



Landscapes of the Soul Small Group Study 2015

Session 3: Mountains The Glory-Space of God

PLANNING YOUR SESSION

Gather items to create your space: purple cloth, (I'm thinking 'purple-headed mountains' from the hymn!) and books or objects to place under the cloth to raise a mountain.

You will need a Bible. You might want to explore different translations at www.biblegateway.com

Download Audio Recording #3 to your laptop or device to play to the group.

Download/print the Audio Script and the Participant Sheet.

The Spiritual Practice has a Group Practice and a "Take it Outside" choice. You may decide to go outdoors with the group. Or participants may practice outside during the week.

Decide if you want to do anything special for the closing session next week.

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

Preparing the Space

You may wish to create an "altar-table" with a purple cloth. Under the cloth arrange books or other objects to make the shape of a mountain. Or you might place a picture of a mountain.

Welcome and 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.

Where did you meet God this week?

Breath Prayer

The Breath prayer is a tradition rooted in the experience of the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 3rd century. They fled the cities for a life of solitude in the desert. They wrote little, but quotes and stories give us a glimpse in their desert spirituality. The breath prayer was a short verse, often drawn from scripture, spoken on the breath and repeated as they went about their work. It is a practice for everyday living.

Here is a practice for this week:

(based on The Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount.)

On the in-breath pray: Blessed am I.

On the out-breath pray: Rejoice and be glad.

Listening to the Audio Recording: Entering the Landscape
Before listening to the Audio Recording #3, you may wish to ask the group if they want 3-5 minutes of silence at the end of the recording for journaling or jotting down notes.

Paths to Explore

Choose a few questions most relevant to your group or invite participants to respond to a question of their choice. The questions are also on the Participant Sheet.

1. What did you hear in the Audio Recording that stood out for you?
2. What meaning does the phrase "a spirituality of place" have for you? In what ways has your spirituality been shaped by the place you grew up or places you visited?
3. We sometimes talk about "mountaintop experiences." Have you had any such experiences in your life? What gifts did your mountaintop experience bring to the rest of your life?
4. Take a moment to think about the various places you have been this week- the grocery store, the office, a school, a neighbour's house. Notice if there was a place in which you felt God to be present? What feelings does this evoke? Was there a place where you felt God to be absent? What feelings did this bring?
5. Recall from memory Bible Stories that took place on mountains. What is the significance of the mountain in each story? What wisdom or practice might be carried from the mountain into our daily lives?

Spiritual Practice

Group Practice

Recall mountains/hills you have climbed. Make a list of as many words as you can to capture the sounds, images, memories and feeling that rise in you as you remember. Use some of these words to create a Haiku poem.

Haiku is a Japanese poetry form. It is sometimes called "spiritual practice in three lines." It uses just a few words to capture finding God in a moment and in the ordinary. Some engage a practice of writing a Haiku at the end of each day offering praise or to hold a special or vivid moment.

Traditionally, haiku is written in three lines:
with five syllables in the first line,
seven syllables in the second line,
and five syllables in the third line.

Take it Outside: Experiencing the Sacred Outside

I love the phrase "a pilgrimage in your own backyard." Yes, there are some "holy" places that hold a special power. Yet even common ground can become holy and shimmer for a moment as the glory-space of God's presence. Take a pilgrimage in your own backyard.

Nature is not something “out there,” we are embedded in nature all the time. Centre yourself by paying attention to your breath. *Really* look at what you are seeing. Make observations in a journal or sketch details of what you see. Take your time. Listen and be aware of thoughts, feelings, connections that rise in you. Respond with praise in words or body. Then rest and enjoy.

Closing

You may want to close the group session by singing the Beatitudes (from the Sermon on the Mount) Blessed Are We - in Voices United #896

Or you may want to read Psalm 121.