

THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

A WEARY WORLD

REFLECTIONS FOR A BLUE CHRISTMAS

WELCOME FRIEND

Welcome to this film series: A Weary World, Reflections for a Blue Christmas with Kathy Escobar. In her book of the same title, Kathy writes:

There are so many of us who—for all kinds of reasons—suffer this time of year and keep longing for hope, connection, and peace in the middle of loss, chaos, and confusion; who feel the magnitude of our weary world weighing on our hearts and souls; who are wrestling with chronic pain, broken relationships, shattered dreams, fragile faith, and unexpected losses. (Page 3)

In October of 2019, Kathy, her family, their friends and community were devastated by the death of one of her five children. Throughout their grieving process, the Escobar's have been, and continue to be, committed to being real with themselves and others about their unmanageable heartbreak while remaining open for moments of reprieve, glimmers of hope, beauty, and love. Kathy is an author, truth-teller, and visionary. Her writing is inspired by real life experiences and practices of becoming true. Her willingness to create and hold the sacred space of being real helped found and shape The Refuge, a Christian recovering community that she co-pastors in Denver. She is an admired leader, and a true friend, fellow human, and beautiful soul.

This four-part series is a conversation with Kathy discussing spiritual and life practices she has found helpful when crawling through seemingly impossible loss when it collides with the hustle-and-bustle holiday season. This is more than a “How to survive the holidays” guide, it is her true to life work learning how to honor reality, be honest, hold paradox (both the dark and the light), and borrowing hope when she had none.

If you find yourself weary and facing down a blue Christmas, we hope this series brings you company—you are not alone. You are held in our hearts and prayers and those of us who can are holding hope for you when you can't. Keep being true to yourself, we are with you.

SERIES SESSIONS & INFORMATION

SESSION ONE // Honoring Reality

SESSION TWO // Practicing Honesty

SESSION THREE // Embracing Paradox

SESSION FOUR // Borrowing Hope

Visit the *A Weary World* series page on The Work of the People here:

https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/film_series/a-weary-world

USING THIS GUIDE AS INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP

As you begin this exploration, know that this guide is simply that—a guide. It is meant to offer a pathway toward discovery, so feel free to co-create with what you find here, shaping it for yourself or for a group you are leading. Use as much or as little as you find helpful. Trust your gut. Linger where you need to, don't force anything. Be creative, and don't forget to have fun. This is your journey.

A note for individuals. Be sure to carve out enough time to gift yourself the ability to be present to the films. It's important that you don't feel rushed or anxious, that you feel clear of your daily life to enter into deep listening. Have your journal with you, there will be writing prompts throughout, including the first few below. Read through each one and choose to write about the one or two that you gravitate toward.

A note about writing: Journaling is one of those things that often sounds like a good idea but may not actually be implemented for many reasons, however, its scientifically proven to be a transformative process. We highly suggest not only writing things down, but returning to them and using your notes in your own, unique creative way (or perhaps try a new creative way!).

A note for group leaders: Consider adding a first session to get to know one another, talk a little about the material and perhaps Kathy's story, and allow the group to introduce themselves to one another. This session is also a great time to share any group "rules for the road" you may want to put in place to cultivate a safe-sharing atmosphere. Let the group know there is a daily spiritual practice (see below) for them to be working on their own. Engage the group by sharing the prompts just below, and ask the group to answer one that stood out to them. Encourage members to bring a journal and pen to each session to capture what is meaningful to them from the film, and to use when working through journaling prompts throughout.

What was it about this series or this author that captured your attention?

What question did you bring to this journey?

What is your intention for this series?

What is blessing do you hope to receive?

A LITTLE ABOUT ADVENT

Within the annual Christian calendar is a season called Advent. Advent is a month-long vigil of hope. It begins during the late Autumn when days are growing shorter and the nights longer. Ending on Christmas Eve, the season of Advent is a time of being swaddled in the dark, of encountering mystery, of waiting and expectation. The Advent journey brings depth and meaning to the dark times, and anticipation of the light's return. It is a reminder that we, too cycle like the seasons, and are made up of both darkness and light.

DAILY SPIRITUAL PRACTICE FOR THIS SERIES

Our hope is that this series becomes a companion for the weary and an invitation to practice being just as you are and who you are this holiday season. For the duration of the series, plan time each day for an approximate 20 minute silent sit. Don't put any other expectation on yourself or God or the silence or the time—just show up as you are.

