



WEEKLY MATERIALS FOR SMALL GROUPS

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» 2020 ADVENTURES IN FAITH COMMITTEE «

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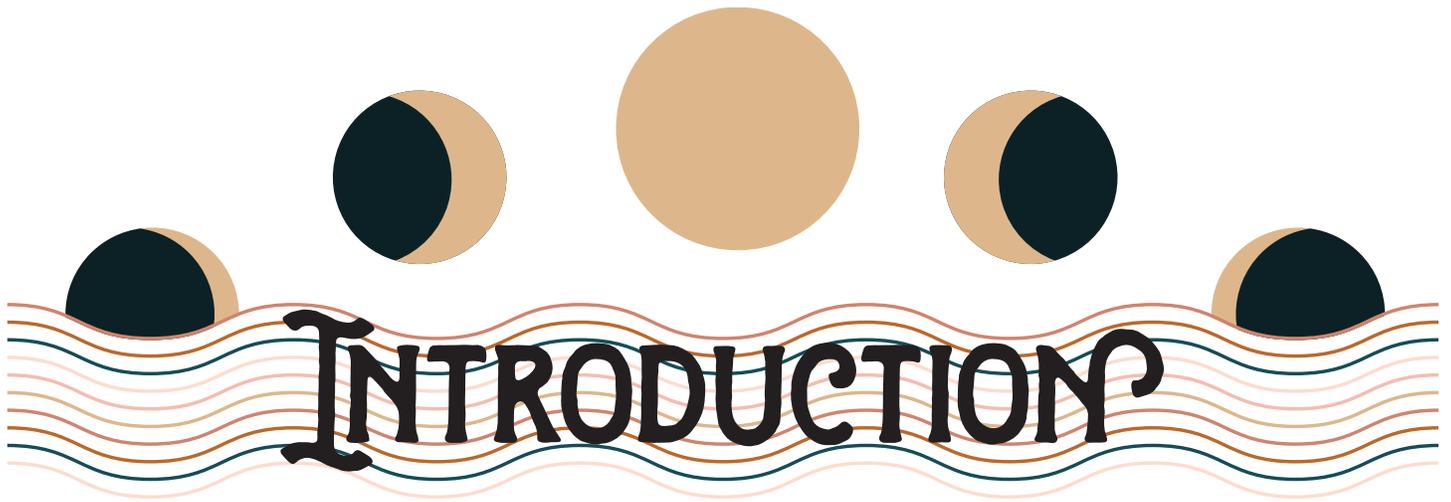
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INTRODUCTION

» FACILITATORS «

GROUP TIMES AND MEMBERS

Groups should be at least one hour, but no more than an hour and a half. Ideally, each group should have no more than ten participants, including the facilitators.

» OPENING AND CLOSING BLESSINGS «

A brief blessing should start and end each group session. Ideally a facilitator will do an opening blessing, as trust grows in the group, it might be beneficial to invite a participant to say a closing blessing.

» KEY POINTS «

These key points sum up what we intend the participant to understand in each week's session. You can choose to share these points with the group, or use them as your own guide for how to use the curriculum effectively.

» DISCUSSION QUESTIONS «

These questions are designed to create meaningful sharing in your group. You can choose which, if any, to ask.

» PROCESSES «

These meditations, surveys, and experientials are designed to assist the participants' inner exploration of faith. Choose the ones that you feel will be most resonant with your group.

» WEEKLY PRAYERS «

Each week concludes with an affirmative prayer. Invite participants to say this prayer daily, as a way to deepen in the week's topic, and to practice together with their small group.

» SHARING GUIDELINES «

It is recommended that you review these guidelines each week with your group.

SHARING GUIDELINES: (Handout to download)

- U I respect the confidentiality of what is said by others, either to me or to the group.
- U I speak from the "I/me" voice, I am authentic and stay on topic while still expressing my true feelings and concerns.
- U I listen to others with an open mind and I refrain from giving advice.
- U I choose to share or pass as needed and will push thru my own personal tendencies in group participation.
- U I choose to engage in respectful communication that is honoring of the group.
- U Since I am an integral part of this group, I agree to show up and participate fully.

