



# Practices of Releasing

## Session 4: Lent Small Group Study Leader Sheet #4 Fear & Courage

### Planning Your Session

Gather items to create your space.

You will need stones, nails and ribbons for check-in.

If your group is not finding the suggested check-in helpful, you can ask a check in question instead. It is important to keep the check in. It gives participants a chance to join the circle and hear the sound of their voice.

*Other check in questions:*

This week I noticed ....

What kind of a day/week have you had so far?

What's one thing you did this week that others might not know about?

### 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.

You may also want to sing, “Don’t Be Afraid”, More Voices, #90. Words: John Bell & Graham Maule

### Check in

*See the note in the sidebar about Check-in. There is no cross talk or discussion. As leader, start with yourself and go around the circle.*

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

You will need a Bible. You may wish to explore different translations at [bible gateway.com](http://bible.gateway.com)

Download Audio Recording #4, “Fear & Courage” to your laptop to play to the group.

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

Download and make copies of Participant Sheet #4, “Fear & Courage.” The words to the candle-lighting and the prayer practice are on the participant sheet.

There is a script for this session if you find it useful.

Read the directions for the Group Spiritual Practice. Allow at least 5 minutes of silence for this practice.

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

- 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:*

Imagine the People of God on their journey through the desert. They are thirsty and discouraged. They are hurting over the past and fearful of the future. Snakes, with fiery stings, are loosed among them. Release is promised as a snake is lifted to a pole. As the people stare into what harms them, they are healed and freed to live.

Read Numbers 21: 4-9, slowly.

## Listen

*Share this introduction with the participants:*

Janice MacLean is back to lead this session on Fear and Courage.

Listen to Audio Recording #4: Fear & Courage

## 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?

Janice says, “Courage is fear transformed.” Have you had experiences where you know this to be true? Is there a story you can share with the group?

What practices help you move through your fear? What practices help your faith community move through changes and take up new challenges?

Is there something fear has taught you that you might not have learned otherwise?

Do you agree with Janice that fear and courage are not opposites? What is the opposite of fear?

What words or images do you associate with the phrase, "the fear of God."

Recall the story Janice shared about the little girl going out in the dark to follow the sound of the owl. Fear and awe seem to be closely related. Can you recall times when were both afraid and filled with awe or wonder? What might this say about God? Or spiritual practice?

## Group Spiritual Practice

### *The Welcome Prayer*

*Share these words of introduction with participants.*

The Welcome Prayer is described here in a bare bones summary by Cynthia Bourgault in an online course. She devotes a chapter to it in her book, [Centering Prayer & Inner Awakening](#).

We'll read over the three steps together. Then there will be a time of silent prayer to practice. Move through the prayer on your own time.

Watch for opportunity to practice this prayer in the coming week.

### *The Welcome Prayer*

When confronted with an upset, whether physical or emotional, apply this three-step process:

1. *Focus or "Sink in."* This means "bring your attention to" -- i.e., become physically present to -- the upset *as sensation in*

*your body*. If you're angry, for example, what's going on physically? Is your stomach churning? Your jaw tightening? Bring your attention there, without judgment or commentary.

2. *Welcome*. Silently begin to say the word "Welcome" as the sign of your willingness to be consciously present to this moment in your life, regardless of its psychological or physical contents. If you prefer, you can name the content lightly: "Welcome, fear;" "Welcome, anger."

3. *Let Go*. As the pain or emotion begins to shift or dissolve on its own (and it will!), silently say, "I let go," again naming it lightly if you want: "I let go this fear;" "I let go this anger."

Read more about the Welcome Prayer:  
Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer & Inner Awakening*,  
Cowley Publications, 2004

or on these websites:

<http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/faq/welcoming-prayer>

<http://www.contemplativeforum.org/practice/welcoming/>

## Blessing

*You may wish to share one or both of these prayers to close your session.*

I finished my morning quiet time with an exercise of  
breathing out resentment, breathing in joy;  
breathing out anxiety, breathing in peace;  
breathing out hate, breathing in love,  
breathing out want, breathing in thanksgiving;  
breathing out fear, breathing in trust.

Then I am ready to start my day.

- from A SACRED PRIMER, Elizabeth Harper Neeld

Lead me from death to Life  
from falsehood to Truth.  
Lead me from despair to Hope,  
from fear to Trust.  
Lead me from hate to Love,  
from war to Peace.  
Let Peace fill our hearts,  
our world, our universe. - from the World Peace Prayer