



Faith in Action
2019

THE GIFTS OF
Imperfection

by Brené Brown



Small Group Workbook

Spiritual Life Center

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Deep gratitude for the 2019 Faith in Action team:

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All those who showed up after we went to print!

Modern Roots Marketing

Your Guide to a Wholehearted Life

No one is perfect. Most people do not expect anyone to be.

Yet, when we fall short of expectations, do something that we consider embarrassing or see our so-called flaws, we may look at ourselves and believe there is something wrong with us. This can lead to the self-defeating thoughts that say in essence, “I’m not good enough”.

However, what if there are extraordinary gifts in our so-called imperfections because they are integral to our worthiness? What if, no matter what we have done or not done, we were born worthy regardless of the misguided beliefs that there is something missing or wrong with us?

This year’s Faith in Action program, based on Brené Brown’s book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, addresses this topic. It will serve as a reminder that we are always worthy of personal growth, self-discovery, and unlimited love no matter what.

This series will help us live a wholehearted life in which we will find the inner fortitude to overcome fear that keeps us stuck. And it will strengthen our bond with our authentic selves and the world around us.

We will identify the key Guideposts that will lead to experiencing that wholehearted life. We will learn how to apply tools to affirm our worthiness, live authentically, be resilient, cultivate our intuition, detox from anxiety, and live a bliss-filled life.

I look forward to exploring with you fresh ways to stop rigorously holding on to self-defeating thinking or accepting we fall short in our lives. Rather we will joyfully embrace our whole selves – even our imperfections – so that we fully express who we truly are.

Peace and Blessings,

James

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Trapp".

Rev. James Trapp
Senior Minister of Worship

Study Group Shared Agreements

Purpose: The purpose of shared agreements is to create a safe and healthy environment for the group. It is important that the group reviews these guidelines 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 come from a place of unconditional compassionate acceptance of one another as human beings. Judgmental comments, and even unspoken thoughts, threaten the group process.

Truth and Integrity: Group members are encouraged and supported by the group to honestly and authentically be who they are. 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 avoiding interrupting others, arriving on time, and allowing everyone time to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. We practice sacred listening and refrain from giving advice or trying to fix or solve others' problems.

“Listen to others with inward stillness, without opinion, assent or dissent,
without criticism; hearing through the words into the soul of the other.”

Rudolph Steiner

Sharing Time: Group members demonstrate respect by avoiding interrupting others, arriving on time, and allowing everyone time to share their thoughts and ideas with the group.

Participation: Group members agree to participate in discussion and group activities; however, each person has the right to ask to sit out or to modify his or her participation

Conflict: Whenever people come together and speak truthfully the potential for hurt feelings, misunderstanding and conflict exists. If such a situation arises, group members agree to address it within the group process or one-on-one with the facilitator. Unresolved conflict is toxic to the whole group and not just to the parties involved.

I accept these shared agreements as the foundation for a successful study group.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

STUDY GROUP PRAYERS

Suggested Opening: The Co-Creator's Prayer

Loving Presence, with grateful hearts we join together as co-creators and friends. We come together to support each other as we learn, share, and explore how to live life more intentionally. We open our minds to receive your wisdom. We open our hearts to express your love. We open our souls to radiate your light.

May each of us hear what we are meant to hear and speak as you direct us. Now may each of us speak your intention or prayer for this gathering.

(Intention or short prayer from each who wishes to speak them.)

We now enter into sacred agreement with each other to honor our intentions as we support each other in our spiritual growth. We listen to others with inward stillness, without opinion, assent or dissent, without criticism; hearing through the words into the soul of the other.

Thank you, God, for your loving presence with us and within us; may all we say and do be in harmony with you. Thank you, God!

Suggested Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for your loving presence that has guided and directed us tonight. We honor each person in this group and trust in the process of each other's unique spiritual journey. We hold in sacred trust the personal matters we have shared in this gathering.

We go forward in positive expectancy of ever-increasing good as we remain ever mindful of Your presence, power and love within us.

We thank you, God. Amen.