Begin with a deep breath, then read the following prayer adapted from Kathy's book (Page 99). After you read the prayer, sit with silence.

God is with me.

God, with me.

God alongside me.

God beside me.

God near me.

God plus me.

God by my side.

God in the thick of "it".

God in my humanity.

God in my pain, in my blue.

God in my beautiful, in my messy.

God in the middle of this weary world, with me.

With us.

With all of us.

At the end of your daily sit, take a moment to notice your breath again, and then notice your being. Gift yourself with a small reminder that no matter how fractured and bruised you feel at times, you are indeed still whole. Gift yourself with acknowledgement and appreciation for showing up and following through.

A note for groups: Each week allow time for the group to share how their practice of silence has been for them. Encourage them each week to keep going.

SESSION ONE

HONORING REALITY

INTRODUCTION

In this session, Kathy Escobar encourages us to honor what is true, something critical to being able to heal through hard life circumstances. Some of us will try to cope with our pain by any means necessary. Some of us by buffering our pain so as not to upset the peace. Some of us are able to say it like it is, and some of us can hardly sit in the same room with our own pain.

In her book, Kathy writes, “Honoring our own unique realities is just that—honoring our unique realities. It’s owning that no matter what we’re feeling or experiencing related to life and faith, it’s our story. It’s the place we need healing, hope, connection. For some of us, we’re feeling the need for God..” (A Weary World, page 11)

We need places where we can share about what hurts, what we’re struggling with, and what’s missing because that is how we will heal. We need places where we can be human. We need real people in our lives. The ones who honor reality, who listen to our story and let it be what it is. Let us be who we are. We need people who let us in on their struggles, pains, and real stories also.

As you begin this exploration of Honoring Reality, remember this guide is simply that—a guide. It is meant to offer a pathway toward discovery, but only you know the best way for you or your group. Use what serves you, and leave the rest. Feel free to create something altogether new that is meaningful to you, allow grief to channel through you. Utilizing your creativity to express yourself (however small it seems) is a healthy healing practice.

BE. HERE. NOW.

Focus your awareness on one slow, deep breath. This is a sacred time to take off the pressure of what is ours to do and allow ourselves to be just us. Real. This is when we get present. Show all the way up, whatever that looks like. Use this time as a gift.

Read Kathy’s words from the film (as many times as you need) to center yourself as you move from where you’ve been and what you’ve been doing into this present space.

JESUS MEETS ME

IN MY REAL PROBLEMS.
IN MY REAL PAIN.
JESUS MEETS ME IN MY HUMANITY.

PREPARING TO WATCH AND LISTEN

As you get ready to watch the film, relax your defenses. Set aside the judging mind and invite in an attitude of wonder and curiosity.

As you listen, notice your reactivity or receptivity to anything that comes up in the conversation with Kathy. Any habitual patterns or fears that may keep you closed in and closed off. Listen with awareness to what rises up or out, including memories. Note when a specific sentence, idea or image particularly speaks to or challenges you.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Honoring Reality with Kathy Escobar (17:44)
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/honoring-reality>

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Sit with what you have just experienced for a minute. Let your thoughts and reactions settle. Then read through the following prompt questions (don't feel the need to answer every one, choose and work with the one or two that seem to step forward from the rest). Write down or draw out your internal observations, capturing why you think that question stood out for you, where it took you and what gift or insight it seemed to be offering you.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Before sharing, touch back on your group guidelines for safe-sharing practices. Let the group know this is a time for deep generative listening, not for debate. It's not about defending and self-protecting, nor is it about fixing anyone. It's about self-giving, co-creating, and sharing our stories. It's about letting one another be who we are in the moment. We are here to help each other do our individual work as we listen to each other and ourselves.

OPEN MIND

What, if anything, did you hear that reminded you of yourself or your current situation?
What did you hear that gave you a new way to view yourself or your current situation?

OPEN HEART

What, if anything, was said that made you feel connected or not alone?
What did you hear that enlarged your compassion for yourself or someone else?

OPEN WILL

What, if anything, did you hear that was an invitation to lean into?
What did you hear that felt like it was something you would like to take action on?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

If you have time, explore more using the questions below from Kathy's book, continuing to observe what may be emerging for you. Use your journal to write down what emerges for you, journaling will keep feelings moving up and out of the body.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Once again, take time to share anything emerging for you from any of the following prompts.

