



Practices of Releasing

Session 2: Lent Small Group Study Leader Sheet #2

Planning Your Session

Gather items to create your space.

You will need stones, nails and ribbons for the check-in. Keep these in a basket. They are used each week.

You will need a Bible. You may wish to explore different translations at bible.gateway.com

Download Audio Recording #2, “Violence & Forgiveness” to your laptop to play to the group.

Preparing the Space

You may wish to create an “altar-table” with a purple cloth, a candle, and a basket with stones, nails and ribbons.

Welcome & Candle-lighting

Light a candle. The group may wish to say these words together:

Your light is in our eyes.

Your beauty is in our hearts.

Your goodness is everywhere.

Check in

This is a time for participants to check in, make themselves present to the group and share how they are. There is no cross talk or discussion. As leader, start with yourself and go around the circle. If the group does not know each other well, begin the sharing with names.

Invite participants to choose one object from the basket that helps them check in.

- a stone for something in their week that was dull or heavy;

Planning Your Session

There is no written script of the recording for this session.

Download and make copies of Participant Sheet #2, "Violence & Forgiveness." The words to the candle-lighting and the prayer practice are on the participant sheet.

Read over the words for the Group Spiritual Practice. Be sure to allow spaces for silence in the prayer.

This session is designed for one hour but you can adapt for a shorter or longer time.

Use this space to make notes.

- a nail for something in their week that was piercing;
- a ribbon for something in their week that was bright.

It may be helpful to remind participants of the group agreements and check if any need to be changed or others added.

Scripture Focus

Share this invitation with participants:

These are scandalous words. The first hearers believed we are made 'good' (righteous) by obedience. Paul says it is a gift (grace), and like Abraham and Sarah, we practice it by faith.

Read Romans 4:13-25 slowly.

(I like the Inclusive Bible translation. Or you might want to try the translation from The Message. ([Click here for The Message translation.](#))

Listen

Share this introduction with the participants:

The Rev. Lloyd Bruce is the Operations Officer & Regional Manager of Chaplaincy Services. He reflects on nine years serving as Chaplain in the Springhill Correctional Institution.

Listen to Audio Recording #2: Violence & Forgiveness

Discussion Questions

Choose a few questions. Stay with a question as long as there is energy and then move on. Don't rush to complete the list. There are no right or wrong answers. We learn and grow from good conversation.

What word, phrase or image do you take away from what you heard in the recording?

As you reflect on Lloyd's words, what's the most important thing you've come to understand about violence and forgiveness?

In referring to our humanness," Lloyd shares a quote from a friend: "We are more alike than we are different." Does this make sense to you? Share a bit of what it means.

Lloyd talks about our common capacity for brokenness, fragility and acts of violence. What do you think about this "common capacity" we share in our humanness?

Have you ever said, "There but by the grace of God go I?" If yes, what was going on at the time? After listening to Lloyd, do you feel differently about it now?

How do we live with situations when forgiveness does not seem possible?

What possibilities might open if we hold a truth such as this: that God is already present in the spaces between the relationships we share? What would it mean for our more difficult conversations or situations?

Lloyd says, "If I had the courage to be that vulnerable, God might be present in that conversation." Does Lloyd's statement change the way you understand vulnerability? What gives you courage to "be that vulnerable"?

Group Spiritual Practice

Body Prayer

Lead the group in this prayer prayer, making the words your own.

Get comfortable in your chair. Your hands are relaxed and comfortable on your lap. Close your eyes if that is comfortable for you.

You may want to recall a person who is a challenge to you or someone who is hard to be with.

Make fists. In your mind's eye, put all that comes between you and and this person, into your clenched fists. Imagine all the brokenness and separation, all the hurt and disappointment, and whatever else there may be between you. (*Silence*)

Open your hands. Imagine the space between your hands. Imagine this space filled with light and loving energy. Hold that space. Hold the possibility of new understanding, or healing, or forgiveness, or courage. What gift or grace is in this space that is for you?

Now, **cup your hands** like a bowl, open and receiving.

Rest in this prayer as long as you wish.... Amen.

Throughout the week you may wish to continue practicing this prayer.

Blessing

You may wish to share this quote, a favourite of Lloyd's, from the writing of Anne Lamott.

“Grace means suddenly you’re in a different universe from the one where you were stuck, and there was absolutely no way for you get there on you own.”

(Anne Lamott, *Small Victories: Spotting Improbable Moments of Grace*)

In Romans it says, “Everything is grace.”

(From Roman 4:16 - The Inclusive Bible)

As we continue our journey in this season of Lent, we open our heart to invitations of grace all around. Watch. Look. Listen.