

Welcome

Start by spending some unstructured time together. Eventually, transition to a welcome question, either general or specific.

- General Question: What was the highlight of your past week? What was the roughest part?
- Specific Question: Did you get a holiday break? How was it?

Lectio Divina

Listen

- Begin with a few moments of quiet or a prayer.
- Facilitator: “During the first reading listen for specific words or phrases that grab your attention.”
- Have one person read the passage aloud.

Meditate

- Facilitator: “During the second reading meditate on the text, asking God what it means.”
- Have one person read the passage aloud.

Share

- Facilitator: “After the third reading, share out loud the word or phrase that came to you.”
- Have one person read the passage aloud.
- Take this moment to share your word or phrase.
- If you have time to go through the discussion questions, do so now.

Savor

- Facilitator: “During the fourth reading savor Let go of words, and ask God to reveal how the text might affect your life this week.”
- Have one person read the passage aloud.

Jeremiah 31:7-14

This is what the Lord says:

*“Sing with joy for Jacob;
shout for the foremost of the nations.*

Make your praises heard, and say,

*‘Lord, save your people,
the remnant of Israel.’*

*See, I will bring them from the land of the north
and gather them from the ends of the earth.*

*Among them will be the blind and the lame,
expectant mothers and women in labor;
a great throng will return.*

*They will come with weeping;
they will pray as I bring them back.*

*I will lead them beside streams of water
on a level path where they will not stumble,
because I am Israel’s father,
and Ephraim is my firstborn son.*

*“Hear the word of the Lord, you nations;
proclaim it in distant coastlands:
‘He who scattered Israel will gather them
and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’*

*For the Lord will deliver Jacob
and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.*

*They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion;
they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord—
the grain, the new wine and the olive oil,
the young of the flocks and herds.
They will be like a well-watered garden,
and they will sorrow no more.*

*Then young women will dance and be glad,
young men and old as well.
I will turn their mourning into gladness;
I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.*

*I will satisfy the priests with abundance,
and my people will be filled with my bounty,”
declares the Lord.*

Discuss

Take your time to discuss the following questions. Make space to let everyone speak.

- 1) What thoughts or emotions stir in you when you read this passage?
- 2) Is there anything in the text you find discouraging or encouraging?
- 3) What does this passage teach us about the nature of God?
- 4) How might this affect the way you interact with the people who make up Austin Mustard Seed? How might this affect how you interact with neighbors (literal neighbors, coworkers, friends, etc.)
- 5) What do you want to remember about this passage in the week to come?

Pray Together

Spend time praying together for hopes, dreams, joys and needs. Make sure at least one person records the prayers and sends them to the rest of the group.

Notes

v7. The image here is of snake slithering away from a grassfire.

v8. John's point is God does not give favor to people based on where they were born. Even though God has a covenant with the children of Abraham, that does not mean that God "needs" them.

v11. Tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Roman empire, and were known for overcharging. They were considered traitors.

v14. Some scholars believe that these were Jewish "enforcers," who worked with the Tax Collectors. However, since Jews were not allowed in the Roman Army, it is more likely they were Roman Soldiers.