» CULTIVATING CERTAIN FAITH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES «

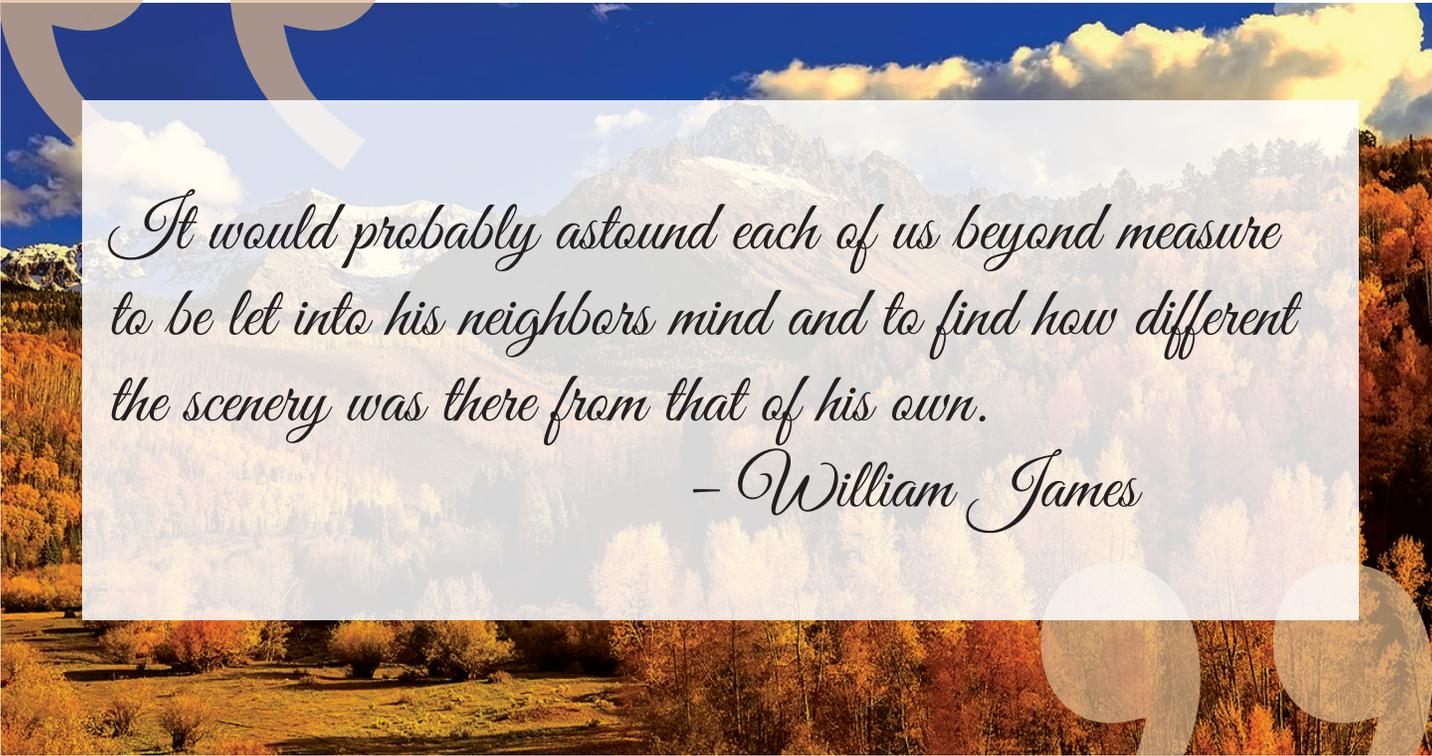
This material is designed to identify and increase your own faith in several important areas of your life.

This is an exploration of Faith. Not somebody else's faith, or the faith of a particular teaching or religion, but your own faith.

Ernest Holmes said:

“If the past has taught us anything it has taught the futility of trying to run the universe with the feeble intelligence of finite minds. Again and again we are brought back to the fundamental proposition that the universe is self-existent and is run by the propulsive action of its untiring energy. Perhaps the greatest lesson which we have to learn is the lesson of faith. Faith in the good, the true and beautiful while the sun sets on falsehood and the night closes in on mortal strife that which endures forever.”

As we approach this adventure in faith together, let us do so knowing that the work we do within our own mind and heart, benefits not only ourselves, but those around us.



It would probably astound each of us beyond measure to be let into his neighbors mind and to find how different the scenery was there from that of his own.

– William James

» BEFORE SMALL GROUPS PROCESS «

ASSESSING MY FAITH: (HANDOUT TO DOWNLOAD)

Do your best to rank where you are today in relationship with the following ten questions. Be honest and authentic. Faith can vary in all of these areas, but where you are and how you feel now is most important for this exercise.

On a scale of 1 to 5, identify your current level of Faith.

I have confidence that a Spiritual Power is with me, and can make powerful, meaningful demonstrations in my life.

1 2 3 4 5

I trust in the people I love the most to love and support me when I need love and support.

1 2 3 4 5

I believe I am a trustworthy and supportive presence for others.

1 2 3 4 5

I take time to dream, aspire, and set goals for myself. I believe these dreams, aspirations, and goals are attainable.

