

# TOSSING AND TURNING

## Week 1 Small Group: Fear

### OPENING PRAYER:

God of Grace, we gather together today carrying with us the fears that kept us tossing and turning through the night. We pray that this time together will help us to know we are not alone. We have you present to walk beside us through the fear, and we have each other to support us on the journey.

*You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do.* Eleanor Roosevelt

### BREAKING THE ICE:

We all experience fear. As a child do you remember being afraid of the dark, being alone, clowns, bugs, or the fear of something happening to someone you love? Share a story in which you were fearful as a child. There are so many things we could be afraid of. For example, some people have what is called acerophobia, which is the fear of foods being sour. There's catoptrophobia, which is not the fear of cats, but the fear of mirrors. Still others are afraid of chopsticks, numbers and certain fabrics. These may sound like silly fears to us, but to some people, these fears are real! What are some other things people may be afraid of?

### WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

**Read** Deuteronomy 31:1-8, Philippians 4:4-9

God promised Moses and the people of Israel the land of Canaan when they left Egypt. Moses sent 12 men from each tribe of Israel to cross the Jordan and explore the land. Although God promised the land and protection from the Canaanites, the people of Israel were too fearful to cross into the land. Now 40 years later only Joshua and Caleb remain to once again be courageous and cross the Jordan. (See Numbers 13 for the account.)

- How does Moses address the past fears of the Israelites?
- What would make this situation different than the original crossing of the Jordan?
- What do you believe is significant about Joshua crossing first?

### NEXT STEPS:

How does fear impact our decision making?

The collective fear of the Israelites was contagious. Are you more fearful when you're alone, or does what others think drive your anxiety? Paul exhorts that those who follow Jesus have reason to rejoice in all circumstances. How might the promise that nothing is impossible with God help you face difficult circumstances?

### CLOSING PRAYER:

God of promise, help us to see the giants before us and trust that you have a plan. Direct our paths in ways that lead to new life. When fear stirs our emotions, send courageous and caring friends to step into the situation with us. Amen.



**UNITED METHODISTS**  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

# TOSSING AND TURNING

## Week 2 Small Group: Future

### OPENING PRAYER:

God of time and space, we invite you into this place. We invite you into our dialogue and into our presence. We open our hearts, minds and doors to your presence as we engage in conversation. Amen.

*Look not mournfully into the past, it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present, it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a courageous heart.* Modified from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

### BREAKING THE ICE:

How often do you try and plan out your future? When was the last time you just trusted that God would take care of the future?

### WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Isaiah 41: 10-13 and Matthew 6: 25-34

- What assurance does God give the people in the Isaiah passage?
- What are the reasons given in both scripture passages that the people should place their trust in God?
- How do you feel knowing that God is providing you with strength, help and holding you up?

### NEXT STEPS:

- What are some things you need to give up in order to fully trust that “God has a plan”?
- When you hear that you’re not to worry in this passage, how do you feel?
- What is one way that you can seek after God’s presence in the midst of worrying about the future?

### CLOSING PRAYER:

God, you are a God of strength, help and perseverance. May we be a people that go through this week knowing that you are already going ahead of us. May we be comforted this week no matter what we are going through. May we place control of our future in your hands. Amen.



# TOSSING AND TURNING

## Week 3 Small Group: Finances

### OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, we come together recognizing that we sometimes struggle with surrendering our finances to you. Help us in this time together to grow in our trust. Open our eyes to be secure in your goodness and provision. Amen.

*Don't make money your goal, instead, pursue the things you love doing.* Maya Angelou

### BREAKING THE ICE:

Have you regretted that you bought something that, you thought, might bring you happiness, but it turned out it didn't? When considering a purchase, do you buy it because you want it, or you need it? What is the difference between "want" and "need"?

### WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

**Read** Luke 12:13-21

- What makes this rich man feel secure enough to say that "Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry"? What is the basis of his security?
- Why do you think God, in this story, regards this rich man as a fool? Is it because of the wealth he has or something else?

**Read** 1 Kings 17:8-16

- The Bible tells us there was a great drought all over Israel. What does it tell us about the general situation of people at that time?
- What happened to the widow when she was willing to share what little she had with Elijah?

### NEXT STEPS:

- The widow was willing to sacrifice everything, including the life of her child. Have we ever been asked to make a great sacrifice for God?
- While Elijah travels, he learns to hear and listen to the voice of God. How can we use the circumstances where we are conditioned to worry to instead listen for God?
- While saving and being prepared are both important, the rich man's problem was he cared only for himself. What mindset do we need to adapt so we might use our finances to love God and others?

### PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

Lord, help us find joy in sharing more than in having more. Give us discernment in how we use our resources. Give us opportunities for generosity. Amen.



**UNITED METHODISTS**  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

# TOSSING AND TURNING

## Week 4 Small Group: Finality, The Anxiety of Choosing

### OPENING PRAYER:

God of endless possibilities, we are often overwhelmed by the choices that are before us. Show us the ways you offer us guidance and direction so that our choices bring you glory. Amen.

*May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears.* Nelson Mandela

### BREAKING THE ICE:

- What's the biggest decision you ever had to make?
- Have you ever bargained with God to help you make a decision?

### WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

**Read** Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

- What were the qualifications of the new apostle?
- What are the various means used to make a choice? In Acts 2, the presence of the Holy Spirit comes upon the believers. How might that have changed their practice?
- Not all choices are between good and bad. Sometimes we have more than one good option. How might this scripture be an example of that possibility?

**Read** Jonah 2:1-10

- Have you ever cried out to God from the belly of the fish?
- Has there been a time in your life when you felt like you were in a pit that God pulled you out of?
- Has God ever sent you, like Jonah, to a place where you didn't want to go? Were you surprised by what you found there?

### NEXT STEPS:

Peter asks for advice from people who had walked with Jesus throughout his entire ministry. What kind of qualifications would you look for, when you are looking for advice on a matter of faith? How about for advice on relationships? Call a friend and share about a decision that you are wrestling with. See if he or she has any insight. Peter prays that the Lord knows everyone's heart. Is that an encouraging thought, why or why not? Pray and ask that God knows your heart as you make decisions. As we close this study on tossing and turning, how will you remain steadfast in your pursuit of bringing your worries to God?

### PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

God, you are our rock and our salvation. When everything else fails, you are still God. Help us to put our trust in the power of your redeeming love, when the decisions we need to make keep us up at night. Amen.



**UNITED METHODISTS**  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY