GROUP by take up and read

WELCOME

"I've always wanted to do a Bible study with a group of young moms," she said, looking up at an older woman who was long past the stage of juggling journals and juice cups. "But I'm new to the area and I only know two women who might join me."

"Then you have a group," said the older woman firmly, with a triumphant smile. "Absolutely. That's a group."

And it is. Where even two women are gathered, He is there, delighted to be invited and eager to bless. Whether you are gathering with one friend in a dorm room at 10:00 every Wednesday night or you're gathering ten women and thirty children at the park on Friday mornings, He's there.

And He's so glad you asked. (Matthew 18:20)

TIPS FOR CREATING A GROUP:

Keep it simple. Begin and end the gathering with the same prayer/scripture reading so that no matter who is hosting the gathering, the format remains simple and clear.

Have an established leader for your gathering time. It can be a different individual each meeting, but it helps to have one person to lead the study session.

Set a beginning/ending time for the gathering. Encourage promptness in arrival so that you can utilize the full amount of time you may have to gather. Start on time, even if you have stragglers. They can join in when they arrive. Always be respectful of the hostesses time.

When it comes to personal sharing, having an egg timer set is a huge help. It may sound rather silly, but when you have a specific amount of time to gather, you want to be respectful of each person present and to not have one voice override the rest.

Send out a reminder 48 and 24 hours in advance, especially if the group is filled with young mothers who are at times easily overwhelmed with the details of daily life and need a little encouragement to leave the house and spend time filling their own hearts and minds with the Word and good fellowship. You may also want to try and get a headcount 24 hours before to assist the hostess for the evening to be properly prepared.

Have someone in the group bring the dessert/snack so that the hostess is simply preparing her home and providing drinks. It makes it easier all the way around to divide up the tasks so no one person carries the full burden.

Remember that people are coming to share in prayer and community, not to judge the state of tidiness in your home. Don't let the clutter stop you from hosting. Simplicity is your friend. You have a spot for sitting and having a productive conversation. If there is a basket of laundry next to the sofa, don't stress. The women gathering are there for you, not your home.

Treat this gathering like a vault. What is shared in small group, stays in small group. This is a place of trust among your spiritual sisters. You must treat the struggles shared and prayers asked for with the utmost respect and discretion.

Keep your eye on the numbers. With a larger gathering (more than five) you will need to break up into smaller groups to discuss the scripture so everyone has an opportunity to share how God is working in their life.

Always try to remain positive in your small group responses. Life is difficult and sometimes one (or more) in your small group may be experiencing a crisis. Remember to listen with your heart and hold judgement, especially in a group setting. If there is something the Holy Spirit has placed on your heart to share with this individual, make time after small group to share it privately. You always want to lift up and encourage each other.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Bible studies and small groups take time to cultivate. It's OK if there is fluctuation in attendance. We must strive to meet each other right where we are in life. God is pleased that you are making the effort to know Him better, so just keep going friends.

Praying with you,

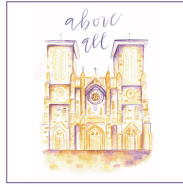
The Take Up and Read Team



GATHER A GROUP
by take up and read

GROUP DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY	PAGE	4
WEEK ONE	PAGE	5
WEEK TWO	PAGE	6
WEEK THREE	PAGE	7
WEEK FOUR	PAGE	8
WEEK FIVE	PAGE	9
HOLY WEEK	PAGE	10
RECIPES	PAGE	11



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : ASH WEDNESDAY WEEK

How can you fold prayer into your morning routine? Where can you pause to clothe yourself with love?

*

Sometimes, our Lent chooses us, doesn't it? Do you feel that your Lent chose you this year? How so?

*

What keeps you from being a good listener? Is it the pride of thinking you know better? Is it the short attention span that you use as a crutch or excuse? Is it a naive excitement that causes you to interrupt? How can you better monitor these pesky habits to become a better listener?

