

**Study Guide  
for  
TEACHING THE BIBLE: HOSTING THE CONVERSATION  
By  
Diane J. Hymans, Ed.D.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Evangelical Church in America is currently engaged in a major initiative to encourage its members to read and study the Bible. That initiative, called *The Book of Faith*, invites you to open the scriptures and join the conversation. This course joins in that invitation by exploring what it means to be a *teacher* of the Bible.

This is a course on teaching the Bible in the church. Your guides for this learning experience are professors from several of the Lutheran seminaries and one college in the United States and Canada. You will be introduced to each of them as we go along. Each one explores a particular facet of the ministry of teaching the Bible in the church, and each brings his or her own commitments and understandings to this conversation we are having together about the practice of teaching. The emphasis in this course is on teaching adults. Much of what you will learn, however, may also be applicable to teaching children, and especially youth.

The focus of this course is on the act teaching. It is not a course on the Bible, though you will have a variety of opportunities to engage biblical texts along the way. If you are interested in studying the Bible in more depth, Select Multimedia Resources offers a number of wonderful courses on the Bible itself that you will find very helpful.

This study guide will help you find your way through the course. It provides an overview of the course and of each session, and offers discussion questions and learning activities of various kinds to deepen your understanding.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, we hope that you will be able to answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean to *understand* something? What does understanding look like? What is the relationship between understanding and teaching?
2. How can you create designs for teaching and learning that engage students and lead to significant understanding?
3. How does your understanding of *faith* shape the way in which you understand your role as a teacher?
4. Why do relationships matter in the teaching process? How can teachers create a climate of trust in the learning environment?
5. What are some of the unique challenges and possibilities for teaching adults that may lead to transformative learning?
6. What has research on the human brain discovered about memory, and how can that enhance our teaching?
7. What does a trustworthy learning environment look like? Why does the environment matter?
8. What teaching methods can help scripture come alive for us? How do we select and use methods appropriately?
9. How does the life experience of African Americans offer insight into the Bible? How can we use this in our teaching?
10. What insights from the experiences of Asian Americans can contribute to the interpretation of the Bible for all of us? How might this enhance our teaching?
11. Why are visual media helpful in teaching the Bible?
12. What are some ways to use media in teaching – from paper and pencil to modern digital technology?

## COURSE RESOURCES

The DVD for this course offers six sessions titled:

1. Teaching as Conversation: Where Do We Begin?
2. Teachers and Learners: Relationships Matter
3. Adults as Learners: What Does the Brain Tell Us?
4. How We Teach Matters as Much as What We Teach
5. Hearing Other Voices: Multi-Cultural Encounters with the Bible
6. From Crèches to the World-Wide Web: Using Visual Media to Teach the Bible

Each session consists of four teaching segments lasting about 20 minutes. After each segment, you will be invited to go to the study guide and use the discussion questions and learning activities suggested to explore more deeply the content of that segment. Each of the study guide sessions was written by the person or persons you will meet on the corresponding session on the DVD. As a consequence, each session in this guide has its own character, shaped by that presenter.

There are two required text for the course:

*Teaching the Bible in the Church* by John M. Bracke and Karen B. Tye, (St. Louis: Chalice Press), 2003.

You will find one chapter from this book assigned for each of the six sessions in the course. Although the presenters do not always deal directly with the content of the book in their sessions, you are invited to bring what you learn from your reading to the discussion questions relating to each session. The book's content can become one of the partners in this conversation we are having on teaching the Bible.

*Opening the Book of Faith: Lutheran Insights for Bible Study* by Diane Jacobson, Mark Allan Powell, and Stanley N. Olson, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress), 2008.

Several of the presenters refer to this book in their sessions, especially chapters 3 and 4. You will want to read the whole book, preferably before beginning the course itself. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a framework from which to study the Bible. Chapters 3 and 4 suggest four approaches to Bible study that we will explore from a variety of perspective throughout the course.

Some of the presenters suggest other readings to enhance your learning. They are found in the appropriate session in this study guide. You may decide whether or not you want to do any of these additional readings. In some instances, your decision may depend on the availability of the books or resources mentioned. Each session also contains a

bibliography of books and other resources mentioned by the presenter. You are encouraged to explore as many of those as you are able, depending on your interest.

It is a privilege and a great joy to sit with others and lead them in a conversation that explores the meaning of the church's scriptures. Those of us who prepared this course pray that it will help you become a better teacher of the Bible. Becoming a teacher is a never-ending task. If we care about what we do, we know that we never get it "right". There is always more to learn. We also know that teaching is both art and science. There are skills we can develop, but we also bring our creative selves to the task. Each of us teaches in a way that expresses who we are. May the God of wisdom and grace be with you as you teach.

## SESSION I – TEACHING AS CONVERSATION: WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

**Presenter:** Dr. Diane J. Hymans, Professor of Christian Education at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio

**Assigned reading:** Bracke & Tye, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*, Introduction, pages 1-9

The first session in this course on teaching the Bible focuses on the act of teaching itself, and the process of creating designs for teaching and learning. Specific attention is given to the concept of *understanding*, exploring what it means to understand, the varied facets of understanding, and how that might help us frame hoped-for outcomes for our teaching. You are introduced to the notion of *backward design* as a way to think about planning for teaching and learning, and that principle is used to design a teaching/learning session on the story of Jacob’s wrestling match on the banks of the Jabbok found in Genesis 32. The session ends with a brief discussion of “discussions” and offers some suggestions for how to shape them.

**Segment 1:** This segment:

- Invites you to consider what good teaching looks like by recalling good teachers you have known.
- Suggests that teaching is like an intentional, three-way conversation involving teacher, learner, and subject, in this case, the Bible.
- Explores the meaning of the concept “*to understand*”, and the difference between *knowing* and *understanding*.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Think of some of the teachers you have had through the course of your life – both those in the church and those in other contexts. What have you learned from them about teaching? What does a good teacher look like for you?
2. What does it mean to you to say that teaching is an “intentional activity”? If it is intentional, what does that mean for how we approach this ministry?
3. Teaching here is described as a three-way conversation involving teacher, learner, and subject. The title for this course also uses the word “conversation”. What does the image of *conversation* say to you about the practice of teaching? What other images would you use to describe what teaching is?
4. What is the difference between knowing and understanding? Would you agree with the distinction made in this segment? How would you define “understanding”? How do you know when you really understand something?

**Segment 2:** This segment:

- Introduces the notion of *backward design* as a way to think about creating teaching/learning designs. Backward design involves three steps: identifying hoped-for outcomes; determining appropriate evidence that learners do, in fact, understand what you hope they will; and then planning the learning experiences and instruction that will be needed in order for that to happen.
- Explores the first step in the process - identifying the big ideas that become the focus of hoped-for outcomes - and demonstrates how these outcomes may be written in the form of questions.
- Suggests that understanding is multi-dimensional, consisting of six different facets. The first three facets are examined: explanation, interpretation, and application.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. How do you usually go about planning for the teaching you do? Talk about the three steps in the *backward design* process. How are they different from the way in which you usually plan? Where does backward design seem like it might be helpful for you? What questions do you have about it?
2. There a number of terms often used in reference to learning outcomes. Goals and objectives are two very commons ones. This session refers to them as “hoped-for outcomes”. What does this phrase suggest to you? Is it helpful? What language do you prefer?

## Learning Activity:

In this second segment of this session, and the one to follow, we will practice using the *backward design* process to create a teaching/learning design for a biblical text. If you are participating in this course as part of a group, you may want to work together to create one teaching/learning design. It would also be fine for you to work in pairs, or to do individual designs. Choose one of the following texts to work with: the creation story in Genesis 1, the book of Jonah, the parables about “lost” things in Luke 15, or the story of Pentecost in Acts 2. If you are currently teaching a Bible study somewhere, you may prefer to work with a text that you might be teaching in that setting.

Spend some time reading and thinking about the text you have chosen. Read it in several versions. If you have access to some resources for Bible study – commentaries, Bible dictionaries, etc. – you may want to consult them to help answer questions that the text might raise for you. As you study, ask yourself: What do I want my students to understand about this text? What are some of the key ideas found here? What are some questions the text raises that are worth exploring? Some of the texts suggested above are very familiar. How can you help students push beyond what they already know to discover something new in the text? Try to articulate some of the “big” ideas in the text you have chosen as clearly as you can. Then write a question or two or perhaps three that might serve as outcomes for your teaching session. As you do this, the question to keep asking is, what do I hope my learners will come to understand about this text? What are the central questions that they should be able to answer about it by the end of the session? Keep in mind the three facets of understanding we looked at in this segment – explanation, interpretation, and application. Which of them are reflected in the questions you have written? If your outcomes all focus on one of the facets, how could you create an outcome that introduces one of the others?

**Segment 3:** This segment:

- Examines three more facets of understanding: perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge.
- Considers two possible approaches to studying the Bible from the book *Opening the Book of Faith* and the facets of understanding that might be related to each of these approaches.
- Walks through the process of designing a teaching/learning session on the story of Jacob's wrestling match using the backward design process.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Does assessment of learning have a place in teaching the Bible in the church? Why or why not? What forms of assessment are appropriate?
2. After you have completed working through the backward design process, reflect on it again. What have you learned about how it works? Where is it helpful? Where did you find it difficult? Is it something that you think you will use in your teaching?
3. Look at the four ways to approach Bible study found in chapter 3 of *Opening the Book of Faith*. Which of the six facets of understanding seem most connected to which of the four approaches to Bible study?



## Learning Activity:

Continue the planning process you began in the previous segment. Look again at the questions you wrote as outcomes for your teaching session. Now add the three facets of understanding we explored in this session to the mix – perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge. Is there a place for them here? Select one or two questions that will serve as hoped-for outcomes for a teaching session. (It may seem like you are spending a great deal of time on the question of outcomes. It is time well spent, as this effort will give focus and direction to what you are doing.)

The next step is to decide how you will assess whether your students have understood what you hope they will. How will you know that they are able to answer the questions you have identified as your outcomes? What can you do during and at the conclusion of your session to discover that? Once that has been decided, you are ready to design the session itself. Does one of the four approaches to Bible study in *Opening the Book of Faith* seem especially appropriate in light of your hoped-for outcomes? What content – or information – do your students need in order to understand what you hope they will? What learning activities will help your students engage the text with which you are working? What is the best sequence for the activities you have identified? Once you have identified these things, outline the session you have begun to imagine.

Though we have described the backward design process in a linear fashion – step 1, step 2, step 3 – it almost never works that way in actual practice. New ideas often emerge along the way that may change the structure of the session. Perhaps you discovered this yourself and you have worked on your design. Now that you have completed your outline, go back and look at your outcomes. Are they still appropriate? Did any new possibilities come to mind as you thought about the content and activities for your plan? Will the approach to assessment you have planned do the job? Would something else work better?

**Segment 4:** This segment:

- Identifies some additional elements to consider in designing teaching/learning sessions, especially beginnings and endings.
- Explores a number of matters related to discussion, probably our most used teaching technique.
- Suggests three kinds of questions that teachers can use: factual, analytical, and personal.
- Concludes with a brief discussion of the significance of the person of the teacher in the teaching/learning process.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Look again at the teaching/learning design you created in the previous two segments. How will you begin the session in order to immediately engage learners in what you are doing? How will you bring it to a satisfying conclusion?
2. How comfortable are you leading discussions as part of your teaching? What makes a discussion work?
3. Consider the quote by Parker Palmer, "...good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher." (Palmer, p. 3) What does that mean to you? Where are your personal growing edges as a teacher?

**Learning activity:**

Think about the three types of questions discussed in this segment – factual, analytical, and personal. Write two of each type of question that you might use in a discussion for the session you have planned.

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Palmer, Parker J., *The Courage to Teach*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers), 1998.

Wiggins Grant, and Jay McTighe, *Understanding By Design*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Alexandria, VA: ASCD), 2005.

## **SESSION II – Teachers and Learners: Relationships Matter**

**Presenter:** Dr. Kristine Lund, Assistant Professor in Contextual Theology and Pastoral Counseling at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Waterloo, Ontario

**Assigned Reading:** Bracke & Tye, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*, Chapter 4, pages 107-136

Teaching the Bible at first glance may seem fairly straightforward. However, if you have led a Bible Study, you probably have experienced both the challenges and joys in teaching. In this session you will be invited to look at your expectations regarding adult faith and how we might approach adult education in the church; the relationship between teacher and learner in adult learning; the opportunities or “teachable moments” for learning that appear in the midst of our discussions; and finally, how teachers are also changed in the process of facilitating adult learning.

At the beginning of the first segment on the DVD there is a scenario presented. It is included below to allow for further reflection in the discussion portion of each segment.

Let’s begin with the scenario. You are leading a Bible study with six individuals:

1. Mrs. B. is a married, 45 year old professional woman with two teenagers. She was born and raised Lutheran and is involved in many of the activities in the congregation.
2. Mrs. G. is a 62 year old woman, recently widowed, never worked outside the home, whose last child recently married and left town for a new job.
3. Mr. F. is a mechanic who started coming to church after his wife left him. They since have gotten back together and his wife, Mrs. F., also is attending the study. While they are back together, you are aware that their relationship is still unstable and faces significant challenges.
4. Mrs. S. is a new immigrant who has lived in your neighborhood for two years. She started coming to the church on Wednesday evenings for the community supper and has recently been staying for the worship service. She is curious about the church and so asked you whether or not she could come to the Bible study in order to learn more.
5. Mr. R. is a retired accountant who is currently the treasurer of the congregation. He’s never come to Bible study before because he was always so busy with his work. Now, he’s curious about the church’s new emphasis on education and has come to check it out.

In the scenario, you invite the participants to talk about their experiences of studying the Bible. Let’s listen in:

Mrs. B answers: “Well, I’ve always just come to church and listened to what the pastor had to say.”

Mr. F. responds: “I think that the Bible should provide me with answers about how to live my life.”

Mrs. G. hesitatingly says: “Well, I’m not sure what to say. I used to think like you...” Mrs. B.: “I just came to church and listened to what the pastor had to say but since my John died, just when we could have started to enjoy life together, I’m not so sure about things anymore.”

Mr. R. with fervor, states: “Well, I mean, don’t we have years and years of understanding the Bible. Isn’t that what Luther was all about? Why would we need to start changing things now? Isn’t it just important that we keep the church doors open and look after all of our members who have been part of this congregation for so long?”

Mrs.S. haltingly says: “But what about all of us who are new to this country? I don’t know what you are talking about. How is this Bible supposed to make sense to me? It seems like Jesus was a friend to people who were different. What about people like me? What does this church have to say to people like me?”

After class, as you and Mrs. G. are bringing the coffee cups into the kitchen, you overhear Mr. R. talking with Mrs. B.. He says, “I don’t know what I was expecting but I wasn’t thinking that we would have to talk about what we think about things. I just thought the pastor would provide some information and we would talk about that. I mean that’s what we used to do. There’d be questions and we would give the answers and when we had questions the pastor would answer them. I don’t know if I’m going to come back if it’s just a mixture of what everybody else thinks about things. I know what my faith stands for!”

### **Segment 1: Pastoral Implications of Teaching the Bible**

How we understand faith will significantly influence how we approach adult education. Is faith a static or dynamic experience in our lives? James Fowler and John Westerhoff invite us to see faith as a verb, not as an object but as action. As such, adult education offers the opportunity for us to explore questions and experiences in life in light of the scriptural witness. Each participant brings their own needs, questions, and answers. As teacher, we work to support each participant in their learning. How we understand faith and adult education will inform how we approach teaching.

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

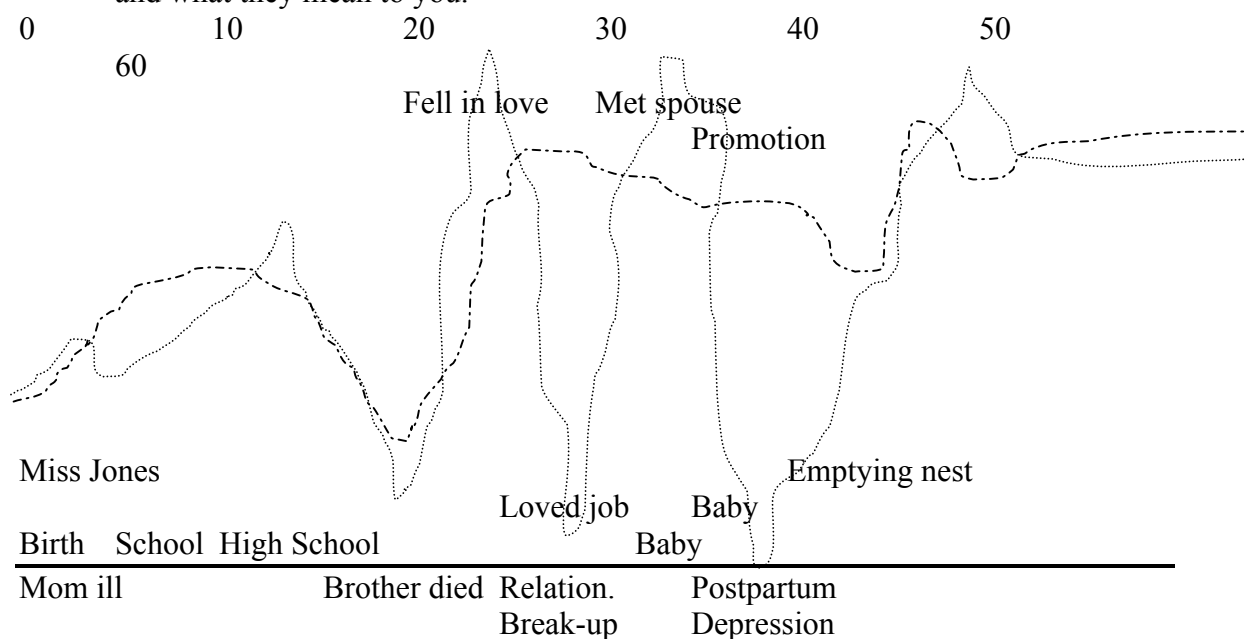
1. Keeping in mind this scenario, which of the following statements best describes your point of view?
  - a) A person's faith should not change throughout their life because that is what life is based on.

OR

  - b) A person's faith could change throughout life just as everything else in a person's life changes.
2. Depending on which statement fits best for you, how will this influence your teaching?
3. As you think about the individual Bible study participants, which of the four methods (devotional, historical, literary, Lutheran) outlined in *Opening the Book of Faith* would the participants be more familiar?
4. With which of the four methods are you most familiar? How will this influence your teaching?
5. Draw a Faith-Life Graph. The purpose of the faith-life graph is to identify the ups and downs of your life and noting where you perceived God in those events. Sometimes, it is during the painful times in our lives when it seems as though God is absent. At other times, the most difficult experiences have provided a strong sense of the sustaining presence of God. Thus, if we were to draw a graph of our experiences and combine it with a graph of our sense of God's presence or activity in our lives, we might find lines coinciding or diverging at various places.

