

Week One
Orientation and Planning for the Year

This session is for mentors who may want to begin with a session to help organize the group and distribute materials. The components are suggestions of pieces that could be included in a Preparation Session. This is not a design that must or needs to be done, or done in this order, unless a mentor would find some or all of it helpful. After the Preparation Session, group members read according to the Guide. Unit One begins with Session Two.

Worship

TRADITION

***Prayer for a Pilgrim Who Struggles with the Journey*²**

Joyce Rupp

Pilgrim God, there is an exodus going on in my life—desert stretches, a vast land of questions. Inside my heart, your promises tumble and turn. No pillar of cloud by day or fire by night that I can see.

My heart hurts at leaving loved ones and so much of the security I have known. I try to give in to the stretching and the pain. It is hard, God, and I want to be settled, secure, safe and sure. And here I am feeling so full of pilgrim’s fear and anxiety.

O God of the journey, lift me up, press me against your cheek. Let your great love hold me and create a deep trust in me. Then set me down, God of the journey; take my hand in yours, and guide me ever so gently across the new territory of my life.

God of my life, create in me the heart of a pilgrim. There is a part of me that fights letting go. Do not allow me to become so rooted or so accustomed to my daily tasks and inner securities, that I miss your voice calling me to greater growth and deeper maturity in faith. I want to hoard my blessings, to hang onto my gifts, to hide my talents and the blessings of my life,

I want to take them out, one by one, only when I know that it is safe and I won’t get hurt or emptied. Stir afire in me such a great love for you and your people that I will constantly celebrate life and appreciate its beauty, even when it is painful.

Allow me to “see visions and dream dreams” so that I can live with your vision and not be overwhelmed by the struggles of the journey. God of the Exodus, I know you are near.

Grant me the courage to change, whether that change is an inner or outer one. Deepen my awareness of your faithful presence and bless my pilgrim heart. Amen.

Check-in

Take a few minutes to consider the following:

What events during the break have especially affected you?

What for you is the essence of EfM?

**ACTION
POSITION**

Journal briefly or make notes, as you wish.

Distribute textbooks.

TRADITION

² Joyce Rupp, *Praying Our Goodbyes: A Spiritual Companion Through Life’s Losses and Sorrows* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave maria Press, 2009), 125.

- **Year One:** *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* by John J. Collins. *The Holy Bible*, Old Testament and Apocrypha.
- **Year Two:** *Introducing the New Testament* by Mark Allan Powell. *The Holy Bible*, New Testament.
- **Year Three:** *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* by Diarmaid MacCulloch.
- **Year Four:** *Theology for a Troubled Believer* by Diogenes Allen. *The Christian Moral Life: Practices of Piety* by Timothy F. Sedgwick. *My Neighbor's Faith* edited by Jennifer Howe Peace, Or N. Rose, and Gregory Mobley.

Distribute the *Reading and Reflection Guide, Volume A* to everyone.

Go over:

Using the weekly *Reading and Reflection Guide*

Overview of the Year, found on pages 31-40 in Part II of the Guide

Note that the readings for some sessions, in particular those at the beginning of each unit, will be found in the Reflection and Reading Guide rather than in the textbooks. Most participants will find looking ahead on a regular basis at the next several assignments, especially in the case of the Interlude books, will help them plan adequate time for reading before the sessions.

Review Attitudes towards Change and Transition

CULTURE

William Bridges notes that change is situational and external—new job, different goals, and new rules. Transition is internal—what happens and is happening emotionally and individually as a result of the change. Without a transition, a change is just a rearrangement of the furniture. Unless transition happens, the change isn't "owned" and it "won't work," because it doesn't "take." Transition is a natural process of disorientation and reorientation. Bridges's Rule No. 1: When you're in transition, you find yourself coming back in new ways to old activities.³

Returning participants come back to EfM with new texts while others come as newcomers to the program, which represents change and transition in itself.

Review Bridges's Outline on Change:

CHANGE

*All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy;
for what we leave behind is part of ourselves;
we must die to one life before we can enter into another.*

—Anatole France

1. Identify who is losing what.
2. Accept the reality and importance of the subjective losses.
3. Don't be surprised at "overreaction."
4. Acknowledge the losses openly and sympathetically.
5. Expect and accept the signs of grieving.
6. Compensate for the losses.
7. Give people information, and do it again and again.
8. Define what's over and what isn't.
9. Mark the endings.
10. Treat the past with respect.

