

# ANCHORED IN HOPE

## SESSION 1: DESPAIR AND FEELING FORSAKEN

**Thank you for being a facilitator on this retreat! We are very grateful that you can be present while we cannot. There are specific instructions that we will provide for you to assist in the facilitation of this retreat experience.**

**This whole day is about the concepts of consolation (hope) and desolation (despair) in their prayer and their daily lives. The following questions will appear during the video session, once near the beginning and again at the end, and the participants will have time to write down the answers in this fashion:**

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS FROM THE VIDEO SESSION (BEGINNING)

1. What do I desire most right now?
2. Where am I currently experiencing change in my life?

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS FROM THE VIDEO SESSION (ENDING)

1. What causes you to despair in life?
2. Where do you turn when you need hope? Who do you reach out to?
3. What brings you peace and joy? How do you find fulfillment in your life?

## ACTIVITY: BIBLE BLACKOUT

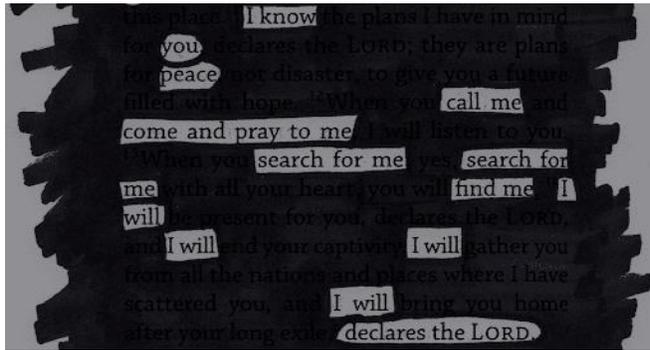
**This activity is designed to get students to look at and pray with Scripture in a new way. They are provided the following instructions:**

This activity encourages you to pray with Scripture in a new way. There are two passages on the next couple of pages. You may do this activity with either one, or both. You will read through the passages several times. After reading through the passage once, read it again and circle, underline, draw a box around, or mark any phrases or key words that jump out to you. Read it through a couple more times and see if anything else jumps out at you. When finished, take your pen and color in the rest of the words, so that they are 'blacked out', leaving your words exposed, forming a sort of poem or prayer.

There are many ways to make the words and passages your own. If you'd rather identify the words with drawings, highlighting, writing, or any other form of art, feel free to do so. The goal

is to find the pieces of the Scripture that speak out to you, and to identify them for discussion later. Your facilitator will have some examples to show you.

The following are image examples of what they may make. The point is to emphasize creativity while focusing on whatever sticks out to them from the passage.



Feel free to draw more inspiration or see more examples here:  
<http://pomomusings.com/2014/06/04/bible-blackout-for-ministry/>

Give them around 15 minutes to complete the activity. Stress that it's important that they read through the passages thoroughly and slowly, to pray with them so they more easily isolate words and phrases to highlight. Feel free to play instrumental music to help them enter into the prayer more fully. The following are the passages:

#### PASSAGES

#### *Philippians 4:4-9*

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!  
Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all people. The Lord is near.  
Do not be anxious about anything,  
but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.  
And the peace of God,  
which surpasses all comprehension,  
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers *and sisters*, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,  
whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,  
whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,  
think about these things. As for the things you have learned and received and  
heard and seen in me, practice these things,  
and the God of peace will be with you.

*Psalm 27:1-6*

The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
Whom should I fear?  
The LORD is the defense of my life;  
Whom should I dread?  
When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,  
My adversaries and my enemies,  
they stumbled and fell.  
If an army encamps against me,  
My heart will not fear;  
If war arises against me,  
In *spite of* this I am confident.

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD  
And to meditate in His temple.  
For on the day of trouble  
He will conceal me in His tabernacle;  
He will hide me in the secret place of His tent;  
He will lift me up on a rock.

And now my head will be lifted up  
above my enemies around me,  
And I will offer sacrifices in His tent with shouts of joy;  
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

**Note: There are reflection questions below that they can do after the activity, either before group discussion or after.**

**When they have finished, begin a discussion about their poems/artistic renderings. Ask for people to volunteer whatever they are comfortable with sharing. Note similarities among different interpretations or call to mind the differences. The discussion should revolve around how Scripture is rich, diverse, and inspires different responses in different people, just as God does. It is, therefore, alive and relevant to all of us and enriches our lives.**

**Encourage them to pray in this way on their own, and to continue to explore their faith through Scripture.**

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS AFTER THE ACTIVITY

Consider the following questions and take some time to write your thoughts down:

1. Did you notice anything about the words that you underlined? Did they follow a particular theme or reflect something that has been on your mind?
2. What did you think of this form of prayer? Was this a new experience for you? Did you experience Scripture in a new way?
3. Do you ever turn to God for hope in times of despair?

**If time permits, there are some closing questions to wrap up the first session, which you can give the students some time to complete on their own.**

## CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. What struck you from today's retreat session?
2. How do you see your relationship with despair? Do you allow it to control your life? Do you easily find hope in times of despair?
3. How can you take what you learned today and apply it to your daily life?

