**Small Group Ministry**

**Group Session Plan**

**Fathers**

**Opening Word** Spirit of Life, let us give thanks for the opportunities to love that present themselves in the turmoil of life,

Where the light catches the tears in another's eyes, where hands are held and there are moments without words, let us be present then, and alive to the possibility of changing. Let us seek to make another's well-being the object of our concern. Let us seek to be present to another's pain, to bathe another's wounds, hear another's sadness, celebrate another's success, and allow the other's story to change our own.

Let us stand in the morning on damp grass hear the syllables of bird song, fill up on sweet air that rolls over oceans and continents. Let us look up at the stars and the planets that fill the night sky with majesty. Let us witness the first fresh buds of spring amid the brown Sticks of winter: And for all this, let us be grateful.

Let us not defend ourselves against the discomfort of unruly emotion, nor seek to close down our ears for fear a new love will come to shake our foundations. Let us instead be open to discovering a new way of seeing an old problem, or appreciating the perfection of a seashell, or the possibility of friendship. For in giving ourselves to what we do not understand, we receive life's blessings, and in taking care of another, we are cared for.

Elizabeth Tarbox, “Prayer for Compassion” from *Evening Tide*

**Check-in/Sharing**

**Topic/Activity** So often what we ask of men is at odds with what we need from fathers. Still, as Elizabeth Tarbox writes, "For whatever the relationship is or has been, your father has left an imprint on you that is there for the whole of your life." We speak of our fathers:

1. What they have been for us?
2. What they have given us?
3. What stories they have helped to shape?

**Likes and Wishes**

**Closing Words** Why would I have imagined that he would live forever? I had mistaken him for the pieces of his iron work -- the gates and wrought iron railings around the cathedral, the fancy candle holders, the supporting iron brackets on the corners of' historic buildings that will be there years after this generation has passed away. Why had I ever allowed myself to believe that he was untouchable by age …….?

We are forged by the unrelenting blows of living that hammer us into pleasing shapes and make us unique. The bellows that startle the fire to new life are blowing behind us to keep us moving, and creation will make us useful so that when our lives have passed in the flame, there will be some part of us that will live on to support the feel of the next generation.

If you can, hold your father in arms and look hard at his fact to remember it. If that is not possible, then take some time to feel whatever it is that the thought of him evokes in you. For whatever the relationship is or has been, your father has left an imprint on you that is there for the whole of your life. Know it, honor it, and be at peace.

Elizabeth Tarbox from “Embers to Ashes” in *Evening Tide*