



OPENING CONTEXT

Parts I and II

PART I: OPENING CONTEXT

TIMING: Friday afternoon; Immediately following the Opening Ritual/Greeting

NOTE TO SPEAKER: It is expected for you to know this talk well. You may use ONE note card. This is firm. See final page of this document for further instructions. IT IS PREFERRED THAT YOU MEMORIZE THIS BY HEART AND NOT USE ANY NOTECARDS (but you can have one available if needed).

PREP: During Friday morning staff meeting, lead the staff through a practice of: *“The Truth: You are not God. You are not in Control. Lay down your illusions. Come, walk in the light.”*

ROOM SETUP: Once all Attendees have gone through the greeting and materials are put away, the speaker and the Staff enter the room. Staff stands behind seated attendees and remains standing during the entire opening context. Once the Staff is in place, Speaker pauses for a moment then speaks.

THE TALK

Speaker: (with strength and volume) “The Truth.”

Staff: (in unison) “You are not God. You are not in Control. Lay down your illusions, come walk in the light.”

[Lights person turns on lights up front only.]

The first thing God said to Adam and Eve after their failed attempt to be like God was “Where are you?” Fear and Shame drove Adam and Eve to hide. Why? Because they had lost their intimate connection with God. Without this connection Adam and Eve lost who they were.

Adam and Eve introduced to humanity the loss of this connection to the presence of God, and the fear and shame that comes with this loss.

Even as followers of Christ we still search for God outside of ourselves to fulfill deep longings. We neglect the truth – Christ is in us.

We long to know who we are – our worth, our value, our security, our strength.

At the core of all our longings is the hunger to be intimately united with God, our Father. Anything less leaves us in a state of constant craving.

And we search, even as Christians, to satisfy this hunger apart from God’s presence. Because we don’t live out of who we truly are.

So...Who are YOU?

The YOU, that rests in God because you are being filled and satisfied with His presence?

The YOU, that has a spirit of power and love, not fear.

The YOU, that confidently knows who you are.

The Cross is the Way back to YOU.

This weekend is an invitation:

- To come to the Cross in humility
- To face your humanity
- To discover more deeply your truest self in Christ.

In order to answer this invitation, we need real and authentic relationships.

[Have the women stand.]

We need sisters.

Sisters we go to battle with.

Sisters, who will fight for us.

Sisters, who will call us out of our smallness into God's design for our lives.

Many of you are here today because you are suffering the consequences of your vain efforts of hiding. Some of you are fighting tooth and nail to not be discovered for who you really are: weak, destitute, and in need.

Many of you are here today because you are longing for more in life, more of God, more power, love, life, direction.

Whatever your reason for coming, it is all welcome.

Here we are: Women at the foot of the Cross.

Sisters,

If Christ comes in weakness and humility, how can you come to him in any other way, but through your own weakness and in humility?

In an attitude of humility, we encourage each of you to walk through this weekend as beginners, as learners, and not experts. Come with an open heart, mind and spirit.

What's at stake?

To be released to live out of your truest self in Christ...in Freedom.

So...Will you come to Christ at the foot of the cross with your sisters?

Will you risk facing the truth about yourself this weekend...that you are not God, but just human?

You could resist Him, the women in this gathering, but why would you? That's not why you came.

The staff women that are serving you this weekend have been through everything that we are going to invite you into this weekend. They are committed to walking with you shoulder to shoulder, woman to woman, as we journey together for the next 48 hours.

So, are you ready?

Will you take the risk to be discovered? To discover who YOU are?

Will you risk believing that God will meet you and fill you as you surrender to His love?

If so, then step forward and form a circle around the cross.

[Pause. Let the Attendees form a clean, round circle. WAIT until it is formed, THEN ask them to tighten the circle.]

Tighten the circle until your shoulders are touching the woman on your left and on your right.

Let's Pray:

"Father, we invite the light of the Holy Spirit to come and invade the depths of your daughters so that they might be free to be who they are in you. We ask this through Christ who is in us. Amen."

PART II OPENING CONTEXT

TIMING: Friday afternoon; immediately following Opening Context Part I

NOTE TO SPEAKER: It is expected for you to know this talk well. You may use ONE notecard. This is firm. See final page of this document for further instructions. IT IS PREFERRED THAT YOU MEMORIZE THIS BY HEART AND NOT USE ANY NOTE CARDS (but you can have one available if needed).

THE TALK

[CONFIRM that the circle is a TRUE CIRCLE and that every person can see everyone else in the circle. Then confirm that they are shoulder to shoulder.]

This weekend we will use symbol a lot.

The Cross ... represents the sacrifice of Christ made in weakness for you. It is the doorway to living out of your identity in God.

The Blue Cloth ... represents the current of God's grace that is constantly flowing for you. There is never a time when it is not present for you.

The Candles ... represent the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are relying on God to manifest himself through his Spirit this weekend.

The Vessel of Water ... represents each one of you. You are a vessel created to be filled with the very Spirit of God. To be filled with His presence, His love, His strength.

The Votives ... also represent each one of you. When we are filled with His Presence, His light shines from within us. Please pick up a votive and return to the circle.

The Dark Cloth ... represents the reality that we oftentimes hide in the dark and do not walk in the light. We cover up what is truly going on within. We do this consciously and unconsciously.

Please turn off your votive as a recognition of that reality. **[Pause]** Return your votive to the Cross.

Now, what's under the dark cloth?

[Ask an attendee to pull the dark cloth away and toss it behind her.]

Each of you, pick up a rock and step back into the circle and hold it in your hands.

These Rocks represent many things. They are the blocks that hinder us from being the new creation that we are. They can be the fears, shame, anger, or sadness within.

For many of us these were created when we were younger. They are the results of the wounds, the pains, and the hurts that we still carry with us today.

They are our efforts at protecting and defending ourselves and they become barriers to both receiving and giving love.

They represent all the destructive messages that we believe about God, ourselves, and others.

These are the burdens we carry day by day. The weight that we are so familiar with that we aren't even aware that we bear it.

They are the burdens that we have failed to entrust to God, and consequently, we do not know who we actually are.

We are limited in our experience of the loving presence of God. There is no greater tragedy than this.

Now, go back to your seats, pull out the tote bag under your seat, and put your rock in it. From this point forward, you are to have your bag and rock with you at all times. You are to carry it with you everywhere.

- When you walk across the room.
- Whenever you are moving from place to place.
- The only time you are to let the bag sit on the floor is when you are sitting down, or when we tell you otherwise.

If you have a physical limitation that would hinder you from carrying this weight please come up at the next break and we will have an alternative for you.

We ask you to carry this rock with you all weekend as a physical reminder of the cost of not walking in the light.

As you carry this weight you will get weary of it. This is good.

As you feel the impact of carrying this rock, let the Spirit speak to you about the consequences of bearing this weight in your life.

Allow Him to reveal to you how this affects the people closest to you.

[Pause]

Let's join together this weekend, sister to sister, and trust God that He has brought you here for freedom – freedom to be YOU.

Have a seat.