1. What is your current reality? What is weighing on your heart, what is going on in your life that is making your soul weary? What are you missing that you long for?
2. What do you need to let be in your current situation? What do you need to let go of trying to figure out?
3. Where do you feel like you can most be yourself, where you can express your pains, losses, doubts, and fears?
4. Who can you bring in close to you to bear pain and walk alongside you?
5. Where are you sensing Emmanuel, God with Us alongside you?

SILENCE

Now take a moment to exhale, to let go and let come, and to receive.

CARRY IT WITH YOU

As you move forward from here, consider returning to your notes as an assist to processing and integrating. Your soul is doing a monumental task. Grieving is hard. Know that you are a work in process, accepted and ever-accompanied. You are not alone.

Allow the following (adapted) song lyrics by The Beatles to wash over you. Even as this planned lesson comes to an end, remain open to the continuing unfolding that may follow you.

LET IT BE

By John Lennon and Paul McCartney

When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.
And in my hour of darkness
She is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

And when the broken-hearted people
Living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be.
For though they may be parted
There is still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be.

And when the night is cloudy
There is still a light that shines on me
Shine on until tomorrow, let it be.
I wake up to the sound of music,
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

Let it be, let it be
Let it be, let it be
There will be an answer, let it be.

EXPLORE MORE

Explore further with these related and curated pieces, practices, and paths to stir your imagination. Click on the resource title to go to the piece.

+ FOCUS PRACTICE + Create an Altar, Goodtherapy.org

“As the instructors at Life Path Center for Learning and Healing beautifully put it, “altars and shrines are external representations of interior mysteries.” Shrines and altars are ways of showing in tangible form what might be happening in our hearts and spirits. Creating shrines and altars gives us opportunities to remember, to reflect and to honor, as well as to help heal the pain of loss through the act of creating. The creation of a personal shrine can establish a private place to which you can return to reflect, meditate, grieve, engage in a personal ritual, remember, and honor.”

+ BOOK + A Weary World: Reflections of a Blue Christmas, Kathy Escobar

+ BLOG + A Weary World, A Weary Year, Kathy Escobar

SESSION TWO

PRACTICING HONESTY

INTRODUCTION

According to Kathy, practicing honesty is “honoring the backstory of what is happening,” even when we honestly want to avoid it or not feel it. For many of us our initial response is to cover up the ugly, suppress and internalize the hurt. So many of us haven’t been taught how to go through hard things, and so many of us are going through hard things like the pandemic and all of the loss of loved ones or real life stresses due to strained relationships. Covering up real feelings doesn’t mean they don’t exist. Covering up feelings is a coping mechanism we use when we think we have to act properly to protect others from our messy.

Practicing honesty, even when we are scared to, is a liberation practice. Think of something you often wish you could be honest about. What would it be like to be free of the worry that drives you to hide your true feelings? What would you do with all that energy it takes to project an alternate reality? What would you allow yourself to feel if you didn’t have to neutralize your grief because you wanted to buffer yourself for everyone else?

BE. HERE. NOW.

It’s time to get present. Get settled in your body and in your place. Take a few moments of silence to take a few deep and slow breaths or say a short prayer in your mind. The goal is to move yourself fully into the here and now, to become fully present.

Once you are ready, read aloud the following quote from Kathy, noticing if and what her words evoke in you:

PRACTICING HONESTY BRINGS [MY] STORY TOGETHER.
IT FLESHES OUT THE HUMANITY IN [ME].

PREPARING TO WATCH AND LISTEN

As you get ready to watch the film, relax your defenses. Set aside the judging mind and invite in an attitude of wonder and curiosity.

As you listen, notice your reactivity or receptivity to anything that comes up in the conversation with Kathy. Any habitual patterns or fears that may keep you closed in and closed off. Listen with awareness to what rises up or out, including memories. Note when a specific sentence, idea or image particularly speaks to or challenges you.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Practicing Honesty with Kathy Escobar (15:16)
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/honoring-reality>

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Sit with what you have just experienced for a minute. Let your thoughts and reactions settle. Take a look over any notes you may have jotted down. Then read through the following prompt questions (don't feel the need to answer every one, choose and work with the one or two that seem to step forward from the rest). Use the prompts to write or draw out more of your internal observations, capturing why you think that question stood out for you, where it took you and what gift or insight it seemed to be offering you.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Before sharing, touch back on your group guidelines for safe-sharing practices. Let the group know this is a time for deep generative listening, not for debate. It's not about defending and self-protecting, nor is it about fixing anyone. It's about self-giving, co-creating, and sharing our stories. It's about letting one another be who we are in the moment. We are here to help each other do our individual work as we listen to each other and ourselves.

