

Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times

Thank you for participating and for leading this group through the book study!

The book is divided into 5 sessions, 4 chapters in each session. Each group member will be required to read the four chapters before each meeting.

Session Format

1. Plan each session with your goals, the scripture, and any activities you might want to do.
2. Opening prayer and an ice breaker or activity. (This might include a check-in to see how everybody is, prayer concerns, or where each person may have felt God during the week etc.)
3. Book discussion, scriptural discussion
4. Closing activity and closing prayer

Helpful suggestions

1. Before each session review the material for the week.
2. Be prepared with a few discussion points or questions to keep the discussion moving.
3. Begin and end on time.
4. Encourage everybody to enter into the conversation. Keep the meeting moving, and to try to let everyone have a chance to contribute. Including yourself.
5. Encourage group members to take the opening prayer, read the scripture, or take a turn at the closing prayer.
6. Stress to your group that everything shared during the meeting is confidential.
7. Have blank paper, pens or pencils, and Bibles in your space. Or

encourage your members to bring what they need.

Session One: Understanding and Countering Fear

Goals:

As you discuss the chapters, and scripture associated with this session your group should start to...

- Recognize the fear we have in our lives and how it affects everyday living.
- Investigate what the Bible says about fear, the power it holds, and how to be delivered from it.
- Have a better understanding to the point of the study.

Scripture: Isaiah 41:10 NRSV Do not fear, for I am with you,

Do not be afraid, for I am your God,

I will strengthen you, I will help you,

I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Prayer: *God who calms the troubled waters, we bless you for your presence in the midst of our fears and trials. We release to you the things we hold too tightly, and we trust your words of peace. Be among us in this session, and may our souls and bodies be secure in you. Amen.* (From the Leader Guide Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times.)

Book and Bible Study and Discussion

1. What are the points, pieces, details of our lives that cause us to be fearful?
2. Fear is a reaction to events that our body uses to actually keep us safe. Talk about a time when fear kept you safe.
3. In the book, Adam Hamilton identifies false fears and unhealthy worry as things that can keep us from living well. Discuss a time when you experienced a fear that kept you from living well, or doing something you wanted to do?
4. In chapter one Adam Hamilton is confident that we can learn to face our fears, control them, and then use them as a learning experience. What

resources, strategies, or tools do you already possess to deal with fear?
What do you hope to learn from this study?

Biblical Perspective on Fear

Read Numbers 13:32-33

1. What were the people feeling that kept them from entering the Promised Land?
2. Why was it easier to listen to the ten spies that were pessimistic to entering the Promised Land, than to the two that were confident that God was with them?
3. According to Hamilton, our visions of a Promised Land, the visions we have of a possible future are sometimes clouded by our perceived risks and dangers so much that we don't move forward. When have you seen this happen to a group of people? When have you been afraid of moving forward because of risks and dangers?
4. Discuss the life the Israelites would encounter as nomadic people living in the wilderness. Compare that to their hopes for the Promised Land and the fears that might keep them in the wilderness?
5. Now discuss question #4 from a modern perspective, and from your view of a preferred future. What are our fears in this situation? What will our lives be like if we don't address those fears?

Define Faith

Hebrews 11:1 Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see.

Adam Hamilton refers to one aspect of faith "As trust or confidence that things will get better despite whatever circumstances we face in the current moment."

1. How are the two definitions the same? Different?

Reference the story of Jeff the executive that lost his job to a corporate merger in chapter 3. Hamilton writes how Jeff found his faith, acted on his faith, and was successful in addressing his fears.

1. Discuss what your own plan might look like when addressing your fears. Try using the acronym FEAR.

Face your fears with faith
Examine your assumptions in light of the facts
Attack your anxieties with action
Release your cares to God

In our book Hamilton recognizes that an acronym may seem rather lame when addressing your fears. But it is a resource that can move us in a forward direction instead of standing still paralyzed.

Discuss the acronym, making sure each member has a grasp of its parts and meanings. Then write the acronym on an index card to take home. Adam Hamilton encourages us to take it home and put it in a prominent place, and to read it every day during this book study.

Imagine your own ThunderShirt

In this section Adam Hamilton references a section in his book where he talks about his little dog needing a ThunderShirt during thunderstorms and fireworks. The Thundershirt calms the dog's anxiety.

Read Philippians 4:5b-7. The Lord is near. Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Jesus Christ.

