40 Day Mind Fast Soul Feast
A Lent Study
For Unity of Lehigh Valley
Introduction

This study guide was created to utilize 40 Day Mind Fast Soul Feast by Michael Bernard Beckwith in study groups. The guide was created by Rev Joy Wyler to facilitate personal study and home based study groups.

Home based study groups were the foundation, not only of early Christianity but also Unity. Each of us has access to the wisdom of the Universe and each of us is able to support one another on our own individual path. No individual holds all the wisdom nor is any one person assured s/he can point the way for all others. We can do our own work, hold the consciousness of the highest and best for all others, and join with like minded friends to pool our wisdom and experience.

Whether your group includes only those associated with Unity or no one who is familiar with Unity, please allow the questions and the readings to bring you to a deeper relationship with the Divine.

The study guides are free for all participants. It is suggested each group consider taking a love offering at least twice during the study time. All offerings will benefit Unity of Lehigh Valley. Group leaders are responsible for getting the love offering to the ULV Office. Envelopes are available at the church.

Lent is a creation of the church; a time of preparation. Be ready for the transformation you are creating.  

Reverend Joy Wyler
Facilitating Group Meetings

Each group will choose its own date and time for meeting. Having a similar structure and format for each meeting will enhance the sense of familiarity and safety for the group.

I. It is suggested that the group determine a meeting date and time by conversation on the phone or online, in advance. It is generally easier to meet in the same home each week but that is up to the group. The first meeting should be the beginning of Lent, prior to Sunday, March 9th. There should be a total of 7 meetings. Study guides are free to all participants.

II. The host will provide the space. This may include setting up chairs or arranging furniture for comfortable seating for the group. You may want to use candles or an alter table to create a sacred space. Any refreshments before or after the meeting are at the discretion of the group.

III. Leadership roles may rotate and it is recommended that the group share leadership duties. It is the responsibility of every participant to do the reading and work described in the study guide.

IV. Meeting format:

- Opening Prayer: this can be rotated so that everyone has an opportunity to open the meeting
- Check-in   (this can be a focus question, a 3 word description of where you are right now, a very brief ice-breaker)
- Discussion using topics and questions in the Learning Guide for the applicable section of the book.
- Closing. You may choose to close by speaking a prayer request and then everyone says Amen; everyone speaks the Prayer for Protection; or you can rotate the closing responsibilities.
- Traditional Lent does not include Sundays but begins 4 days before the first Sunday. Our study guide will be broken into 7 total segments: 5 segments of 6 lessons; the first segment the opening and Day 1 and the second segment catching up with 9 lessons. Meetings should begin before the first Sunday of Lent, March 9th and should end before Easter Sunday, April 20th.
- The last meeting invites your group to create something special. Plan to talk about this in advance. You may want to dress as a celebration, bring special snacks, do something different.
OPENING LESSON

Reading: Introduction and Day 1.

Meeting:

♥ Opening Prayer
♥ Introductions: Go around the circle and invite everyone to introduce themselves (even if you are friends and know one another) by stating his/her name and a preferred name for God. If your group includes people not active in Unity of Lehigh Valley, ask each person to indicate if they participate in any faith community and if yes, which one.
♥ Take turns reading a paragraph of the book’s Introduction until complete.
♥ Discussion: (go around the circle sharing individual responses to each)

1. What is your relationship to “Jesus”? How comfortable are you when the introduction references Jesus and the temptations in the wilderness? Can you set aside your discomfort in a way that allows you to hear the lesson? Could you substitute another sacred character for the name Jesus and benefit?

2. In the third paragraph on page 2 of the Introduction, Rev Beckwith invites us to set an intention. What is your intention for this 40 day journey?

3. Day 1 speaks of “a tendency in human nature to look to the external world for fulfillment that can only be found within.” Can you think of two ways you look to the external world for fulfillment?

4. The affirmation speaks of Freedom from history, habit and experience. What does freedom feel like for you?

♥ Closing
LESSON TWO

Reading: Day 2-10

Meeting:

♥ Opening Prayer

♥ Check-in

♥ Discussions:
  1. Invite someone to read the first paragraph of Day 2. What does this mean to you as both responsibility and possibility?
  2. Do you agree with the philosophy of Emerson in Day 3? “Outgiving what we are compensated for” seems odd in our Western ways of fighting for fair wages. Can you truly serve “an Eternal Idea” and keep your job?
  3. How does Day 3 relate to Day 10?
  4. Were you able to keep the spiritual practice in Day 5: Every hour on the hour take a deep breath and give thanks for your human incarnation? How did it feel?
  5. Did you know George Washington Carver, quoted at the beginning of Day 5, was controversial for refusing to separate his spirituality from his science? Does it sound like the quote of a scientist? How might this relate to the affirmation for Day 5?
  6. Both Day 6 and Day 7 speak about Desire. The Affirmation from Day 2 speaks of “the fire from heaven”. How is this desire and fire alive in you? Or is it?

♥ Closing
LESSON THREE

Reading: Day 11-16. Consider bringing baby pictures to the meeting for the meditation on Day 14.