*

How do you respond when your spiritual sickness comes back? What support system do you have in place for the hard days? If you don't have a support system, what can you do this week to create one?



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Can you think of a time when you didn't feel ready--or able-- to receive forgiveness? How did you overcome that feeling of inadequacy? How did you feel when you finally accepted that forgiveness?

*

What offenses do you find the hardest to forgive? How can you anticipate these offenses, and prepare yourself to respond with love when they arise?

*

Is there a time in your day that is always stressed, always hectic? Can you stop, even for a brief moment, in this time to turn to God in prayer, and ask Him to come into your day and give you peace and patience?

*

Can you completely disconnect from the internet and social media today? If you can't do it completely, how can your clicks lead you closer to God? How can you use technology to live out your vocation, and not fall prey to comparison and envy?

*

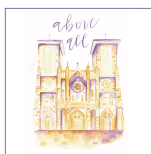
What are your biggest fears and worries--the ones that keep you up at night? Can you offer these things to God, knowing that He will take care of everything, and you don't have to do everything yourself?

*

Are you a perfectionist, even in little ways? How does chasing perfect make you feel? Do you genuinely feel and know that God loves you no matter what, or do you feel like His love is dependent on your perfection?

*

Helping others to notice the speck in their eye can be an act of mercy, but must be done with grace. How would you approach a conversation with a friend in which you feel called to point out a speck? How would you want someone to approach this conversation with you?



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Is your Sunday truly a day of rest, or is it a day to catch up on the to-do list? How can you restructure your week to fully lean in to God's call to rest?

*

Who are the great examples of humility in your life? How do they handle obstacles or setbacks? How can you emulate their humility and their grace?

*

Are there areas of your life where you feel inadequate—that your accomplishments just don't measure up to everyone else's? Or, do you judge people based on their accomplishments, instead of on their hearts? How can you address these issues, so that you are seeing yourself and others with the eyes of God, instead of the eyes of the world?

*

When do you most feel the need to draw attention to yourself? How can you shift your focus so you think not of yourself, but of God?

*

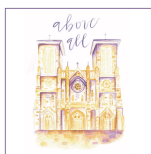
This week, how can you focus not on your own interests, but on the interests of others?

*

At the beginning of Lent, you probably gave something up, or added something to your prayer life. Has this subtraction (or addition) brought you closer to God? Or do you need to create a new Lenten plan that will allow you to forget yourself and remember Him?

*

How do you practice hospitality in your life? Are you afraid to do it? How can you recalculate your time or budget this week to better accommodate the needs of others?



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Who is the best listener you know? What makes him or her a good listener? How can you replicate that listening skill in your prayer life?

*

How often do you revisit the teachings of Saint Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body? How can you make your love more life-giving, more in the imitation of Christ?

*

How do you defuse your anger? How can you help others to contain their anger, or resolve it in healthy ways?

*

How much of your talk is gossip, derision, or poor jokes? Is this a problem among your friends? How can change your conversation so that other people aren't the main object?

*

When has someone apologized to you for telling a lie? Is there someone to whom you owe an apology?

*

Does your vocation ever feel like dead weight-like you want to escape it? How do you fight through acedia to the work God is asking you to do? What busy work or mindless entertainment can you remove from your life in order to spend time in meaningful work and relationships?

*

Do you think that everything is grace? Do you see God's provision everywhere, or only when good things happen? What hard graces, hard thanksgivings, are present in your life?



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

How and when do you make your daily to-do list? How can you invite God into the process?

*

Does the knowledge of your brokenness lead you to despair at times? How can you have grace with yourself in those moments?

*

Do you recognize yourself as a beloved daughter of God? If not, what is holding you back?

*

How have you been called to love others this week?

*

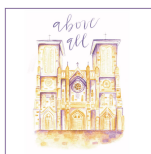
Is there a part of apologizing that you find difficult? Why?