1 2 3 4 5

I believe that my values are still valid, meaningful and true.

1 2 3 4 5

Through study, self-inquiry, and conversation, I believe I do the work to have a consciousness that promotes equity and inclusion.

1 2 3 4 5

I truly live like "We are all one."

1 2 3 4 5

I have faith that my country is on the right track. That in good or hard times, it is ever evolving to achieve its vision of freedom, happiness, and equality for all.

1 2 3 4 5

I have faith and confidence in my future.

1 2 3 4 5

Add up your total and read below to see how certain your faith is in uncertain times.

36 – 45: Faith is strong in you even in uncertain times. Your faith is showing up and demonstrating itself not just in some, but in all areas of your life. It is time not only to keep demonstrating your faith, but to be of assistance to those who may be struggling.

26 – 35: You demonstrate extraordinary faith, but even the strongest faith is tested in times of challenge and uncertainty. There may be a particular area of your life where faith is being called to be cultivated more strongly. It's time to let faith thrive, not just in some, but in all areas of your life.

16 – 25: Faith may be strong in some areas of your life, but challenged in others. It's time to increase spiritual practice, self-care, and ask for support, be it for guidance, or just someone to listen.

9 – 15: Even if your faith may have been strong in your past, it is absent or wavering. It's time to go within and cultivate the spirit, confidence, and trust that help make faith a part of your way of life and way of seeing the world. You are not alone.



» RECOMMITTING OUR SPIRIT «

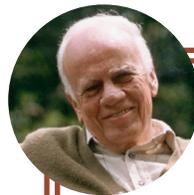
Sometimes when our world seems small or hope appears in short supply, it is our own viewpoint that needs reshaping. We have allowed our spirit to be muzzled, and our way of seeing things become shaped by limited ways of seeing, instead of seeing things with the awareness that knows we are indeed, related to something infinite.

We don't have to see as God sees, but can we see in awareness that there is such thing as God? An Infinite Presence, and ever present Love, an endless possibility that when grasped and applied, can change not only our perspective, but life around us.

» KEY POINTS OF THE WEEK «

- Our relationship with God is never fixed but fluid. To recommit our Spirit is to realize that as we evolve our experience of God evolves too.
- To investigate how our understanding of God has evolved over time through the exploration and deepening of our own faith.
- To recognize that our relationship with God is primary for all that we do in life.

» QUOTES FOR THE JOURNEY «



Suppose you ask God for a miracle and God says, yes, very well. How do you live the rest of your life?

~ Walker Percy



Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone.

-Brother Lawrence



I knew that if God loved me, then I could do wonderful things, I could try great things, learn anything, achieve anything. For what could stand against me, since one person, with God, constitutes the majority?

~Maya Angelou



Many men wish to reject the word God as a legitimate usage, because it is so misused. It is indeed the most heavily laden of all the words used by men. For that very reason it is the most imperishable and more indispensable.

~Martin Buber



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

POSSIBLE ICE BREAKER

Where in life do you most see "God?"

1. Where in life do you most see "God?"
2. How has your understanding of God evolved over time?
3. Is the God of your understanding, the God you need to confront the current challenges of your life?
4. Do you see a relationship between your own personal growth and your concept/experience of the Sacred? What does this tell us about God?



» OPTIONAL PROCESS «

OPTION 1

Contemplative Meditation:

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to the idea that many people proclaim the existence of God with their lips, but deny him with their lives. In other words—just saying one believes in God, does not give him or her the full experience of what it means to have an everyday relationship with God.

Taking these questions into your heart, I invite you to ask yourself:

Do I believe in a God that can perform miracles in my life?

Think of an area in your life where you would like a miracle. Without outlining, imagine a feeling within you of the Sacred, saying “Yes.” How does that feel? What, if anything, does that change within you?

Now, ask yourself,

Do I believe in a God who knows who I am and loves me unconditionally?

We often imagine God where we are, but can you take a moment to imagine yourself where God is? Imagine that right now, you are in the presence of an unconditionally loving presence of great wisdom and warmth. A presence that knows who you are and why you are here.

Imagine right now, a voice speaking to you: (From the Christian writer Henri Nouwen)

“I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths of the earth and knitted you together in your mother’s womb. I have carved you in the palm of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest, I keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you as my own. You belong to me... wherever you are I will be. Nothing will ever separate us. We are one.”

Lastly, ask yourself:

Do I believe in a God who has a vision for my life?

Imagine right now, that your own vision, your way of seeing your everyday life and the people in it, is momentarily replaced with the highest vision possible for your life. A vision that sees the deep bonds of your relationship, a reason for your struggles, your traumas, your talents, and your achievements. Do not judge this vision, just experience it. What is it like to see your life from a panoramic view, that can see, how even the most seemingly minute instance, shaped a thread of spiritual narrative through your entire life.

