

Agenda 2 – *Unafraid* by Adam Hamilton

Part 2: Crime, Racism, Terrorism, and Politics (Chapters 5-8)

Based on *Unafraid Leader Guide* by Alex Joyner

- Welcome and greet one another
- Agree on confidentiality and to practice sacred listening as everyone shares their sacred stories, keeping in mind that we want to leave enough time for everyone to share.
- Gratitude Practice: Share (within 60 seconds) something you are each grateful for this past week.

Opening Prayer:

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.

Explore what makes us fearful in the news

As Dave has brought discussed, he and Cathy used to watch the news every night. They no longer do that.

- Do you feel more or less anxious about today's headlines in the news? Why?
- What is your most trusted news source? How do its reports shape your thinking and feelings about the world?
- Adam Hamilton says that facts, not alternative facts, can be allies in combatting fear. How do your trusted news sources give you facts that help you understand and grapple with problems that cause fear?

News Sources

In Chapter 8, Adam Hamilton notes the findings of Dr. Shana Goldstein, a Syracuse sociologist, showing that when we are anxious we actually seek out news sources that increase our anxiety.

- Why do you go to the news sources you use? Do you find Dr. Goldstein's observation (about people seeking sources that increase their anxiety) to be true for you?
- Adam Hamilton recommends looking at a variety of news sources to help understand how others are thinking. When you intentionally seek out information and viewpoints from sources you are likely to mistrust, how do you think this would alter your experience of others?

Homework: Choose a source that you would not normally use and commit to using it before our next session. At the next group session, share experiences with this exercise.

Study the Bible Together

Chapter 7 in Hamilton's book discusses the fears that are spawned by Terror Attacks. After discussing how our views of terror and the danger of terrorism are often skewed, Hamilton goes on to talk about the twin challenges of preventing future attacks and exhibiting "courageous compassion" for refugees and people of other faiths.

In the section titled "An Indefinitely Suspended Welcome," Hamilton quotes Jeremiah 22:3 as a biblical warrant for helping people who come from situations of humanitarian crisis.

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.

Image helping a refugee family resettling from Syria.

- What does doing “what is just and right” look like in this situation?
- What fears might you have to overcome in yourself or others as you welcome this refugee family?
- How might you meet God in the process?
- Why does God call us to have courageous compassion?

Test Out Thoughts About Crime

- Do you feel that crime is increasing, decreasing, or remaining about the same in our community?
- What helps form your impressions about the level of crime?
- If the level of crime were significantly higher or lower than you expect, what might be some reasons?

In Chapter 5, Adam Hamilton talks about how distorted thinking can lead us to overestimate the threat of things such as violent crime. Among the reasons he gives for this distortion are inaccurate information, negativity, and faulty assumptions or beliefs. Hamilton talks about “cognitive restructuring” as a method of helping to identify faulty assumptions and thought patterns and replacing them with clearer thinking and better information. Discuss:

- Would knowing the actual crime statistics have affected your beliefs about crime?
- Which of the reasons Hamilton offers for distorted thinking best explain our views about crime?
- In this case, are facts really our friends? How can facts help us overcome our fears?

Get to Know Your Neighbors

In Chapter 6, Adam Hamilton talks about a street in Kansas City, Troost Avenue, that marks a dividing line between predominantly white and black communities. If you have a map of your community, place it so that it’s visible to the whole group. Ask:

- Where is our community’s Troost Avenue? What roads or geographic features serve as markers between different communities?
- How would you describe the perceptions of others from the perspective of those living on both sides of the marker?
- Adam Hamilton describes a lunch he had with Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Cleaver III in which they reflected on their childhood experiences growing up on different sides of Troost Avenue. What barriers are there to these kind of interactions in your community?

What are your take-aways?

How can we pray for you?

Closing Prayer

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days. Amen