The faith-life graph is intended to be an image of our experience, a visual way of recalling the important events or pivotal moments in our life, and allowing us to reflect on our life experience theologically. It will not be exhaustive of all that has occurred in our life, nor does it need to reveal more than we wish to share. It is intended to be a brief document from which we can speak and share some insights about our life from both an experiential and theological perspective.

It is probably easier to do a faith-life graph chronologically, perhaps in decades. Those of us who have lived longer will have more decades upon which to reflect. It might look a little like the example below. Some people may prefer to use a nonlinear graph, perhaps a circle, a spiral or a pie graph. The idea is to use the format that works for you as you communicate something about your life events and what they mean to you.



The straight line provides a baseline for the graph. The dotted line represents the emotional depiction of life experiences, while the dashed line represents the spiritual/theological depiction of life experiences. Alternatively, you may choose to use one color to represent the emotional meaning of the graph and another color to represent the spiritual/theological meaning of the graph. Once you have drawn the graph reflect on the statements below:

- Observing my Faith-Life Graph, I notice . . .
- My greatest joy grows from . . .
- I got through my worst moments . . .
- I believe that my life . . .
- I experience God . . .
- Other comments and reflections that arise from your Faith-Life Graph . . .

Take the opportunity to share your Faith-Life Graph with at least one other person. Reflect on the experience of sharing. How does this exercise influence how you responded to Question 1 above?

### **Segment 2: The Pedagogical Relationship**

We live in a web of relationships. This is true in the church as well. The quality of these relationships either enhances or detracts from our learning environments. As teachers we play an important role in creating environments that support students in their learning. This can be illustrated with the image of a bridge between teachers and the students. The bridge gains strength and support as more trestles (trust, honesty, respect, curiosity, openness, diversity, etc.) are put in place over time. Bridges are being constructed within the group of students at the same time. As these bridges develop and grow stronger, both the individual and the group are able to engage in increasingly more significant conversations.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. In the Preface of the book, *Opening the Book of Faith*, we read that we study the Scripture so that “we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.” (p.vii) What does this calling mean for you as a teacher of the Bible?
2. Would you agree or disagree that a certain amount of entrustment happens as we study Scripture together? Explain.
3. What are some of the “trestles” you think are important in developing relationships in the learning environment?
4. What might be some of the challenges for you as a teacher in the development of a strong “bridge” that facilitates learning?
5. Which of the Bible study participants do you think will be more difficult for you to engage in the learning? Mrs. F. who is quiet, Mrs. G. who is forthright about the way her husband’s recent death has impacted her beliefs, Mrs. B. who has been a faithful supporter of the church programs or . . .? Explain.



### **Segment 3: The Teachable Moment**

As teachers, it is important to plan and prepare for our teaching sessions. However, all of us have had the experience where what we have planned isn't necessarily what happens! Sometimes, what emerges in the midst of our discussions results in rich learning opportunities. These "teachable moments" cannot be planned, but as teachers we can prepare for them.

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Describe an experience, either as a teacher or a student, when you left the session thinking, "I really enjoyed that", or "Boy, that was a really good discussion!" Then describe a time when you have left feeling something just didn't happen. What do you think contributed to these experiences turning out this way?
  
2. Describe a time when you encountered ideas or perspectives that were challenging. What helped (or in hindsight might have helped) you engage with these new ideas or perspectives?
  
3. What would you need in order to be able to approach each situation as one that is being "occasioned" for learning?
  
4. How might you invite a student to approach their experience as an "occasion" for learning?
  
5. What might you need as the teacher to be able to engage Mr. R., Mrs. G., or Mr. F. in the learning that is being "occasioned" for them?

### **Session Four – Expect To Be Changed In The Community Of Learning**

Sometimes as teachers we approach the task of teaching as if the student is the only one who learns. Teaching also offers opportunities for the teacher to be a learner. We may learn from the material with which we are interacting, or from an insight that a student might have as they are learning. We may also learn from the interpersonal challenges that arise out of our interactions with students. Two questions to consider are: What do I know? and, What or how can I learn? In this way, the experience of teaching presents learning opportunities for all.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

- 1) Think of a teacher who has been important for you. What made the relationship with that teacher significant?
- 2) How do you understand your role as teacher? Is it to be the purveyor of knowledge? Something else? Explain.
- 3) Do you expect to learn as a teacher? What are you open to learning? What might be more difficult for you to learn?
- 4) What helps or supports you to remain open to your vulnerability as a teacher?
- 5) What would be your response to overhearing the conversation between Mr. R. and Mrs. B.?
- 6) After overhearing the conversation between Mr. R. and Mrs. B., what do you think you would do? Would you talk to Mr. R. alone? with Mrs. B.? with Mrs. B. and Mrs. G.? ignore the situation? or . . .?
- 7) What kind of support do you need as a teacher? Where might you access this support?

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### **SESSION III: Adults as Learners: What Does the Brain Tell Us?**

**Presenter:** Dr. Mary Hughes, Professor of Christian Education at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio

**Assigned reading:** Bracke & Tye, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*: Chapter 1, pages 11-29

How can we insure engaged eager students and energetic learning events among adults who study the Bible? This session will help you understand how to help adults learn more effectively. In particular, we will explore today's brain research for clues for memorable learning.

**Segment 1:** Adults are lifelong learners with both challenges and opportunities that must be addressed. Thoughtful planners consider the competing demands, distractions, and physical and logistical limitations permeating the daily lives of adults. Good adult education values the student's existing knowledge, past life experience, desire for life-centered relevance, and maturing brain.

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Childhood experiences of school were both positive and negative for most people, and those experiences shape our adult attitudes toward learning. (a) Share with one another some of the positives and the negatives of your own school experiences, and (b) reflect on how they shape you as a learner today.
2. In what ways are you a better learner today than ten years ago, and what has made the difference?
3. In what ways are you a better student of the Bible than ten years ago, and what has made the difference?
4. What challenges (competing demands, distractions, health, etc.) to adult education are represented in the study group of which you are a part? How could adult education planners respond to those challenges?
5. In what ways do your current Bible studies relate to the problems, needs, and questions that arise in daily life?

**Segment 2:** We teach toward at least four levels of discovery and understanding of the Bible, ranging from knowledge to transformation. We are often content with our current understanding of Scripture. Our challenge as teachers is that Christians may be transformed through their encounters with Scripture.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Identify ways in which the four aha's are part of recent and current Bible studies: (1) gathering information & "knowing" the Bible; (2) gaining meaning and understanding of the Scripture; (3) gaining the Scripture's meaning for today; and (4) transformation.
2. What balance of attention is given to each of the destinations of Bible study: the four aha's? In what ways might you wish to change the priority given to each of the four?
- A. In what ways might you encourage more Bible study that leads toward transformation?

**Segment 3:** Bible study is enriched by many types of memory. Our Bible studies draw heavily on semantic (word-related) memory which is difficult to establish. Two clues for encouraging semantic memory are learning to pay attention, and using helpful memory aids.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Imagine that together you are planning to lead Study 1: Exodus 3:1-15, beginning on page 68 in *Opening the Book of Faith*, as part of a weekly study group of adults. Brainstorm ways in which you can call upon several memory types as you begin this study: procedural/riding a bike memory, automatic/handshake memory, emotional memory, episodic/location memory.

An alternative: Four Bible studies are offered in *Opening the Book of Faith*. Although these discussion questions direct you to Study 1, feel free to use any of the four studies for your discussions.

2. It is important to get the learner's attention. For your study of Exodus 3: 1-15 identify five different and specific things you can plan to capture and re-capture the attention of the students.
3. Identify 2-3 memory aids that can help in your study of Exodus 3:1-15. This may be challenging because it often requires imagination and creativity. But, don't give up too easily, and you may be rewarded with valuable tools for learning.

**Segment 4:** Bible study may be enriched through two additional clues for semantic memory: using repetition as a “fixative” for memory, and insuring that what we study has meaning for daily life.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Continue to imagine that you are planning to lead Study 1: Exodus 3:1-15, in *Opening the Book of Faith*, as part of a weekly study group of adults. Discuss ways in which the suggested timetable for repetition can be used to help students form long-term memory.
2. As you continue to plan, consider how to explore the Scripture visually. Identify 2 or more diagrams, charts, concept-maps, symbols or other graphics that can be created to help to make meaning of the text.
3. Good discussion requires thought-provoking questions. Some questions are suggested in the study itself. Compose 4 or more questions (or re-write the suggested questions) inviting the group to explore the meaning of the Scripture text for the students’ own daily lives.

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## **SESSION IV – How We Teach Matters as Much as What We Teach**

**Presenter:** Dr. Norma Cook Everist, Professor of Church Administration and Educational Ministry at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

**Assigned reading:** Bracke & Tye, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*, Chapter 2, pages 43-73

Suggested reading: Norma Cook Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*, Chapters 1-3.

In relation to the ELCA's "Book of Faith" initiative, this session focuses on two important topics: how to set a trustworthy learning environment, and how to select and use methods to help Scripture come alive among us today when we study the Bible.

How we teach teaches as powerfully as what we teach. Ultimately, the church's curriculum is God and God's people encountering Scripture together in their time and their place. When we carefully set and maintain the learning environment, we are able to use a variety of methods appropriate to the text, so that people can engage Scripture and be equipped for mission and ministry in daily life. We examine eight facets of learning that will help us with that task.