Discuss the scripture. What does it say to you? What do you need for your own ThunderShirt? Hamilton lists several spiritual practices that are calming to our souls; prayer, reading scripture, singing hymns, and meditation. Have your group share their experience with their own spiritual practices.

Talk about what we might use to remind us that God is always with us. I often have a small cross in my pocket. I also light a candle and sit in a special spot to meditate. Encourage everyone in your group to pick something that will remind them to pray, or meditate, or sit down and read scripture. Have them report back as to how this worked for them.

Closing activity

In chapter 4, Adam Hamilton show us how he might have a written conversation with God, as a prayer practice. As a closing activity, use Isaiah 41:10 to write a prayer conversation to God. Use each line of the scripture as God talking to you, respond to each line as your response to God. This is a private exercise, it is between themselves and God. You may choose to do this exercise at home.

Closing Prayer

Offer this prayer, one of your own, or have someone in your group pray you out with this prayer or one of their own. Be sure to offer and encourage.

*God of peace, you know our fears before we speak. You know how fragile our faith is and how difficult our struggles are to trust you more. For faith like a mustard seed in a fearful world, we pray. **Amen (Unafraid-Leader guide)***

Session 2

Crime, Racism, Terrorism, and Politics

Goals

~Examine and discuss how the world is changing or has changed such that we are afraid. Discussions which will include crime, race, terrorism, and politics

~Discuss what the Bible teaches us about “courageous compassion” and how we might adopt and model this virtue in our own lives and church community.

~Understand how our chaotic and disordered thoughts can feed our fears and make them worse. Adam Hamilton uses a form of cognitive therapy to show this to us.

~ Learn to use *Lectio Divina* as a spiritual practice to address the fears that cause us pain and wounds our spirits.

Scripture

Psalm 46:1-2a, 6-7

God is our refuge and strength,

A help always near in times of great trouble.

That's why we won't be afraid when the world falls apart...

Nations roar; kingdoms crumble.

God utters his voice; the earth melts.

The Lord of heavenly forces is with us!

The God of Jacob is our place of safety.

Opening Activity

Read the story of Henny Penny the chicken in chapter 8, paragraphs 2-3. Discuss the story.

1. How did Henny Penny's fear and then her friend's fear lead them to not see the fox for what he was?
2. What might be an issue today that could affect us in the same way?

Opening Prayer

Pray together using the following prayer or one of your own.

*Creator God, who set the stars in the heavens, give us the ears to hear the drumbeat of your steadfast love upholding the universe. Renew our senses so that we can be attuned to your ways. For courage in these days we pray. Amen (**Unafraid:** Leader Guide)*

Bible and Book Discussion

1. We all come from someplace or somewhere. Many have a rich heritage and culture that they very much want to preserve. Discuss how that need poses negative and positive points when addressing our fear of the other.

2. How does information and education help us overcome our fears of the other?
3. Define xenophobia and discuss how it might affect life in this country?
4. How does welcoming “the other” witness to what Christ has done for us? (**Unafraid**: Leader Guide)
5. Think about newspapers, magazines, headlines, news teasers, etc. Do the headlines cause more or less fear for you? Why do you think the headlines are designed the way they are.
6. Take a moment and talk about your own news sources. How does the news sources we trust help us form opinions about our world? How does the news help you address your fears?

Survey news sources

According to Syracuse Sociologist, Dr. Shana Goldstein, we actually seek out news sources that increase our anxiety when we are already feeling anxious.

1. Discuss how you choose the news sources you use. Do you find yourself more or less anxious after reading them?
2. To better understand other people and their views and opinions Adam Hamilton encourages us to read and gather information from other sources we may not usually choose. Discuss how this may change your understanding of others?

As an activity to do during the week to come, encourage the group to use an untrusted news source. At the next session have someone volunteer to share the experience.

Bible Study

In chapter 7, Hamilton talks about terrorism how it is used, and how it will continue to be used. He also discusses the fact that often our opinions about terror, and the impending danger is inaccurate. Terrorism instills fear in us, and then we have fear of the other. Hamilton encourages us to have “courageous compassion” for others, refugees, and people of other faiths.

Read Jeremiah 22:3

The Lord proclaims: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor. Don't exploit or mistreat the refugee, the orphan, and the widow.