*

Have you been missing moments when you should be apologizing for wrongdoings? Do you have difficulty recognizing these moments?

*

Do you find it more difficult to give or receive an apology? What aspects of each are uncomfortable for you?



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Checkpoint: how are those Lenten resolutions? How can we recommit in these final weeks of Lent, if needed? How can we strengthen our commitments to our spiritual growth?

*

What's one thing you can drop from your weekly schedule in order to spend more time with Jesus (daily Mass, adoration, private prayer, Confession, etc.)?

*

How will you continue the habit of prayer and community that you've cultivate this Lent after Easter? Start brainstorming a plan.

*

What's your relationship with complaining? To whom do you complain? About what? How can we help one another stop complaining?

*

Lent requires a certain grace and grace requires space. How do you make space for grace?

Have you gone to Confession yet this Lent? If not, what keeps you from receiving the sacrament? How can you clear your schedule and prepare your heart so you can get there?

*

Who is someone you've wanted to reach out to? How can you fold her into your community? What can you do this week to begin cultivating a relationship?



GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : HOLY WEEK

Do you ever have trouble trusting God with your life and the lives of your loved ones? Why? What are some steps you can take today to open yourself to trusting God with the nitty-gritty of your daily life?

*

Think about how God has blessed you with gifts and talents. Which of them is your favorite? How can you use your talents to minister to your family and community?

*

How has God amazed you this week? Pray for the gift of wonder if you are having difficulty recognizing His hand in your life.

*

How are you like Judas? How can you break free of this?

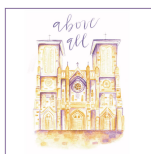
*

How would you feel if Jesus knelt in front of you today and asked to wash your feet? Embarrassed? Humiliated? Awed? Why? Do you look for examples to serve, even in the smallest ways, in your daily life?

In what ways can you better live a life of compassion?

*

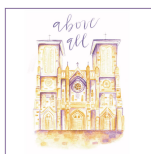
Is there something still locked in the tomb of your heart that needs to be released before you celebrate the joy of His Resurrection?



GATHER A GROUP

RECIPES

CHEESEY CHICKEN & BROCCOLI SOUP	PAGE 12
NO-KNEAD CRUSTY BREAD	PAGE 13
CREAMY TOMATO SOUP AND GRILLED CHEESE	PAGE 14
ONION & MUSHROOM SOUP	PAGE 15



GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

Cheesy Chicken and Broccoli Soup

INGREDIENTS

2 - 2 1/2 lbs. chicken breasts, diced after cooking
onion, diced
3-4 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 c. butter
1 c. flour
8 c. reserved chicken broth
2 heads of broccoli, heads cut off into bite size pieces
1 1/2 t. salt
1/2 t. garlic powder
1 t. black pepper
1/2 t. cayenne pepper
1 c. whole milk
5 c. sharp cheddar cheese, grated (not packed)

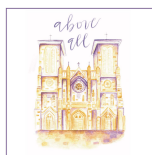
DIRECTIONS

Ahead of time, fill a large stock pot half full with water and place your chicken breasts inside. Boil over high heat for about 30-40 minutes, until cooked through. Reserve water to use as broth and allow chicken to cool.

Heat butter over medium high heat in a large stock pot. Add onion and garlic, cooking for about 5 minutes until onion is softened. Add in flour, stirring well so that it does not burn to bottom of the pan, for about one minute. Slowly add in chicken broth, stirring well after each cup addition. Throw in diced chicken and broccoli, along with the spices and salt. Bring to a slow boil and cook for 30 minutes.

Add in milk and cheese, stirring until cheese is melted in.

Makes about 6-8 servings as a main dish. Wonderful served with sourdough bread or multigrain crackers.



GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

No-knead crusty bread

INGREDIENTS

7 cups flour
1 tbsp salt
1.5 tbsp yeast
3 cups lukewarm water

DIRECTIONS

Mix ingredients in large bowl until all dry ingredients are incorporated.