**Segment 1:** When we tend the faith community well, any number of curriculum resources and methods can be used. We need to use our appropriate teaching authority to set and maintain learning environments that are safe, trustworthy, hospitable and healthy. Six factors to consider are: the physical factor, the time factor, the authority factor, the relational factor, the emotional factor, and the intellectual factor. The first, second, and third articles of the Apostles' Creed ground us for this ministry of teaching.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Think about a present or past challenge you experienced in setting and maintaining a safe, trustworthy environment for a Bible study group. What worked? What did not work? Why? What might help improve that learning environment? If your group is large, you may want to talk about this with a partner. Then share what you care to with the larger group.
2. Imagine you are starting a new or renewed Bible study group. What factors in the learning environment would you need to attend to? Time? Place? Leadership and authority factors? Relationships and outreach? Intellectual and emotional needs? Others?
3. Picture the three articles of the Apostles' Creed. Believing in our Creator God, how can you create a safely bounded, carefully planned, orderly environment? How can you inspire a liberating interaction with Christ in your encounter with Scriptures? How can the empowerment of the Spirit move people out into their worlds in mission and ministry?
4. Use the "Assessment Tools" for "Individuals" and "Faith Communities" at the back of the book, *"Opening the Book of Faith"* to see where you are, what needs you have, and what you envision for studying the Bible.

**Segment 2:** If how we teach teaches as powerfully as what we teach, how do we teach? In the next three segments, we will explore eight facets of learning. This segment examines the first three. As people of God we learn from each other simply by being together, worshipping, serving, struggling, growing together in the faith **community**. Theologically speaking, we are, by God's grace, the Body of Christ and also **individually** members of it, with different gifts, and different calls to ministry. We have a transcendent God, so we use methods of **presentation**, including story telling, PowerPoint, concerts, performance, and more.

SEE THE CHART ON "EIGHT FACETS OF LEARNING" IN THE APPENDIX TO THIS SESSION.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. In your group, have each one share briefly: How do you like to learn? “How do you like to teach? What differences do you find?
2. Read out loud together the Bible text: Mark 10:17-52. Choose one of the three sections of Mark below to explore together; or divide your group into three smaller groups and have each group do one of the options. (If there is time, the whole group may do all three.)
  - a. Read verses 28-31. What does that mean for you as an individual? As a faith community? How could you invite learners to move from individual to communal consideration of this text, and back again?
  - b. Choose the perspective of one individual character in this Bible text. Be quiet for awhile. Think and feel from that point of view. Share with the others your individual thoughts. What are some ways that you could suggest for individual learners to respond to what they discover through reflection on a character?
  - c. Read vs. 17-22. Invite more than one member of the group to read the story again out loud, using a variety of inflections. How do you hear the text differently?
3. Which of the three facets mentioned so far – Community, Individual, Presentation – has potential for your teaching that you have not yet fully explored? How might you gain some further experience in these methods of teaching?
4. Consider the four approaches to Bible study found in chapter 3 of *Opening the Book of Faith* – devotional reading, historical reading, literary reading, and Lutheran theological reading. Then think about the three facets of learning discussed in this segment. Which of them seems well-suited to which of these four approaches to studying the Bible? For example, presentation might be useful in utilizing the historical approach.

**Segment 3:** Here we will look at three more facets of learning. **Discussion** is used with other methods, but it also stands on its own. It involves being present with each other, intentionally and energetically, and traveling with each other mentally and emotionally. **Study** is acquiring knowledge, perhaps memorizing information, and understanding concepts. God has designed us to develop and created us to learn. **Experiential** learning is very powerful and memorable. Learning through doing prepares people for speaking and acting, skills necessary for sharing Jesus Christ all week long.

**Questions for Discussion:**

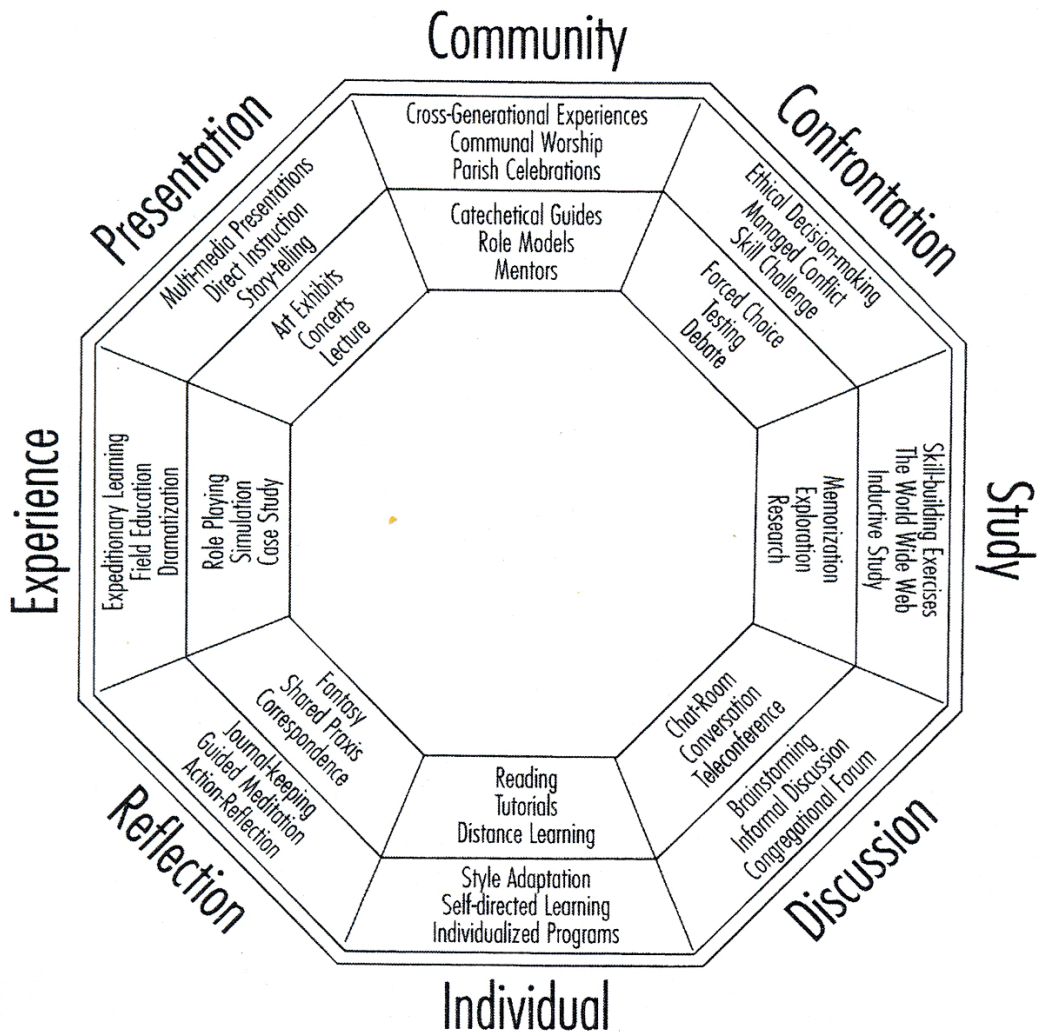
1. Discuss discussion! Share an experience when you were a participant in a Bible study and the discussion got out of hand...in a negative way. Where did it go? What happened? How did you feel? Share an experience that was positive. How did the teacher's leadership facilitate that? (Make sure that in *this* discussion all have opportunity to listen and learn from one another!)
2. Explore the two "bookends" of Mark 10:17-52 - vs. 17-22 and vs. 46-52. What similarities do you find between these two individuals who encounter Jesus? What contrasts? What does this say to you about discipleship? As time allows, study the center verses, 23-45 and consider the connections to the "bookends". How could you use the three facets of learning in this segment- discussion, study, and experiential learning – to explore this text?
3. "Remember together" some memorable experiential learning opportunities. Talk about a personal experience, perhaps from long ago, that are still informing your life today. What will help you improve your own teaching skills in using experiential learning.
4. Which of the three facets of learning explored in this segment would be helpful with which of the four approaches to studying the Bible found in chapter 3 of *Opening the Book of Faith*?

**Segment 4:** This final segment considers the remaining two facets of learning. Some people thrive on confrontation and debate. Others don't. **Confrontation**, properly understood and used appropriately, can be a productive learning method. **Reflection** includes journal keeping, drawing, praying the Scriptures. In our teaching, we choose methods that engage participants in a text to encounter the living God, and to be equipped for ministry in daily life. The faith community studies the Bible with doors to the world wide open. We discern the human predicament, our need for God's mercy, and the Good News of forgiveness and new life in Christ.

