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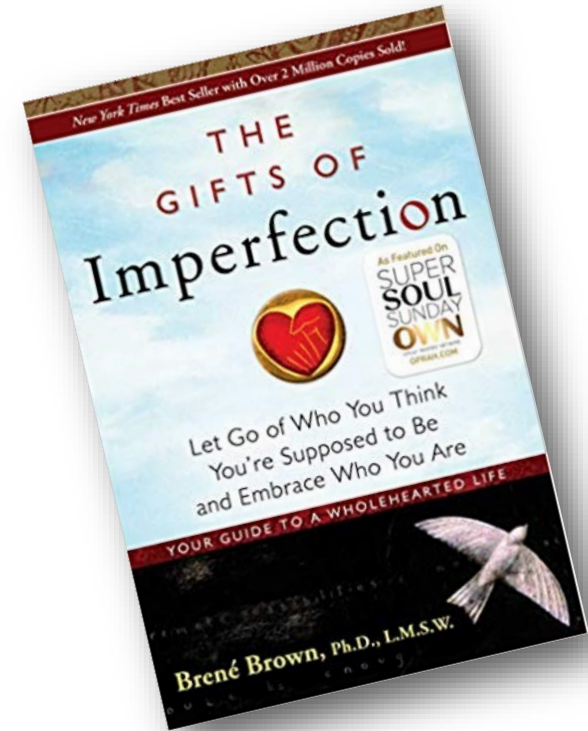
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**FALL PROGRAM 2019**  
**October 20-November 17**  
**“The Gifts of Imperfection”**  
*by Brené Brown*

**Wholehearted Living**



**Study Guide for self-study, small book groups,  
Minister’s Book Group**



*Wherever you are on your spiritual journey,  
you are welcome here.*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to our 2019 Fall Book Program, where we will be journeying together with Brené Brown's book, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Your guide to a Wholehearted Life*. Brené sees Wholehearted Living as engaging with the world from a place of worthiness. She also says that Wholehearted Living is a *process* and not a onetime choice. In my own personal life, I know that I could benefit from Wholehearted Living and relating with the world from a place of full worthiness. Now that sounds like a worthy endeavor!

This study guide is created to facilitate meaningful group discussions and group wisdom and is also made to support those who are following along as a self-study program. The power and wisdom of a group is mighty, and we invite you to take advantage of one of the groups that form here.

That being said, there are many ways to participate in this five-week series, and you are welcome to participate at whatever level you are called to do so:

- Attend the special Netflix screening of Brené Brown's Tedtalk, *Call to Courage*, which will be shown at Unity Minneapolis on Friday evening, October 18, at 7pm. There will be a follow-up discussion afterwards.
- Attend Sunday services and read the book during this series.
- Pick up a study guide and do a self-guided study.
- Join a Spirit Circle and participate in a group.
- Participate in the Minister's Book Group offered by Rev. Pat or the class taught by Rev. Jeannette.

Together we can do what we cannot alone.

Yours in respect and camaraderie,

*Adam Glatzl and Rev. Pat*

## SHARED AGREEMENT FOR OUR STUDY GROUPS

*"Everyone belongs; everyone matters; everyone is a contribution."*

### **Intention:**

The purpose of the shared agreement is to create a safe and healthy environment for the group. It is important that the group reviews these agreements and that there is consensus before beginning any spiritual group.

**Confidentiality:** Everything shared by group members is confidential. What is said here, stays here.

**Compassion:** Group members relate with unconditional compassionate acceptance of each other as human beings. Judgmental comments, and even unspoken thoughts, may threaten the group process. Our agreement is to listen to each other with open hearts.

**Truth and Integrity:** Group members are encouraged to be authentic and truthful. Speaking the truth involves risk and can only occur safely in a compassionate environment.

**Respect:** Group members show respect for each other and the group by not interrupting others, arriving on time and not monopolizing the group. It's okay to disagree.

**Participation:** The intent is for every member of the group to participate in discussion and group activities; however, each person has the right to ask to sit out or to modify his/her participation.

**Self-Responsibility:** Group members own their own story through speaking personally, using I statements. Each member of the group is accepted as they are. We do not give advice or try to 'fix' others.

