

## Agenda 5 – Unafraid by Adam Hamilton

### Part 5: Aging, Illness, Dying, and Fear of the Lord (Chapters 17-20)

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:

This spiritual practice is a way to awaken yourself to God's presence during any moment of your day. Breath and Spirit are one in the same in the Bible. God is as close as your breath. By connecting to your breath you awaken yourself to this intimate closeness of God.

**Inhale slowly and deeply: Forever I am Exhale slowly: loved by God.**

**Inhale slowly and deeply: Wherever I am Exhale slowly: there is God.**

**Inhale slowly and deeply: Whomever I am with Exhale slowly: I am their neighbor.**

**Inhale slowly and deeply: There is nothing Exhale slowly: that can separate me from God's love.**

**Inhale slowly and deeply: Be still and know Exhale slowly: that I am with God.**

#### Opening Prayer

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.

#### Book and Bible Study and Discussion

##### Use the Story of Siddhartha to Explore Angst

In the interlude that begins Part Five, Adam Hamilton relates the story of Siddhartha, who as a young man was deeply troubled when confronted with the realities of old age, illness, and death. Hamilton uses the term angst to describe the feelings we have when we consider these existential concerns.

What was the occasion (such as the death of a pet or grandparent, a parent's injury or illness)?  
How did it affect you?  
Who helped you deal with what you were feeling?

### Study a Bible story with Elderly Characters

In Chapter 17, Adam Hamilton lifts up biblical stories of God working through older adults.

Luke 2:25-38

#### The Prophecy of Simeon

25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

27 That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, 28 Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, 29 "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,

as you have promised. 30 I have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared for all people. 32 He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

33 Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him.

35 As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."

#### The Prophecy of Anna

36 Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. 37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four.

She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. 38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

Consider Simeon and Anna.

What does the Bible tell us about who they were?

What role do they play in the story of Jesus?

Consider the FEAR Acronym the Tool for Confronting Fear

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 as 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

In the section titled “When Older = Happier” in Chapter 17, Adam Hamilton notes that, according to surveys, people in their seventies or older are often among the happiest.

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.

Consider these Questions

Which of the reasons seems surprising?

When have you seen some of these reasons confirmed?

What other reasons would you add to the list?

Analyze a Pharmaceutical Advertisement

In Chapter 18, Adam Hamilton says that pharmaceutical companies spend billions of dollars every year to market to consumers.

Consider drug advertisements.

Describe a drug advertisement that you saw on television or the Internet Recently.

Discuss:

What fears do these ads play on? What positive effects might they have?

What promises are made about the impact of the drug on our lives?

What potential side effects are mentioned?

What visuals accompany the words of the ad?

Explore Principles for Dealing with Serious Illness

In the sections of Chapter 18 titled “Facing Real Maladies with Courage and Hope” and “Allen’s Story,” Adam Hamilton shares the stories of three people who faced serious illness.

In this part of the chapter, he lifts up some approaches that these people found helpful:

Trust that my life belongs to God.

Serve others.

Live one day at a time.

Give thanks for each day.

Remember the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Consider the following questions:

As you imagine the difficulties of facing serious illness, which of these feels like the most difficult to do? Which seem surprising?

Which, if any of these principles, are you following now?

Explore Christian Beliefs about Death and Heaven

In Chapter 19, Adam Hamilton addresses Christian beliefs about death and heaven. Review the section titled “The Christian View of Death and What Comes After.” Ask:

In what ways is this vision of death different from the visions we see in popular culture?

Examine God’s Purposes In the first paragraph of the Chapter 20 section titled “Finding God in the Storms,” Adam Hamilton writes, “I don’t believe, despite what property insurance policies might say, that natural disasters are ‘acts of God.’ ” He goes on to say that some events appear to go against God’s will, but God can bend those events to serve God’s purposes.

For example, he describes good things that have emerged following the devastation of hurricanes.

Discuss:

When have you seen good emerge from events that were destructive?

What comfort have you found in trusting that God works for good even in terrible situations?

How does this trust reflect awe and reverence for God?

What are your take-aways?

How can we pray for you?

Closing Prayer

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 love for you and for our neighbors. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.