

WEEK 3: GRIEF AND THE DEATH OF THE FALSE SELF

Detailed Facilitator Guide with Notes and Questions

OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

Week 3 Goal: Move participants through genuine grief for the loss of their grandiose self-concept while simultaneously helping them embrace their ordinary, actual identity.

The Paradox: They must mourn something that was never real (the false self) while discovering something they've always been but never valued (the true self).

Critical Balance: This is NOT about self-hatred or worthlessness. It's about right-sizing—accepting ordinariness as the ground where genuine love and connection grow. Participants will resist this fiercely because the culture (and their trauma) has taught them that ordinary = worthless.

What Makes This Week Dangerous:

- **Identity crisis:** "If I'm not special, who am I?"
- **Existential despair:** "If I'm ordinary, what's the point?"
- **Depression risk:** Loss of the structure that held their sense of self
- **Spiritual bypassing:** Creating a new false self of "I'm so humble now"
- **Flight response:** "This program is asking me to be nothing, so I'm out"

Your Role: Guide them through the death of who they thought they were so they can be born into who they actually are. Hold the tension between grief (which is real) and hope (which is also real).

ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS FOR FACILITATORS

The False Self vs. The True Self

False Self:

- The constructed identity built on: achievement, image, specialness, admiration
- Requires constant external validation to exist
- Exhausting to maintain
- Fragile—collapses when challenged or unrecognized
- Based on comparison: "I'm better than/different from others"
- Says: "I am what I accomplish/what others think of me/my specialness"

True Self:

- The identity rooted in: being made in God's image, inherent worth, ordinary humanity
- Exists independent of performance or recognition
- Restful—nothing to prove
- Stable—grounded in unchanging reality
- Based on belonging: "I'm a beloved child of God, like all humans"
- Says: "I am because I am, not because I achieve"

The Work: Letting the false self die so the true self can emerge.

Understanding Kenosis (Self-Emptying)

From Philippians 2:6-7: Christ "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself."

Key insights:

- Christ didn't empty Himself OF His divinity; He emptied Himself of the PRIVILEGES of divinity

- He chose to take the form of a servant—ordinary, unimpressive, vulnerable
- This wasn't self-destruction; it was love expressed through self-limitation
- The "way down" (humility, service, ordinariness) was actually the way to resurrection

For narcissism recovery:

- Participants must empty themselves of the privileges they've claimed: special treatment, exemption from limits, right to dominate
- This feels like death—because in a sense, it is. The grandiose self must die
- But this death leads to resurrection into authentic personhood

OPENING SESSION (Day 1)

Setting the Stage (15 minutes)

Facilitator Script:

"Last week, you faced the harm you've caused. That was brutal. Some of you are still reeling from it. That's normal.

This week is different but equally difficult. This week, we're not looking outward at others you've harmed. We're looking inward at the self you've constructed—the false self, the image, the grandiose identity you've built and maintained.

And we're going to let it die.

That sounds dramatic. It IS dramatic. For those of us with narcissistic patterns, our entire identity is built on being special—more insightful, more capable, more interesting, more wounded, more SOMETHING than others.

We've spent our lives trying to be exceptional. This week, we're going to learn to be ordinary. And we're going to grieve the loss of exceptionalism.

Let me be crystal clear about what this is NOT:

- This is NOT about hating yourself
- This is NOT about becoming a doormat
- This is NOT about worthlessness
- This is NOT about losing your gifts or personality

This IS about:

- Letting go of the need to be more valuable than others
- Accepting your limits, your needs, your ordinariness
- Grieving the loss of grandiosity—because even though it was false, it was yours, and letting it go hurts
- Discovering that ordinary humanity is where love lives

Jesus said, 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' (John 12:24)

You've been alone—impressive, maybe, but alone. This week, you're learning to die so you can actually live."

Check-In Question (Go Around):

"What's your gut reaction to the phrase 'letting your false self die'? What comes up for you?"

Facilitator Note: Listen for:

- Fear: "If I'm not special, I'm nothing"
- Resistance: "I don't think I have a false self"
- Relief: "I'm exhausted from pretending"

- Confusion: "I don't understand the difference"
- Anger: "This feels like you're asking me to disappear"

All are valid. Don't correct yet. Just witness.

SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION EXPLORATION (30 minutes)

John 12:24 - The Grain of Wheat

Read aloud: John 12:24-26

Facilitator Teaching:

"Jesus is talking about His own death here, but He's also teaching a universal spiritual principle: death precedes resurrection. Letting go precedes receiving. Decrease precedes increase.

A grain of wheat looks complete. It has potential. But as long as it remains a grain—intact, self-contained—it's alone. It bears no fruit.

Only when it falls into the earth and dies—when it breaks open, loses its form, surrenders its integrity as a grain—does it bear fruit. The death is necessary for the life.

Your false self is the grain. It's been carefully constructed. It looks impressive, maybe. But it's alone. It bears no fruit—no genuine intimacy, no real love, no deep peace. Just performance and exhaustion.

This week, you're falling into the earth. You're letting that constructed self break open. It will feel like loss—because it is. But what comes from that death is fruit: the possibility of actual connection, real love, authentic existence.

The question is: Are you willing to let the grain die?"

Discussion Questions:

1. "What is the 'grain of wheat' in your life—the false self you've carefully preserved?"

- Help them name it: "the competent one," "the spiritual one," "the tragic victim," "the exceptional achiever," "the misunderstood genius"

2. "What are you afraid will happen if you let it die?"

- Common fears: "I'll have no identity," "No one will love me," "I'll be worthless," "I'll disappear"

3. "Can you think of a time when letting go of something led to something better? (Not necessarily narcissism-related—just any loss that led to gain?)"

- This builds hope: Death leads to resurrection

John 3:30 - "He Must Increase, I Must Decrease"

Read aloud: John 3:22-30 (context: John the Baptist's disciples are upset that Jesus is becoming more popular)

Facilitator Teaching:

"John the Baptist had a following. He was respected, sought after, influential. Then Jesus shows up, and people start leaving John to follow Jesus.

John's disciples are offended on his behalf: 'Rabbi, the one who was with you beyond the Jordan—He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!' (v.26)

They expect John to be threatened, competitive, defensive. Instead, he says: 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' (v.30)

John understands something profound: His job is not to be the center. His job is to point to the center and then get out of the way.

For those of us with narcissistic patterns, we've made ourselves the center of every story. Every conversation becomes about us. Every situation gets filtered through 'how does this affect me?'

This week, we're practicing John's posture: I must decrease.

Not: 'I must disappear.' Not: 'I must be worthless.' But: 'I must get smaller, quieter, less central—so that God and others can increase in my awareness and in my life.'

Decrease doesn't mean elimination. It means right-sizing."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Where in your life are you still demanding to be central? Where do you need to decrease?"**
 2. **"What's the difference between decreasing (healthy) and disappearing (unhealthy)?"**
 - *Facilitator clarification:* Decreasing = taking up appropriate space, not all the space. Disappearing = no space at all, self-erasure.
 3. **"If you decreased—if you made yourself less central—what might increase in your life?"**
 - Possible answers: Space for others, capacity to listen, actual intimacy, rest from performance, awareness of God
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Mark 8:36 - Gaining the World, Forfeiting the Soul

Read aloud: Mark 8:34-37

Facilitator Teaching:

"Jesus asks: 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?'

The narcissist has been trying to gain the world—admiration, achievement, recognition, control, specialness. And in the process, they've forfeited their soul—their actual self, their capacity for genuine connection, their peace.

You might have gained impressive things:

- Career success
- Others' admiration
- A reputation for being exceptional
- Control in relationships
- A carefully managed image

But be honest: Have you lost your soul in the process?

Your soul = your true self, your capacity for authentic relationship, your ability to rest in being rather than doing, your connection to God and others.

This week, we're asking: What have you gained? What has it cost you? And are you willing to reverse the trade—to let go of 'the world' (your grandiose image) to regain your soul (your true self)?"

Discussion Questions:

1. **"What have you 'gained' through your narcissistic patterns? What has your false self gotten you?"**
 - Be honest: It HAS gotten them things (or they wouldn't keep doing it). Acknowledge this.
2. **"What has it cost you? Where have you forfeited your soul?"**
 - Common answers: Intimacy, peace, rest, authenticity, knowing and being known, deep joy
3. **"If you could trade back—give up what you've gained to regain your soul—would you? Why or why not?"**

- *This reveals readiness:* Some aren't ready yet. That's information.
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DAILY PRACTICES INSTRUCTION

Morning Practice: Name One Aspect of Your False Self (Days 1-7)

Detailed Instructions for Participants:

"Each morning, after your silence practice, name one aspect of your false self—the image you've carefully constructed and maintained.