2019 Faith in Action

The Gifts of Imperfection by Brené Brown Weekly Themes & Affirmations

Week	Theme & Chapters	Color	Affirmation
Week 1 October 6 thru 12	Tools for the Journey Introduction – Chapter 1 Pages 1 - 21	Red	I embrace wholehearted living. I am connected, courageous, and compassionate.
Week 2 October 13 thru 19	The Hustle for Worthiness Chapters 2 & 3 Pages 23 -47	Orange	I cultivate my sense of belonging by releasing my need to fit in. I am worthy, I am love in action.
Week 3 October 20 thru 26	The Audacity of Authenticity Guideposts 1 & 2 Pages 49 - 62	Yellow	I cultivate authenticity and self-compassion by releasing perfectionism and what other people think. I <i>know</i> I am always good enough.
Week 4 October 27 thru November 2	Resilience Bounces into Gratitude & Joy Guideposts 3 & 4 Pages 63 - 85	Green	I cultivate resilience, gratitude, & joy by releasing powerlessness, scarcity, fear. I am Hope-filled and Power-full.
Week 5 November 3 thru 9	ctrl.alt.delete Guideposts 5 & 6 Pages 87 - 97	Blue	I cultivate Intuition, trust, & creativity by releasing comparison and my need for certainty. I am faith-filled.
Week 6 November 10 thru 16	The Anxiety Detox -That Elusive Nothingness Guideposts 7 & 8 Pages 99 - 110	Indigo	I cultivate play, rest, calm, & stillness by releasing exhaustion, productivity, and anxiety as a way of life. I am balanced and renewed.
Week 7 November 17 thru 23	Follow Your Bliss Guidepost 9 & 10, Final Thoughts Pages 111 - 126	Violet	I cultivate meaning-full work, laughter, song, & dance by releasing self-doubt, “supposed to” & being “cool”. I am true to my gifts and my talents.

Faith in Action Weekly Colors

SLC uses Chakra colors each week as we journey toward greater awareness and aliveness.

Chakras, as an ancient spiritual system, show the path of integration of mind, body, and spirit leading to enlightenment.

The SLC community joins together during this seven-week period and wears the color of the week on Sundays to show their commitment to the journey.

The weekly bulletins are printed in Chakra colors as we progress on our journey together toward wholeness and transformation.

On the next page, you will find the weekly affirmations ready for color printing for you to cut out and post at your desk, refrigerator, mirror or anywhere else so that it can remind you of the current stage of this book study journey we are all taking together.

Blessings!

WEEKLY AFFIRMATION CARDS:

Your next page can be printed out in color (on cardstock if you like) as a means to create affirmation cards for each week of the Faith in Action program.

Print this page of FIA Affirmations in color, cut out weekly, and enjoy:

Week One	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I embrace wholehearted living. I am connected, courageous, and compassionate.
Week Two	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I cultivate my sense of belonging by releasing my need to fit in. I am worthy, I am love in action.
Week Three	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I cultivate authenticity and self-compassion by releasing perfectionism and what other people think. <i>I know</i> I am always good enough.
Week Four	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I cultivate resilience, gratitude, & joy by releasing powerlessness, scarcity, fear. I am Hope-filled and Power-full.
Week Five	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I cultivate intuition, trust, & creativity by releasing comparison and my need for certainty. I am faith-filled.
Week Six	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I cultivate play, rest, calm, & stillness by releasing exhaustion, productivity, & anxiety as a way of life. I am balanced and renewed.
Week Six	Faith in Action 2019	Spiritual Life Center	slcworld.org	I cultivate meaningful work, laughter, song & dance by releasing self-doubt, “supposed to,” & being “cool.” I am true to my gifts and talents.