Meeting:

- Opening Prayer
- Check-in
- Discussions:
  1. Would you agree Imagination is more important than Knowledge? Why or why not?
  2. Consider the opening quote in Day 12: *It is impossible for man to conceal himself. In every act, word or gesture he stands revealed as he is, and not as he would have himself appear to be.* Now consider the Affirmation: *Because my thoughts, words and actions mirror the Spirit’s presence within me, I send out vibrations of love, joy, peace and compassion to all who cross my path.* This week, how have you been “revealed to be” at your worst and at your best? How is the activity of the Affirmation different?
  3. Day 14 is one of the most beautiful descriptions of an intimate relationship with the Divine. As a group take just a moment to close your eyes and meditate on “the thought God had at the precise moment it projected you into existence”. How does that feel?
  4. How do you “court the Infinite”?
  5. In this present time, have you given up on dreams and on believing in yourself? If yes, are you open to transformation? If not now, how do you currently nourish your dreams?
  6. What is your “Praise Phrase”?

- Closing
LESSON FOUR

Reading: Day 17-22

Meeting:

♥ Opening Prayer

♥ Check-in

♥ Discussions:
1. Day 17 talks about accessing both our human and divine nature. How freely do we access our divine I AM during an ordinary day? What might change if we practiced this more? What does “consciously access the divine” look like?
2. “You cannot fool spiritual law!” Is this a blessing or a curse? Why?
3. Day 21 invites us into a bold revision of beliefs around death and life. While it may take more than a day to truly change our thoughts, can you contemplate yourself as eternal? What might it mean to “celebrate the eternal Spirit at the center of my being”? 
4. On Day 20 Beckwith returns again to the image of flame, “With every breath realize you glow with God. Then you will know absolutely that the flame of the Godhead is always alight within you.” Invite your group to create a simple ritual celebrating the eternal light of God aglow in you. Arrange tealights so that there is one candle for each person in the group and one larger candle to represent the Godhead. One by one, each person lights a candle for him/herself and states simply, “I AM the light of the world. I AM God’s delight”. Spend a few moments in the silence before extinguishing the candles.

♥ Closing
LESSON FIVE

Reading: Day 23-28

Meeting:

♥ Opening Prayer

♥ Check-in

♥ Discussions:
1. How do you feel about the concept of surrender? Is there some fear that comes up as you contemplate “complete surrender”? What does that fear come from?
2. Are we ready to affirm “Conscious communion with Spirit is my way of life”? What might get in the way?
3. Is gratitude described in Day 24 different than the way you usually experience gratitude? How is it the same or different?
4. Over half way through this 40 day process, on Day 25 Beckwith returns to letting go of seeking fulfillment through the external. Have you sensed any shifts since day 1? What is different? How can we sustain our shifts?
5. On Day 28 Beckwith introduces the “Laughing Buddha” and the freedom to laugh at ourselves. Invite each participant to share a time when s/he was able to laugh at her/himself. Does “pride” ever get in the way of being able to laugh at ourselves?

♥ Closing
LESSON SIX

Reading: Day 29-34

Meeting:
♥ Opening Prayer
♥ Check-in
♥ Discussions:
1. The beginning of Day 29 invites us to abstain from turning on the television. Many of us have additional ways of distracting ourselves from making conscious contact with God including computers, Facebook, Candy Crush, books, sports, and work. What is one thing you abstained from “until you make contact with your spirit”?
2. What might need to change to make God first in your life?
3. Spend a day practicing the affirmation, “I AM that I am” at least once an hour. What do you notice?
4. Our answers are not locked inside someone else. Who have you looked to for the answers found within you? What does it take to confidently affirm, “God in me is the one true source of my fulfillment and enlightenment”?
5. What fuels your activity most days? Can you describe a day in which “My every motive, thought and action is fueled by the energy of my commitment and love for my spiritual journey”?
6. Explore a group experience of “yogic gratitude”. Remain seated. Stretch both arms above your head, reaching as high as comfortable towards the ceiling. Hold for 3 breaths. Gently release and bring arms to your side. Now bend forward and reach your arms towards the floor, stretching comfortably and holding for 3 breaths. Return to upright gently. Take 3 cleansing breaths. Now, if you were practicing unconditional gratitude, what are you grateful for this week?

♥ Closing
LESSON SEVEN

Reading: Day 35-40

Meeting: Consider as a group in advance how you would like to make this a special final meeting.

❤ Opening Prayer
❤ Check-in
❤ Discussions:

1. These last lessons are about celebrating our sacred self. This is the truth of yourself we have been discovering, exploring and living from these last 40 days. Has your comfort level with your sacred self changed during this experience? If yes, how. If no, what might have been going on or what might have made it a better experience?

2. Do you feel you have been able to put God first in your life during any of this time?

3. Has this process produced any changes in your life?

4. Consider a final ceremony together. Gather tealights, one for each participant and one larger candle to represent the Godhead. As each participant lights his/her candle, state “I AM that I am”

Together affirm these statements:

_I consecrate myself to the purpose of my being. I dedicate my thoughts, words and actions to the Spirit and am a clear, pure channel of its expression._

_I offer myself as an instrument of the Spirit. I allow my Soul-force to express in its fullest form and all is well with my spirit and life circumstance._

_I open myself and allow the universe to flow through me in loving service to all who cross my path._

And so it is. Amen.