Chapel Hill has a history of sponsoring refugee families. Someone in your group may have had a hand in that experience. Have them share that experience, the fears that shadowed the joy, and where they met God in the process. Finally, as a group discuss why God calls us to have “courageous compassion.”

If no one in your group has had first hand experience with a refugee family, take a moment to imagine what that experience might look like. Talk about the fears that you will address, where you might meet God in the process, and why God calls us to have “courageous compassion”.

Thoughts about Crime

Consider the crime in your area. Have your group express their opinion as to if the crime is increasing, decreasing, or staying at current levels. Now refer to the chart in chapter 5 of your book to see if your groups opinions are accurate. This chart shows the perceived crime rates in the U.S. vs. the actual crimes rates in the U.S.

Also, in chapter 5, Hamilton tells us that “inaccurate information, negativity, and faulty information or beliefs” leads us to a distorted thinking. This way of thinking causes us to believe that the threat of terror and violent crime is much larger than it actually is. To counter this way of thinking, Hamilton introduces us to “cognitive restructuring”. We can replace misinformation with better information, and negative thoughts with positive thoughts, which will help with clearer thinking and better decisions.

1. Discuss how knowing the actual facts and figures for crime would have affected your beliefs about crime?
2. Distorted thinking may have affected how we view crime in our area and in the U.S. Talk about how this may or may not

be true for you. Include what may have affected your thinking, inaccurate info, negativity, or your own faulty assumptions or beliefs.

Using the acronym FEAR~

Facing your fears with faith

Examine your assumptions in light of the facts

Attack your anxieties with action

Release your cares to God

1. Discuss how facts are our friends.
2. How can facts help us overcome our fears?

Get to Know Your Neighbor

In chapter 6, Adam Hamilton tells a story about Troost Ave. in Kansas City. This particular street divides the city racially between black and white. Consider your own community.

1. Where is your "Troost Ave."? What roads or geographic features mark the boundaries from one part of the community to another?
2. How does one side perceive the other side?
3. Adam Hamilton and Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Cleaver III grew up on opposite sides of Troost Ave. just a few years apart. They grew up when segregation was allowed in planned communities and community spaces. What barriers are in place today to protect against these practices?
4. How might members of your group get to know members from the other "side" of a community? Challenge the members of your group to volunteer to use one of these ideas and get to know someone from the other side of their community.

Explore the Possibilities of a Hospitable Spectrum

In chapter 8, Hamilton and Rev. Glen Miles refer to Jesus and his disciples as having a spectrum of views that could have been turbulent.

1. Discuss the disciples and their backgrounds.
2. Discuss possible tensions.

Consider the political environment in the U.S., the extremes, the middle, and everything in between.

1. Do you think Hamilton's assertion that most Americans don't identify with the extremes is true? Why or why not?
2. He also comments that there is more worry, fear, and anxiety as you move toward the extremes. Do you believe that statement? Why or Why not?

Read Romans 12:18-21

*If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, **Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back says the Lord.** Instead, **if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.** Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.*

1. How should we behave with people with whom we disagree?
2. How must our attitude and behavior change toward those with different political views, to take this passage seriously?

Closing activity

Lectio Divina means “divine reading”. Using the appendix at the back of your book, choose a scripture to use. Adam Hamilton uses *lectio Divina* to address the “R” in the acronym FEAR. **Release** your cares to God. As a closing activity (10 minutes) read through and practice *lectio Divina* with the scripture you have chosen.

Closing Prayer

In Chapter 7, Hamilton quotes the second verse of the hymn “God of Grace and God of Glory” (Unafraid-Leader Guide)

Read together the second verse as your closing prayer.

Session 3

Failure, Disappointing others, Insignificance, and Loneliness

Goals

- ~Explore courage
- ~Examine grace and acceptance, and their relationship
- ~Have an understanding of the fears exploited by FaceBook
- ~Connect “meaning-making” with the practices of faith (**Unafraid-Leader Guide**)

Scripture

Read Psalm 139:5, 7-10 NRSV

You hem me in, behind and before,

And lay your hand upon me...

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning

And settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

Even there your hand shall lead me,

And your right hand shall hold me fast.

Possible Opening Activity

If someone from your group took the challenge to use a news source that is new to them, have them report back now.

1. How did the news source stand up to your preconceived thoughts about it?
2. Did it change your thoughts about anything in particular in the news?
3. Will you continue to explore other news sources like this, to get another perspective? Why or why not?

