



What is Truth?

An Embodied Lenten Series

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Part of “A Toolkit for Reparations in Community: A Resource for the Body of Christ” www.diomass.org/reparations-toolkit

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Session 3: Rooting in Relationship

Overview

How deep are our relational roots with ourselves, one another, and God? This session examines where there might be weak and shallow roots and where there might be a need to continue to nurture roots that run deep and therefore can weather the work of reparations.

Preparation and set-up

You will need writing material for this session. You may also want a Bible.

Centering breath (five minutes)

As a group, breathe in for a count of three, hold for a count of three, and exhale for a count of three. Do this three times.

Opening prayer (five minutes)

“You can’t stand in the midst of the world and struggle for fundamental change unless you are standing in your own space and looking for change within.”

–Howard Thurman

God, we know that you sent your child, Jesus, to walk with us and to be in a deep relationship with us. May we return to that relationship as a source of life as we seek to be in relationship with ourselves, the truth, and one another. Amen.

Creating the container (20 minutes)

Read the poem one time through. Sit in silence for one minute. Read the poem again. Sit in silence for one minute. For the final time, read only the lines in bold type. Reflect on the questions provided.

There is no such thing as a “safe space” —

We exist in the real world.

We all carry scars and have caused wounds.

This space

seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside,

and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere,

This space will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But

It will be our space together,

and we will work on it side by side.

— *By Beth Strano [Used here with permission]*

- If volume goes from 0 to 10: What’s the current volume level of your world?
- How do you seek to turn down the volume of the world?
- Strano invites us to “amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere.” How will your community enact this practice as you work to tell the truth? In the previous two sessions, how have you noticed the group practicing or resisting this invitation?
- If your group has created group agreements or expectations, revisit them and adjust as needed.

Embodied exercise: Visio Divina (25-30 minutes)

Before you begin the Visio Divina (“divine seeing”), take three collective breaths as a group, coming back to your center and to your breath. Pick one person from the group to read the prompts and hold the time for this embodied exercise. Move through the prompts as a group, one step at a time.

- Wherever you are, find an object in the room that catches your attention.
- Once you find it, spend two minutes looking at or interacting with it in whatever ways that come natural to you.

- Spend two minutes looking at or interacting with the object as a botanist. Explore the physical details of the object.
- Spend two minutes looking at or interacting with the object as an ecologist. How does it connect with other things in its environment?
- Spend two minutes looking at and interacting with the object as a poet. What does the object say to you—about itself, about you, about our world? You might want to write down a short poem.
- Spend two minutes looking at and interacting with the object as a worshiper. In what ways does the object hold some part of the divine?

Now use these questions to reflect on the experience and your reaction to it.

- What did you notice during this exercise?
- How did your relationship deepen with this object?
- Was there a particular way of interacting with the object that was surprising, delightful, and/or challenging?
- What are the connections between this activity and deepening our relationships with self, God, and others?

Scripture and reflection (30-40 minutes): Luke 13:6-9

Take three collective breaths as a group, coming back to your center and to your breath. Have the Scripture read aloud. Listen for a phrase or word that stands out to you. Try not to think too much about why the phrase or word stands out—simply listen for what stands out. When the reading is finished, speak into the space those phrases or words. After a concluding moment of silence, read the Scripture a second time. Then read the reflection provided and reflect on the questions that follow.

Jesus told this parable: “There was a fig tree growing in a vineyard. The owner came out looking for fruit on it, but didn’t find any. The owner said to the vine dresser, ‘Look here! For three years now I’ve come out in search of fruit on this fig tree and have found none. Cut it down. Why should it clutter up the ground?’

“In reply, the vine dresser said, ‘Please leave it one more year while I hoe around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine; if not, then let it be cut down.’” (Luke 13:6-9, The Inclusive Bible)

The Parable of the Fig Tree invites us to examine our own lives and relationships. We are not sure why the fig tree has not borne fruit. Might the roots be too shallow? Is there a healthy watering cycle? Perhaps the soil needs treatment. Whatever the reasons, like the fig tree, we are being called to more life so that we might bear fruit—so that our relationships might grow deeper.

- How do we recognize that, when we neglect our relationship with ourselves and God, we may not bear fruit?
- What “manure” do we need to add to enable our relationships to deepen?
- Deep roots enable us to draw life. How are you deepening your roots? And what nourishment are you getting?
- Thinking back to the embodied practice: How might we bring that same level of curiosity to our relationship with ourselves and God?

Closing prayer (five minutes)

Invite one of the group members to offer the following prayer to close.

Relational God, we thank you for being with us and drawing us closer to you, ourselves, and one another. As we seek to deepen our roots in relationship, we are grateful that you give us so many examples through your beloved one, Jesus. Be with us as we navigate the spaces into which you are calling us. Amen.

Going deeper

Suggestions for individual and household follow-up reflection, study, and action:

- As we explored during “Creating the container,” amplifying voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere takes intention and attention. For further reflection, you are invited to select five people or groups whose voices you want to amplify as you explore the work of truth-telling and reparations. Why did you choose these people or groups? What do you hope to hear from them? How will you turn down your own volume so you can hear them?
- The 2022 Lenten Preaching Series hosted by the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston—“The Spiritual Practice of Truth”—will follow the session themes in this series. You are invited to reflect further on each session theme by watching the corresponding sermon from the preaching series, which will be available at <https://www.stpaulboston.org/sermon-index>.