**Prayer Support:** Between meetings, we each pray daily on the prayer requests of others in the group

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER WORKSHEET

My Name for God	Where God Is	Affirmative request, desire for Myself
<i>It is not I, but the Father</i>	<i>in heaven</i>	<i>that does the work (John 14:10)</i>
<i>God</i>	<i>in all things</i>	<i>prosper me</i>
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	<i>acting within me</i>	<i>illuminates my mind</i>
<i>Divine Love</i>	<i>expressing through me</i>	<i>fills me with joy</i>
<i>The prospering power of God</i>	<i>everywhere present</i>	<i>guides me to right employment</i>
<i>The Christ Presence</i>	<i>in me</i>	<i>is the fulfillment of my every need</i>

1. Using the examples, each one creates a 3-part prayer request for himself or herself (can be written out if that helps).
2. One person speaks his or her affirmation out loud. Each member writes the name and prayer request on an index card.
3. Everyone in the group visualizes it, holds it in prayer consciousness (allow some time for this, about fifteen seconds or so), and then in unison affirms the requested when prompted by saying "Amen" or "And so it is" or a similar close (everyone says the same thing).
4. Continue one person at a time until each prayer is affirmed by the group.
5. Either the facilitator closes the prayer or someone can be asked to start the circle and offer the closing prayer.

*Adapted from Stretton Smith's 4T Prosperity Program, The 4T Publishing Company, Carmel, CA 1998*

## **Week One: "Wholehearted Living."** Intro, Gifts of Imperfection, and Exploring... - (ix - 30)

**What Came Up for You?:** From the reading for today, what ideas or statements created a strong reaction in you? If any limiting beliefs came up, can you be ready to release them?

### **Core ideas:**

***"When we can let go of what other people think and own our story, we gain access to our worthiness – the feeling that we are enough just as we are and that we are worthy of love and belonging."*** (23)

1. Brené defines wholehearted living as "engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness." After reading this section, how do you define it?
2. What does it look like when you "hustle for worthiness?"
3. Are there parts of your story that are more difficult to own than others?
4. What would reclaiming those stories (retelling the story without blame, shame, or judgement) mean for you?

### **◆ *The three tools for Wholehearted Living:***

1. Ordinary **Courage** is *"speaking openly about who we are, about what we're feeling, and about our experiences (good and bad) ... Ordinary courage is about putting our vulnerability on the line."* (12-13)
2. *"The heart of **compassion** is really acceptance. The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become."* (16-17)
3. **Connection** *[is] the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when*

*they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” (19)*

### **Questions**

1. Which of these three tool(s) are you actively using?  
Share a story of using one tool in your life.
2. Which tool(s) do you want to develop more and why?
3. What is something that your book study group can do to provide the opportunity for each person in the group to feel seen, heard, and valued?

### **Assignment for next week:**

1. Read The Things That Get in the Way, Guidepost #1 Cultivating Authenticity and Guidepost #2 Cultivating Self-Compassion.
2. Brené Brown writes, *"our stories are not meant for everyone. Hearing them is a privilege, and we should always ask ourselves this before we share; 'Who has earned the right to hear my story?'"* Start thinking about which person(s) in your life you can tell your complete story to. This is just a personal question for you to start to consider.
3. Start thinking about a symbol that you can keep in a visible place at home or on your desk, or a tiny object to carry in your pocket, to remind yourself to practice courage, compassion, and connection.

*we're talking about embracing our imperfections, cultivating authenticity, and looking the world in the eye and saying, 'I am enough.'" (125)*

- a. Am I willing to really let go of what other people think and embrace all of me: how I feel, what I believe and who I am?
- b. Am I willing to let others in my life be free of what I think they should do and how they should act? Am I willing to support them in their personal quest to embrace themselves, listening to how they feel, what they believe and who they are?

### **Digging Deep:**

Write your own criteria for "meaningful" work. Then make a list of possible ideas for work that inspire you. What would you love to do?

"If we believe that laughter, song, and dance are essential to our self-care, how do we make sure that we hold space for them in our lives?"

### **Closing Prayer:**

***Dear Divine Spirit, Wholehearted Living is about me engaging in my life from a place of worthiness. It's about me cultivating the courage, compassion, and the connection to wake up in the morning and think, No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough. It's going to bed at night thinking, Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging. For all my imperfections and the strength to let them become blessings I give thanks. Amen.***

**Week Two: "You Are Enough!"**  
**The things that get in the way from  
cultivating authenticity. (pgs. 31 - 62)**

- a. Share about one way that you "create a clearing."

