

UNEARTHING



Facilitator Guide

21 Sessions Based on the Poetry of Joe Davis

Sessions written by

Jia Starr Brown

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This guide is dedicated to all of the teachers, mentors, and leaders committed to digging deeper into themselves and their community for human flourishing. May you dig deep enough to unearth more than you ever imagined possible.





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About This Facilitator Guide

This guide includes twenty-one sessions that correspond to the twenty-one poems in *Unearthing Us: Poems and Practices for Discovering Our Fullest Selves* by Joe Davis. Like the Facilitator Guide for his previous collection of poetry titled *Remind Me Again: Poems and Practices for Remembering Who We Are*, this guide invites the facilitator into deeper, more extensive session planning for the benefit of themselves and the participants. Read these two pages to learn more about the basics of this guide. Then begin to prepare your heart, mind, and body for leading with the content starting on page 8.

Who are these sessions designed for?

Unearthing Us: Poems and Practices for Discovering Our Fullest Selves was written for a broad audience. Many ages can enjoy reading these poems together and going deeper into the activities described in this guide. Sessions could serve as a youth group curriculum for high school students. Intergenerational groups may enjoy gathering to read the poems and engage in the activities together. If your church has writing groups or book groups that meet, they could use *Unearthing Us* and this guide to plan several sessions. And if your church hosts a community garden or has members active in gardening or farming or other activities that get people in the dirt, they may enjoy exploring the themes in these poems.

If you have people with limited mobility, sensory impairments, or other needs, make sure the whole group can access your space. Provide additional supports so everyone can experience the poems and activities without barriers.

When and where can these sessions be held?

These sessions can be planned for church youth groups during times of regularly scheduled programming, such as Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, or midweek times. You could also choose times during the church year that connect well to themes in the poems. Lent with the onset of spring, the planting season that begins during the Easter season, or the harvesting times of late summer and autumn may be especially fruitful times to talk about themes of planting, growth, and flourishing.

Sessions can be held in typical faith formation spaces like the youth room, fellowship hall, or another comfortable spot. Given the recurring themes of gardening, planting, and growth, consider holding at least some sessions outdoors. If that's not possible, bring some houseplants to your gathering space and ask participants to help with tending them each time you meet.

How can these sessions be sequenced?

This collection of twenty-one poems includes three sections with seven poems in each. Because the themes and images in these poems progress from planting to growth to flourishing, moving through the sessions in order can more fully recognize the flow of this poetry collection.

What is needed for each session?

Provide each participant with a copy of *Unearthing Us* along with a Bible, a journal, and writing utensils. Some sessions have additional supplies listed in the margin near the beginning.

How do I get started with this guide?

In your role as facilitator of these sessions rooted in the poetry of Joe Davis, spend time reading (and rereading!) the following pages written by Rev. Dr. Jia Starr Brown. Her expertise as an educator, activist, and curriculum designer is evident throughout this guide, beginning with the content that helps you deliberately prepare your heart and mind as the leader of these sessions. Plan to make a copy of the Pre-Work Pages (pages 12–13) for each session you lead. Read through the poetry collection first, and then begin working through each of the sessions beginning on page 16.

A theme of this poem: The power of song

Dreaming

Prepare to Lead

Not every plant or person needs the same things to grow. Do you know what you need to grow? What role does *song* play in your life and faith journey?

Supplies

- *Unearthing Us*
- Needs and Seeds reproducible sheets on pp. 18–19
- Bibles
- Journals
- Writing utensils

Finding Freedom

Read the Poem

Invite your group to read the poem a few times. A read-aloud may take about two minutes.

Minimization can happen when we believe we all feel the same and need the same things.

Distribute the Needs Sheet and invite participants to write responses in the first two columns.

- What did you need a year ago? What *songs* provided affirmation and encouragement during that season of your life?
- What do you need today? What *songs* speak to your spirit today, providing either comfort or witness?
- How have your needs (and the music) changed from Year-Ago-Me to Today-Me? What shifts do you notice in the melodies?
- What circumstances led to those transitions?

Then think about two people you know well. Consider the alternative preferences and needs of these two other folks and fill in what you can for each area. What encouraging songs can you share with them?

Not everything we plant in others *or* that has been planted in us leads to growth. On the Seeds Sheet, look at the two columns. In one, name the seeds that have been planted in you that have *not* led to your growth. In the other, name the seeds you may have planted in others that have *not* led to their (or your) growth.

Living with Creativity

Engage with Scripture

Invite someone to read Proverbs 18:21 or read this verse aloud together:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

Select one of those experiences from the Seeds Sheet. Rewrite the story with a growth mindset. How would that retelling have changed something in your life? In their life?

Gardening

Make Community Connections

Lead participants to take a walk or drive through a neighborhood that has a demographic makeup that is different from their own.

- What assumptions are coming to the surface for you?
- Where did those assumptions come from?

Unraveling

Reflect in Your Journal

Guide participants to use their journals for this reflection.

Reflect on a time when your assumptions about another person's needs steered you in the wrong direction.

- What assumptions have you made about the needs of others?
- What impact might that have had in their lives?
- In what ways, if at all, did making that assumption impact *your* life?
- How did/can you correct that fracture?

Praying

Prepare to Send

Thank God for your time together. Ask God for the courage to use your voices and melodies to honor the people, the land, and all that you plant. Name what you hope to plant, and ask God to help you.

Needs sheet

Use this chart to record needs in each column in the areas listed in the first column.

	Year-Ago-Me	Today-Me	Person 1	Person 2
Emotional				
Physical				
Spiritual				
Community				
Intellectual				
Social				

Seeds sheet

Name the seeds that have been planted in you that have <i>not</i> led to growth.	Name the seeds you may have planted in others that have <i>not</i> led to growth.