For Week One:

Please read: *Pages 1-21*

Introduction
&
Courage, Compassion, and Connection,
The Gifts of Imperfection

Faith in Action Fall 2019
The Gifts of Imperfection
By Brené Brown



**“Owning our story and
loving ourselves through
that process is the bravest
thing that we will ever do.”**

~ Brené Brown

Faith in Action Song

All In

By Paula Mandella

Dearly divided, we are gathered here today
Facing our challenges, our hopes and dreams
Some broken, some departed
If you'll agree with me, consider this...
Make a conscious choice to dwell in joy, and dare to be delighted
The universe will rise to meet you, open and wholehearted

On the 'how to' list for happiness, so many have so much to say
To find your bliss, you have to deal with what gets in the way
You don't have to be a chameleon, just to feel like you belong
Standing firm on sacred ground, you are resilient and strong
Just let your story be told, be authentically bold
Beautifully imperfect as you gently unfold
Speak your truth, raise the roof
Brave enough to share, it'll take you there...

Chorus:

**I'm all in! I'm all in! Whoa oh, oh, Whoa oh, oh
I'm all in! I'm all in! Wherever I am is where I begin
I'm all in! I'm all in! Whoa oh, oh, Whoa oh, oh
I'm all in! I'm all in! Whenever I feel my heart openin'
I'm all in... I'm all in**

When the shame storm stirs the darkness, blowin' up all your stuff
You're left standing in a puddle of "I'm not good enough"
You try to hold onto your footing on those shifting shores of shame
Gazing across the swampland lookin' for someone else to blame

You know the pain of shame and the blamin' game
Are two sides of a mirror that are one in the same
Shake it out, shout out loud
Say it in a prayer, it'll take you there...

Chorus

Outro vamp w ad lib

**I'm all in, I'm all in, Whoa oh, oh, Whoa oh, oh
I'm all in...whenever I feel my heart openin', I'm all in**

Week One:

Tools for the Journey

Introduction

Pages 1-21

Introduction

Brené Brown writes about her own struggle as a shame researcher, and how other people were and are uncomfortable talking about what she does.

1. Discuss the first three things we need to know about shame as listed on page 38.
2. Why is this topic so difficult for us to acknowledge?

The Gifts of Imperfection

Brown relates the story of being asked to speak at a PTO meeting. The principal had an agenda but never told Brown. The talk did not go well and afterwards, Brown spiraled into what she calls a “shame storm.” Brown offers us tools for working with imperfection events: Courage, Connection, Compassion. She often uses the words as verbs rather than nouns.

1. When, in your life, has something not gone well because you were caught in someone else’s agenda? Did it result in a shame storm? What tools did you have to work through the event?
2. What are some ways that you can “courage” your way through an imperfection event?
3. To receive compassion, we need to reach out, to connect with someone else. But that someone else must be trustworthy, able to walk with you, not shame you. Discuss a time you tried to talk about your shame event and walked away feeling even worse.

4. Explain the criteria for a trustworthy, non-shaming confidant.
5. Why are boundaries so very important?
6. Share examples of your own courage or the courage you have witnessed in others.

Notes:

Week Two:

The Hustle for Worthiness

Exploring the Power of Love, Belonging, and Being Enough Pages 23- 47

Exploring the Power of Love, Belonging, and Being Enough:

Brown says, “A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all women, men, and children,” yet most of us struggle because we do not feel *worthy*. Self-love and self-acceptance are not optional.

1. How much time and energy do you put into worrying about what other people think?
2. What does it mean to “own your own story”? What steps can you take to begin owning that story and be worthy in the present moment?
3. Explain the difference between fitting in and belonging.
4. How does Brown’s definition of *Love* differ or coincide with your own definition?
5. Describe the difference between *professing* love and *practicing* love.

The Things That Get in the Way:

Brown acknowledges that we, as a culture, do not like to feel uncomfortable. But, if we really want to move forward, we must talk about what gets in our way.

1. On page 38, Brown lists three things that we need to know about shame. Discuss those three things in light of your own personal experiences.

2. Describe the four elements that people with high shame resilience share?
3. What is the difference between shame and guilt according to Brown? How is her definition different from yours?
4. When feeling shamed, which is your more courageous response: to feel hurt and cry or to go into attack mode?
5. On page 47, Brown lists four ways to get your shame resilience and story claiming going. Discuss.