What is the false self? The false self is the identity you built to feel safe, special, or valuable. It's who you **PERFORM** being, not who you actually are.

Common False Selves:

- The Achiever: "I am what I accomplish"
- The Spiritual One: "I am my moral superiority/religious insight"
- The Victim: "I am my suffering/my exceptional wound"
- The Rescuer: "I am needed/indispensable"
- The Intellectual: "I am my intelligence/insight"
- The Charmer: "I am how others see me/my likability"
- The Rebel: "I am my uniqueness/refusal to conform"

Each morning, name one aspect:

- Day 1: What false identity have I been performing?
- Day 2: What does this false self require from others to survive?
- Day 3: What does maintaining this false self cost me in energy?
- Day 4: How does this false self prevent genuine intimacy?
- Day 5: What am I afraid will happen if I let this identity go?
- Day 6: Who would I be without this false self?

- Day 7: What does this false self protect me from feeling?

Write in your journal: 'My false self says I am _____. But this is a performance, not reality.'

The goal: Awareness and naming. You can't let go of what you won't acknowledge."

Sitting with Grief (Days 1-7)

Detailed Instructions:

"After naming an aspect of your false self, sit for 15 minutes and allow yourself to feel the grief of letting it go.

Yes, you're grieving something that wasn't real. And the grief is still real.

You've invested years—maybe decades—building this identity. You've organized your life around it. You've made choices to maintain it. Even though it was false, it was YOURS. Letting it go feels like loss.

How to sit with grief:

1. **Don't rush it:** Set a timer for 15 minutes. Commit to staying present.
2. **Feel it in your body:** Where does grief live? Chest? Throat? Stomach? Notice the physical sensation without trying to fix it.
3. **Let it move through you:** You might cry. You might feel empty. You might feel angry. Let it be what it is.
4. **Resist the urge to spiritualize it away:** Don't immediately jump to 'but God loves me' or 'this is for my growth.' Just grieve.
5. **Notice what you're mourning:**
 - The sense of being special
 - The admiration you won't receive
 - The image you've maintained

- The certainty of who you thought you were
- The control you're losing
- The story you've told yourself

What grief feels like:

- Sadness, emptiness, loss
- Anger: "This isn't fair. Why should I have to change?"
- Bargaining: "Maybe I can keep a little bit of my specialness..."
- Confusion: "Who am I without this?"

What grief is NOT:

- Self-pity: "Poor me, I have to be ordinary"
- Performance: Crying dramatically to prove how deep you are
- Shame: "I'm terrible for ever having a false self"

After 15 minutes: Journal briefly. What did you feel? What did you resist feeling? What surprised you?

The goal: Learning that you can survive the death of your false self. It hurts, but it doesn't destroy you."

Facilitator Warning: Some participants will skip this practice because it's uncomfortable. Others will perform grief dramatically (another form of grandiosity). Watch for both.

Evening Practice: Reality Check (Days 1-7)

Detailed Instructions:

"Each evening, list 3 ordinary, unglamorous truths about who you actually are—not who you perform being, but who you are when no one is watching.

This is NOT self-hatred. This is reality.

Examples of ordinary truths:

- I get tired and need rest
- I don't always know what to say
- I make mistakes regularly
- I need help from others
- I'm afraid sometimes
- I get jealous
- I'm not the smartest person in most rooms
- I'm average at many things
- I have needs I can't meet myself
- I'm human—limited, flawed, finite

Also include ordinary GOODNESSES:

- I can be kind when I'm not performing
- I genuinely enjoy simple things
- I care about people (even if I don't always show it well)
- I have ordinary gifts that serve others
- I'm capable of growth

The point: See yourself clearly. Not as exceptional (grandiose) or worthless (shame), but as ordinary—beautifully, limitedly, humanly ordinary.

Write: 'Today, three ordinary truths about me are...'