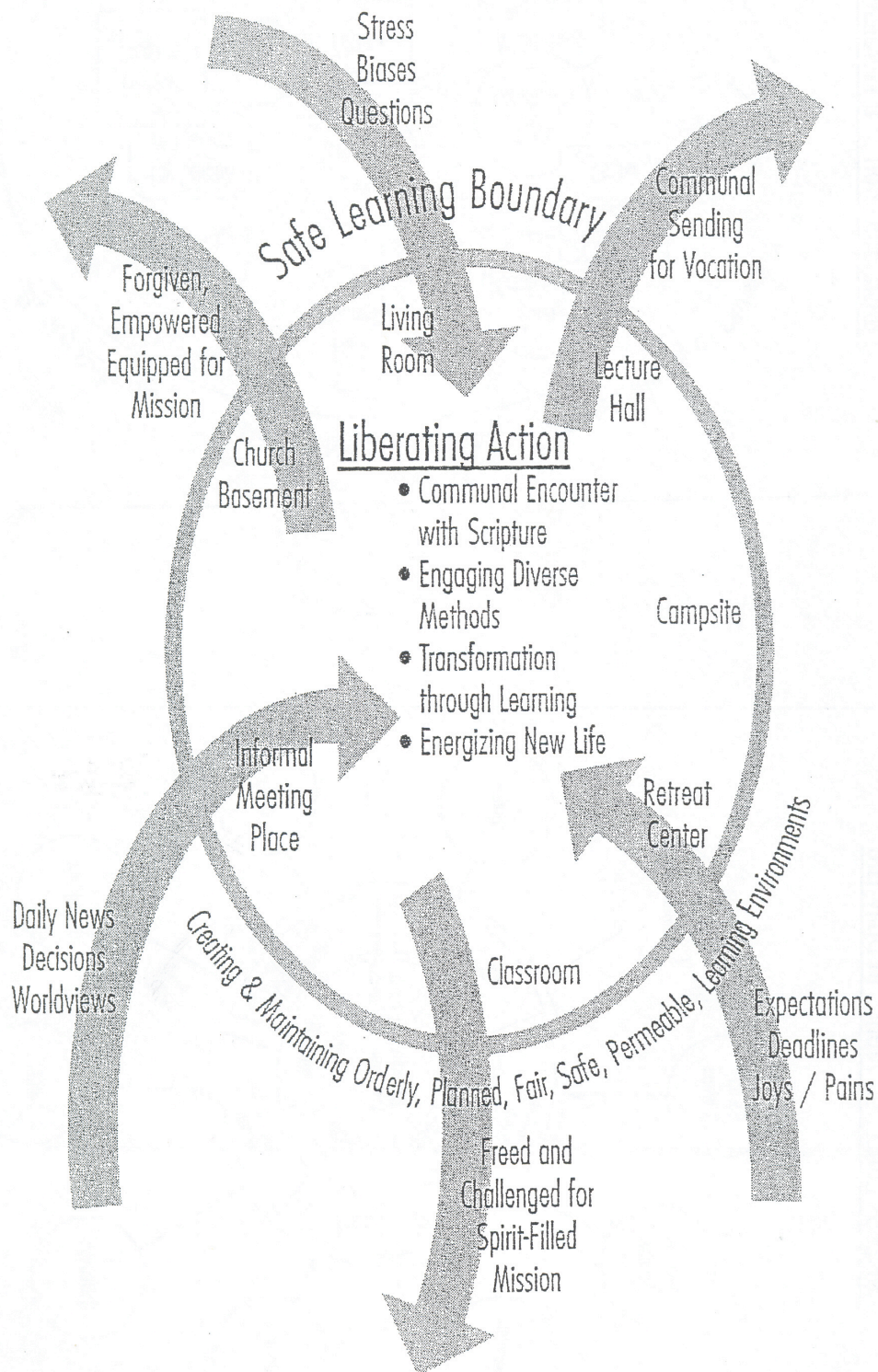
**Questions for Discussion:**

1. It is not difficult to remember a confrontational learning experience that was problematic, perhaps even abusive. Recall and share a teaching experience in which a method of confrontation was used productively. What made it work?
2. What is a holy time, or a holy place for you to enjoy reflective biblical study? Talk together about providing opportunities for group Bible Study using various kinds of reflective learning. What insights do you get from considering a "devotional" reading of the Bible in chapters 3 and 4 in *Opening the Book of Faith*?
3. Think about the people among whom you minister. What are some of the human situations of brokenness, fear, alienation, etc., present in your faith community? Which of them stands out for you in the Mark 10 text? Which of the facets of learning might be used to teach the Good News in Jesus Christ in response to this human situation – the Good News that meets people where they are and equips them for ministry in daily life in the world? Which of the four approaches to the Bible in *Opening the Book of Faith* would be useful here?

# Eight Facets of Learning



# Learning Arenas Grounded in the Creed



*The Church As Learning Community*  
Norma Cook Everist  
(Abingdon Press)



# The Psalter as Prayer Book

The Psalms show us human being pouring out their fears, joys, anxieties, vengeance, thanksgiving to a God who has promised to hear. While reading one psalm or a part of a psalm is useful for devotion, a person may want to become familiar with the entire Psalter, journal keeping along the way.

Youth and adults can take on the challenge of reading the entire Psalter in one month using the following marking system in one's own Bible. The Bible thereby becomes a prayer book, with a specific section to read on a specific morning or evening of the month. As the Psalms are re-read, a person might come back again to a date in his past when that Psalm matched his own feelings.

The following marking system takes about 15 minutes, and could be done in class or alone. At Psalm 1, mark 1-M to indicate that the person on the first day of the month in the morning reads Psalms 1-4. At Psalm 5 mark 1-E.

On the evening of the first day of the month the person reads Psalm 5-8. If one begins reading the Psalms on February 11, one would read in the morning Psalms 58 and 59.

Mark the Psalms thus:

Psalm 1	1-M	Psalm 60	11-E	Psalm 107	22-M
Psalm 5	1-E	Psalm 64	12-M	Psalm 108	22-E
Psalm 9	2-M	Psalm 66	12-E	Psalm 112	23-M
Psalm 12	2-E	Psalm 69	13-M	Psalm 116	23-E
Psalm 18	3-M	Psalm 70	13-E	Psalm 119:1	24-M
Psalm 19	3-E	Psalm 73	14-M	Psalm 119:41	24-E
Psalm 23	4-M	Psalm 74	14-E	Psalm 119:89	25-M
Psalm 26	4-E	Psalm 77	15-M	Psalm 119:129	25-E
Psalm 31	5-M	Psalm 78	15-E	Psalm 120	26-M
Psalm 33	5-E	Psalm 79	16-M	Psalm 126	26-E
Psalm 35	6-M	Psalm 81	16-E	Psalm 133	27-M
Psalm 36	6-E	Psalm 84	17-M	Psalm 136	27-E
Psalm 38	7-M	Psalm 86	17-E	Psalm 140	28-M
Psalm 39	7-E	Psalm 89	18-M	Psalm 142	28-E
Psalm 42	8-M	Psalm 90	18-E	Psalm 144	29-M
Psalm 45	8-E	Psalm 93	19-M	Psalm 145	29-E
Psalm 49	9-M	Psalm 96	19-E	Psalm 146	30-M
Psalm 50	9-E	Psalm 101	20-M	Psalm 147	30-E
Psalm 52	10-M	Psalm 103	20-E	Psalm 148	31-M
Psalm 55	10-E	Psalm 105	21-M	Psalm 149	31-E
Psalm 58	11-M	Psalm 106	21-E		

In months with fewer than 31 days, days 30 and 31 are combined.

Not all of these psalms will pertain specifically to the individual's day. However, in the discipline of reading the entire Psalter, many possibilities for journal keeping with the Psalms will be opened up to the person.



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SEE THE APPENDIX FOR CHARTS RELATED TO THIS SESSION.

Chart I, “Eight Facets of Learning”, and chart II, “Learning Arenas Grounded in the Creed”, are found in *The Church As Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education* by Norma Cook Everist, (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 2002. Used with permission from the publishers.

Chart III, “The Psalter as Prayerbook”, is from *Educational Ministry in the Congregation* by Norma J. Everist, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House), 1983. Used with permission from the publisher.

The following session gives voice to only 2 of the many voices that can be raised that differ from the dominant culture perspective. As you prepare to use this material, invite the participants to consider the multi-cultural histories, commitments, and concerns that are in your own particular context. Look for the tools and insights that can be used in your context.

## **SESSION V – Hearing Other Voices: Multi-cultural Commitments and Concerns**

**Assigned reading:** Bracke & Tye, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*, Chapter 3, pages 75-105

### **Part I: The African American Experience**

**Presenter:** Dr. Nelson Strobert, Professor of Christian Education at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

#### **Segment 1: African Americans and the Bible**

##### Suggested Readings:

Yolanda Smith, *Reclaiming the Spirituals*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2004. pages 55-82.

Vincent Wimbush, *The Bible and African Americans: a Brief History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Albert Raboteau, “The Chanted Sermon” in *A Fire in the Bones: Reflection on African American Religious History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

William B. McCain, “African American Preaching and the Bible” *Journal of Religious Thought*, 2001: pages 72-80.

This segment is an historical overview of the contexts in which African Americans have engaged the Bible. From the beginning years on the North American continent to the contemporary period, African Americans have made connections between the passages from the Bible which were heard in worship and the context of their own lives. The Bible has been used by those outside of Christian faith communities as a means to attract African Americans because of the central role that the Bible has in their lives. More recent historical developments include the role of African American women and global perspectives on the Bible – two important concerns that very often are not discussed or mentioned when we are involved in the study of the Bible.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

- What might be the importance of examining the Womanist perspective in the study of the Bible? What biblical stories, songs and letters, might be particularly important to African American women and their engagement with the Bible? What might a feminist perspective bring to the text? How might the womanist and feminist perspective be helpful to all students of the Bible?
- Have you ever engaged in Bible study with Christians from other countries? If your answer is yes, what were some of the similarities and differences in how you interpreted the texts?
- Often congregations are able to invite someone from the church in another part of the world to preach in the congregation. If you have heard such a guest, what similarities and differences in interpreting the texts in the sermon did you notice?

A portion of this segment deals with the concrete contexts in which African Americans have interpreted the Bible: spirituals, literature, and the sermon.

### **Sermons**

The sermon makes strong connections between the text and the contexts of African American lives. The preacher not only reads the text but also performs the text in what Raboteau describes as the chanted sermon, in which one experiences the living word. This is underscored at the end of Raboteau's essay which states, "In the chanted sermon, African-American Christians did not merely talk about God, they experienced his power, and found that in the experience their own spirits were renewed."

