

Session 4: Chapter 6

Gather

Create and protect connections

If needed, reconnect to your group by introducing yourself with your name and your connection to the congregation. Then go around and share one word that reflects how you are feeling coming to small group.

Then, have someone read out loud the guidelines for gathering found in the *About this Guide* document and any additional guidelines added for your group. Make sure you all understand what time to wrap up your conversation to best honor each other's time.

Center

Ground yourselves in common purpose

Have one person read: *An invitation to a Brave Space* by Micky Scottbey Jones

Together we will create brave space Because there is no such thing as a "safe space"

We exist in the real world

We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.

In this space

We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.

We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,

We call each other to more truth and love

We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.

We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.

We will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But It will be our brave space together,

And

We will work on it side by side.

Discuss

Pick a few questions below to respond to as a group

1. How was discipline/justice enacted in the home you grew up in? What kinds of punishment models existed for you as a child? If you were/are a caregiver to children, did you continue that model in your own childrearing?
2. Do you have any personal experience with prison or incarceration?
3. What picture does Ruttenberg paint about the American criminal justice system? How does it fit (or not fit) in with the conversation about repentance that we've been having so far?
4. Have you encountered the concept of restorative justice/transformational justice before? How does it differ from our country's primary criminal justice model? What are some challenges inherent in a more restorative or transformational justice model?
5. What are your thoughts on holding appropriate consequences for harm that allow for the possibility of repentance of the perpetrator?
6. Jesus quoted the Hebrew prophet Isaiah when he said he came to "proclaim good news to the poor... (and) liberty to the captives." In Matthew 25, Jesus distinguishes between the goats who ignore the call to do justice and praises the sheep who feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, tend the sick and finally: visit the prisoner.

Jesus says to a woman caught in adultery, when he saves her from mob: "go and sin no more." In other words, he sees her as a whole person: a victim of others' hypocritical accusations and worthy of protection and defense, yet also a harm-doer herself. He holds her accountable for her actions, inviting her to turn herself around.

How does Jesus' approach to accountability inform our own approach of accountability in our personal lives and impact how we view the carceral system?

7. What parts of this chapter were most challenging or thought-provoking for you?

Close

End your discussion with prayer

Close your time together with the prayer below, adding any prayer concerns from your group. Before you depart, confirm your next gathering date, time, and space.

Loving God, We seek to walk the pathway of your love and compassion. Strengthen us in this work. Where we feel anxiety, grant us peace. Where we encounter fear, grant us courage. Where we face unknowns, grant us hope. May Christ guide us, the Spirit sustain us, and this community uphold us. Amen.