What this builds: Comfort with reality. The false self requires fantasy. The true self can handle truth."

THE EULOGY EXERCISE (Days 2-4)

Instructions for Participants

Facilitator Introduction (Day 2):

"The centerpiece of this week is writing a eulogy for your false self. This is not sarcastic or dismissive. This is genuine mourning.

Your false self served a purpose. It protected you when you didn't know how else to be safe. It got you things you needed (or thought you needed). It was your survival strategy.

And now it has to die. Not because it's evil, but because it's killing your capacity for real life.

So we're going to honor it by writing its eulogy—and then we're going to let it go."

Step 1: Identify Your False Self (Day 2)

Instructions:

"Before you can eulogize it, you have to name it clearly.

Write answers to these questions:

1. **Who was your false self?** Give it a title or name.
 - "The Exceptional One"
 - "The Indispensable Rescuer"
 - "The Spiritually Superior"
 - "The Misunderstood Genius"
2. **When was it born?** When did you start performing this identity?

- Often traces back to childhood: "When I realized being smart got me attention..." or "When I learned that being needed made me valuable..."

3. What did it promise you?

- Safety, love, value, control, protection from shame

4. What did it cost you?

- Authenticity, rest, genuine connection, your actual self

5. What did it protect you from feeling?

- Ordinary, unimportant, unloved, vulnerable, needy

Example:

'My false self was "The Exceptional Achiever." It was born when I was 8 and realized that achievement was the only way my father noticed me. It promised that if I was impressive enough, I would finally be loved. It cost me the ability to rest, to fail, to be ordinary. It protected me from feeling unimportant and invisible.'

Step 2: Write the Eulogy (Days 3-4)

Instructions:

"Now write a proper eulogy—as if you're standing at a funeral, saying goodbye.

Include:

1. **Acknowledgment:** 'We gather to mourn the loss of [false self name].'
2. **History:** 'It was born when... It served me by...'
3. **Gratitude:** 'I'm grateful for how it protected me when I didn't know another way.'
4. **Honest assessment:** 'But it also cost me... It prevented me from... It harmed others by...'

5. **The goodbye:** 'I'm letting you go now, not with hatred, but with sadness and necessity. You have to die so I can live.'

6. **What comes next:** 'In your place, I'm choosing to become...'

Sample Eulogy:

'We gather today to mourn The Exceptional One—the identity I built at age 10 when I learned that being special was the only way to matter.

For thirty years, you served me. You got me achievements, admiration, a career, a reputation. You convinced me I was different, better, more insightful than others. You protected me from feeling ordinary and invisible.

I'm genuinely grateful for your service. You were my armor, my strategy, my false salvation.

But you've also cost me everything real. You've kept me isolated, performing, exhausted. You've prevented me from being known or loved for who I actually am. You've harmed people I care about by making everything about me.

You have to die now. Not because you're evil, but because I can't bear fruit while you're alive. I can't love while I'm performing. I can't rest while I'm achieving. I can't be known while I'm hiding behind you.

I'm letting you go—with sadness, with fear, but also with hope.

In your place, I'm choosing to become an ordinary person who is loved not for being exceptional, but for being human. I'm choosing rest over achievement. Connection over admiration. Truth over image.

Goodbye, Exceptional One. Thank you. And goodbye.'

Length: At least 1-2 pages. This is significant. Give it weight.

When complete: Read it aloud to yourself. Let yourself cry if it comes. This is real grief."

Group Processing: Eulogy Sharing (Day 5 Session)

Opening Question: *"What was it like to write a eulogy for your false self?"*

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Who is willing to read their eulogy aloud?"** (Voluntary)
 - *Facilitator:* Create sacred space. This is vulnerable. Receive it with honor.
 - After each reading: "Thank you. That's holy work."
2. **"What surprised you about your false self's history? When it was born? What it promised?"**
3. **"Which was harder to write: the gratitude for what it gave you, or the honesty about what it cost you?"**
4. **"As you said goodbye, what emotion was strongest? Sadness? Relief? Fear? Something else?"**
5. **"What are you afraid will replace your false self? (What if nothing does?)"**
 - *Address this fear directly:* Something WILL replace it—your true self. But it won't feel as impressive, and that's the point.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11 - THE KENOSIS HYMN

Deep Study (Day 3 or 4 Session)

Read aloud together: Philippians 2:5-11

Facilitator Teaching (20 minutes):

"This passage is one of the earliest Christian hymns—a song about Jesus's self-emptying. Paul quotes it to teach the Philippians (and us) what true greatness looks like. Spoiler: It's the opposite of narcissism.

Verse-by-Verse Breakdown:

Verse 6: 'Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.'

- Jesus WAS equal with God. This isn't false humility or pretending to be less than He is.
- But He didn't GRASP at it—didn't cling to it, didn't demand it, didn't insist on the privileges of it.
- The narcissist grasps: 'I deserve special treatment. I'm entitled to recognition.'
- Jesus releases: 'I don't need to demand what I have. I can let it go.'

Verse 7: 'But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.'

- 'Emptied Himself' = *kenosis* (Greek)—voluntary self-limitation, letting go of privilege
- He didn't empty Himself OF His divinity, but of the PRIVILEGES of divinity
- He took the form of a servant—the lowest social position
- He became ordinary humanity—limited, vulnerable, needy

THIS IS THE MODEL: Voluntary descent, self-emptying, choosing servanthood over status.

Verses 8-9: 'He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death... Therefore God highly exalted Him.'

- The descent continues: humiliation, suffering, death
- THEN exaltation—but only through the way down
- The resurrection comes AFTER the crucifixion, never instead of it

For us: The way up is the way down. You don't get resurrection without death. You don't get exaltation without humility.

Verses 10-11: 'Every knee will bow... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.'

- Ultimate vindication
- But notice: Jesus didn't demand recognition during His earthly life. He served, and God exalted Him.

The narcissist demands recognition NOW: 'See me! Acknowledge me! Affirm my specialness!'

Jesus trusted the Father's timing: 'I'll serve in obscurity, and let God handle vindication.'

Application for recovery:

- Let go of grasping for special treatment
- Embrace voluntary limits and servanthood
- Trust that decrease leads to increase
- Stop demanding immediate recognition
- Walk the way down, trusting it leads to life"

Discussion Questions (30 minutes):

1. **"What is Jesus's relationship to His divine nature in this passage? Does He deny it, or does He just not grasp at its privileges?"**
 - *This matters:* The point isn't self-hatred, it's non-grasping.
2. **"Where in your life are you 'grasping'—demanding privileges, special treatment, recognition, or exemption from normal limits?"**
3. **"What would 'emptying yourself' look like in your actual life? What privileges would you release?"**

- Examples: Needing to be right, needing to be impressive, needing constant affirmation, exemption from criticism, control over how others see you
4. **"Jesus 'took the form of a bond-servant.' What would servanthood without resentment look like for you?"**
- *Key distinction:* Servanthood ≠ doormat. Jesus served freely, with dignity, not from compulsion or resentment.
5. **"Do you believe the 'way down' actually leads to life? Or does it feel like extinction?"**
- *Honest answer required:* Many don't believe it yet. That's okay. Trust is built over time.
6. **"What would it mean to trust God for vindication instead of demanding immediate recognition?"**
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CREATIVE EXPRESSION: THE DEATH OF THE IMAGE-SELF (Days 5-6)

Instructions for Participants

Facilitator Introduction:

"Words are powerful, but sometimes the death of the false self needs to be expressed non-verbally. This week, you're going to create something that represents this death.

This is NOT about artistic talent. It's about process, about externalized grief, about making the invisible visible.

Options:

- Draw or paint the death of your false self
- Create a collage from magazines
- Sculpt with clay

- Write a poem or song
- Create a symbolic ritual (burning a written description, burying something, etc.)

The process matters more than the product."

Drawing/Painting/Collage Prompts

Option 1: Before and After

- Left side of page: The false self (how you've presented yourself)
- Right side of page: The true self emerging (ordinary, real)
- Middle: The death/transition between them

Option 2: The Breaking

- Visual representation of the grain of wheat breaking open
- Yourself breaking open to bear fruit

Option 3: The Descent

- Visual journey down: from grandiosity (top) to humility (bottom)
- Can be literal (a figure descending stairs) or abstract (colors, shapes)

Option 4: Collage of Identities

- Images representing the false self—then torn, burned, or transformed
- Emerging images of the true self underneath

Questions to guide the creative process:

- What colors represent your false self? Your true self?
- What images/symbols capture your grandiosity?
- What does death/transition/descent look like visually?