OPEN MIND

What in the film did you hear that made you imagine living out your situation in a new way?
What is something you heard that gave you the ability to see honesty in a new way?

OPEN HEART

What, if anything, was said that tugged at your heart?
What did you hear that brought up a memory from the past?

OPEN WILL

What is an image or a take away from the film that is pulling you toward the future?
What did you hear that is something you would like to take action on?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

If you have time, explore more using the questions below from Kathy's book, continuing to observe what may be emerging for you. Use your journal to write down whatever comes to your mind or heart—journaling will keep feelings moving up and out of the body.

NOTE FOR GROUPS: Once again, take time to share anything emerging for you from any of the following prompts.

1. Practice honesty using this prompt: "Right now, I am really feeling _____ because of _____."
2. What are you afraid of most right now? How is your fear affecting your mind, heart, relationship, or faith?
3. What are you most angry about right now? Is it toward yourself? Others? God? How can you honor your anger in a healthy way instead of resisting it?
4. What do you imagine practicing honesty can look like for you this holiday season?

SILENCE

Take a moment to exhale, to let go and let come, and to receive. Just trust that all you have experienced is going to keep working with you and for you through the Grace that is always present.

CARRY IT WITH YOU

As you move forward from here, consider returning to your notes as an assist to processing and integrating. Practicing honesty is not as easy as it sounds. Know that you are a work in process, accepted and ever-accompanied. You are not alone.

The Welcoming Prayer has helped many learn to accept and allow the truth to stand as it is. Here is the Welcoming Prayer for you to touch back to as you wish throughout the week:

THE WELCOMING PRAYER

By Mary Mrozowski

Gently become aware of your body and your interior state.

Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I welcome everything that comes to me in this moment
because I know it is for my healing.

I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions,
persons, situations and conditions.

I let go of my desire for security.
I let go of my desire for approval.
I let go of my desire for control.

I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person, or myself.

I open to the love and presence of God
and the healing action and grace within.

EXPLORE MORE

Explore further with these related and curated pieces, practices, and paths to stir your imagination. Click on the resource title to go to the piece.

+ FOCUS PRACTICE + Cut Up Poetry

Try creating a cut up poem from your journal entries so far. If you can, make copies of pages and then cut out words and phrases within the writing and place all the cut outs on the table and shuffle them around. (If you don't want to risk someone getting hold of your private journal pages, then skim the journal and type up and print all the words and phrases that are meaningful to you at this time so your full pages are never exposed.) Arrange them as you feel led onto a blank page, creating new verses, images and stanzas. Let your inner self guide you and see what you come up with. Once you have your poem set, grab some glue and paste it in place. Put your poem on your altar, and consider sharing them as a group exercise if you are using this series in a group setting.

+ BOOK + A Weary World: Reflections of a Blue Christmas, Kathy Escobar

+ BLOG + It's Okay to Just Say it, Period, Kathy Escobar

+ PRAYER + The Welcoming Prayer

SESSION THREE

EMBRACING PARADOX

INTRODUCTION

Our conditioning teaches us to think either/or and black and white, however when we are black and white thinkers we don't just lose shades of grey, we lose a prism of color. The hard and the good live together. It's both/and. When we learn that truthfully we carry both the dark and the light, it then just becomes a matter of learning to allow and sit with. When we can sit with paradox within ourselves, we can hold that same space for others, and in God as well.

BE. HERE. NOW.

It's time to show up, to get settled in your body and in your place. Take a few good, deep breaths, letting go of whatever you were previously doing or thinking and whatever thoughts you have of what there is to do next. Move yourself fully to here and now. This is your sacred time, gift yourself all of it.

Once you are ready, read aloud the following definition of paradox from Kathy, noticing what her words evoke in you:

CONTRADICTING THINGS
CAN LIVE IN THE SAME PLACE
AT THE SAME TIME.

