



Practices of Releasing

Session 5: Lent Small Group Study Leader Sheet #5 Scarcity & Abundance

Planning Your Session

Gather items to create your space.

You might want to discuss as group the shape of the final session. A simple liturgy for anointing (hands) is offered. You may also want to share tea/ coffee and refreshments.

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.

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 might also want to sing a Doxology:

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow
Praise God, all creatures high and low;
Give thanks to God in love made known.
Creator, Word and Spirit, One. (Voices United, #541)

Or a grace, like this or another,

“For health and strength and daily food, we give you thanks,
our God.”

Planning Your Session

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?

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

Download Audio
Recording #5, "Scarcity &
Abundance" 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
#5, "Scarcity &
Abundance." The words
to the candle-lighting and
the prayer practice are on
the participant sheet.

Read the directions for the
Group Spiritual Practice.

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

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

Scripture Focus

Share this invitation with participants:

Imagine Jesus watching a sower planting one grain of wheat at a time, as was the custom. This one seed yields so much wheat. This one grain gives so much life. What is Jesus saying about his life? Notice how your heart responds as you listen.

Read John 12:20-27, slowly.

(The lectionary reading is John 12:20-36. You can choose to read the whole text or a portion.)

Listen

Share this introduction with the participants:

Laura Hunter is Minister for Justice & Stewardship with the Maritime Conference of The United Church of Canada. She is a Diaconal Minister.

Listen to Audio Recording #5: Scarcity & Abundance

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?

Laura says scarcity and abundance are lenses through which we see ourselves and the world around us. Can you share examples where this is true for you or for your faith community?

Laura believes we get to choose whether our lens is scarcity or abundance. Do you agree? What helps you choose? What limits your choice?

You might also think about your faith community. What helps your faith community make choices that lead to new possibilities? What shuts down generosity or new possibility?

Have you ever experienced a “wake-up call” bringing you to a different sense of abundance?

Laura names the practice of giving as critical in supporting our ability to see possibility and hope. What are some of your practices of giving? Think about time, relationships, money, and energy.

In what ways does the image of “holy currencies” speak to you? What “holy currencies” do you, or your faith community have to exchange?

As we enter the last weeks of Lent, what might you release (let go), opening you further to the possibilities of abundance?

Group Spiritual Practice

The Practice of Gratitude

Share these words of introduction with participants.

“Gratitude is more than a feeling, a virtue, or an experience: gratitude emerges as an attitude we can freely choose in order to create a better life for ourselves and for others.”

- Brother David Steindl-Rast

Practicing gratitude on a daily basis is perhaps the most powerful thing we can do to increase our feelings of abundance.

A Circle Prayer of Thanksgiving

Here is a simple process for a circle prayer. One person begins and offers a thank you prayer spoken aloud or prayed silently in the heart. When finished this person invites another person, by name, to pray. This one responds silently or with spoken word. When finished this one invites by name another person to pray. This continues until all who wish have prayed.

At the end, savour the abundance shared.

To continue this practice of gratitude you may want to start off the day by writing down three things you are grateful for. You may even want to keep a gratitude journal where you can keep track. Our gratitude helps us pay attention to all that the day is offering.

Blessing

Here is a Lent blessing to close your session.

A Blessing for the Journey into Emptiness

May the days that beckon the journey
open a space between what is and what will be,
a space of emptiness waiting to be filled.
May the things that sit at the edge of revelation
move silently into that emptiness.
May they be noticed with attention and claimed as gifts
given from the Holy One.
When the gifts have been offered and received,
may your soul be filled with gratitude to God
who initiated the journey and provided the blessing.

(adapted from a prayer on ExploreFaith. org)