



Landscapes of the Soul  
Small Group Study 2015

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## Session 4: Trees Hospitality & Community

### PLANNING YOUR SESSION

Gather items to create your space: a green cloth, plants or small trees or leaves, a candle.

You don't need a Bible!

Download Audio Recording #4 and the Guided Intercessory Prayer (if using) to your laptop or device to play to the group.

Download/print the Audio Script and Participant Sheet #4.

There are no prepared questions for this session. Instead you may want to participate in a Bible-less Bible Study.

If you planned on sharing refreshments for the closing session, you might want to do so at the end. Or during the Bible-less Bible Study.

I welcome your feedback. Please see the Feedback Sheet on the Landscapes Webpage.

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 green cloth and plants or small trees. (See Planning notes)

### 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.*

**Think about a tree, a grove of trees, or a forest that holds or held some special significance for you. It could be something that stirs a connection to a childhood memory, has a symbolic significance for you, or related to a story connected with your spiritual journey.**

### 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 Psalm 1:3)

On the in-breath pray: Strong

On the out-breath pray: As living trees.

## Listening to the Audio Recording: Entering the Landscape

### Paths to Explore

*There is opportunity today to spend time in a Bible-less Bible study. This combines the Discussion Time and Group Spiritual Practice.*

A while ago I took part in a Bible-less Bible study. I was told that it originated with a group of Christian Peacemakers who were imprisoned together. They didn't have a Bible but each day they would do Bible study by recalling from memory some stories and then deciding on one. Together they would tell the story from memory.

As a group, brainstorm bible stories/passages you would like to study. You might want to choose a story in which trees are central. You might remember one of the stories mentioned in the audio recording or another one with a tree.

Agree upon one story and help each other recall the details. It doesn't matter if you remember everything. You will remember all the story you need.

Then ask the following questions and share responses. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. What is the main point of this story for me?
2. What is difficult, challenging or confusing about this story?
3. How might this story change my life?

### Spiritual Practice

#### Group Practice

Bible-less Bible Study (as above.)

#### Take it Outside

*"Between a human and a tree is the breath. We are each other's air."* - Unknown Author

You might want to go outside this week and visit a tree. Being in the presence of a tree is grounding. Be mindful of your breath and grateful for the shared relationship sustaining you and tree.

## Closing

Sometimes trees stand together in groves and provide shelter under a canopy of branches. There is opportunity today to dedicate prayer time to praying for your communities of faith.

There are two choices.

- a) Download and play the Guided Intercessory Prayer Audio Recording by Rev. Catherine Smith. You will find it in the resource section of this session, on the Landscape webpage.
- b) Bring several votive candles and arrange in a circle on the altar-table. Invite participants to sit quietly and allow prayers to come to their heart. When they are ready they can light a candle and offer spoken or silent prayer. The Leader will close by offering the Lord's Prayer.

You may wish to share a time of refreshment and evaluation.

Thank you for sharing in this Small Group Study.  
Blessings, Janice