



What is Truth?

An Embodied Lenten Series

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Part of “A Toolkit for Reparations in Community: A Resource for the Body of Christ” www.diomass.org/reparations-toolkit

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Session 6: Building Resilience

Overview

The practice of telling the truth isn't always easy; in fact, it can be incredibly challenging and costly. Therefore, we must build up our resilience to stand firm amidst opposition, sacrifice, and hopelessness. Session 6 explores how white dominant culture often places hope at the center of the work instead of right action and moral imperative. How do we build collective practice and memory to weather the challenges ahead?

Preparation and set-up

You may want a Bible on hand.

Centering breath (five minutes)

As a group, breathe in for a count of three, hold for a count of three, and exhale for a count of three. Do this three times.

Opening prayer (five minutes)

God, as we enter a conversation on resilience, we ask that you remind us where in our lives we have stood firm in the face of challenge. Remind us how, despite a culture that tells us to move straight to hope, we have allowed ourselves space to tell the truth and stand in our own resilience. Just as we have done before, we know we can do it again. Send your Spirit to guide us, hold us, and encourage us this day. Through your child, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Creating the container (20-30 minutes)

Read the poem one time through. Sit in silence for one minute. Read the poem again. Sit in silence for one minute. For the final time, read only the line in bold type. Reflect on the questions provided.

*There is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world.
We all carry scars and have caused wounds.
This space
seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside,
and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere,
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our space together,
and we will work on it side by side.*

— By Beth Strano [Used here with permission]

- What does it mean, look like, feel like, etc. to do this work side by side?
- How will we build each other up and lean on each other for courage, strength, and resilience?
- Review your community agreements. How have you embodied them during this series? Are there particular agreements you wanted to focus more energy and attention on?

Embodied exercise: Power Pose (15-20 minutes)

Part of being resilient is stepping into the physical manifestation of that resilience. Sometimes we just need to get into our bodies and feel the power that comes from being resilient.

Invite one person to strike a power pose (feel free to stand or sit). Other community members will then reflect that power pose back to the person. One by one, each person is invited to strike their own power pose and have the other members mirror that pose. When you finish the first round, go around again, posing and mirroring. Feel free to try a different pose the second time around.

After both rounds, reflect on these questions (remembering to practice deep listening):

- What makes you feel powerful?
- Why did you choose that pose to depict your power?
- How do you understand the connection between your power and being resilient?

Scripture and reflection (30 minutes): Isaiah 50:4-9

Before you read the Scripture, take three collective breaths as a group, coming back to your center and to your breath.

*Exalted YHWH has given me
a skilled and well-trained tongue,
so that I can sustain the weary
with a timely word.
God awakens me morning after morning--
wakens my ear, to listen like a student.
Exalted YHWH opened my ears
and I have obeyed, I did not turn away.
I offered my back to those who would humiliate me.
I did not hide my face from insults
or spitting.
Because Exalted YHWH helps me,
insults cannot wound me,
for I have set my face like flint.
because I know I will not be put to shame.
My vindicator
is at my side.
Who would dare accuse me?
Let us confront each other!
Who are my adversaries?
Let them accuse me!
It is Exalted YHWH who helps me.
Who will judge me guilty?
All of them will wear like a piece of clothing;
moths will devour them.*

(Isaiah 50:4-9, The Inclusive Bible)

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, he does so with an air of celebration and empowerment—even though he knows that this exact road will bring him to betrayal, suffering, and death. In order for him to face such an uncertain and challenging road, he had to draw from a source of life much bigger than himself. And we must do the same. In the Isaiah text we hear from a prophet who is facing persecution and suffering, all the while declaring God as his ultimate source of life and resilience. What if this text isn't one of knowing this deep within himself, but a proclamation of resilience and hope the prophet needs to make in order to come back to it when things become challenging?

Read the Scripture once out loud in the group and then, on your own, read the Scripture highlighting or underlining the text where Isaiah is claiming a truth or promise of resilience. Then, take 10 to 15 minutes to write your own declaration of resilience. Feel free to use the Isaiah text as reference or rewrite your own version of it. Name how God will give you strength, where you might face challenges, and

from whom or what you ultimately get your fortitude. Then come back as a group and read your declarations to one another. Afterwards, spend time reflecting on the questions.

- What surprised you about writing, sharing, or listening to each other's declarations of resilience?
- How is resilience different from hope? Is the Isaiah text hopeful or resilient? How so?
- Why do we need to cultivate more resilience as a group?
- What personal or communal practices enable resilience?
- What does the story of Lent and Palm Sunday teach us about resilience?

Continuing the journey (20 minutes)

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to the work of healing and reparations. If anything, the work needs to be authentic and deeply contextual to your particular location, history, and relationships. This series has, hopefully, given your group a foundation of practices that will enable trust, relationship, and resilience as you continue on the journey towards reparations. Take the next few minutes to reflect as a group on what these next steps might be and how you would like to continue this work into the next iteration.

- What practices or key learnings from this Lenten series do you want to hold on to as a community? What do you want to let go of?
- Who has been missing from this conversation? How might you invite them in or go meet them where they are?
- Is pursuing reparations the next step for your community? Is there more ground that needs to be tilled in order to ensure it is done in a holistic and authentic way? What might enable you to get to reparations?
- Do you have a strong sense of your congregation's history and who was affected by that history? If not, how might you go about exploring that more in depth? If so, how will that be key to reparations?
- What might you as an individual and/or as a community need to let go of in order to make reparations a reality?
- What are you committing to do next? In the coming week, month, year?

Closing Prayer (five minutes)

Invite one of the group members to offer the following prayer to close.

God, we thank you for time, space, and energy to explore this important conversation and to do so in community. While we have come to the end of this Lenten series, we know that this work is not done. As we move beyond this space, embolden us to go deeper, to seek out community, and remain grounded in you. It is through you that we have come to this moment and it is for your dream that we continue the work. Amen.

Going deeper

Suggestions for individual and household follow-up reflection, study, and action:

- For further reflection, read the “Begin Again” section (page 25) in “[The Process Toward Reparations: A Template](#).” What questions come up for you as you read this?
- The 2022 Lenten Preaching Series hosted by the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston—“The Spiritual Practice of Truth”—will follow the session themes in this series. You are invited to reflect further on each session theme by watching the corresponding sermon from the preaching series, which will be available at <https://www.stpaulboston.org/sermon-index>.