- Recall a sermon that you feel empowered and renewed you. What was the text for the sermon? What words would you use to describe the sermon?
- View and listen to examples of African American preachers. What are the similarities and differences from your experience in listening to sermons?
- Listen to a variety of Sermons on Day 1, an online collection of lectionary-based sermons from a variety of Protestant denominations, <http://day1.org/>. How does the preacher make connections with you and your experience? How does the sermon make connections with your community context?

### Other sermon possibilities:

Pastor Lawrence J. Clark (ELCA) "The Passion of Jesus," Day 1 Broadcast - [http://day1.org/1036-the\\_passion\\_of\\_jesus](http://day1.org/1036-the_passion_of_jesus) - Luke 23:1-56/Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday - Year C/April 01, 2007

Reverend Gardner C. Taylor. Video clip from sermon preached at the Church of God in Christ Convention. – Go to youtube.com and search for Gardner C. Taylor

Bishop Vashti McKenzie Preaching at Howard University, Washington, DC

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKIo7y-x2ew>

Bishop Vashti McKenzie at Reid Temple in Maryland.

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=vashti+mckenzie&hl=en&emb=0&aq=0&oq=vashti+m#>

- How does the following text apply to Bishop McKenzie?  
Sermon based on Revelation 3:8 "I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name."

#### Additional Sources:

"Reverend Gardner C. Taylor" Religion and Ethics Video Clip

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/august-18-2006/reverend-gardner-c-taylor/1786/>

Extended Interview with Reverend Gardner C. Taylor. Religion and Ethics

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/august-18-2006/reverend-gardner-c-taylor-extended-interview/1881/>

### **Literature**

The Bible has been used in the creative work of literature by African American writers and writers in general.

- When you reflect on your reading, can you identify authors whose works use religious themes?

The following are examples from African American literature:

Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773)

"Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:  
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.  
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,  
"Their colour is a diabolic die."  
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,  
May be refin'd and join th'angelic train.

- How would you summarize the poem?

Rita Dove, "Receiving the Stigmata" (1983) in *African American Literature*, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Nellie Y McKay, eds. New York: Norton, 1997.

There is a way to enter a field  
empty-handed, your shoulder  
behind you and air tightening.

The kite comes by itself,  
a spirit on a fluttering string.

Back when people died for  
the smallest reasons, there was  
always a field to walk into.  
Simple men fell to their knees  
below the radiant crucifix  
and held out their palms

in relief. Go into the field  
and it will reward. Grace

is a string growing straight  
from the hand. Is  
the hatchet's shadow on the  
rippling green.

## **Spirituals**

The spirituals are those sacred songs which emerged out of the slave experience on North American soil. They developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Yet these songs continue to inform us today, because they come from the depths of the human experience of which we are all a part, regardless of our racial or cultural backgrounds.

- What are some contemporary expressions of these spirituals? If you are able, listen to some Christian hip-hop singers to get a feel for the concerns of our young people (e.g., Flame). What themes are present in the songs? What connections might there be between the spirituals and Christian hip-hop music?

The spirituals emerged from the slave experience of African Americans. Before singing or listening to the spirituals listed below, or others that you might have in your setting, read a few slave narratives which give us a picture of the experience from which the spirituals developed. The Library of Congress has a collection of slave narratives that were told to interviewers in the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938.

(<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>.)

There are also many slave narratives that were written. You might consider reading one of the following:

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

<http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/>

Incidents in the Life of a Slave – Harriet Jacobs

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>

Look at the spirituals found in your hymnal or worship book. Identify the biblical themes and passages which are reflected in the spiritual. How do these themes connect with all Christians?

The following spirituals are found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*:

- 290 “Go Tell It on the Mountain”
- 325 “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”
- 333 “Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land”
- 350 “Thy Crucified My Lord”
- 353 “Were You There”
- 354 “Every Time I Think About Jesus”
- 438 “My Lord What a Morning”
- 459 “Wade in the Water”
- 471 “Let Us Break Bread Together”
- 614 “There is a Balm in Gilead”
- 677 “This Little Light of Mine”
- 770 “Give Me Jesus”
- 860 “I’m So Glad Jesus Lifted Me”

#### Additional Resources:

Books:

James Weldon Johnson. *American Negro Spirituals*. New York: De Capo Press, 1981.

Christa K. Dixon. *Negro Spirituals*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.

Sources for listening to spirituals:

“Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLpELx5ovGg>

“There is a Balm” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raOucG9Sg9Q>

“Wade in the Water” with Alvin Ailey Dance Company

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9uEq9Sjefg>

“My Lord, What a Morning” Marian Anderson  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJoDR704-BA>

“Steal Away” Mahalia Jackson and Nat King Cole <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O5hz5KnSdc>

“My Soul’s Been Anchored on the Lord” and “This Little Light of Mine” Leontyne Price  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_FvWAOKdYO8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FvWAOKdYO8)

Jessye Norman. “Spiritual” CD Recording. London: Philips, 1978

## **Segment 2: Studying the Bible in the African American Context**

Suggested reading: Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 1994.

In this segment, we will explore the manner in which the biblical text and the contexts of African American lives can be woven together to engage African Americans and all people in Bible study. Our question is: How can we connect the biblical text to the contexts of African Americans? One response to this question is to engage in the work of Dr. Anne Wimberly in *Soul Stories*, where she describes the story-linking process. Though Wimberly is writing especially for an African-American audience, her method would work with Christians from all backgrounds.

In the first phase of this process, “engaging the everyday story,” we are dealing with our individual personal stories. How do we link our present contexts with the biblical text? What is going on in our lives? (The entire process is described in chapter 1 of *Soul Stories*. If you have access to the book, you will want to read this chapter.)

- What are the issues, encounters, and events which drive you to reflect on God’s Word in the biblical text?

In the second phase, “engaging the Christian faith story in the Bible,” we begin to investigate and connect with the biblical text. This connection is done by hearing the text read several times and in various ways, with a partner, in a group, and reading silently.

- What are the biblical texts that assist in your theological reflection when you need guidance?
- How have these texts changed for you over the years? How have your interpretations of the texts changed?

In the third phase, “engaging Christian faith stories from the African American heritage,” Wimberly pushes us to look at stories from our heritage. She specifically looks

at a story of faith from the experience of an African American woman, Harriet Tubman, who was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, leading slaves to freedom.

- Who are some of the people of faith who are spoken about in your ethnic-cultural community?

The fourth phase, “engaging in Christian ethical decision making,” is the action phase. Our study and reflection assists us in engaging in the world around us.

- How is our world different because we were engaged in the stories of faith, both within the Bible and from our ethnic heritage?
- Identify the possibilities for action in your community in response to your engagement with the text.

### Heritage Stories

There are a number of slave narratives that depict slave life as mentioned previously. The story-linking model is appropriate for any congregation. It would be helpful to identify the cultural groups present in yours in order to explore the ethnic histories present. Through online searches, ethnic historical societies, etc., one can develop a portfolio of resources that can be used for the story-linking process.

Slave Narratives: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/religiouscontent.html>

The Fugitive Blacksmith; Events in the History of James W.C. Pennington, Pastor of a Presbyterian Church, New York, Formerly a Slave in the State of Maryland, United States.

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/penning49/penning49.html>

Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown47/brown47.html>

Memoir and Poems of Phyllis Wheatley, a Native African and a Slave Dedicated to the Friends of the Africans

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/wheatley/wheatley.html>

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Blount, Brian. *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

Clifton, Lucille. *Blessing the Boats*. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2000.



Felder, Cain Hope. *Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

Gates, Henry Louis Jr. and Nellie Y McKay. *African American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1997.

Nash, Peter T. *Reading Race, Reading the Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

Thurman, Howard. *Deep River and the Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death*. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1975; reprint 1996.

Williams, Delores S. *Sisters in the Wilderness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.

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## **Part II: The Asian American Experience**

**Presenter:** Eddie Kwok is Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Mission, and Director of Contextual Education at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Canada. He also serves there as Liaison with the Chinese community.

These two segments of session 6 explore Asian American reading of the Bible. The first deals with questions of what an Asian American reading of the Bible is: What are the sources? Who are the interpreters? What are the particular challenges and issues faced by Asian Americans that these interpreters have to address? In this study guide you will be invited to participate in an Asian American experience through having a meal in an Asian restaurant. The discussion that follows is intended to help you unpack this experience in order to enter into a deep appreciation of the issues and challenges faced by Asian Americans.

The second segment here presents a series of three different texts and explores how they are read by Asian American interpreters. It offers interpretations that are an alternative to those offered by the traditional Western critical approach. In this segment, you are invited to put on the lenses of these Asian American interpreters and read the texts through their perspectives. Through the eyes of these interpreters, you may enter into a deeper appreciation of the text and what it has to say about the marginalized.

**Segment 3:** This session takes the learner on an exploration tour of what is Asian American Reading of the Bible. It introduces the learner to the sources, history and the complex and diverse nature of Asian American biblical interpretation. It invites the learner to participate in the Asian American experience.

