

Small Group Study

“Do Not Be Afraid: Defeating Fear with Hope, Peace, Love, Joy and a Wholehearted Life”

Introduction

We're glad you are delving deeper into our Advent season together with this small group study! This is not a Bible study so while the scripture for the week is read at the beginning of the small group time, it is simply to hear it again as a spiritual practice of centering and praying. The subjects of the discussions are more based on counteracting fear as well as the messages of hope, peace, joy, love and life that are highlighted in the Advent season.

Through these five sessions, we will journey with Dr. Brené Brown, who is a social worker, researcher, and best-selling author. Dr. Brown's work on vulnerability speaks to how we let fear—in many forms—affect our lives. Brené calls on us to live more fully into hope, peace, joy, and love through practicing vulnerability. You will hear some repetition in these videos but each one brings out a different point and we think you'll appreciate the chance to revisit these messages and go deeper each week.

We felt it was a perfect time of year to explore Brown's work, not only because it complements the worship theme but also because the holidays can bring up issues of perfectionism, unrealistic expectations, stress, sorrow and old or existing family conflicts. We are grateful for Dr. Brown's work and if you find it resonates with you, we highly recommend her books. You can explore those [HERE](#) (or just search for her name at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)).

We recommend groups of 6 – 8 people gather together for about an hour each week during the series. The smaller group size will allow people to share more deeply and have more time to do so. We imagine these conversations taking place in a living room—a safe, private place where folks feel welcome and comfortable to share without interruption. This study could also be done individually with journaling as the primary mode of reflection, or with a study partner. Additionally, if everyone has a copy of this leader guide, people can continue even if they go out of town for Christmas.

The videos are all accessible on YouTube, with the links provided in each week's session. Be sure that you have a computer ready to play the videos, and if possible, connect it to a larger screen such as a TV (though not necessary with this size group) and portable speakers if necessary.

This group study is scripted so that anyone in the group can be in the role of leader on any week with minimal preparation.

Materials needed

- Computer with internet connection and good sound
- TV or larger screen (optional)
- A printed copy of that week's guide for each person
- Pen or pencil for each participant (optional: have fun with attaching a feather to the writing utensils as a reminder of the worship theme)
- Bible
- Candle and matches
- Feather(s) to place near candle (optional)
- Clock or watch to keep track of time

Suggested Schedule

Before start time

Gather together and settle in

3-5 minutes

Opening circle with lighting a candle, scripture and introduction read aloud

5-20 minutes

Watch the week's video

3 – 5 minutes

Personal, silent reflection or journaling

20 – 35 minutes

Group discussion

Last minutes

Closing prayer/ritual