PREPARING TO WATCH AND LISTEN

As you get ready to watch and listen to the film, relax your defenses and instead engage with wonder and curiosity. Receive Kathy's conversation notice your reactivity or receptivity to anything that comes up including any habitual patterns or fears that may keep you closed in and closed off. Let her words and experience be hers but also lead you to consider your own. Note when a specific sentence, idea or image particularly speaks to or challenges you. If you feel judgement or feel defensiveness in yourself, write it down.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Embracing Paradox with Kathy Escobar (15:16)
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/honoring-reality>

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Sit with what you have just experienced for a minute. Let your thoughts and reactions settle. Take a look over any notes you may have jotted down. Then read through the following prompt questions (like before, don't feel the need to answer every one, choose and work with the one or two that seem to step forward from the rest). Use the prompts to write or draw out more of your internal observations, capturing why you think the question stood out for you, where the conversation with Kathy took you, and what gift or insight anything seemed to be offering you.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Before sharing, touch back on your group guidelines for safe-sharing practices. Let the group know this is a time for deep generative listing, not for debate. It's not about defending and self-protecting, nor is it about fixing anyone. It's about self-giving, co-creating, and sharing our stories. It's about letting one another be who we are in the moment. We are here to help each other do our individual work as we listen to each other and ourselves.

OPEN MIND

What are some ways you notice yourself utilizing either/or thinking? What about both/and thinking?

What did you hear that inspired a new way of thinking about how conflicting truths existing at the same time?

OPEN HEART

What, if anything, was said that moved you emotionally?

What did you hear that reminded you of a story from your own life? What did you hear that may have helped you see yourself or someone else in a more compassionate light?

OPEN WILL

How can you actively practice embracing paradox through the holiday season?

In what ways can you imagine practicing embracing paradox will help you see others in a different light this holiday season?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

If you have time, explore more using the questions below from Kathy's book, continuing to observe what may be emerging for you. Use your journal to write down whatever comes to your mind or heart—journaling will keep feelings moving up and out of the body.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Once again, take time to share anything emerging for you from any of the following prompts.

+ In what way do you imagine practicing embracing paradox will increase your compassion for yourself and others?

+ Consider the contradictory feelings or realities you are living out right now. Choose one word from the left column and one word from the right, or use any of your own words.

abundant	ambivalent
alive	angry
awake	apprehensive
beautiful	bound
compassionate	broken
connected	bumpy
creative	challenging
curious	closed
delighted	confusing
easy	dark
empowered	dead
encouraging	depressing
free	empty
fulfilled	exhausting
full	fierce
genuine	frustrating
glorious	hard
grateful	heavy
light	insecure
loud	irritating
noble	lonely
open	messy
pretty	sorry
proud	scattered
quiet	shattered
redeemed	tired
resilient	turbulent
restored	ugly
revived	unnerved
safe	unsettled
satisfied	vulnerable
secure	visceral
smooth	wandering
strong	weak
tenacious	weary
whole	wondering

Share some of your both/ands with the group. Consider these prompts:

Right now, my story is _____ and _____.

I'm feeling _____ and _____
I'm grieving _____ and also celebrating _____.

- + What are you seeing glimpses of light in the darkness right now?
- + How are you finding peace in the chaos?
- + Where are you finding hope right now?

SILENCE

Take a moment to exhale, to let go and let come, and to receive.

CARRY IT WITH YOU

As you move forward from here, consider returning to your notes as an assist to processing and integrating. Know that you are both hurt and healing, and that is okay. You are not alone.

Read through this adapted prayer by Arthur Bennett from his book *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Return to this prayer when faced with holding the tension of two conflicting feelings or truths that exist together at the same time.

THE VALLEY OF VISION

By Arthur Bennett (adaptations by Kelly Hall)

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that lows have their highs, and highs have their lows,
that a broken heart is still a whole heart,
that the humbled spirit will be the honored spirit,
that the apologetic soul is the forgiven soul,
that to have nothing is to have all things,
that in grieving well we will heal,
that we have to give it away to keep it,
that the valley is the place of vision.

My God, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Shine your light into my darkness,
show me
beginnings at my ends,
enlightenment in the depths of my depression,
how to see my blind spots,

have abundance into my scarcity,
and strength in my weakness.

EXPLORE MORE

Explore further with these related and curated pieces, practices, and paths to stir your imagination. Click on the resource title to go to the piece.