Notes:

Week Three:

The Audacity of Authenticity

Guideposts 1 & 2 Pages 49-62

Guidepost 1: Creating Authenticity - Letting Go of What People Think

Being authentic is a choice. We *can* choose to be ourselves, but that usually means that we must push against a culture that says it is not OK to be self-focused. Brown says that “staying real” is one of the most courageous battles we can ever fight.

1. Why is it likely that we will be both “hopeful and exhausted” when we start to choose to be authentic?
2. On page 50, there is a list of aspects that have to come together so we can step into authenticity. Which of these aspects would you start with? Why?
3. Think of a recent time when you stepped up into being authentic even though you really wanted to run and hide. What compelled you to stand your ground?
4. How did you feel while walking through the experience?
5. What is the greatest takeaway from that time?

Guidepost 2: Cultivating Self-Compassion – Letting Go of Perfectionism

Brown writes about people who don't "claim shame" but do claim perfectionism.

1. Why is it shameful to feel shameful?
2. Brown lists the myths of perfectionism on page 56. How do these ideas change your perspective on your own perfectionism?
3. In what ways does this change your perspective of *other* people's perfectionism?
4. Brown states unequivocally that there is no such thing as Perfect. Take a moment to think about this – do you agree with Brown? Why or why not? How do these feelings show up for you?
5. Self-Compassion is key to being your authentic self. This means, in part, not over-identifying with your feelings. Name some techniques that you can use to step back when a "perfection attack" happens. How can you become the observer rather than drowning in emotion? Explain how this can engender self-compassion.

Notes:

Week Four: Resilience Bounces into Gratitude and Joy

Guideposts 3 & 4 Pages 63-85

Guidepost 3:

Cultivating a Resilient Spirit – Letting Go of Numbing and Powerlessness

Resilience is the ability to overcome, or work through, adversity. Brown says that we all have what she calls protective factors that we can use to work through a circumstance and that there are several factors that seem to be common to resilient people

1. Review Brown's list of resilient commonalities on page 64. Which of these factors do you identify with? Which factors could you develop more fully?
2. Spirituality is one of the most important factors in resilience. How does Brown's definition of spirituality compare with your own definition?
3. Brown says Hope is not an emotion, but a way of thinking. She says that hope can be learned by becoming more critically aware of our thinking. Think of a time when you felt helpless and powerless. What steps did you take to change your thinking?
4. Discuss how the three steps on page 68 can help you become critically aware more quickly and effectively.
5. At times we need to take a break, to just "take the edge off," and that can sometimes lead into just plain numbing. Describe the difference between "taking the edge off" and numbing.
6. In what ways do you take the edge off? In what ways do you numb?

7. How do you forgive yourself when you fall into numbing?

Guidepost 4:

Cultivating Gratitude and Joy – Letting Go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark

When Brown talks about having an attitude of gratitude, she says that just having an *attitude* is not very useful. Her example is that she can have a “yoga attitude” but if she never actually does yoga, she will not benefit from it.

1. Explain the difference between working from an attitude and actually engaging in the real thing.
2. There is a quote in the book that essentially says that even if you do not feel happy, you can still have joy. What is the difference between happy and joy?
3. Describe a time when you felt unhappy yet experienced a deep underlying joy.
4. Our relationship with fear and scarcity means that we spend time either looking for extraordinary moments or we look for what is missing. How does focusing on, or waiting for, extraordinary moments keep you from living wholeheartedly?
5. What corollary do you see between looking for *what is missing* and being afraid of the dark?
6. In what ways can you learn to see what IS instead of what ISN'T?

7. Explain what Brown means when she says, “When we Numb the Dark, we Numb the Light”?

Week Five: ctrl.alt.delete

Guideposts 5 & 6 Pages 87-97

Guidepost 5:

Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith – Letting Go of the Need for Certainty

We are uncomfortable with uncertainty. We don't feel safe unless we think we know the answers or what is coming. Brown tells us that learning to live with uncertainty is the sanest way to live. And you do this by trusting your intuition, which means you live in faith.

