**FAITH 365 WEEK TWO 2020**

**A CALL TO GRATITUDE**

**Preparation**

* **Have handouts ready for each participant**
* **Make sure CDs for music and video are ready**
* **Take time to make sure that all AV equipment is working before people arrive**
* **Place a candle in the center of the room/table**

**Welcome**

* **Invite people to be in the moment, put aside the cares of the day, and turn off cell phone**

**Focus**

* **This Lent all our sessions will focus on the idea of being called.**
* **Would anyone like to share from their experience this past week if you had a chance to walk around your neighborhood?**

**What was that experience like for you?**

**What did you notice?**

**Did you notice the presence of God?**

**Session Overview**

* We have all experienced gratitude in our life: for the person who lent us a hand when we were overwhelmed at work, or home or in school. We are grateful to the person who gave us a ride; for birthday gifts or the thoughtful note we receive.
* We live in a country, like many others, that set aside a national day to be thankful. And while our focus may be on the turkey or football games, many of us do stop and whisper a prayer of gratitude for freedoms and opportunities we often take for granted.
* The author Tolkien once wrote: *what punishments from God are not gifts?* His strong, and perhaps confusing words, betray an inner spiritual truth. It is often the challenges of life, the sorrows and the setbacks, that help us most deeply hear God’s call and understand our discipleship. And often in the midst of a difficult time, we experience an opportunity to laugh and to find joy. All of this is gift. All of it calls us to gratitude.
* **We will now use a song to settle us, open our hearts, and allow us to be present to this moment. This song is called Praise You In This Storm. It is sung by the artist Casting Crowns.**

**Song:** Praise You In This Storm (Hall/Herms)

sung by Casting Crowns

I was sure by now  
God You would have reached down  
And wiped our tears away, stepped in and saved the day  
But once again, I say, Amen and it's still raining  
  
As the thunder rolls  
I barely hear Your whisper through the rain, "I'm with you"  
And as Your mercy falls I raise my hands  
And praise the God who gives and takes away  
  
And I'll praise You in this storm and I will lift my hands  
For You are who You are no matter where I am  
And every tear I've cried You hold in Your hand  
You never left my side and though my heart is torn  
I will praise You in this storm  
  
I remember when I stumbled in the wind  
You heard my cry, You raised me up again  
But my strength is almost gone  
How can I carry on if I can't find You  
  
As the thunder rolls  
I barely hear Your whisper through the rain, "I'm with you"  
And as You mercy falls I raise my hands  
And praise the God who gives and takes away  
  
And I'll praise You in this storm and I will lift my hands  
For You are who You are no matter where I am  
And every tear I've cried You hold in Your hand  
You never left my side and though my heart is torn  
I will praise You in this storm  
  
I lift my eyes unto the hills  
Where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord  
The Maker of Heaven and Earth  
  
I lift my eyes unto the hills  
Where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord  
The Maker of Heaven and Earth  
And I'll praise You in this storm and I will lift my hands  
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And though my heart is torn  
I will praise You in this storm

**Faith Sharing**

* **We will now listen to a passage from scripture…Psalm 23**
* **Give out the sheet with the passage. Ask the members not to read along, but listen to the words and feel what is happening, or pay attention to the message it conveys.**
* **After the passage is read, we can be quiet for a minute or two so that all can look at the passage.**
* **Allow time for quiet, and then begin a conversation with these three questions:**
* **WHAT DID I HEAR?**
* **WHAT DO I THINK IT MEANS FOR US?**
* **WHAT CHALLENGE DID IT OFFER?**

**Intro to video**:

*Jim and Jeannie Gaffigan: Finding Humor in a Brain Diagnosis*

Jim Gaffigan is a standup comedian, author, actor and writer. His co-writer and collaborator on many projects is his wife, Jeannie. Jeannie is an actor and producer. They are both practicing Catholics and the parents of five children. In this video, they talk about how everything about their lives changed when a frightening medical emergency diagnosed Jeannie with a brain tumor. And they discuss how humor helped them get through it.

* **Show video**

**Questions for Discussion**

* **Remember that all the questions do not have to be answered; nor do you have to discuss them in the order listed here. The questions are offered to help facilitate the conversation.**
* **Be conscious if individuals seem to dominate the conversation; gently suggest that others might want to weigh in.**
* **Remind the group that we want to speak about our personal experiences, and not relay the experience of other people.**
* **Every week, start with the question, What image or phrase stood out for you in the video? How people respond might direct which question you turn toward first.**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

~What image or phrase was most impactful for you in the video?

~Sometimes you need a big reminder to realize how grateful you are to be alive, and for your life. For what are you grateful?

~Have you ever faced a difficult experience that made you grateful?

~In the video clip, Jeannie says “when I would tap into my faith, I could see the big picture, but when I wasn’t in touch with it, it was too much to bear.” Is there a time in your life when you counted on your faith to pull you through an experience or challenging time? Share an experience in which your cross became easier to carry because you relied on your faith.

~Does your faith impact your ability to be grateful? How?

~Has humor ever helped you through a difficult moment?

~In what ways do you struggle to be grateful?

~Jeannie is the author of “When Life Gives You Pears: the healing power of family, faith and funny people.” What helps you to heal when life gives you pears? Is it difficult for you to be grateful when you are suffering?

~Jim is reminded of how grateful he is for Jeannie when he receives an “I love you” text from Jeannie. How are you reminded of gratitude? What could you do to express your gratitude to someone else?

~ Where in your life are you being called to get past what is directly in front of you so you can consider the bigger picture?

~Have you known anyone in your life like Jeannie, who was able to find gratitude in the midst of suffering? How did witnessing that impact your life?

~Has there been a time in your life when you have truly felt God’s presence walking with you through a dark moment in your life?

**Closing Prayer**

Each week, we will conclude our time together by offering intentions that we have. We can share those aloud or silently within our hearts.

Are there any intentions we would like to share at this time?

Allow time for group members to offer prayers.

Gathering all these prayers together, we pray together the Lord’s prayer…

**Our Father….**

**An invitation for the Week:** Who stood with you in a challenge or difficulty? Even if it happened years ago –or if you have thanked them—could you bring them some joy this week by contacting them and reminding them of your gratitude?

**Song:** **Praise You In This Storm** (Hall/Herms)

sung by Casting Crowns

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God You would have reached down  
And wiped our tears away, stepped in and saved the day  
But once again, I say, Amen and it's still raining  
  
As the thunder rolls  
I barely hear Your whisper through the rain, "I'm with you"  
And as Your mercy falls I raise my hands  
And praise the God who gives and takes away  
  
And I'll praise You in this storm and I will lift my hands  
For You are who You are no matter where I am  
And every tear I've cried You hold in Your hand  
You never left my side and though my heart is torn  
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I remember when I stumbled in the wind  
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And though my heart is torn  
I will praise You in this storm

**Scripture: Psalm 23**

The LORD is my shepherd;

there is nothing I shall want.

In green pastures he makes me lie down;

to still waters he leads me;

he restores my soul.

He guides me along right paths

for the sake of his name.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff comfort me.

You set a table before me

in front of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me

all the days of my life;

I will dwell in the house of the LORD

for endless days.