

## Appendix: Using *How Can I See the Light When It's So Dark?* with Groups

For the purposes of retreats, workshops, seminars, or classroom study, this book divides naturally into four sessions, with one major section discussed at each meeting. However, if time permits, six sessions would allow two sessions each for the lengthier chapters, “Barriers to Gratitude” and “Bridges to Gratitude,” and one session each for “Belief in Gratitude” and “Becoming Gratitude.”

The individual journaling and reflections questions found at the end of each chapter may be used by readers as a private devotional exercise or reprinted for the use of groups. (Permission is granted.) I recommend that discussion groups consist of no more than five or six people, so that each person has an opportunity to contribute to the interchange. It is usually helpful for someone in each group to be responsible for facilitating the group discussion so that the material can be responsibly covered and each participant has time to be heard.

Here are some specific suggestions for retreat or classroom sessions. As an opening for each session, a designated person could read the scripture passage that begins that section and invite the participants to connect the scripture to the topic. If time permits, *lectio divina* (individual or group reflection) would deepen the experience. Following is

a useful model for the process, which may be adapted to the needs of your group.

*LECTIO DIVINA*

1. Select the passage.  
Short passage—1–10 verses.
2. Take time to be fully present.  
Reaffirm that you want to be addressed by God.  
Pay attention to breathing.  
When mind wanders, return to breathing.  
Release tension; breathe in peace and stillness.
3. Receive your word or phrase.  
Read passage slowly and out loud.  
Notice a word or phrase that “speaks” to you.  
Notice positive or negative energy.  
Close eyes; repeat word or phrase.  
Let it sink into your consciousness.
4. Think about the word or phrase.  
What is going on in your life that needs to hear this word?  
Why is God calling this to your attention?  
What is God saying to you through this word?
5. Explore feelings evoked by the word or phrase.  
Remember a possible instance in your past that connects with this word.  
What prayer emerges from your heart regarding your own needs?  
How does this word move you to pray for others?
6. Release and offer all to God.  
Release thoughts, feelings, and intentions to God.  
Rest in God; let go of mental “action”; be silent.

7. Receive what is offered.

Notice any insight or invitation that is offered.

Pay attention to any response or specific action that may be suggested.

Formulate a breath prayer using the inspired word or phrase.

The Litany for the Silence, found in Chapter 3, can be reproduced and read responsively as an opening exercise. In addition, some of the stories, poems, and illustrations in the book may be copied separately and handed out for individual or group use during “free time.” For instance, “The Naked Crab” (Chapter 1), “Manuel’s Lunch” (Chapter 1), “Otherwise” (Chapter 3), the article about Itzak Perlman (Chapter 3), etc.

If the retreat setting is conducive to outdoor reflection, reprint the disciplines in Chapter 3 that require a nature setting, especially the walking exercises or the Sacred Seed exercise. Participants can engage in the exercises, journal about them, or discuss their experiences in the larger group at the appropriate time.

Following are two gratitude prayers that may be reprinted and prayed in unison to open or close the sessions.

### **PRAYER OF THANKS**

Just this once, O God, I’d like to come to you with no problems, but  
simply to say,

Thank you:

For your forgiveness, when I fail;

For the sheer joy of sleep, when I’m terribly tired;

For the silent strength of humility, when pride overtakes me;

For the justice of your laws, when people are cruel;

For the growing remedies to good health, when I am ill;

For the nurture of new knowledge, when I make a mistake;  
For the simplicity of orderliness, when I face confusion;  
For the joy of helping others, when I see people in need;  
For the assurance that you have made a place for each of us, when I feel  
    inadequate among my peers;  
For the earthly evidences of your will, when I am trying to find out  
    what life is all about;  
For the reality of your world, when I stray too far into fantasy;  
For the rightness of reasonableness, when I panic too quickly.  
For the fun that refreshes, when everything gets too serious;  
For the renewal of moments of silence, when I am dizzy being busy in  
    a going world;  
For the confidence of friends, when loved ones do not understand;  
For the healing love of family, when friends hurt me;  
For your presence, when I am very lonely;  
And above all, dear God, I thank you for the fullness you have given to  
    this world of yours.

AMEN

### **PRAYER FOR A NEW DAY**

O God, for another day, we give you thanks.  
We pray that on this day, you will FREE us  
    From all fear of the future,  
    From all anxiety about tomorrow,  
    From all bitterness toward the past,  
    From all cowardice in the face of danger,  
    From all laziness in the face of work,  
    From all failure in the face of opportunity,  
    From all weakness when your power is so near.

We pray that on his day, you will FILL us  
With love that knows no barrier,  
With sympathy that reaches out to all,  
With faith strong enough for the darkness,  
With strength enough for our tasks,  
With loyalty to do your kingdom's work,  
With wisdom to meet the complexities of life's decisions,  
With the will to point us to you.  
AMEN.