+ FOCUS PRACTICE + Seek Healing in Art, Music, or Nature

Each day this week, find a piece of art or music or a symbol in nature that represents paradox in your life right now or make one of your own. This could be as simple as printing iconography and sitting with the image, going for a nature walk and collecting leaves or acorns, or printing music lyrics that you connect with, but we encourage you to take it deeper, somehow making it your own. However you do this, bring some sort of symbol of your time to your altar where you can continue to reflect upon it.

+ BOOK + A Weary World: Reflections of a Blue Christmas, Kathy Escobar

+ BLOG + When Christmas is Hard: Honoring Paradox, Kathy Escobar

SESSION FOUR

BORROWING HOPE

INTRODUCTION

Hope is the gift that happens on the other side of enduring. We cannot manufacture it, it grows through stories of resilience. Conversations, sitting with, and being loved all become glimmers of light in the darkness. It is natural and normal to feel hopeless when we are suffering life's losses. We lose hope, that is a real thing, and it doesn't necessarily change on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning just because those days are scheduled to arrive.

Fortunately, creation exists in such a connected way, that when we don't have it, we can draw from a source that does until our own hope rises. For many of us, that source lies within the reciprocal relationships with our family and friends, or our faith community, or maybe even nature itself. In this film, Kathy talks about her own hopelessness, and having to borrow hope from those who have carried her and her family through the hardest of the hard.

BE. HERE. NOW.

Take a few good, deep breaths, each time sinking deeper into your body and letting go of whatever you were previously doing or thinking or any inner thoughts about what there is to do next. Become fully present.

Once you are ready, read aloud the following quote from Kathy, noticing what her words evoke in you:

I CAN'T GET WHAT I NEED JUST FROM GOD.
I NEED PEOPLE.
I NEED THEIR STORY OF SURVIVING HARD THINGS.

PREPARING TO WATCH AND LISTEN

As you get ready to watch and listen to the film, relax your defenses and let go of your expectations. Instead, engage with wonder and curiosity. Open up to this final conversation with Kathy. Notice your reactivity or receptivity to anything that comes up including any habitual patterns or fears that may keep you closed in and closed off. Be curious about her words and experience, let her story lead you back to your own. Note when a specific sentence, idea or image particularly speaks to or challenges you.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Embracing Paradox with Kathy Escobar (15:16)
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/honoring-reality>

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Sit with what you have just experienced for a minute. Let your thoughts and reactions settle. Take a look over any notes you may have jotted down. Once again, read through the following prompt questions (like before, don't feel the need to answer every one, choose and work with the one or two that grab your attention). Use the prompts to write or draw out more of your internal observations.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Before sharing, touch back on your group guidelines for safe-sharing practices. Let the group know this is a time for deep generative listing, not for debate. It's not about defending and self-protecting, nor is it about fixing anyone. It's about self-giving, co-creating, and sharing our stories. It's about letting one another be who we are in the moment. We are here to help each other do our individual work as we listen to each other and ourselves.

OPEN MIND

What did you hear that was unsettling?
What did you hear that inspired a new hope?

OPEN HEART

What, if anything, are you feeling connected to from the film?
What did you hear that took you back to some time or person from the past?

OPEN WILL

What did you hear that is pulling your forward, perhaps making you aware of something that is yours to do?
How can your experience of hopelessness bring hope to others?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

If you have time, explore more using the questions below from Kathy's book, continuing to observe what may be emerging for you. Use your journal to write down whatever comes to your mind or heart—journaling will keep feelings moving up and out of the body.

A NOTE FOR GROUPS: Once again, take time to share anything emerging for you from any of the following prompts.

- + What did you hear that inspired a new hope?
- + Who or what do you need to approach to borrow hope? Where or to whom can you loan some hope?
- + Where do you see love in action in your life today? How can you follow Love?
- + Where are you finding hope right now?

SILENCE

Take a moment to exhale, to let go and let come, and to receive.

CARRY IT WITH YOU

As you move forward from here, consider returning to your notes as an assist to processing and integrating. Know that you are both hurt and healing, and that is okay. You are not alone.

Read through this responsive prayer, I AM, You Are, We Are by Kelly Hall. Return to this prayer when faced with holding the tension of two conflicting feelings or truths that exist together at the same time.