1. What is your definition of *intuition*? How does it differ from Brown's definition?
2. Brown was shocked to discover that she actually lives by her intuition. When thinking about it, how often do you go with your "gut"?
3. When you are in uncertainty, how do you feel? How does your body feel? How do you feel emotionally?
4. What happens when you let go and trust the process?

Guidepost 6:

Cultivating Creativity – Letting Go of Comparison

When Brown's family moved to Houston, creative activities stopped, and they went from belonging to fitting in. She then developed the idea that creativity was really a waste of time.

1. While growing up, what level of creativity did you engage in? How much time was spent in comparison and "keeping up"?

2. What is your personal definition of *creativity*? What value do you place on creativity?
3. How does creativity show up in your life?
4. When you press ctrl.alt.delete, you clear the memory of your computer. How can you use a version of this method to stop comparing yourself to others?
5. Describe how your life changes when you are not comparing yourself to others?

Notes:

Week Six:

The Anxiety Detox - That Elusive Nothingness

Guideposts 7 & 8 Pages 99-110

Guidepost 7:

Cultivating Play and Rest - Letting Go of Exhaustion as a Status Symbol and Productivity as Self-Worth

We live in a culture that celebrates overwork and exhaustion. Unless what we are doing is productive, it is not valued, we are wasting time. Brown was startled to discover that wholehearted people actually *Play*.

1. How much of your Identity, or self-worth, is, or was, wrapped up with your work?
2. Play is activity that is purposeless. How often do you allow yourself to do something simply because it is fun, and you simply want to do it?
3. When have you said that your work is your “play” and don’t really take time away?
4. Make your own list of “joy and meaning.” What shows up on the list that surprises you?

Guidepost 8:

Cultivating Calm and Stillness – Letting Go of Anxiety

When productivity is the most important thing in our lives and we never stop to play, we do not function well. We try to keep up. We compare ourselves. We keep looking to the outer for validation. We become deeply anxious. Brown discovered that she was trying to function *through* anxiety rather than dealing with it, and that was not working for her.

1. What is the difference between being *anxiety free* and *anxiety aware*?

2. Calm, to Brown, is “creating perspective and mindfulness while managing emotional reactivity.” What steps can you take to manage emotional reactivity?
3. Stillness is particularly helpful when you are anxious, yet for some, the idea of being still creates its own level of anxiety or resistance. What are some ways to learn to be still without becoming more anxious?
4. How and when do you create space to feel, think, dream, and question?

Notes:

Week Seven: Follow Your Bliss

Guideposts 9 & 10, Final Thoughts Pages 111 -126

Guidepost 9:

Cultivating Meaningful Work - Letting Go of Self-Doubt and “Supposed To”

Meaningful work means different things to different people. Your perspective will be different depending on where you are in your life. Young and working is different from older and working or from older and retired. Yet, there are common aspects that apply to meaningful work no matter your life stage. From your perspective discuss the six aspects Brown offers us:

1. What are your gifts and talents?
2. Where does spirituality come into your work?
3. How do (did) you make a living?
4. What is your level of commitment to your current work?
5. How tied up do you get in “Supposed Tos” and Self Doubt?

Guidepost 10:

Cultivating Laughter, Song, and Dance – Letting Go of Being Cool and “Always in Control”

We spend a lot of our time trying to stay in control so that we look “cool”, but most of us have times when we let go and let it fly.

1. When do you laugh? When and where do you sing? When and where do you dance?
2. What level of freedom do you experience when you do allow yourself to just BE?

Final Thoughts

Brown asks this question: “What is the greater risk, letting go of what people think? Or, letting go of how I feel, what I believe, and who I am?”

1. Why is this such an important question?
2. What have you learned and been able to apply during these seven weeks of study and discussion?

As Faith in Action Draws to A Close:

Thank you for participating in this year's Faith in Action book study. Working together, we continue to build and reinforce the consciousness of Oneness. Blessings to you all.

Cultivate Courage
Cultivate Compassion
Cultivate Connection

This is *your* life.
This is *your* time.

Be who you came here to be –
A wonderful, divine being full
Of love, light, and joy.