

Let your life speak of freedom

In Jesus, and through the Spirit, God shows us how to receive a deep connection with God and others. When we discover this unity, we realise that we are part of God's gift to the world, and we recognise others also as God's gift.

Group facilitator welcomes everyone. Each person introduces themselves. Leader reminds people of the guidelines. Leader begins by reading out the session title and two sentence explanation.



Connect: (10 minutes)

Share experiences of giving/receiving to and from others as you lived with attention to God this week. Did you notice receiving any love in a way that you thought modelled Jesus' way of loving?

Share your experience of your risky venture.



Contemplate: (10 minutes)

Some words of Paul Umbreit, founding director of the Centre for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking. A centre dedicated to working for unity.

"Authentic forgiveness is a gift of awakening, a freeing of one's spirit, a release of long held toxic energy."

Slow down your breathing and repeat the words slowly to yourself. Hold before God a conflict situation big or small which you are part of this week, where there is not unity, but a build up of toxic energy. Imagine the situation held in the grace and light and power of God. You may not have the willpower to remove the hurting thorn, but you can imagine that God does have that power. There may be consequences beyond your imagining. What does it feel like to let go of toxic energy?

End by saying together:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr



Consider (15 minutes)

John 17:20-23 or the Gospel passage just used in worship.

Someone reads the setting. Two people read the passage slowly one after the other.

Setting

Jesus during the last supper with his disciples prays for them. He prays that they may share his intimate relationship and connectedness with God. This will show itself in a deep connectedness with each other. This unity as they pull together for the kingdom means that many will see this new, supra human way of being human, (beyond petty ambition and conflicts) as truly coming from God.

John 17:20-23 (NRSV)

'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Three minutes' silence to think about the passage individually. Guard this time of silence for personal reflection. Each person has the opportunity to share a word, phrase or idea which lights up for them or a question raised for them. You may want to do this in twos or threes, rather than as a whole group. Listen carefully without comment to each person's contribution.

Only when everyone has had the opportunity to share, let a conversation develop. The conversation may develop from the contributions or a focus for the conversation might be:

How do you learn to love people who see things very differently from yourself?



Commit (5 minutes)

How are you going to pay more attention to God to live with intentional generosity this week?
What next step are you taking on your risky venture?

If you are not meeting next week, you may instead answer the following question:

Think about something that you have learnt as a result of doing this course, and what you will do as a result of it. Share this in a word, an image, an idea or in some other way.

Close with the series prayer.

*God of amazing grace,
you entrust to us the gift of your life.
You invite us to notice and treasure you.
May the threads of our lives,
mundane and spectacular,
speak of you, that your love may overflow to others
and the whole world.
Amen.*