

Let your life speak of hope

After the devastation of losing Jesus, the disciples are afraid for their lives and future. Despite the ruins of their dreams, they meet a very real sense of the presence of Jesus who gives them a deep peace and courage to let the closed door open.

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. What was good? What was difficult?

**Contemplate (5 minutes)**

Concentrate on the rhythm of your breathing, as you breathe in and breathe out. Imagine yourself breathing in God's love, God's blessing. Imagine yourself breathing out God's love to your environment, being a blessing for the world.

End by saying the baptismal blessing together:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine on you
And be gracious to you;
The Lord look on you with kindness
And give you peace. Amen.

(You may find it helpful to light a candle, have some flowers, a Bible, or a cross as a focus for the worship. This is an unhurried 'waiting upon God' time of devotion)

**Consider (15 minutes)**

John 20:19-31 or the Gospel passage just used in worship.

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

Setting

The disciples are meeting together in a room with the doors locked, because they are very afraid that, like Jesus, they might lose their lives. They may be in the same upper room where three nights earlier they had had supper with Jesus. They do not seem to have believed Mary Magdalene's story that she has met the risen Christ. Jesus comes to them through the locked doors, comes close to them and breathes his Spirit on them which deeply reassures them that all is well and gives them peace. Thomas is not present with them and insists he needs to see and touch for himself.

John 20:19-25 (NRSV)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

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:

Have you or someone you know, had the experience of feeling fear, but found the courage to do an action that felt right anyway?



Commit (5 minutes)

Share a challenge or concern that you or someone known to you faces this week.

How are you going to pay more attention to God's impulses and give or receive love this week?

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.*