

**Learning to Walk in the Dark**  
**Chapter Four**  
**The Dark Emotions**

*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!*

*Amy Fryar Kennedy*

**Quotes and ideas worth repeating:**

Carl Jung: *Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkness of other people.* (page 73)

*When I stopped trying to block my sadness and let it move me instead, it led me to a bridge with people on the other side...Sadness does not sink a person; it is the energy a person spends trying to avoid sadness that does that.* (pages 79-80)

Ken Wilber: *Much of what passes for spiritual teaching in this country is about consoling the self, not losing it.* (page 87-88)

**Related Scripture:**

Matthew 10:39 *Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

BBT talks about time spent in bed this chapter. When are beds mentioned in the Bible?

Ps 4:4            Ps 6:6

Job 33:19       Ps 63:6

**Centering Song:** “Straw House Down” by Peter Mayer (Straw House Down CD)

**Introductions:**

Share your experience of walking to the mailbox in the dark.

**Gathering Activity:**

Have paper and crayons or marker available. Assign people different emotions to draw:

rage            hurt            fear            misery            relief            daring            sad-  
ness    anxiety            embarrassment            joy            excitement

**Reflection/discussion:**

Examine pictures. Allow people to comment on their own drawing or others.

What are the dark emotions?

Miriam Greenspan writes that what tips people toward depression is *a low tolerance for sadness. It is the inability to bear dark emotions that causes many of our most significant problems, not the emotions themselves.* (page 78) Agree or disagree?

Greenspan again: *There are no dark emotions-just unskillful ways of coping with emotions we cannot bear.* Agree or disagree?

According to Greenspan, what are powerful emotions trying to get us to do? (page 78)

BBT describes times when we wake up and are unable to go back to sleep as times when you come fact to fact with what really matters because it is too dark for most of your usual shallow distractions to work. How do you handle waking up with things on your mind? (page 76)

BBT has a chaplain's perspective: Eruptions are good news, the signal that darkness will not stay buried. If you can stand the upsetting energy, you may be allowed to watch while dark and light come back into balance. (page 84). Agree or disagree? Discuss.

Discuss endarkenment (page 86) Is it good not to comprehend everything all at once?  
Example: Nicodemus walks away from Jesus after not understanding the "born again" comment.

Can you describe a time when you had a gradual understanding of a subject or concept?

What would you name as the two functions of religion?

Ken Wilber names these two: 1. Translation: Beatitudes allow people to see hardships as blessings (translation). 2. Transformation: religion exists not to comfort the self, but to dismantle it (page 87)

Agree or disagree?

**Closing:** "Morning Star" by Ann Weems

There are those times when  
all the stars are torn from our skies,  
and morning will not come.  
We try to make our way  
in unlit passages,  
frightened, desperate and despairing.  
We cannot see,  
for wherever we turn

the night continues,  
And yet, it is  
into this impenetrable night  
that the Child is born.  
Tearing through the seams of darkness,  
the Morning Star appears  
in our eyes and in our hearts.  
The people who walked in darkness  
have seen  
a great Light.

**Materials need to lead:**

Paper and markers/crayons for drawing emotions  
Straw House Down CD or ipod and player

**Homework for next week:**

Do something to help someone who is sad/scared/in despair this week.