- What does resurrection/emergence/new life look like?

After creating: Sit with your creation. What do you see? What does it tell you?

Symbolic Ritual Option

If participants prefer ritual over visual art:

The Burning/Burial:

1. Write your false self's name and identity on paper
2. In a safe, private space, burn it (in a fireplace, grill, or fireproof container) OR bury it
3. As it burns/is buried, speak: "I release you. You are not me. You have to die so I can live."
4. Afterward: Sit in the emptiness. Don't rush to fill it.

Safety note: If using fire, follow all safety protocols. Never burn indoors without proper ventilation/fireplace.

Group Sharing (Day 6 or 7)

If people are willing to share their creative work:

1. **"Would anyone like to share what they created?"**
 - No pressure. Art is vulnerable.
2. **"What was the process like? What surprised you as you created?"**
3. **"What do you see in your creation now that you didn't intend when you started?"**
4. **"If your art could speak, what would it say?"**
5. **"How does it feel to externalize the death of your false self in this way?"**

THE REALITY RESUME (Days 6-7)

Instructions for Participants

Facilitator Introduction:

"You've spent this week letting go of who you've been performing to be. Now we're going to start building something new: a 'Reality Resume.'

This is NOT a job resume. This is documentation of who you actually are when no one is watching—the ordinary, unglamorous, real you.

The point: Begin defining yourself by reality, not by image."

Categories for the Reality Resume

1. Limits I Have:

- I need 7-8 hours of sleep to function
- I can't do everything perfectly
- I don't have endless energy
- I need help from others
- I'm not good at everything
- I have emotional and physical limits

2. Needs I Have:

- I need to be loved
- I need community
- I need rest and play
- I need forgiveness
- I need God

- I need to be seen and known (not admired, but known)

3. Ordinary Gifts I Have:

- I can listen when I'm not performing
- I can fix things/cook/write/teach/[ordinary skill]
- I can make people laugh
- I can be present when I choose to be
- I can serve without needing credit (sometimes)

4. Character in Development:

- I'm learning to be honest
- I'm growing in empathy
- I'm practicing humility
- I'm becoming capable of hearing feedback
- I'm slowly learning to love

5. Ordinary Joys I Have:

- Coffee in the morning
- A good book
- A walk outside
- Laughter with friends
- Ordinary pleasures that don't require achievement

6. Who I Am When No One Is Watching:

- Kind or unkind?
- Generous or stingy?
- Honest or deceptive?

- Self-aware or self-deceived?
- Growing or stagnant?

Write 2-3 sentences for each category.

The goal: Start to see that ordinary humanity is a complete identity. You don't need to be exceptional to be valuable. You just need to be real."

Group Discussion (Day 7)

1. "Which section of your Reality Resume was hardest to write? Limits? Needs? Why?"
 2. "What did you learn about yourself that you haven't acknowledged before?"
 3. "How does your Reality Resume compare to the image you've been projecting?"
 4. "What would it be like to introduce yourself to someone from your Reality Resume instead of from your performance?"
 5. "Can you imagine being loved for who you actually are—limits, needs, ordinariness and all?"
 - *For many, this is impossible to imagine:* Sit with that. It reveals the work ahead.
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THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL DEEPENING

Thomas Merton Quote Discussion

"There is no greater disaster than greed. He who knows when he has enough is rich." — Thomas Merton (reflecting on Tao Te Ching)

Facilitator Teaching (10 minutes):

"Merton is reflecting on the Tao Te Ching's teaching about contentment. The narcissist is greedy—not necessarily for money, but for admiration, recognition, specialness.

Narcissistic greed looks like:

- Never enough affirmation
- Never enough recognition
- Never feeling 'seen' enough
- Constantly comparing: 'Do they love me as much as they love them?'
- Insatiable need for validation

The narcissist never knows when they have enough because the need is bottomless. They're spiritually bankrupt, constantly needing more supply.

Merton says: **He who knows when he has enough is rich.**

Recovery is learning: I have enough. I AM enough. Not because I'm exceptional, but because I'm made in God's image. Not because I've achieved, but because I AM.

