

An Altar in the World
Chapter Five
The Practice of Getting Lost

This study guide is formatted for a small group gathering. If you choose to use it as a small group leader or as an individual, feel free to adapt it in whatever way seems meaningful to you. Enjoy!

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Lesson prep:

Print out homework assignments for next week.
Put out hymnals and Bibles.

Quotes and ideas worth repeating:

Once you leave the cow path, the unpredictable territory is full of life.

You can no longer see where to put your feet.

You must become aware of each step you take.

Leaving the known path is a boon to your senses.

If you do not start choosing to get lost in some fairly low risk ways, how will you ever manage when one of life's big winds knocks you clean off your course?

Anything can become a spiritual practice one you are willing to approach it that way- once you let it bring you to your knees and show you what is real, including who you really are, who other people are, and how near God can be when you have lost your way.

Getting lost makes you stronger at the edges and softer at the center.

Getting lost may be the kick in the pants you have been waiting for.

Related Scripture:

1 Kings 19:1-9 Elijah fleeing fury of Jezebel

Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus' 40 days in the Judean desert

Matthew 2:1-12 A journey in search of a king and going home by another way

Introductions:

Share a time when you were lost.

Did you find things while you were lost that you would never have discovered otherwise?

Reflection/discussion:

When you are going somewhere new, do you depend on GPS, read a map, ask a stranger for directions? How do you like to find your own way?

Read Biblical stories listed above of being lost aloud or in small groups.

Discuss: What caused the characters to be lost?
What did they lose by being lost?
What did they gain?

What was the reason for God's choice of Abraham and Sarah as first parents of Hebrew people?

(BBT's answer: they were willing to get lost, willing to move without a map, only equipped with God's promise to be with them).

Close your eyes and imagine yourself on the side of a busy road at night with a flat tire.
(May do guided imagery here).

You are vulnerable. What does being vulnerable teach us?

There are people all over the world who know how helpless you are feeling right now. They are vulnerable to bombs, guns, hunger, and mistreatment.

Are there wilderness times in your life when you took a detour or changed you for the better?

Barbara Brown Taylor states:

Popular religion focuses so hard on spiritual success that most of us do not know the first thing about spiritual fruits of failure.

Do you agree or disagree?

Recall a time when you showed hospitality:

Recall a time when you received hospitality:

Which changes you more-receiving hospitality or providing it?

Closing: Sing verses 1, 3 & 4 of "Amazing Grace"

Materials needed:

Hymnals, homework assignment slips

Homework:

Take a detour from the safest, shortest route to work, grocery, church or school this week. Test these skills:

Manage your panic.

Marshall your resources.

Take a good look around to see where you are.

Ask what this unexpected route might have to offer you.

The best way to grow in empathy for those who are lost is to know what it means to be lost yourself. Show some kindness this week for someone who is living in a foreign

country, someone with a child who won't stop crying, someone who is grieving,
someone who lost a job.