Opening Prayer Activity

In chapter 12 Adam Hamilton makes note of the adverse effects on mental health and feelings of loneliness in the younger generations. Have the members of your group take out their own cell phones. Hold them in your hands and think about how you use them every day. How often? What purposes? How many calls in or out? How many texts? Games? Internet? Social media? Think about and share your thoughts about how a smart phone may have changed your connections with people. More connected? Less connected? Give details!

Then ask the members of your group...

What if this smart phone was your connection to God?

Have your group listen in silence for what God is saying to them personally. Now ask the group to give their fears to God in silence. Allow a few minutes of silence in this moment.

Closing Prayer

You may offer this prayer aloud, or one of your own.

*Lord you speak throughout the cosmos and in the depths of our being. You know the desperate ways we long to be connected and the patterns of distraction that fill our days. Take the fears that we speak. Hear the deeper desires of our heart. Be among us and between us as we search for each other and for you. **Amen***

(Unafraid-Leader Guide)

Book, Bible, Discussion

Reflect on Failure and Risk

In chapter 9 we learn about failure and how we fear it, how we associate shame and loss with it. Hamilton uses J.K.Rowling as an example of someone who risked failing, to accomplish her goals.

Invite members to share a time when they experienced failure.

1. Discuss the outcome of your failure. Was it as bad as you imagined?
2. Do you feel like you learned something from the failure? Would you call it growth?
3. When risk presents itself again, because it will, what did you learn about your own ability to handle failure?
4. Finally discuss what keeps us from taking risks that will ultimately teach us courage and give us confidence?

Dealing with the Fear of Failure

Three principles outlined in chapter 9...

~Most things are never as hard as you fear they will be.

~Successful people are willing to do the things that unsuccessful people are unwilling to do.

~More often than not, choosing the harder, riskier, inconvenient path is the right choice.

Consider, based on your own, failures and accomplishments...

1. Do these principles remain true?
2. Would you add to the list?

Scripture Study

Matthew 7:12a

You should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.

James 1:19b

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry.

Adam Hamilton encourages us to put these verses to memory. In the meantime, discuss or give examples of...

1. People in our community, nation, world, who live out these verses.
2. For your group and yourself when is it hard to live this out?
3. Think about the characters in the Bible. Think about Jesus. Where do you see them living out these verses?

Discuss Social Media

Have your group discuss social media and all the different platforms they use.

1. Have your group share how social media has impacted them, individually in a positive way, by being affirmed or cared for?
2. Now have them share a time when they felt hurt or injured by social media.
3. How should we approach perceived rejection, or painful comments from social media?
4. What does our book suggest we do to build resilience, and reduce our need to “people please”?

Theological Word Study

Grace

Adam Hamilton defines Grace ~Grace is undeserved kindness, blessing, mercy, and love. Grace is grace precisely because we can't earn it. (**Unafraid-Leader Guide**)

According to our book, it is grace that will lead us to a better relationship with God and with others.

Using your Bibles take turns reading: Genesis 1:27-31, Psalm 23, Luke 23:39-43, Ephesians 2:4-9.

1. What does each scripture tell us about the nature of God's grace?

Now read together the excerpt from Paul Tillach's sermon "You are accepted" pg. 101-102 of your book.

1. Discuss what you each find most hopeful about this excerpt?
2. God accepts all of us through his grace. How does that free us from the fear of disappointing others?
3. What do you do to remember that God loves and accepts us just the way we are?

Often businesses, non-profits, churches...etc, review their purpose statement, mission statement. How often have you heard "We do this so that..." fill in the blank. If the answer is in line with our mission statement, then the event would continue, or the ministry would continue. If it doesn't fall in line, or has no purpose then that event can be revisited, reworked or discontinued altogether.

Have the group ponder the things they do every day. Have them finish the statement "I'm doing this because...", "I'm doing this so that...", "I'm doing this practice because...", and then answer...

1. How satisfied are you with the statement?
2. Does it cause you to question the practice?
3. Does this practice lead me closer to or away from God?
4. How could you change what you do, to be more meaningful and in line for what God wants for us?

Using the fear of being alone, answer and discuss these questions.

1. Using my faith and my faith community, how can I address this fear?
2. Are my fears true?
3. How can I attack my anxieties?
4. How can "I release my cares to God"?