Enough looks like:

- 'I'm loved by God and a few people—that's enough'
- 'I have ordinary gifts that serve others—that's enough'
- 'I'm human, with limits and needs—that's enough'
- 'I'm growing slowly—that's enough'

This is the opposite of greed. This is contentment."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Where are you greedy for admiration or recognition? Where is it never enough?"**

2. **"What would 'enough' look like for you? Can you even imagine it?"**
 3. **"What are you afraid will happen if you stop reaching for 'more' (more recognition, more specialness, more achievement)?"**
 4. **"Merton says knowing when you have enough makes you rich. Do you believe that? Or does 'enough' feel like poverty to you?"**
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C.S. Lewis Quote Discussion

"God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing." — C.S. Lewis

Facilitator Teaching (10 minutes):

"Lewis is saying: You've been looking for happiness in admiration, achievement, being special. But it's not there. It was never there.

The narcissist keeps thinking: 'If I just get a little more recognition, a little more success, a little more specialness, THEN I'll be happy. Then I'll be at peace.'

But Lewis says: **It's not there.**

Happiness and peace are not located in human admiration. They're not in achievement. They're not in being exceptional. They're only found in God—in being loved by Him, known by Him, belonging to Him.

You've been drinking from broken cisterns (Jeremiah 2:13). You've been trying to fill a God-sized hole with human applause. And you're dying of thirst in the process.

This week's grief is partly: Mourning the realization that what you've been chasing was always a mirage.

But here's the hope: Now that you know admiration won't satisfy, you can stop chasing it. You can turn toward what WILL satisfy—God Himself.

Not 'God loves me because I'm special.' But 'God loves me because He is love. I don't have to earn it. I just have to receive it.'"

Discussion Questions:

1. "What have you been trying to get from human admiration that only God can give?"
2. "Lewis says happiness and peace apart from God don't exist. Do you believe that, or does part of you still think 'just a little more success/recognition will do it'?"
3. "What would it look like to stop trying to get from people what only God can give?"
4. "How do you experience God's love—as conditional on performance, or as unconditional gift?"
 - *Many will say it's conditional:* That's the wound. That's what needs healing.

MANAGING RESISTANCE TO ORDINARINESS

Common Resistances and How to Address Them

Resistance 1: *"If I'm ordinary, I'm worthless."*

Response: "That equation—ordinary = worthless—is the lie your false self has been telling you. It's not true.

Jesus was a carpenter from Nazareth. Ordinary occupation, ordinary town. And He was the most significant human who ever lived—not because He was flashy, but because He loved perfectly.

Your worth doesn't come from being exceptional. It comes from being made in God's image. Every human has that worth—including ordinary you."

Resistance 2: *"You're asking me to be a doormat."*

Response: "No. There's a difference between humility and being a doormat.

Humility: Seeing yourself accurately—no better and no worse than you are. Operating from your real self, not a performance.

Doormat: Letting people abuse you, having no boundaries, making yourself nothing.

Jesus was humble ('I am gentle and humble in heart'—Matthew 11:29). He was NOT a doormat. He set boundaries, confronted evil, said no when necessary.

Ordinariness doesn't mean you have no value or voice. It means you don't need to be MORE valuable than others to matter."

Resistance 3: *"I don't want to lose my personality/gifts."*

Response: "You're not losing your personality. You're losing the PERFORMANCE of your personality.

You'll still be [funny/smart/creative/whatever]—but you won't need constant recognition for it. You'll be yourself naturally, not strategically.

Your gifts won't disappear. But you'll use them to serve rather than to impress. That's actually MORE effective, not less."

Resistance 4: *"This is just making me depressed."*

Response: "I hear that. Letting go of grandiosity can feel like depression because you're grieving.

But there's a difference:

- **Depression:** 'Nothing matters. I'm worthless. There's no point.'
- **Healthy grief:** 'I'm sad about what I'm losing. And I trust something better is coming.'

If this is triggering clinical depression, we need to address that. But if it's grief, we need to move through it, not avoid it.

Can you tell me which it feels like?"

If clinical depression: Refer to mental health professional. Possibly pause Week 3 work until stabilized.