Cover bowl (with room to rise approximately double size) and allow to rise at room temperature for 2 hours.

Move to fridge and continue rise for at least 2 hours, up to 7 days.

Pull off the amount of dough you'd like to bake and allow to rise for at least 45 minutes on a piece of parchment paper.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 450 with pizza stone (or overturned cookie sheet) on center rack and broiler pan on bottom rack.

Slash dough down the center with a serrated knife (approx. 1/2 inch deep) and immediately transfer dough & parchment paper to pizza stone, pour 2 cups ice cubes OR one cup boiling water into broiler pan, and bake for 25-35 minutes. Cool at least 30 minutes before slicing



GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

CREAMY TOMATO SOUP

- 2 14.5 oz cans of diced tomatoes
- 1 small onion, chopped (or 1 cup)
- 4 tbsp (1/2 stick) salted butter
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/8 tsp baking soda
- Kosher salt (2 tsp, approx.)
- 1 1/3 cup chicken broth (10 oz)
- 1 tbsp dried basil (3 tbsp fresh, if you have it)
- 1-2 cups heavy cream

Cook onion with salt in butter over medium heat until soft.

Add tomatoes, chicken broth, dried basil, baking soda, and sugar. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer, cover, simmer for 15 minutes to 1 hr.

Remove from heat and puree with immersion blender or in blender. Add fresh basil if you have it. Add heavy cream, stir to combine, serve warm.

GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICHES

(For 4 large sandwiches)

- 4 tbsp (1/2 stick) salted butter
- 1/2 tsp garlic salt
- 4 slices cheddar cheese
- 4 slices monterey jack (or havarti) cheese
- 8 slices bread

Melt butter and add garlic salt. Brush each slice of bread with mixture.

Using approximately 1.5-2 slices of cheese/sandwich, combine cheddar and Monterey jack in a harmonious arrangement.

Cook in panini press or in a pan until cheese is melted and bread is slightly browned.

Cut in half and serve immediately with soup



GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

ONION & MUSHROOM SOUP

INGREDIENTS

4 large Vidalia or other sweet onions, thinly sliced
2 TBS olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
10 cups combination chicken and beef stock or all vegetable stock
1/2 cup zinfandel
1 bay leaf
1/2 teaspoon dry savory
salt and pepper
10 ounces (or more) sliced mushrooms (I like Baby Bella)
(1 pound sirloin beef or tenderloin if you're feeling fancy, cut into 1/2 inch pieces, optional)
1 bag of prewashed baby spinach
(*The beef is optional. The mushrooms make this soup plenty hearty without it.)

DIRECTIONS

In a large Dutch oven or a crockpot, combine the sliced onions with the olive oil. Bake in the Dutch oven at 275 for four or five hours, until caramelized and a golden brown. If you'd prefer, place in the crockpot on High for about four hours. I usually start this first thing in the morning and then just keep an eye on it. It's very low maintenance.

Don't let the onions burn. Just let them cook until they're golden brown.

If you cooked them in a crockpot, transfer them to a heavy bottomed soup pot or a Dutch oven. Add the garlic and sauté for a minute. Add the stock, wine, bay leaf, and thyme. Cover partially and simmer until the flavors marry, about half an hour.

Discard the bay leaf. Season with salt and pepper.

Saute the mushrooms in a bit of olive oil. Add a little broth to the oil if necessary. Add the mushrooms to the soup.

(Briefly sear the beef in scant oil until it's just browned on all sides. Add to the soup.) Steep about 10 minutes.

Put a handful of fresh spinach in the bottom of individual bowls. Ladle the hot soup over the spinach just before serving. The spinach will wilt, but stay bright and the sharp spinach taste won't bleed into the broth.

*If you eat cheese and bread, my sources tell me that crusty cheese bread is pretty amazing with this soup.