

Meeting 15 —Thriving (Up to 90 minutes)



**women
thriving
in ministry**

AN INITIATIVE OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Gathering Time—5 minutes

- As people join the meeting, welcome them and create a place of hospitality. When all have arrived, open your time in prayer.

Conversation Starter—15 minutes

- Which inspires you more: a favorite place in your home state/country, the mountains, the ocean? Why?
- Did you take some time to journal on any of the questions we suggested last month? Anything to report?

Sharing Together—40 minutes

Homework, to be shared in advance:

An Exercise in Paying Attention

We will be talking about what it means to live a life of *Thriving* this month. As an exercise to prepare for this discussion, would you put your phone aside, silence any alerts you expect on your watch, and take a walk outside—or at least an intentional look around wherever you are—for at least 15 minutes? Would you be open to whatever catches your eye and settle in to see what you can experience? Look at the squirrel digging around and playing tag. Study your favorite plant and its soil. Watch the kids playing outside. Even study your own hands. Jot down what comes to mind or what you experience and be prepared to share it. (Bonus points: Do this practice every day for a week!)

To the Mentor: *Please share the paragraph above with your mentees at least 2 weeks prior to this meeting.*

- The focus for this month is on the topic of Thriving. How would you describe what it means to Thrive?
 - Perhaps read or talk about John 10:10. What do you think Jesus meant by “abundance” or “life to the full”?
- Teaching:
 - Dr. Bloom and his research group explain that thriving relates to our sense of meaning, purpose, and our sense of connection with others.
 - Here’s how Dr. Bloom defines *thriving*: striving to live a good and worthy life that honors other people and contributes toward the common good.

- It includes 3 dimensions:
 - Spiritual Vitality—the clarity and strength of one’s faith and includes the wholistic impact that a spiritual or religious belief provides. It is related to the amount of awe, wonder, inspiration, and worship of the Triune God that one experiences.
 - Relational Connectedness—the quality of relationships and social support in and outside of work.
 - Meaning in Life—the extent to which a person experiences meaning in life. (Thank you Captain Obvious!)
- Think back to the exercise in paying attention that we assigned. Tell us about your experience. What did you learn? How was that for you?
 - *Mentor: we expect that this homework was delightful for some and maybe challenging for others. We hope that they will point to experiences of awe, wonder, or delight.*
- Listen to Henri Nouwen’s famous statement about joy: “Joy does not simply happen to you. You have to choose it and keep choosing it every day”? What do you think this means? How do you do it?
- We can’t always control the spiritual vitality we experience, the health of our relationships, or the meaning that we feel in our life at any given moment. But we can do things to nurture each of those. Is there an area that you particularly want to nurture right now?
- Consider the Fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5 specifically identifies the following as fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit: *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*. Where do you see this fruit growing in or around you? How does this fruit help you “thrive” according to this definition?

Prayer Practice—Lectio Divina—15 minutes

To the Mentor: *This is written for you to read directly, if you’d like.*

Our prayer practice today is a guided prayer experience called Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina, which means divine reading, is one of the great treasures of the Christian tradition of prayer. While originating with the early desert Fathers and Mothers, it became the devotional practice of the Jews in the days of Jesus and the main form of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition for the first sixteen centuries. This method of prayer leads us into a deeper encounter with scripture, as we listen with the ear of our hearts. It is a way of listening to scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ. As we encounter Christ’s friendship, trust, and love, our conversation becomes communion. As we read, reflect, respond, and rest in the Word, we experience union with Christ. This union ultimately leads us to transformation, as Christ works in us, helping us to become more merciful, compassionate, and loving.

I will guide you through this experience, beginning with a time of preparation and concluding with a time of rest. You will remain silent throughout the entirety of the experience. I will read the passage a total of four times and will share the written prompts and questions verbally. You are invited to read along, to put your papers away and simply receive, or to journal through

these steps—whatever you prefer. The instructions for leading the passage are below, as is a section of scripture, John 15:5-11.

- Prepare your heart to receive the Word by spending a few minutes in quiet, sitting comfortably, with eyes closed, as you eliminate distractions and focus inward. Let your body relax and become consciously aware of God’s presence with you.
- *First Reading of the Passage – Read*
 - Listen to the word offered, reading it several times slowly, with an open ear for the word or phrase that strikes you or catches your attention. Be content to listen simply and openly, without judging or analyzing as you savor the word meant for you. How is my life touched by this passage?
- *Second Reading of the Passage – Reflect*
 - Listen for the way in which the passage connects with your life. Allow several moments for thoughts, perceptions, and impressions. If the passage is a story perhaps ask yourself, “Where am I in this scene? What do I hear as I imagine myself in this story? How does this story connect with my own life experience?” Is there an invitation for me here?
- *Third Reading of the Passage- Respond*
 - Listen for your own response. Allow a prayer to flow spontaneously from your heart. As you enter into personal dialogue with God, prayerfully consider if there is an invitation for you in this text, if God is calling you to act or respond to the word you have heard. You might find it helpful to write your prayer or to journal at this point. How should I respond to this invitation?
- *Last Reading of the Passage- Rest*
 - Return to a place of rest in God, as you wait and rest in God’s presence. Assume a posture of being yielded and open to God as you accept this word as a gift.

John 15:5-11 (NIV)

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

Inviting Response—10 minutes

- Do you remember the homework we gave you on the Resilience lesson? (It was a self-check-in about your body/soul, your relationships, your sense of purpose.) Two of those three things are identified as aspects of *Thriving*. Being able to pay attention to our own selves—our body and soul, our relationships, and our sense of purpose—and nurture that part of ourselves is an important practice. What's one thing that you could do to nurture your body and soul, your connection, or your purpose in the month ahead?
- Is there anything that you've not said yet that you'd like to say?
- WorkWell App: consider adding one of the Self-Discovery practices and keep doing one that works well for you.
- IMPORTANT FOR NEXT MONTH: Presuming that you lead this lesson in November, would you discuss plans for meeting in December. Invite your group to consider whether you will meet in Advent or not. If so, is someone (including the Mentor) willing to identify the agenda for that meeting? It could be a time of workshopping Christmas worship plans, fellowship/sharing time or include a virtual Christmas "party." If schedules are tight, give yourselves a break with a month "off."
- Confirm next meeting time.

Closing Prayer—5 minutes

Remind them of the Group Commitments, one being prayer for one another. Are there any updates or new prayer concerns within this group? Share them now. Ask each person to pray for another person. (Agree upon those prior to praying.)