Wrapping up

Remind the group to read the next section. As a closing activity, review Adam Hamilton's suggestions to overcome fears of not being able to connect.

~Reengage others, despite discomfort

~Invest in relationships

~Visit someone you know is lonely

~Get involved in your church community

Encourage the group to commit to one suggestion or an action toward one of the suggestions.

Closing

Read the verses again

Matthew 7:12a

You should treat people in the same way

That you want people to treat you

James 1:19b

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry.

Read aloud from Psalm 139. Remind your group that the grace revealed in Jesus Christ gives us confidence that God is present with us always. (**Unafraid-Leader guide**)

You hem me in, behind and before,

And lay your hand upon me...

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there.

*If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
And settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
Even there your hand shall lead me,
And your right hand shall hold me fast.*

Psalm 139:5, 7-10 NRSV

Session 4

Apocalypse, Change, Missing out, and Finances

Goals

- ~Explore Apocalyptic, Dystopian, End of Times type scenarios with respect to what God Intends for us.
- ~Explore grief, and the fear of change.
- ~Explore how practicing gratitude can address our feelings of fear and discontent.
- ~Study basic financial principles, and how they can reduce stress around finances.

Scripture

Luke 12:22-23, 27-31 CEB. (Have Bibles handy)

Opening Activity

Imagine the world you grew up in. Imagine the world your children grew up in or are growing up in right now. Discuss the differences. What has changed? Buildings? People? This session will examine a changing world that causes worry, fear, and anxiety. We will also explore how we can live boldly in the scripture from Luke 12.

Have someone volunteer to read the scripture and then have another read this prayer or one of your own.

Prayer

*God of every age, you know that the more things change, the more things stay the same. Help us to face our fears with faith and to see in our time together the ways you are calling us to trust in you. We do not want to hold these worries; we want to be held in your hand. **Amen***

Book Study and discussion

Explore our fascination with the end of the world

Many of us have watched End-of-World movies. Ask the group to share some titles, whether they watched them and why they find them entertaining.

Adam Hamilton suggests that this type of entertainment is popular because it plays to our fears about the future. Discuss some of the possible causes of the end-of -the-world as we know it.

1. How does it make you feel seeing movies portraying realistic end-of-world fears that you personally might have?
2. Do you think there is an advantage to facing those fears by watching a movie?

Read the section in chapter 13~ending with paradise restored pg. 141.

1. What will the new heaven and new earth be like?
2. Does this vision of God's future for us change the stories we tell about the present? (**Unafraid-Leader Guide**)

Consider two possible responses people of faith may have toward today's problems. Hamilton notes that we will either~

- A. Not care about the problems we face today because God will eventually restore everything to paradise.
- B. Or, be paralyzed by the problems of today because we forget that God will ultimately win the day.

Discuss this among the group you are with. Where do you think most Christians lean? Where do you find yourself leaning? And finally, how do you think our lives might change if we actually lived into this scripture from Revelation?

Working with the acronym FEAR

Brainstorm with the group and choose a possible fear of the future. Hamilton uses nuclear war. Have your group reflect on the fear they choose. Use the acronym to work with your fear. Use your note card with acronym written on it. Write down the groups answers as you work with FEAR, or write your own responses.

F ~Face your fears with faith ~Talk about how that might play out for you, or as a group. Be specific and give examples.

E ~Examine your assumptions in light of facts. How might the facts change your assumptions, or support them. And how would this make you feel?

A ~Attack your anxieties with action. What activities could you engage in to settle some of your anxieties?

R ~Release your cares to God. What does this mean to you?

Encourage the group to share their thoughts as they worked through the fear. Reflections, conclusions, feelings, resources, practices.

Scripture Study

Read John 5:2-9

Think about the man and all the reasons he might be at the well. Pretend you are him for a moment, what must it have felt like to be him, lying at the well. Why do you think Jesus asked "Do you want to get well?"

Most of us have had situations we have avoided due to fear, or fear of change. Invite a member to share a time when they were afraid of addressing something important in their lives.

1. How did it feel to work through that fear?
2. If its still an issue for you, how does it feel to be in the middle of that fear right now?
3. Thinking back to the man at the well. How did Jesus address the man's condition?
4. If Jesus were to help you with your fear in your situation right now, what do you think he would say?