³ William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes, 3rd Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009),

11. Let people take a piece of the old way with them.
12. Show how endings ensure continuity of what really matters.

Personal Reflection

CULTURE/ACTION

Bridges’s Rule No. 2: Every transition begins with an ending. Our whole way of being the personal style that makes you recognizably “you” and me “me” is developed within and adjusted to fit a given life pattern.

Bridges’s Rule No. 3: Although it is advantageous to understand your own style of endings, some part of you will resist that understanding as though your life depended on it.

Think about how you tend to act at the end of an evening at a friend’s house or leaving a job or a neighborhood. Do you try to drag things out by starting new conversations and activities as others seem to be ready to leave, or do you say suddenly that it was a nice evening and dash out? (Share what you choose.)

Learning Goals and Needs

Think of the implications of stories told.

POSITION

- What goals do you have for your participation in EfM this year?
- What will help you to make this transition in your own life?

Possible theological reflection suggestions:

- 1) Explore "transition" from theological perspectives, using the traditional terms of creation, sin, judgment, repentance, and resurrection; or
- 2) Explore “transition” as a provocative word using the method found on page__ in Part II of this guide.

Covenant

Questions to consider toward forming Norms:

POSITION

- What environment will best facilitate your goals for this year?
- What commitments will you make to your fellow travelers on this journey?

Note: The Respectful Communications Guidelines from the Kaleidoscope Institute, found on page 43 in Part II, may be a helpful resource in setting the group’s own norms for community life.

Schedule

ACTION/POSITION

- Thirty-four seminar sessions in five six-week units and four Interlude sessions
- Holiday breaks
- Worship
- Spiritual Autobiographies
- Theological Reflection
- Anything else that needs to be scheduled

Optional Further Work on Change and Transition

CULTURE

Bridges’s Rule No. 4: First there is an ending, then a beginning, and an important empty or fallow time in between.

The Neutral Zone: Attentive inactivity and ritualized routine, emptiness, old reality looks transparent, nothing feels solid anymore. The process of disintegration and reintegration is the source of renewal.

Tools: consisting of ways "in" not of ways "out"—surrender, acceptance, wilderness, retreat or liminal space, reminiscence, recollection and awareness, notice hunches, coincidences and synchronicities toward autobiography, making meaning, discovering what you really want and long for. Traps: fast forward, reverse, depression.

Beginnings: Much as we long for external signs, we must settle for inner signals that alert us to the proximity of new beginnings—a new theme, a strange fragrance, an inner idea about an external opportunity—that bring us home to ourselves. When we are ready to make a new beginning, we shortly find an opportunity.

Ways to support the process—stop getting ready and act, begin to identify yourself with the final result of the new beginning, take things step by step, shift your purpose from the goal to the process of reaching the goal.

Personal Reflection

ACTION

Think back to the neutral zones and the best and important beginnings in your own past. What tools have been most helpful to you? What has brought you home to yourself?

Worship

Psalm 139, *Prayer of One Experiencing Adult Transition* by Joyce Rupp⁴

O Lord of revelation, once again I find myself opening up to another life process, full of pain, full of mystery and a certain aching wonder. I hear you calling me to face new beginnings, to leave the old behind, to discover new and deeper parts of my total being. O Lord God, help me to realize that I can be free, that I am being freed at this present moment. Let me look beyond my own small world and smile on the mysterious way that you allow each one of us to grow into the best of our own uniqueness. I want to live and to love the mystery. I remember the wonder and newness of discovering myself as person. I recall how I began to respect and to love the secret of who I am, of how I began to sense the greater and fuller dimensions of becoming “me.” I thank you for all the tastes you have given to me of myself through the crises of my life.

O God of revelation, I offer you the struggle and the beauty of being human. I ask your blessing as my human growth continues to be revealed in the midst of my daily activities. I realize that my birth was just a beginning, just a first step in the continuous series of births that have called me to constant dying and rising, to a deeper and more meaningful life. I hear now another call to die and to live more deeply, to live more wholly, more fully, a call to be opened and freed. O God, it takes so much time to bring all of myself to birth—a lifetime—and I become so impatient. This anxiousness and this anxiety I feel ... its healthy, you say? It's all right? It's a part of my existence? It's shaping my heart into yours? Fully human? Ah yes, my God, let me not fear the mistakes or the failures of the anxieties that come with growth; rather, let me see in all of this process the signs and the strength of your cross and your resurrection. Let me know the blessing of your presence in this ever-birthing life of mine. Amen.

For Transformation the internal and external have to match.

—Laurie Rokutani

All begin the reading and reflection according to the Guide directions for Week Two.

⁴ Joice Rupp, *Praying Our Goodbyes*, 142.