Resistance 5: *"I'll lose my edge/success/effectiveness."*

Response: "Actually, research shows the opposite. People who operate from secure identity (not needing to prove themselves) are MORE effective leaders, better collaborators, more creative.

Your 'edge' built on insecurity and need for recognition is exhausting and unsustainable. An edge built on groundedness and clarity is powerful.

But I hear your fear. What if you're less impressive? You might be. But you'll be more real. And real is what creates actual connection and lasting impact."

SHAME SPIRAL PROTOCOLS

Watch For

This week, shame spirals might sound like:

- "I've wasted my whole life on a lie"
- "I have no identity now"
- "I'm nothing—literally nothing"
- "I don't know who I am"

Distinguish between:

- **Healthy disorientation:** "I don't know who I am without my false self—and that's scary but necessary"

- **Unhealthy despair:** "I AM nothing, and there's no point to anything"
-

Intervention Script

When someone says: *"I'm nothing. I don't even know who I am anymore."*

Response:

"I hear you. You're in the middle of a death, and it's disorienting. That's normal.

But let's be precise: You're not nothing. You're grieving the loss of who you PERFORMED being, and discovering who you ACTUALLY are.

Right now, it feels like a void because the false self filled so much space. But the void won't stay empty. Your true self—ordinary, limited, beloved—is emerging.

This is the hardest moment: after the death, before the resurrection. You're in the tomb. It's dark. It's scary. But it's not permanent.

Can you hold on through this in-between? Can you trust that something is coming even though you can't see it yet?"

If they can't: "Okay. Let's just focus on the next 5 minutes. You don't have to see the whole future. Just the next tiny step. Can you do that?"

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: DAILY DYING

Facilitator Introduction:

"Paul says, 'I die daily' (1 Corinthians 15:31). This is a spiritual practice: daily letting go of the false self, daily choosing the true self.

This week has been an intensive death. But recovery is a daily practice of small deaths.

Daily Dying Practice (5-10 minutes):

1. **Identify where false self emerged today:** 'Today, my false self showed up when I [needed recognition/got defensive/made it about me].'
2. **Name it:** 'That was The Exceptional One trying to survive.'
3. **Let it die:** 'I release that. I don't need to be exceptional in that moment. I can be ordinary and human.'
4. **Choose true self:** 'Instead, I choose to be real, limited, and dependent on God.'
5. **Receive grace:** 'God, I don't have to be impressive to be loved by You. Thank You.'

This becomes a daily rhythm: Notice false self → Name it → Let it die → Choose true self → Receive grace.

Over time, the false self's grip weakens. The true self strengthens. But it happens daily, not once."

FACILITATOR SELF-CARE

This week is existentially heavy. You're holding people through identity death. That's profound work.

Take care of yourself:

- Process your own false self issues in supervision
- Don't try to rescue them from the grief—it's necessary
- Rest after sessions—this work is draining
- Pray for wisdom—you need divine guidance
- Remember: The void won't stay empty. Resurrection is coming.

If you're feeling despair yourself: Get support. Don't carry this alone.

CLOSING THE WEEK (Day 7)

Final Reflection Questions

1. **"Complete this sentence: This week, I grieved..."**
 2. **"What aspect of your false self is hardest to let go? Why?"**
 3. **"Can you see any glimmers of your true self emerging? What does it look like?"**
 4. **"What do you need to move into Week 4?"**
-

Facilitator Closing Words

"You've done profound work this week. You've let something die. You've eulogized it, grieved it, released it.

This is not small. This is the spiritual journey at its deepest: death and resurrection.

Remember:

- The void you're feeling won't stay empty
- Ordinary is not worthless—it's where love lives
- You can be loved for who you are, not who you perform
- The way down is the way up
- Resurrection comes, but only through the tomb

Next week, we begin rebuilding. We move from emptiness to filling—but filling with REALITY, not performance. With true self, not false.

You've proven you can handle death. Now let's learn to live.

Let's close with this prayer:

'God, we've let something die this week. We're grieving the loss of who we thought we were—and that's appropriate. But we trust that You are raising us

into who we actually are. Give us courage to stay in this in-between space. Help us believe that ordinary is enough, that we don't have to be exceptional to be loved. Resurrect us into our true selves. We can't do this alone. Thank You that we don't have to. Amen."

END WEEK 3