

ANCHORED IN HOPE

SESSION 1: DESPAIR AND FEELING FORSAKEN

Welcome to this retreat experience! We are very happy and blessed to be able to share this experience with you, even virtually! Throughout your retreat experience, you will find times for reflection and questions, and we have provided this retreat packet for you to use!

As you enter into this retreat experience, take some time to reflect on some questions from the video session when prompted.

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 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.

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.

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?

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?