What Gets in the Way: *"We convince ourselves that playing is a waste of precious time. We even convince ourselves that sleep is a terrible use of our time."* (100)

3. *"We convince ourselves that if we stay busy enough and keep moving, reality won't be able to keep up. ... Of course, the irony is that the thing that's wearing us down is trying to stay in front of feeling worn down."* (108)
- a. What is your response to Brené Browns statements above? How can your courage, compassion and connection change your approach to play and rest?
- b. What are some of your gifts that you share with the world? Share about a time when you used one or more of your gifts and had the inner knowing "for this I was born."
- c. What gifts lay fallow within waiting for you to start using them? Which one of these gifts has your intuition been calling you to develop? Name one action step you are willing to commit to take to move forward in sharing this gift. Name a friend that you are willing to share this goal with and invite them to hold you accountable for taking this action step by a specific date.
4. *"There are many shame triggers around the vulnerability of laughing, song, and dance."* (120)
- a. List some of the conditions that trigger your "shame" around laughing, song and dance.
- b. What practices could you use to eliminate your triggers?
5. *"The truth is that meaningful change is a process. It can be uncomfortable and is often risky, especially when*

What Came Up for You?: From the reading for today what ideas or statements created a strong reaction in you? In a few sentences, what thoughts/feelings do you want to share?

**Core Ideas:**

***"If we want to live fully, without the constant fear of not being enough, we have to own our story."* (46)**

***"When we allow ourselves to become culturally conditioned to believe that we are not enough and that we don't make enough or have enough, it damages our soul."***

- ◆ What is your response to Brené Browns statement above? How has this gotten in your way in the past?

**Questions**

1. Shame Resilience begins with these questions:
- a. "Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging." Where you feel shame?
- b. What do you hide or protect yourself out of a sense of shame? What's the most courageous thing you could do for yourself when you feel small and hurt?
2. "Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are." (50)
- a. How have you cultivated the courage to be imperfect?
- b. Share what it means to you to, "be enough." "That you are enough." What comes up for you to describe this place of beingness?
3. "...self-compassion has three elements: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness." (59) "Based on my data, I don't think that some people are perfectionists and others are not. I think perfectionism exists

along a continuum. We all have some perfectionistic tendencies." (58)

- a. Where do I believe I stand on that continuum of perfectionism? How does perfectionism show up in my life?
  - b. In what ways do you sacrifice who you are? When you sacrifice who you are, who are you trying to please? How can you catch yourself before you over commit?
4. "To overcome perfectionism, we need to be able to acknowledge our vulnerabilities to the universal experiences of shame, judgment, and blame; ... When we become more loving and compassionate with ourselves and we begin to practice shame resilience, we can embrace our imperfections." (57)
- a. What are the personality traits that have gotten in your way in the past, and prevented you from embracing your imperfections?

**Digging Deep:** Brené has created a mantra, "*Don't shrink. Don't puff up. Stand on your sacred ground,*" as a way to stay in her authenticity. What would help you to stay in your authenticity when faced with the choice to abandon it and play safe?

**Assignment for next week:**

1. Read Guidepost #3 Cultivating a Resilient Spirit and Guidepost #4 Cultivating Gratitude and Joy, (pgs. 63-85)
2. How are you coming along with thinking about which person(s) in your life you can tell your complete story to. This is just a personal question for you to consider. As Dr. Brown states "*our stories are not meant for everyone. Hearing them is a privilege, and we should always ask ourselves this before we share; 'Who has earned the right to hear my story?'*"
3. Have you decided yet on a symbol that you can keep in a visible place at home or on your desk, or a tiny object to carry in your pocket, to remind yourself to practice courage, compassion, and connection

## **Week Five: Celebrating Play and Rest, and Cultivating Calm, Stillness and Meaningful Work. (pgs.105 - 124)**

**What Came Up for You?:** From the reading for today, what ideas or statements created a strong reaction in you? In a few sentences, what thoughts/feelings do you want to share?