Refer to the final section of chapter 14, "New Joys on the Other Side". Hamilton talks about his grief when his daughters went to college. Talk about ways you could or have worked through a similar situation. How did your faith help you deal with the grief of change?

Examine Ways to put Social Media in Perspective

Refer to chapter 15 in which Adam Hamilton talks about the "fear of missing out", and social media. Read again the section "The perfect Anxiety Producing Machine".

1. After reading the section, why do you think social media produces anxiety and the fear of missing out?
2. According to our book, how should we address our fears of missing out, pertaining to social media?

Possible Activity

For this next activity you will need your note cards and something to write with.

List your activities from yesterday. Include things you did, people you were with, what you read, what you ate etc.

Now consider what activities you would be inclined to include in a social media post. Now eliminate them. Consider what is left on your list. Have the members of the group choose one item (To be clear you are choosing an item that you would not normally post). Pretend

that you actually posted that item. What do you think you would have said about it, how do you think you would have felt about it?

Ask someone to share their imaginary social media post.

1. Did you learn anything about social media and how it produces anxiety in you or in others?
2. Looking at your list; How did you differentiate between a good post and an inappropriate post?
3. How do you feel about social media? Did this activity change any of your ideas?

Consider Financial Principles

Read the section of your book “The Right Kind of Financial Fear” as a group or to yourselves. Hamilton gives us five financial principles to which we can align our lives. As a group discuss the five principles. Have someone share how they may be using one or more, or none of the principles. Discuss how these principles might reduce your anxiety around your finances. Finance can be a struggle and most likely will be a struggle for all of us at one point in our lives. (If someone has shared the extent of their financial anxiety and might be in need of care, please refer them to our Pastors for possible programs and resources!).

Wrapping Up

“We should learn to ‘want what we already have, not what we don’t yet have.’” (**Unafraid: Leader Guide**)

Wrap up this session by expressing gratitude. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16 (“Rejoice Always”), and talk about how we can always express gratitude.

Now read for your group the following litany and have them respond after each line with “We give you thanks, O Lord!”

When the morning is bright with possibility...

When the day is dark and the skies are heavy...

*When children remind us of your promises for the future...
When the car makes strange noises on the way to work...
When the bill is more than we expected and the bank account is low...*

*When we lose unwanted pounds on the scale...
When weariness and illness drag us down...
When a moment with a friend makes us want to share the joy...
When a memory of past hurts brings us feelings of shame...
In joy, in sorrow, in good times and bad, in life, in death...*

Closing Prayer

Read the following prayer or use one of your own.

*God of lilies and sparrows and the grass of the field, we hear your call to spend no worry on the things we call necessity. We want to trust in you. We release our cares to you. We walk into the future knowing we are in your hands. And in all things, we give you thanks.
Amen.*

Session 5

Aging, Illness, dying, and Fear of the Lord

Goals

- ~Develop trust that God is always inventing something new.
- ~Come to know mindfulness as an exercise to alleviate fear.
- ~Explore "Fear of the Lord" and our faith in God.

Opening activity

This is an exercise in mindfulness. If you need to refer to the book the section is on pg. 200. Mindfulness brings a person into the present moment. Invite your group to get comfortable, legs uncrossed, arms relaxed and unfolded. Guide them through the "four sided" method of mindfulness.

Breathe in slowly as I count...1...2...3...4

Hold your breath as I count...1...2...3...4

Exhale slowly as I count...1...2...3...4

Hold with your lungs empty...1...2...3...4

Repeat several times

Instruct the group to breathe normally as you offer prayer. Use one of your own or the one below.

God who breathed life into the first human in Eden, you are as near to us as our own breath. Your spirit moves within us and around us. We are grateful for this moment, and this day. Take our fears and worries about tomorrow and our regrets and hurts we carry from yesterday. We release ourselves and our time to you. **Amen**

Learning together

Book and Bible Study and Discussion

Reread the story of Siddhartha. Talk as a group about a time when you first experienced death, or illness in a loved one or pet. Talk about the feelings you had, and the affect it had on you. How did you address those feelings? Did someone help you?

In our book Adam Hamilton refers to older adults in the Bible and how God used them. Read Luke 2:25-38. These are the stories of Simeon and Anna.

1. Talk about the stories. Focus on who they were.
2. What is their influence on the story of Jesus?
3. Talk about how God used them in old age, and what might be God's intentions for us in old age?