### **Learning Goals**

- To gain an appreciation of the Asian American experience
- To know who the Asian American interpreters are
- To attain a knowledge of the nature and the approaches of Asian American interpretation

### **Preparation**

If possible, before watching this segment of the DVD, organize a cultural experience for the group as a prelude to the study session. This experience could be in the form of a dim-sum lunch at a Chinese restaurant, or a meal at a Japanese sushi restaurant or a Korean barbecue. If you know someone from the Asian community in your area, ask him or her to take you there and introduce the group to the distinctive types of food being served.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. After the meal, talk about your initial reaction to the experience, and what your thoughts and feelings were after you had tasted the food.
2. Try to imagine what the world would be like in North America today without names such as “dim-sum” or “wonton” or “chow mein” or “ginger beef” or “lemon duck” or barbecued duck/pork or fried rice. If there were no “wok,” would we know “stir-fry”? What would we be missing if there were no “sushi” or “tempura” or “teriyaki”? What if there were no Indian restaurants to go to where we could have “curry” or “tandoori,” or no Korean hotpot or barbecue or “kimchi”? How would life in your community be different?
3. Should biblical interpretation be any different? Why or why not? The cliché “variety is the spice of life” is an idea worth revisiting when speaking not just of food, but also of approaches to the Bible. Just as the way in which Asians use spices and the way in which they prepare their food is clearly distinct from that of Europeans, it can also be argued that Asians understand their world differently. With their distinctive cosmologies, it seems obvious that their reading of the Bible would also be different from that of persons from the West.
4. While at the restaurant, which dish did you like best? Which did you not like? Why? Ingredients that Asians use in their cooking may taste strange and exotic to the palates of European Americans. Some might even find them offensive. It is easy to devalue or even discard them from our menus. Yet they are considered delicacies by Asians. Similarly, Asian cosmologies and their interpretations of the Bible can seem alien because they do not reflect Western notions. Does it make them invalid? Why or why not?
5. In our pursuit of the truth, why is it important to be open to hear voices other than our own, particularly voices of the minority?
6. Have you had the opportunity to visit or to live in Asia? When you were there, what was your experience of being a minority? Of not knowing the language? Did you feel you were accepted there as member of the community? Why or why not?
7. Imagine yourself to be an Asian American in your community. What are some social and cultural challenges that you might have to face? How do you think the church could offer to help you address some of these challenges?

### **Closing**

Name those who are marginalized in your community. Pray that the church will find the will, the way and the courage to speak up for those who are voiceless.

**Segment 4:** In this segment, you are invited to participate in the experience of reading the Bible from Asian American perspectives. You will be given the opportunity to read a selection of texts for themselves and explore the meanings behind them, particular those related to the Asian North American experience of marginalization and liminality.

### **Learning Goals**

- To hear the voices of some Asian American interpreters
- To become acquainted with Asian American interpretation in practice
- To appreciate the contributions of Asian American to the discourse on biblical interpretation

### **Preparation**

If there is a Chinatown in your community or nearby, organize a visit before the group meets to watch this segment of the DVD. If possible, arrange to have a guide show the group around and talk about the history and development of the Chinese community. Invite the guide to speak about Chinese immigrants' experience of racism and the struggles of the Chinese community to deal with the discriminatory actions of the dominant culture.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. If you were able to arrange a tour of Chinatown, invite group members to speak about their experience of being in there, and their response to the guide's presentation on Chinese immigration and the experience of racism.
2. Imagine yourself as a Chinese labourer living in Chinatown. The year is 1882 and the Chinese Exclusion Act has just been passed. No Chinese immigration would be permitted until the Act was repealed in 1943. Ninety per cent of the inhabitants in Chinatown like you are men. They are the only community you have. You hardly know any English and you have difficulty finding any work outside Chinatown because nobody would employ you. How would you have responded to this scenario?
3. Read Genesis 16. Who did you identify with in the text before you saw the DVD and why? Has your perception of Sarah and Hagar changed? How? Who are the "Hagars" in our own communities?
4. Read 2 Samuel 11. Does it seem strange to you that this text is entitled the "Story of Uriah the Hittite" instead of "The Story of David's Adultery with Bathsheba"? David seems to be everybody's favourite action hero, is he yours too? Why do you think he is so popular?
5. What do you think of David's actions to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba? What about Uriah's murder? Why do you think Uriah's murder was glossed over

and David's actions were minimized? Do you think the story-teller is biased? Who are the "Uriahs" in our midst?

6. Read Judges 4-5. What is so unusual about the story of Jael? Who is she? What is her background and why is she so special? Does the fact that Jael has her own tent have any ethnic significance?

### **Additional Texts for an Asian American Reading of the Bible (Optional)**

Text: Genesis 19

The Story of Lot's Wife Being Turned into a Pillar of Salt

Key question for an Asian American exploration: Was Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt because she lusted after the worldly life she had been enjoying in Sodom, or, as some Midrashic sources suggest, was it because she could not bear to leave behind her two other daughters who had refused to go with the rest of her family?

Text: Exodus 2

The Story of Moses

Key question for an Asian American exploration: How did Moses see himself? And how did others perceive him? What was Moses' experience of liminality? (Note especially verse 11 and verse 19)

Text: 1 Peter

Key question for an Asian American exploration: In what ways did the Christian community in Asia Minor experience marginalization?

### **Closing**

Name the "Hagar's" and the "Uriah's" and the "Moses's" in your community. Pray that the Church would recognize and confront its own complicity in racism, and take up its role as advocate for those who suffered discrimination in our society.

### **Glossary**

#### *Cultural Hermeneutic*

This is a way of approaching the text in which the reader engages the experiences of people in the text from his or her own cultural perspectives. The reader's cultural perspectives are regarded as resources for reading the text rather than as obstacles. This method of interpretation is distinct from the classical historical critical approach where the cultural perspective of the reader plays no significant part in the interpretative process.

#### *Culturally Contextualized*

All interpretations are contextual because texts are read through the eyes of one who is situated in a particular context. When distinctive cultural motifs in a particular context are intentionally employed in the interpretation process to tease out meaning from a text, the result is a culturally contextualized reading.

### *Heterogeneity*

Heterogeneity is a description of Asian American identity that highlights its complexity and diversity. It is thought that with successive generations, Asian Americans will eventually lose their Asian cultural heritage and become totally assimilated to the dominant white culture, and thus, become homogenized. Heterogeneity argues that this is often not the case. In reality, successive generations have to re-negotiate and rearticulate their Asian American identity in ways that recent immigrants may not be aware of.

### *Hybridity*

Hybridity is a postcolonial notion that is used to articulate Asian American cultural identity. Homi Bhabha defines it as active resistance and challenge to the dominant culture. Frank Yamada, an Asian American biblical scholar argues that Asian Americans, “both in their bodies and their construction of cultural identity, re-present imposed constructs of Asian-ness and American-ness in such a way that renders the authority of the dominant culture’s perception problematic.”

### *Identity*

Identity here refers to the designation of those living or working in North America who, in one way or another, can trace their roots back to the Asian context. This identity is not homogeneous but represents a complex and diverse group of people that are connected in some ways to the histories and cultures of East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and even the Pacific Islands.

### *Liminality*

Liminality refers to the experience of living in an in-between world. It is to be neither here nor there. Culturally, Asian Americans live in two worlds: the world of Asia and the world of America. They are not fully integrated into and accepted by either cultural system. Politically, it means not being at the center of power but standing on the precarious boundary of the two dominant groups. Socially, it is to be part of a minority; a member of the marginalized community. Linguistically, the person who lives in the liminal world may speak two or more languages and often be the master of none. Spiritually and psychologically, the person experiences a sense of alienation and rootlessness.

### *Marginality*

Marginality means not being at the center. It means not being fully accepted by those from the dominant groups who are at the center. Marginality is an experience that is often not understood by those who are at the center. Some have even classified it as a social and psychological disorder.

### *Trans-generational*

Trans-generational is a description of the continuing challenges faced by generations after generations of Asian Americans as they seek to rearticulate their cultural and ethnic identity.

### **Select Resources for Further Exploration**

Fernandez, Eleazar S., and Fernando Segovia, eds. *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

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Wu, Frank. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. New York: Basic Books, 2001

#### Internet Resources

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/chinex.htm>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H-MY6c\\_tLA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H-MY6c_tLA)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4bhpskMdM4>



## **SESSION VI – Using Visual Media to Teach the Bible**

**Presenters:** Dr. Rolf A. Jacobson, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Dr. Hans Wiersma, Assistant Professor of Religion at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Assigned reading:** Bracke & Tye, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*, Chapter 5, pages 137- 160.

This session is designed to stimulate and inform your thinking about using visual media to teach and learn the stories and lessons of Holy Scripture. The presentations address the general subject of using visual media to teach and learn the Bible; using works of art, photography, and sculpture for teaching and learning; applying movie scenes and TV programs to the study of the Bible; and implementing user-created visual media.

**Segment 1** - This segment introduces you to the general subject of using visual media to teach and learn the scriptures. In one sense, imaginations have always translated the oral or textual transmission of scripture into images in the minds eye. In another sense, external visual media - such as iconography or nativity scenes at Christmastime - have been used to teach the scripture for many centuries. Recent technological advances have increased exponentially the possibilities for accessing and using visual media to teach and learn scripture.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What are some ways that you have experienced visual media in a classroom or teaching-and-learning setting? (Examples: slideshows, filmstrips, felt-boards, modeling clay, etc.)
2. What factors or hindrances make it difficult for you to implement visual media as you formulate a lesson plan? What do you need to learn more about in order to become more adept at implementing visual media in your teaching of the Bible? Who do you know that might help you do some of the preparatory work for adding visual content to your lessons?
3. Educators sometimes identify three main modes or styles of learning: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Put simply, people learn by seeing, hearing, and/or doing. However, these three learning styles are ranked and experienced differently by individuals. What is your preferred learning mode in a classroom setting? What do you think might be your preferred learning mode when it comes to learning the Bible? When you prepare a lesson, do you prepare for learners who are primarily visual, auditory, or kinesthetic?