### **Core Ideas:**

***"A critically important component of Wholehearted living is play!" (99) "True play that comes from our own inner needs and desires is the only path to finding lasting joy and satisfaction in our work."* (101)**

### **Questions**

1. *Meaningful Work encompasses the following ideas: "We all have gifts and talents; Squandering our gifts brings distress to our lives; Sharing our gifts and talents with the world is the most powerful source of connection with God; Using our gifts and talents to create meaningful work takes a tremendous amount of commitment; Like our gifts and talents, meaning is unique to each one of us."* (112-113)
  - a. What is play for you? Tell about a time when you played wholeheartedly.
  - b. How can you consciously add play to your work?
2. *"I define calm as creating perspective and mindfulness while managing emotional reactivity."* (106)

*"Stillness is not about focusing on nothingness; it's about creating a clearing. It's opening up an emotionally clutter-free space and allowing ourselves to feel and think and dream and question."*

- a. What is your response to Brené Brown's statement above? Share about a time when the need for certainty got in your way of trusting your intuition, faith, and/or creativity...
4. Comparison is often the death of creativity. *"The comparison mandate becomes this crushing paradox of 'fit in and stand out!' It's not, cultivate self-acceptance, belonging, and authenticity; it's be just like everyone else, but better."*
    - a. What has been your experience of balancing creativity and comparison?
  5. *"Self-doubt undermines the process of finding our gifts and sharing them with the world."* and *"To overcome self-doubt and 'supposed to,' we have to start owning the messages."*
    - a. What is your response to Brené Browns statements above? How have these behaviors gotten in your way in the past?
    - b. What makes you afraid? What's on your 'supposed to' list? Who says? Why?

### **Digging Deep:**

What would it take for you to be willing to be in a state of "not knowing" and live with the vulnerability that it engenders?

What are some ways that you express your creativity (originality)? Consciously carve out some time every week to do something creatively yours.

### **Assignment for next week:**

1. Read Guidepost #8 Cultivating Calm and Stillness, Guidepost #9 Cultivating Meaningful Work, and Guidepost #10 Cultivating Laughter, Song and Dance. (pgs. 105 - 124)

## **Week Three: Cultivating Authenticity, Self-Compassion and a Resilient Spirit.** (pgs. 63 - 85)

**What Came Up for You?:** From the reading for today what ideas or statements created a strong reaction in you? In a few sentences, what thoughts/feelings do you want to share?

### **Core Ideas:**

***Brené Brown believes that spiritual resilience is the combination of "Resilience—the ability to overcome adversity" and "spirituality—the belief in connection, a power greater than self, and interconnections grounded in love and compassion..."*** (63, 64)

### **Questions**

1. How has spiritual resilience shown up (or not shown up) in my life?
2. If hope is a mindset that is *"a combination of setting goals, having the tenacity and perseverance to pursue them, and believing in our own abilities,"* which of these three aspects of hope are you most skilled in and which do you want to develop?
3. Practicing critical awareness (67-69)
  - a. What is on my **"never good enough"** list and where did I get those messages? When I "reality-check" the items on the list, are they "true" or are these items part of the "manufactured images being fed me? What is really true about me? **3.**
4. Letting go of numbing and taking the edge off vulnerability, discomfort and pain. (69-72)
  - a. Being resilient asks us to be open to *"trying to feel the feelings, staying mindful about numbing behavior, and trying to lean into the discomfort of hard emotions."* (69) How do I accomplish this in my daily life?

**Digging Deep:** Describe a spiritual practice that helps you to cultivate a resilient spirit.

**Assignment for next week:**

1. Read Guidepost #5 Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith, Guidepost #6 Cultivating Creativity, and Guidepost #7 Cultivating Play and Rest. (pgs. 87 - 105)

**Week Four: Cultivating Gratitude, Joy, Intuition and Creativity. (pgs.87 - 105)**

**What Came Up for You?:** From the reading for today, what ideas or statements created a strong reaction in you? In a few sentences, what thoughts/feelings do you want to share?

**Core Ideas:**

***"Intuition is not a single way of knowing—it's our ability to hold space for uncertainty and our willingness to trust the many ways we've developed knowledge and insight, including instinct, experience, faith, and reason."*** (89)

- ◆ How do you integrate intuition into your life?

**Questions**

1. To live a joyful life is to actively practice gratitude. *"Both joy and gratitude [are] spiritual practices that [are] bound to a belief in human interconnectedness and a power greater than us."* Joy is *"... a spiritual way of engaging with the world that's connected to practicing gratitude."*
  - a. What are my gratitude practices?
2. *"Creativity, which is the expression of our originality, helps us stay mindful that what we bring to the world is completely original and cannot be compared."* (97)
  - a. How have you expressed your creativity/originality in the past? Include examples from both childhood and adulthood.
3. What Gets in the Way: Our need for certainty is the thing that most often stops us from trusting our intuition and faith—*"it's often because we don't trust our own knowing. It feels too shaky and uncertain. We want assurances."* (88)