Consider the possibilities of old age

Have your group take out their note card with the acronym F.E.A.R written on it. Using the acronym, consider how we might address our fears of aging. Have members of the group volunteer for each letter, and share how they would address their fears.

Use these questions from the **Unafraid: Leader Guide** to help your members form their answers.

Face your fears with faith- How does my faith or the Bible help me face the fear of aging?

Examine your assumptions in light of the facts- What things did I believe about aging as a younger person that have turned out not to be true.

Attack your anxieties with action- What is something I can do to make aging less scary?

Release your cares to God- What practices or prayers will help me release my cares to God?

Learn from Studies of Seniors

From our book, we learn that seniors are often happier than the younger generations. Adam Hamilton cites these reasons:

- ~They have more reasonable expectations.
- ~They are more appreciative of what they have.
- ~They have more time to spend with family and friends.
- ~They tend to have time for hobbies, travel, and other leisure activities.
- ~They feel less pressure and stress to meet others' expectations.
- ~They tend to have fewer negative and more positive emotions.
- ~the breadth of their life experiences leads them to be less overwhelmed by adversity.

As a group discuss the list. What would you add to the list or subtract from the list? When have you seen the reality of any of these situations? Did the list surprise you? Why or why not?

Activity

Think about the advertisements we see every day. Adam Hamilton talks about the pharmaceutical companies and their advertisements today. Think about a particular pharmaceutical ad you have seen on TV or internet. What can you say about the ad? Does it play to your fears? Or does it alleviate your fears? What is the mood of the actors in the TV or internet ad spots? Side effects? What promises do these ads make?

Now think about how you might make an TV advertisement or internet spot about prayer, and how prayer could alleviate the

symptoms of worry and stress. What promises would your ad make? What scripture evidence might you use? Side effects involved?

You could write this out or act it out if your group is feeling creative.

Chasing Anxiety Disorder out into the Light

Sharing LaVon's Story

Read LaVon's story starting on page 195 in your book.

1. If you found yourself in LaVon's position, how might you have reacted?
2. Discuss among the members of your group what you know about anxiety disorders. Is there anyone who might share a first-hand experience of themselves, or someone close to them?
3. How did you feel after reading LaVon's story?

As LaVon shared her story, she gave us some valuable ways to address anxiety. Identify those strategies and talk about them.

Exploring Principles for Dealing with serious illness

In the sections of chapter 18, Facing Real Maladies with Courage and Hope, Hamilton focuses on serious illnesses. He relates several stories of people for whom serious illness was a reality. Adam Hamilton also gave us a list of ways to approach a serious illness.

~Trust that your life belongs to God

~Serve others

~Live one day at a time

~Give thanks for each day

~Remember the death and resurrection of Jesus

Use this list as discussion points as you might face a serious illness, or have faced a serious illness. What seems easy? More difficult? Which points do you already practice?

Explore Christian Beliefs about Death and Heaven

The Christian View of Death and What Comes After

In this section of chapter 19, our author discusses death and heaven, and how we as Christians believe that we are more than just an Earthly body. We are “spirit, mind, soul, heart, as well as body” (**Unafraid by Adam Hamilton**). Take out the funeral liturgy found in your folder. Most will reflect Christian belief in the liturgy.

1. Discuss what it says specifically about death and the afterlife.
2. Does this particular liturgy use scripture?
3. What does the scripture say to you?
4. As one of those still living on this side of heaven, how does it make you feel?

Examine God's Purposes

Think about hurricanes, tornados, floods and other disasters. Adam Hamilton doesn't believe that natural disasters are “acts of God”, but goes on to say that God can use such events to his purpose and to produce something good.

1. Talk about the good you have seen or experienced firsthand from natural or man-made disasters.
2. How does it make you feel, knowing and trusting that God is still in control, even in the middle of disaster?

Wrapping Up

Closing activity

As your last activity, have your group take turns talking about and sharing what they have learned about fear, how they might address fear and anxiety next time they feel stressed or afraid.

Closing Prayer

You may use the following prayer or one of your own.

*Lord of life and conqueror of death, you have shown us how to confront the fears we face each day, From the terrors of the night, to the future we cannot see, you have promised to be with us. We thank you for the community we have shared together and the strength we have drawn from each other. We go forth to live unafraid with the love for you and for our neighbors. In the strong name of Jesus. **Amen (Unafraid-Leader Guide)***

