

Session Three

B L E S S A N D B E B L E S S E D

Opening Worship

For Reflection

When have you felt like you are supposed to have an exact plan for your life, year, or semester? How did that pressure to plan to feel? How does Jesus's role as a gentle shepherd that leads us to "abundant life" counteract those stressors? How might Jesus as a shepherd we follow affect how we think about decisions that feel high stakes or high stress? How does Jesus's view of us as "sheep" he knows by name contrast with the way we might feel seen by a world focused on achievement?

Introductory Video

"Blessed with Discomfort" by Sister Ruth Marlene Fox
Video from The Work of the People available on the PYT Website

Opening Sentences

One: In a world of long-term plans and stressful decisions,

All: We are blessed by a God who loves us.

One: In a time wracked by scarcity and stress,

All: We are blessed by a God who loves us.

One: In a church where we wonder if there is a place for our doubts and our questions,

All: We are loved by a God who sees, knows, and blesses us. Let us worship God.

Song

"When the Spirit of the Lord" (English & Spanish)

Listening for God's Word

Psalm 23 & John 10:1-16

Reflection on God's Word

Rev. Jerry Cannon
Video available on the PYT Website

Response to God's Word - Movement Prayer

Rev. Melanie Marsh
Video and Instructions available on the PYT Website

For all who hunger
Something to eat

For all who thirst
Something to drink

May all who are outside
Be invited in

May all who are exposed
Be sheltered and clothed

For all who are sick
Healing and comfort

For all who are imprisoned
Liberation and love

Give us eyes to see
And Hearts to know
That as we do for the least of these
Our sisters and brothers and siblings
We do for you, O Christ
We do for you, O Creator
Amen

Song

“I Could Sing of Your Love Forever” OR
“Prayers of the People” by Ben Johnston Krase

Closing Blessing

One: From where we are to where you need us,

All: Jesus, now lead on.

One: From the security of what we know to the adventure of what you will reveal.

All: Jesus, now lead on.

One: To refashion the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,

All: Jesus, now lead on.

One: Because good things have been prepared for those who love God,

All: Jesus, now lead on. Amen.⁴

Closing Worship

This simple worship experience makes use of river stones available at most craft stores or building and garden supply stores. (Make sure you have enough for two stones for each person.) Each participant should receive two stones upon entering worship.

Introductory Video

"Hope Beyond All Hope" by Alana Levandoski
Video from *The Work of the People* available on the PYT Website

Call to Worship *(Three readers, each with a lit candle.)*

Reader One: I will light a light in the name of God who lit the world and breathed the breath of life into me.

Reader Two: I will light a light in the name of the Son who saved the world and stretched out His hand to me.

Reader Three: I will light a light in the name of the Spirit who encompasses the world and blesses my soul with yearning.

All: We light three lights for the Trinity of love: God above us, God beside us, God beneath us; the beginning, the end, the everlasting one.⁵

Song

“Glory to God”

Meditation

Participants are asked to hold the two stones in their hands. “Look at the stones that you now hold in your hand. Feel their weight. Notice their shape, their color, the texture and mass. Listen to the following meditation about stones.” If the worship meeting is outdoors near a pond or lake, that is ideal. You may also set up a large basin or bowl of water.

Reader One: What I hold in my hand is as old as me, and older.

Reader Two: As old as my name, my language, my culture, and older.

Reader Three: As old as my race, as old as the human race, and older.

Reader One: As old as the soil, as old as the sea, and older.

Reader Two: As old as the earth, as old as the sun moon and stars... but younger than God.

Reader Three: For God made this stone, made and meant its color, its contours, its journey from below to above. And had earth never revealed it, and had I never admired it, it would still bear witness to God’s deep intention to make the world mean the world, want the world, ween the world; and one day walk the world and hold in his hand what I now hold in mine.⁶

Reader One: Now take one stone; the one that represents something you need to let go of. It is time to leave it behind. It may be a hurt or grievance, an action you wish you had not done and for which you seek forgiveness, it may be a habit or a pattern you wish to end. Take that stone and drop it into the water; it now belongs to God. It is part of the sea of God’s forgiveness, where God has posted a sign saying, “NO FISHING.” It is time to move forward in freedom.

All: God, I trust You with this, I leave it in Your hands – help me let go...

Reader Two: Now take the stone that represents something you want to take from this place, this moment, this experience together. It may be a memory, an activity, a conversation, a question, or an encounter with someone that has had an impact upon you. You are invited to take this stone with you when you leave; You may carry it in your pocket or place it on a table or dresser at home. It is a lasting memorial of God’s presence and action in your life. Take a long and deep look at this stone. Squeeze it tightly in your hand.

All: God, I thank You for this gift. Help me to hold it and keep learning from You.

Reader Three: You go forth from this moment, transformed in some ways from the person who began this experience. You have seen and been seen. You have known and been known. You have been blessed to be a blessing to others. In some ways you will never see yourself or the world around you in quite the same way again. This is the Spirit's work among us. Let us rejoice in God's love in Christ that meets us where we are, and refuses to leave us alone.

Song

"You Shall Go Out with Joy"

Closing Blessing

On your heart and your home, the blessing of God.
In your coming and your going, the peace of God.
In your life and in your seeking, the love of God.
At each ending and new beginning, the arms of God
to welcome you and bring you home.⁷

I came so that they could have life. John 10:10

