

3

Observing Thought Patterns

Materials

Nametags
Markers
Intention written on easel or board
Copy of Group Agreement

The open chair symbolizes the group's willingness to welcome new participants. Encourage participants to feel free to invite a friend, co-worker or neighbor to participate in the group whether or not they attend the church.

Intention: To observe thought patterns and their demonstrations in our lives.

Create Sacred Space: Set up chairs for the number of participants plus one in a circle. Eliminate as many potential interruptions as possible by turning off the phone and making certain that pets and children are in places where they can be themselves without disturbing the meeting. Soft meditative music may be playing and a candle burning if appropriate and permitted. Greet participants at the door and invite them to make a nametag.

The Gathering

Welcome (2 minutes): Promptly at the starting time, invite group members into an opening circle for welcome, check-in and centering prayer.

Facilitator: "Welcome, everyone, to our Small Group Exploration on *Cultivating God Mind Through Parables*. Thank you for honoring your commitment to this small group and for honoring our agreement to begin on time. Today we are going to explore the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds to discover its deeper meaning and how it can be helpful in our everyday lives."

Introductions/Check-in (8-10 minutes): “A special welcome to each of you who are here for the first time. Thank you in advance for sharing yourself with us. Let’s go around our circle and introduce ourselves to one another again. In one or two sentences tell us one way you can cultivate your mind by practicing spiritual principles. Or if you’d rather, share a thought or personal insight from your journaling or week’s experiences.”

Centering Prayer (3 minutes): “Thank you Mother/Father God for calling us together in this place, to this divine appointment. May we be open to discovering insights that will inspire us on our spiritual journey. As we cultivate the rich soil of our minds, we prepare the way for divine ideas and thoughts to grow and flourish.

“As God’s beloved children, we are created to experience life fully, breaking forth into our potential like the sprouting seed that breaks through the soil into the light of a new day.

“From Unity’s *Daily Word* book, on Day 254, the words are ‘Break Through.’ The affirmation is, ‘I am a spiritual being on a divine journey.’”

Colleen Zuck (ed.),
*Daily Word: Love,
Inspiration, and Guidance
for Everyone*,
Daybreak Books,
Emmaus, PA, 1997, p.
254. Reprinted with
permission of Unity®,
publisher of *Daily
Word*®.

Right now I know that I am standing on the threshold of a breakthrough—a spiritual journey that will take me further along in my growth than I could ever possibly imagine.

This is a journey on which I will be filled with a peace that far surpasses anything I have ever experienced, and I begin it by knowing and living the truth of my divine potential.

I am on a journey of positive thinking, praying, and living. If ever I find myself falling into a rut of negative thinking, I don’t break down—I break through! I break through the barriers of those negative thoughts and that less-than-positive attitude. I break through and discover that I am a spiritual being on a divine journey.

“The Bible verse is: ‘I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it.’ –Isaiah 43:19.

“God, we turn to you for insights and open ourselves to breakthroughs as we travel the spiritual journey together during this small group experience. We thank you for this opportunity to make new friends, to explore our lives, to consciously observe our individual thought patterns, and to discover the deeper meaning in Jesus’ parables. With grateful hearts, we pray this through the love of the living Christ in each of us. Thank you, God. Amen.”

Materials

Index cards, one per person, plus some extras

Note: Allow up to 5 minutes. This may not be easy for some people; there will be some scribbling out, etc. Encourage people as needed to put anything they can think of on the card.

Truth or Lie Activity(15 minutes): “Our opening activity will engage and challenge each of us in a fun way. Please take an index card as we pass them around our circle. Take a few moments to think of two truths and one lie about you and write them on the card. When everyone is finished, we’ll try to guess each other’s untrue statement.”

When everyone is finished say: “Now find a partner with whom to share your statements. One partner reads his or her statements and the other person asks questions to help determine which statements are the truth and which is the lie. If your partner determines which of your statements is the lie, don’t reveal it. Then switch and follow the same instructions. You will have 3 minutes per partner, a total of 6 minutes for this discussion.”

Say: “Let’s gather in our circle again. As we go around the circle, each person will read their three statements aloud, followed by their partner choosing which statement is the lie. The correct answer as to which statement is the lie is then revealed.”

After group sharing ask:

- How did it feel to act as if your lie was true?
- How were your feelings different when you were stating the truth vs. a lie?

- What surprises did you experience as to whether someone’s statement was true or was a lie?
- What did you observe in your partner that helped you decide what was the truth or a lie?