If willing, ask this vision to show you what it is that you still have to see or know.

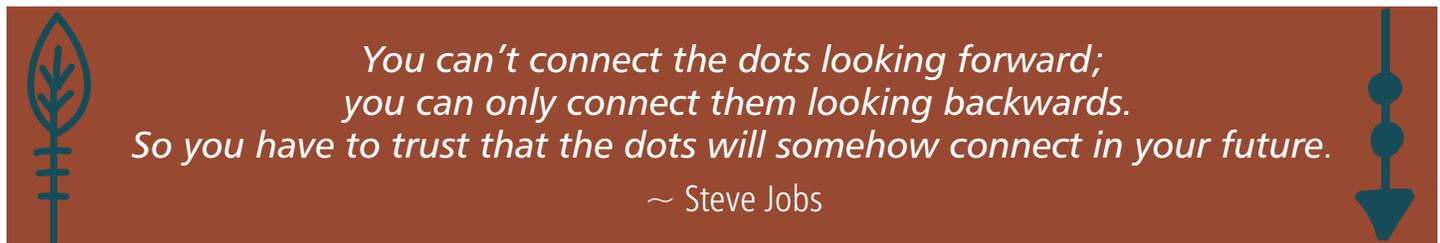
In this moment of silence, without judgment, listen to the answer, be present to what you see.

Giving thanks for all that has been experienced, gently bring yourself back present to our group.

Give participants some time to journal their experience.

OPTION 2

Experiential Process:



Although we talk about Faith as being “unseen,” Faith is also built in by reflecting on how the Divine has been present in so many ways in our past. And how it is so evident in this very moment. It is an exercise in being aware of Spirit at work and not taking for granted the simple gifts in life.

Quantum Physics has verified what we have taught for so many years at Mile Hi. Where your Attention goes, Energy flows (The Observer impacts the Outcome). For this process, you are invited to create a time line going back as far as you like. Fill in the time line with as many steps as you can with experiences **where you are willing to recognize** the Divine at work. Release any belief that it is only the big things and start with something as simple as making a new friend, a parent or relative that was kind, a pet or loving animal that gave you comfort, a present that made you happy, something you learned in school that touched your heart or sparked your interest — and maybe the teacher who changed your life for the better. How about times in nature, art, dance, music or sports where you really were at your best or were touched by the talent of another. Be willing to consider those experiences that, at the time, were not pleasant, and now you can see were there for your benefit and spiritual evolution. Even right now, notice your breath. Seems simple and yet this is the Gift of Life breathing you — loving you every moment into existence.

Take about 15 minutes to Relax and Ponder your time line of Faith [walking with the Spirit]. Every dot that you recognize, to which you pay Attention, allows you to be even more Aware of the Divine at work in ways you may have forgotten. Every dot strengthening your Awareness of your connection to the Divine.

Now imagine that this time line is like a staircase with steps, a trail of the Life you have lived, or maybe an escalator where sometimes you step and sometimes you let the steps carry you — or some may imagine it as something like a ski lift that picks you up and carries you to the next stepping off point. Let this image you have created bring you to the present moment. Reflect on what you have experienced sometimes consciously, sometimes Something at work without you noticing. Some steps clearly took you forward, some may seem to have taken you back. And yet here you are, being fully capable of choosing your steps. You choose where your Attention goes. You choose to actually use that Attention to trust that you can connect the dots going forward. You step forward, clear that the Divine has been and will always be there for you as Gratitude and Recognition are your Commitment to partnering with Spirit.



» PRAYER FOR THE WEEK «

How wonderful it is to know that I am surrounded by the Infinite Intelligence and Love that is God. I allow every part of my being and every aspect of my life to be embraced by this Divine truth. For I absolutely know with certainty that because God Is — I AM. I am perfect, whole and complete. I am safe, I am protected and I am loved. Right now, right where I am, I accept this as the truth and I recognize that when I am grounded in this awareness, I invite a deeper experience to unfold as my life. I turn from any condition that does not support the highest vision for my life and I accept, with great anticipation and clarity, all of the good that is flowing to and through me. Thank you God, for your wisdom, your mercy and your grace. I give thanks for all that you have done and for all that is yet to come. And So It Is.

» NEXT WEEK «

Next week we will be exploring the topic “Renewal of Heart.” Consider where in your life you feel you are most living with heart, and where in your life it may appear to be most lacking. Essential to living with heart, is meaningful and supportive relationships. This week consider if your support system assists with your faith.