



## ZIMZUM DISCIPLESHIP VIDEO LESSON #5: IMPERFECTION SMALL GROUP SESSION 2

### GATHERING

#### Opening Prayer:

Holy One, you created us in your image and invited us to become fully who you have made us to be. We have often thought that meant we needed to find perfection as fallible human beings, yet you desired us to grow into maturity. Help us to know that in you we find wholeness through our weakness. **Amen.**

*Begin with brief check-ins and the opening questions below:*

#### Opening Questions:

How has it been practicing zimzum discipleship these past weeks? Have you found time for the Daily Examen?

#### **Reading: Matthew 20:1-16**

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing

you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Use *lectio divina* ("divine reading") for this passage.

- Read the text slowly aloud. Sit for a time and notice where your heart takes you
- Meditate on a word or phrase that has caught your attention. Or imagine taking on a role in this narrative and playing it over again in your mind
- Pray the passage aloud slowly again, or simply pray the word or phrase that has taken your attention
- Quietly consider how this passage might lead you to live more faithfully as a disciple of Jesus, and let the Spirit guide you as to next steps for contemplative living.

## Content

"I would like to describe how this message of falling down and moving up is, in fact, the most counter-intuitive message in most of the world's religions, including and most especially Christianity. *We grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right.* That might just be the central message of how spiritual growth happens; yet nothing in us wants to believe it. I actually think it is the only workable meaning of any remaining notion of 'original sin.' There seems to have been a fly in the ointment from the beginning, but the key is recognizing and dealing with the fly rather than needing to throw out the whole ointment!

"If there is such a thing as human perfection, it seems to emerge precisely from how we handle the imperfection that is everywhere, especially our own. What a clever place for God to hide holiness, so that only the humble and earnest will find it! A 'perfect' person ends up being one who can consciously forgive and include imperfection rather than one who thinks he or she is totally above and beyond imperfection. It becomes sort of obvious once you say it out loud. In fact, I would say that *the demand for the perfect is the greatest enemy of the good.* Perfection is a mathematical or divine concept, goodness is a beautiful human concept that includes us all. By denying their pain, avoiding the necessary falling, many have kept themselves from their own spiritual depths—and therefore have been kept from their own spiritual heights." — Richard Rohr from *Falling Upward*

## Reflection Questions

- Jesus declares the last will be first. Our society declares the opposite. How do you reconcile these two messages in your own life?
- Richard Rohr writes, “We grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right.” Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- Describe a time in your life when you either did it wrong and grew spiritually because of that situation or where when you were last or the least and you experienced honor or healing.
- Why do you think God seems to have a preference for weakness or imperfections in us as human beings? What does this say about God?
- Close by doing the Examen together (either at this point in the study, or following the final reflection questions).

As a reminder, begin by settling yourself, and asking the Spirit to guide you through the past 24 hours of your life. After a few moments of quiet, ask two related questions: For which moment in the past day am I most grateful? For which moment am I least grateful? Allowing the Spirit to guide you, share this with others gathered around you, write it in a journal, or simply note it in your own heart. If there is a need to make repair, either with God or others, pray for guidance, and then finally, give thanks to God for being with you in the midst of every aspect of your life.

## Final Reflections

- What has captured your heart or your imagination in today's discussion?
- Where have you seen God—or Love—recently?
- What might you intentionally do over the next 2-4 weeks to bring you closer to God?

## Closing Prayer

Almighty and Eternal God, you sacrificially withdrew from a place within yourself in order to create the entirety of the cosmos so that you might be in relationship with us and all of creation. Help us to embrace zimzum discipleship and make space in our own lives, that we might more faithfully follow in the way of Jesus who gave of himself for the salvation and healing of the whole world. All this we ask in the name of the Risen Christ, who dwells endlessly with you and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*