4. Consider the four interpretive approaches highlighted in the *Opening the Book of Faith*: devotional, historical, literary, and Lutheran theological. How might visual media be used to support each of these approaches? Which approach is perhaps best supported with visual media?

### **Optional Learning Activity**

Locate a number of children's books that illustrate a Bible story (or stories). Invite learners to find illustrations they like or don't like. Reflect: How do the illustrations interpret the original biblical texts? If children benefit from illustrated biblical texts, why not adults?

**Segment 2** - Long before motion pictures, artists have been creating works of art that offer profound interpretations of scenes and themes from the Bible. Did you know that if you google “Rembrandt Prodigal Son,” you’ll come up with links to dozens upon dozens of digital reproductions of the Dutch artist’s masterwork? With just a few more steps, it’s possible to import these images to suit your pedagogical purposes. The World-Wide Web now makes it possible to search for and access these works of art with the click of a mouse.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Recall a painting, sculpture, cartoon, or other art-image, of a biblical character, story, or theme. Describe it as best as you can. Where did you see this artwork originally? Is your recollection of the artwork clear or fuzzy?
2. What is your experience with slideshow software such as PowerPoint? Have you ever used such “slideware” yourself? What makes for an effective PowerPoint presentation? Are you as annoyed by text-only PowerPoint presentations as is the writer of this study guide? How can tools like PowerPoint best be used to teach and learn the Bible?
3. Stained-glass windows are a centuries-old visual art medium. Are there any stained-glass windows in your church building? If so, what biblical themes or scenes are being illustrated by these windows - windows that literally illuminate your congregation’s worship? What other kind of art is on display in your worship space and elsewhere in your church building? How is such art generally perceived by your congregation’s members? Are there art-works that are more highly-valued, or more central than others? Why?

### **Optional Learning Activity**

Obtain a book of biblical art (places to look: your church library, your local library, or your local bookseller). Make photocopies of images that illustrate biblical scenes and characters. Hand them out to your learners. Invite your learners to tell the story that is being told by the artwork. Invite them to supply dialogue for the bible characters pictured. (If you photocopy the images in such a way that you leave large margins on the page, learners can draw in their own “speech balloons” in which to write dialogue.) Reflect: How does engagement with biblically-themed artwork enhance your experience of a biblical text?

**Segment 3** - Since the advent of video tape players, it has been possible to use scenes from movies and television programs to teach and learn the Bible. Today, with a video projector connected to a laptop with a DVD player and internet access, the options for showing media clips in support of Bible lessons are manifold. Beyond just showing an episode of *Veggie Tales* to a Sunday School class, this segment discusses strategies for using copyrighted video material in your teaching settings.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Think of a movie in which the main character(s) experienced redemption and/or reconciliation of one kind or another. Summarize the character's story. (Redemption and reconciliation are common cinematic themes. If you are having trouble thinking of a movie, just think of the last five movies you saw. Odds are, at least one character experienced redemption and or reconciliation in most of those movies, if not all of them!) How might you connect the reconciliation and/or redemption of the movie character(s) you chose with the experience of biblical characters—or even with your own experience? Why are themes of redemption and reconciliation so integral to many human stories?
2. In Western societies, the Christian narrative has been the “dominant narrative” for centuries. That is to say, for a very long time most westerners understood their own stories within the framework of the “salvation history” described from Genesis to Revelation. Today, thanks to movies and television, people are exposed to a wide range of different narratives. Moreover, it is often the case that people are more familiar with the themes and characters of the worlds imagined by *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Lord of the Rings* than they are with the biblical narrative. Does finding points of connection between modern cinematic narratives and the biblical narrative help communicate the Christian world-view, or does finding such points of connection simply dilute the stories and lessons of scripture?
3. Books like *The Gospel according to the Simpsons* demonstrate that it is possible to extract relevant Christian content from television shows. What other television shows have a spiritual side? Are there shows that you would recommend as good viewing for Christians? Conversely, can you name any shows that you would label as anti-Christian, or that feature characters that are anti-Christian?

### **Optional Learning Activity**

Perhaps that crack about *Veggie Tales* in the synopsis of this segment above isn't such a bad idea after all. Obtain a copy of an episode of Veggie Tale and watch it with your group. Reflect: Which biblical story, theme, or lesson is this episode attempting to teach? Upon which biblical text(s) is the episode based? In what significant ways does the episode exercise "creative license" when compared with the original biblical material? In what ways does the episode remain faithful to the biblical material? In terms of learning, what is the difference between (1) viewing the *Veggie Tales* episode only, (2) reading the biblical text(s) only, and (3) reading the biblical text(s) and viewing the *Veggie Tales* together?

**Segment 4** - You don't need modern technology to create your own visual media. If students have pencil and paper, they have the tools to create visual media that will help them learn the Bible. Nevertheless, digital cameras, and the availability of slide-show and video-editing software offer additional possibilities. There are now any number of ways by which teachers can tap their own creativity - not to mention the creativity of their students - for the purpose of teaching and learning scripture.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Describe one of your own attempts at creating visual media - anything from childhood to now, from drawing a picture to making paper-maché, from shooting video to putting together a slideshow. What is frustrating about the creative process? What is rewarding? Are there artists (painters, cartoonists, film makers, etc.) whose work you admire? Why?
2. A common pedagogical strategy with children is to involve them in simple creative projects such as coloring, drawing, painting, cutting-and-pasting, modeling with clay or play-dough, etc. What factors hinder such pedagogies with adults? How might creative projects enhance the experience of adult learners?
3. Imagine that you have a video camera and one hour to create a video about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. How might you go about it? Would you try to recreate the events? Would you use real actors or, say, action figures? Would you try to retell the passion story by videoing representative images found around your learning site? Or would you simply interview others, asking them to retell the story on-camera? What other possibilities might there be?

### **Part Four Activity**

If possible, try to create the user-generated project described in question three, above. It's sure to be an informative and rewarding endeavor. However, if making a video in one hour's time seems too ambitious, try this activity on for size: Create a comic of a Bible story. Here's how: (1) choose a story, (2) figure out how many panels you will need to tell the story, (3) fill in the panels with drawings and speech balloons. No artistic ability is required. You can do this project as individual learners or as groups. All panels can be squeezed onto a single sheet of paper. However, if you use one sheet of paper per cartoon panel, you can tape each panel to a board or to the wall, so that others may more easily view the results. Reflect: How does creating your own representation of a biblical story enhance your understanding and appreciation of that story?

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Pinsky, Mark I., *The Gospel According to the Simpsons: The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 2001.

*Veggie Tales* are produced by Big Idea, Inc., in Franklin, Tennessee

**Resources from the Worldwide Web** (resources listed here are from March, 2009)

“Biblical Art on the WWW” ([www.biblical-art.com](http://www.biblical-art.com)) is an excellent place to begin if you want to search for art resources to illustrate Bible stories and themes. Search by biblical subject, biblical text, artist, or word.

The lectionary-based “The Text This Week” website includes an art index feature similar to that of Biblical Art on the WWW. Here you can search for art according to character, item, theme, or event, as well as by lectionary week or scripture passage (go to [www.textweek.com/art/art.htm](http://www.textweek.com/art/art.htm)).

The “Mark Harden’s Artchive” ([www.artchive.com](http://www.artchive.com)) is a searchable database of public domain works of art. However, the website does have annoying ads and pop-up windows. It is possible to pay a fee for advertisement-free access and/or to get the entire database of images on CD-ROM.

Olga’s Gallery ([www.abcgallery.com](http://www.abcgallery.com)) is a searchable, on-line art museum that displays famous and not-so-famous works of art. In addition, almost all major museums have their own on-line presence, including the National Gallery of Art ([www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov)), the Chicago Art Institute ([www.artic.edu/aic](http://www.artic.edu/aic)), and the Louvre ([www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)).

Flickr ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)) is a user-generated collection of millions of images. On the day of this writing, the writer of this study-guide typed “Abraham and Sarah” into the search box. This search netted 356 images, including images of paintings, drawings, and sculptures of the biblical Abraham and Sarah, but also a photo of a dual burial site for a couple with the names Abraham and Sarah.

You can do a Google search in “image” mode. A search for “Madonna and Child” will net you thousands of “thumbnail” images (and their associated links) of artwork depicting mother Mary and the baby Jesus. You may also get the occasional photo of the singer/actress Madonna with her children, but that’s part of the fun of a Google image search ([images.google.com](http://images.google.com)).

For “movie clips that illustrate and inspire,” check out the well-appointed [www.wingclips.com](http://www.wingclips.com). There are also a number of books that identify movies scenes that can be utilized to teach the Bible, including the *Videos That Teach* series of books available from major Christian booksellers.

The “Text Week” site noted above also has a movie theme index ([www.textweek.com/movies/themeindex.htm](http://www.textweek.com/movies/themeindex.htm)) to help identify movie clips that illustrate scripture themes.

If your classroom is set up with a way to access the Internet, YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) will allow you to “stream-in” video content, including content that you have created. Many television stations are making television programming available via their websites; Hulu ([www.hulu.com](http://www.hulu.com)) offers high resolution streams of many programs, and even some movies.

Information about obtaining an “umbrella license” for showing copyrighted video material in a congregational setting (similar to the CCLI license for music) can be obtained at [www.mplc.org](http://www.mplc.org).

Don’t want to pay for slide presentation software like PowerPoint? Individuals can obtain free versions of productivity software at [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org).