Small Group Ministry

Group Session Plan

**Power of Myth**

Need Copies of “Quotes on Mythology From Joseph Campbell” at end of session plan. *Suggestion: Give the “Quotes” to the group prior to the meeting.*

**Opening Words**:

And what about myth….

Is myth the [sacred](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred) [narrative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative) explaining how the world came to be?

Is myth what conveys a set of [religious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious) values or presents behavioral models?

Is myth [truthful depiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History) or [allegory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory) or [personification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythopoeic_thought) of natural phenomena?

Does myth point beyond rational thought to mystery and wonder?

Does a “proven” myth lose the very potential, the very wonder, the essence of its existence?

So what about myth……?

**Check-in**: How is it with you today?

**Topic/Activity**:

"The Power of Myth" is a book based on the interviews between Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers that became a famous television series [1988]. It deals with the universality and evolution of myths in the history of the human race and the place of myths in modern society. Campbell blends accounts of his own upbringing and experience with stories from many cultures and civilizations to present the reader with his most compelling thesis that modern society is going through a transition from the old mythologies and traditions to a new way of thinking where a global mythology will emerge. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Power_of_Myth>

1. *Each group member selects a quote about myths, or is given a quote by the facilitator, or randomly takes a quote from a basket.*

Take time to reflect on a quote about myths. Share how you relate to the concept of myth as presented in the quote. In a culture and time that is so concerned with “facts” and “proof”, what does myth offer related to meaning in life or in existence?

1. Share a myth from your childhood and the importance or impact of that myth on your understanding of life and the universe.

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes:** How was the session for you?

**Closing Words**:

Are Myths True**?** Nearly every culture on earth possesses its own set of mythic tales concerning the creation of the world and man's place in it. But why, in this age of science and reason, when the factual basis of most myths has been debunked, do these stories persist, continue to grow and evolve?

The author Tim O'Brien once wrote: "A thing may happen and be a total lie; another thing may not happen and be truer than the truth." While most would not interpret myths as literal truth, those who study them tend to see in them a weighty metaphorical, archetypal truth, a truth about the unseen, ineffable dimensions of existence that lie outside the bounds of science and reason.

Bill Moyers, <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/faithandreason/perspectives1.html>

QUOTES ON MYTHOLOGY FROM JOSEPH CAMPBELL

“Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth--penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words. Beyond images, beyond that bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told.”   
― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“We need myths that will identify the individual not with his local group but with the planet.”

― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“Myth basically serves four functions. The first is the *mystical function*,... realizing what a wonder the universe is, and what a wonder you are, and experiencing awe before this mystery....The second is a *cosmological dimension*, the dimension with which science is concerned – showing you what shape the universe is, but showing it in such a way that the mystery again comes through.... The third function is the *sociologica*l one – supporting and validating a certain social order.... It is the sociological function of myth that has taken over in our world – and it is out of date.... But there is a fourth function of myth, and this is the one that I think everyone must try today to relate to – and that is the *pedagogical function*, of how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances.” ― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“Heaven and hell are within us, and all the gods are within us. This is the great realization of the Upanishads of India in the ninth Century B.C. All the gods, all the heavens, all the world, are within us. They are magnified dreams, and dreams are manifestations in image form of the energies of the body in conflict with each other. That is what myth is. Myth is a manifestation in symbolic images, in metaphorical images, of the energies of the organs of the body in conflict with each other. This organ wants this, that organ wants that. The brain is one of the organs.”   
― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“Half the people in the world think that the metaphors of their religious traditions, for example, are facts. And the other half contends that they are not facts at all. As a result we have people who consider themselves believers because they accept metaphors as facts, and we have others who classify themselves as atheists because they think religious metaphors are lies.”   
― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/314907)

“The first step to the knowledge of the wonder and mystery of life is the recognition of the monstrous nature of the earthly human realm as well as its glory, the realization that this is just how it is and that it cannot and will not be changed. Those who think they know how the universe could have been had they created it, without pain, without sorrow, without time, without death, are unfit for illumination.” ― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell)

“People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.”

― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“Eternity isn't some later time. Eternity isn't even a long time. Eternity has nothing to do with time. Eternity is that dimension of here and now that all thinking in temporal terms cuts off.... the experience of eternity right here and now, in all things, whether thought of as good or as evil, is the function of life.” ― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“The spirit is really the bouquet of life. It is not something breathed into life, it comes out of life. This is one of the glorious things about the mother-goddess religions, where the world is the body of the Goddess, divine in itself, and divinity isn't something ruling over and above a fallen nature.... Our story of the fall in the Garden sees nature as corrupt; and that myth corrupts the whole world for us. Because nature is thought of as corrupt, every spontaneous act is sinful and must not be yielded to. You get a totally different civilization and a totally different way of living according to whether your myth presents nature as fallen or whether nature is in itself a manifestation of divinity, and the spirit is the revelation of the divinity that is inherent in nature.” ― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)

“If you go to a master to study and learn the techniques, you diligently follow all the instructions the master puts upon you. But then comes the time for using the rules in your own way and not being bound by them....You can actually forget the rules because they have been assimilated. You are an artist. Your own innocence now is of one who has become an artist, who has been, as it were, transmuted.... You can't have creativity unless you leave behind the bounded, the fixed, all the rules.” ― [Joseph Campbell](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/20105.Joseph_Campbell), [*The Power of Myth*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/971052)