I AM, YOU ARE, WE ARE

By Kelly Hall

LEADER

I AM in the first stretch of morning
lighting the day, rustling trees, nudging birds,
rousing you -

when your eyes open, I AM there.

Wait with Me

be still for a minute

take in one good, deep breath

exhale the night

make a little more room -

manger space

let Me take up residence in You,

and be your guiding star

hear Me when I say,

I AM here,

I AM right here.

RESPONSE

When I make room within,
When I resist less, and rest more
I awaken knowing I am sourced in You.
You teach me that I am accepted,
and afford me the grace to accept myself—
a person You chose in the womb,
and like the stars,
gave me a name.
I am just one among many.
Give me the blessing of knowing You
In light of You-with-me,
Show me who You believe I am.

LEADER

Have faith that I AM with you
giving assurance, reminding you of who you are -
Mine.
And that is not all.
I AM giving more of Myself to you,
investing in us - you, Me, and them -
hoping you will open up
and with more Light,
see more of what can be together.
My beloved,
let Me have liberty in you,
let Me be Myself, freely.

RESPONSE

Help me tame my thoughts!
Be who You must—God be God!
The One who is able to receive curses
and gift presence.
Who comforts the grieving
Brings joy to the downtrodden
Who overcomes sorrow with gladness
and turns ashes to crowns.
It is hard to not be afraid of Your way!
It is nothing I could ever imagine, bigger than my wildest dreams!

LEADER

Yes, it will be unimaginable!

Don't be afraid, you will not lose in the loosening -
just open your hands,
let go of this world's reality,
I AM bringing you into Mine!
I made the Way, so the Way is made!
You would never expect it!
And, you could never be prepared, yet I urge you, "Get ready".

RESPONSE

Soon the unseen will be seen,
God, reorient our perceptions!
You have invested Yourself in us,
You are all in!
Let Your undying faith and love of humanity grow in me.
Let me grow into a love greater than I have ever known.

EXPLORE MORE

Explore further with these related and curated pieces, practices, and paths to stir your imagination. Click on the resource title to go to the piece.

+ FOCUS PRACTICE + Lectio Divina, Sometimes by Mary Oliver

Spend some focused time each day with this poem, *Sometimes*, by Mary Oliver. When you sit with it, you will read it slowly three times. Each time noticing a word, phrase, or idea that captures your attention. Does anything in her poem bring you hope?

SOMETIMES

By Mary Oliver

1.
Something came up
out of the dark.
It wasn't anything I had ever seen before.
It wasn't an animal
or a flower,
unless it was both.
Something came up out of the water,
a head the size of a cat
but muddy and without ears.
I don't know what God is.
I don't know what death is.
But I believe they have between them

some fervent and necessary arrangement.

2.

Sometime
melancholy leaves me breathless...

3.

Water from the heavens! Electricity from the source!
Both of them mad to create something!
The lightning brighter than any flower.
The thunder without a drowsy bone in its body.

4.

Instructions for living a life:
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.

5.

Two or three times in my life I discovered love.
Each time it seemed to solve everything.
Each time it solved a great many things
but not everything.
Yet left me as grateful as if it had indeed, and
thoroughly, solved everything.

6.

God, rest in my heart
and fortify me,
take away my hunger for answers,
let the hours play upon my body
like the hands of my beloved.
Let the cathead appear again—
the smallest of your mysteries,
some wild cousin of my own blood probably—
some cousin of my own wild blood probably,
in the black dinner-bowl of the pond.

7.

Death waits for me, I know it, around
one corner or another.
This doesn't amuse me.
Neither does it frighten me.

After the rain, I went back into the field of sunflowers.
It was cool, and I was anything but drowsy.
I walked slowly, and listened
to the crazy roots, in the drenched earth, laughing and growing.

- + BOOK + A Weary World: Reflections of a Blue Christmas, Kathy Escobar
- + BLOG + Hope is My Favorite Word, Kathy Escobar

////// MORE FROM KATHY ESCOBAR ////

+ The Work of the People

+ Kathy's website and blog

Read Kathy's books:

- + Faith Shift: Finding Your Way Forward When Everything You Believe is Coming Apart
- + Down We Go: Living in the Wild Ways of Jesus
- + Come with Me: An Invitation to Break Through the Wall Between You and God with Elaine Martens Hamilton
- + Practicing: Changing Yourself to Change the World
- + A Weary World: Reflections for a Blue Christmas