

Agenda 4 – *Unafraid* by Adam Hamilton

Part 4: Apocalypse, Change, Missing Out, and Finances (Chapters 13-16)

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.

Centering Practice:

Meditation on Light - Sit with these quotes about "Light":

- "You have but to remember and you will see the light. (Quran - The Heights 7:201)
- "You are the light of the world." Jesus

Meditation Practice

- Be aware of your breath and quiet your body, as you are able, starting at your feet and moving up to the crown of your head.
- If you feel tension in some part of your body breathe and image the word "peace" in that area. Be conscious of the light of the sun that surrounds you (cloudy or sunny day).
- Rest in the light that sustains all life... image your life story as part of this light in the world.
- Listen for words or images that might come to you. If any do, write them down.

Opening 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.

Learning Together

Each fall, as college freshmen head to school, surveys pop up describing the incoming class. Usually the surveys emphasize how many old technologies are unfamiliar to them (for instance, many may have never used a VCR) or what events older people may still think of as current that the students regard as history (such as the Iraq War, which began when they were toddlers).

Imagine trying to describe the world you grew up in to someone who is twenty years old. What things would they not have known about? What important buildings are no longer standing or have been repurposed? What influential people died before they were born? How much change has taken place since the years when you grew up? Explain that in this session we will be exploring trends and changes that cause many people to experience anxiety and worry. The purpose of this session is to help us embrace the confidence and trust embodied in **Jesus' words in Luke 12:22-23, 27-31**

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

Book and Bible Study and Discussion

Explore Our Fascination with the End of the World

Ask group members to throw out titles of popular entertainment (books, TV, movies) that feature an end-of-the-world scenario. Some examples might be Independence Day, The Walking Dead, and The Road. Ask group members who enjoy this kind of entertainment to share why they find it appealing.

In Chapter 13, Adam Hamilton suggests that apocalyptic and dystopian visions are popular because they draw on our fears about the future. This can be seen in the causes of the catastrophes in our entertainment. Invite participants to share some of the causes of disaster in apocalyptic movies.

- How do you feel when you see depictions of your fears about the future coming to reality?
- Is there something useful about facing those fears through popular culture?

Read the section of Chapter 13 titled “Ending with Paradise Restored.”

- What are the elements of the biblical vision of the new heaven and the new earth?
- How might this vision of God’s future change the stories we tell about the present?

In this section, Hamilton notes two negative responses we might make to the problems of the day: (1) not caring about the problems because God will eventually bring about a new heaven and a new earth, and (2) being paralyzed by the problems because we forget that God will ultimately prevail.

- Which of these errors do you feel is more prominent among Christians?
- To which of these responses are you more prone?
- If we took God’s promise of ultimate restoration seriously, how would it affect our behavior in the present?

Study Scripture Together

John 5:2-9 NLT

2 Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, [a] with five covered porches. 3 Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. [b] 5 One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

7 “I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

8 Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

9 Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath,

Imagine that you are reporters sent to interview the man who was healed. You ask questions about why the man is there and what it has felt like for him to be there. Ask the volunteer to respond in character. Encourage the group to have fun and not feel there are “right” ways to do this.

- What were some of the reasons given for the man’s illness?
- What others might you imagine?
- Why might Jesus have asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

In Chapter 15, Adam Hamilton talks about the practice of cultivating gratitude as a way of retraining our minds to “want what we already have.” Invite group members into a closing time of offering thanks for the things they have. Consider **1 Thessalonians 5: 16 (“Rejoice always”)** and consider how we can “give thanks in every situation.”

Read aloud the following litany and follow each sentence with the phrase, “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 we receive an unexpected gift. ..

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 ...

What are your take-aways?

How can we pray for you?

Closing Prayer

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.