Discovery and Exploration

Materials

Copies of handout (see Appendix)
Colored paper
Markers
Pens

Parable and Discussion (25-30 minutes): “As you listen to Jesus’ words in the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, I invite you to be aware of any deeper messages that come to your attention.”

The Wheat and the Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30

He put before them another parable, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’

After reading, ask:

- What happened in this parable?
- What did the slaves ask Jesus?
- When we think of the soil as our minds, what is the deeper meaning of sowing good seed?

- What does the wheat represent?
- What do the weeds represent?
- How are you like the sower of good seeds in your daily life?
- How would you interpret weeds being sown during a time of sleeping?
- What do you think the enemy represents? How are you like the enemy?
- What deeper meaning do you see in letting both the wheat and the weeds grow together? How is something like this happening in your life?
- What does collecting and burning the weeds mean to you?
- What deeper meaning do you see in gathering and storing the wheat? What is an example of a way you gather and store wheat in your life?
- What is the deeper message this parable has for you?

Let the Rest Fall Away Activity (15 minutes): “Please select a piece of colored paper and a pen or marker. In the center write a vision or goal that is dear to you, a divine idea that you want to manifest in your life. Then around the page write down thoughts you have about that vision. These may include negative concepts like ‘I will never have time to get this done and still earn a living.’ Or positive thoughts like ‘This is what I really want to do with my time.’”

After everyone has completed writing their thoughts, ask: “Examine the thoughts you have written on your paper and determine which are weed thoughts that do not support your vision, the thoughts you need to let fall away. Tear out the weed thoughts from your paper and allow them to float to the floor.”

“Now, look again at your vision and the thoughts that support it.

- How does it feel to remove and let go of those things that interfere with your vision?
- What would have happened if you had thrown away the whole paper in order to get rid of the negative thoughts?

- What can you do to observe the thought seeds you are planting in the rich soil of your mind?
- What can you do to make it harder for the “enemy” to plant weed thoughts in your mind?
- What spiritual practices will help you tend the “thought fields” of your mind and bring the harvest?

Caring and Closing

Facilitator: “In the days until we meet again, observe your thoughts and their patterns to determine what seeds you are planting. Consider what you would harvest when the seeds have grown and matured. Continue to be open to the unfolding ideas of how you can cultivate your mind and reap the harvest of your heart’s desire. You may want to journal about the activities we experienced today as well as your observations in the coming week. Feel free to share your thoughts and experiences when we check in next week.”

Closing Prayer Requests (10-15 minutes): “Now let us join our hearts and minds together to pray with and for one another using affirmative prayer. We will go around the circle and state our requests for prayer support for ourselves for others. Let us state our request in the form of an affirmation. For example, ‘I am centered and open to God’s guidance and wisdom.’”

After the requests say: “In support of these prayer requests, let us pray together our Prayer for Protection:

The light of God surrounds us.
 The love of God enfolds us.
 The power of God protects us.
 The presence of God watches over us.
 Wherever we are, God is.

“We close our prayer time with a message from the writings of Silent Unity.”

Discovering the Kingdom Within You: Spiritual Preparation for Easter 2006, Unity, Unity Village, MO, 2005, p. 5. Reprinted with permission of Unity®.

My mind is a fertile field where a variety of thoughts can grow. Some are productive; others are not. How can I know the difference? How can I separate the weed thoughts from the wheat thoughts?

One way is to take time to pray and to seek God’s guidance. As I turn to God with an open mind and heart, I will find the wisdom I seek, and I will be able to discern which thoughts will help me gain a closer relationship with God.

Anger, unforgiveness, judgment, or negative thoughts that keep me from knowing I am one with God are “weeds” that I need to release.

Thoughts of kindness, patience, love, and self-control are worth harvesting, for they will help me grow ever closer in my relationship with God and the people in my life. These gifts are the “wheat” I will harvest....

I let go of any negative thoughts and produce positive thoughts of light and love.

Facilitator: “Thank you God for each person in this circle, for the guidance each one receives from you, and for your presence always with us. Amen.”

Resources

Colleen Zuck (ed.), *Daily Word: Love, Inspiration, and Guidance for Everyone*, Daybreak Books, Emmaus, PA, 1997, p. 254.

Discovering the Kingdom Within You: Spiritual Preparation for Easter 2006, Unity, Unity Village, MO, 2005, p. 5.