

God's Radical Love For All

A Bible Study
by
Open Hearts. Open Church.
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Task Force on
Sexual Orientation
and
Gender Identity

Participant's Guide

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Open Hearts. Open Church.

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod Task Force on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Introduction

Thank you for opening your hearts to hear what the Bible has to say about God's radical love for all.

This bible study was created by Open Hearts. Open Church. - the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Task Force on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to help individuals, small groups, and congregations better understand what the Bible has to say regarding God's inclusive love, especially focusing on people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

If you have any comments, questions, or would like more information please contact Open Hearts. Open Church. at info@openheartsopenchurch.org

Two documents from the ELCA's Book of Faith Initiative (<http://www.bookoffaith.org/>) form the basis of this bible study.

- What Lutherans Think About The Bible
<http://www.bookoffaith.org/pdf/What%20Lutherans%20Think%20About%20the%20Bible-3.pdf>
- Some Helpful Ways to Read the Bible
<http://www.bookoffaith.org/pdf/Some%20Helpful%20Ways%20to%20Read%20the%20Bible-3.pdf>

Please read these so you can become familiar with them as they help you through this Bible study.

John 12:27-33

The Bible Passage

John 12:27-33

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Discussion Questions

1. In what way(s) do you hear this text as law? In what way(s) do you hear this text as gospel?
2. How does this passage show forth Christ? What does this text tell us about the person, the character of Jesus?
3. What other passages from the Bible help us to understand this passage? How does the context of this text inform your understanding of it? How does the reading and interpretation of the other passages inform your reading of this text?
4. What is the plain meaning of this text?
5. How is this text interpreted by my community? In my experience? How might others hear this passage, especially people from cultures different from my own?
6. Reflecting on the text and discussion:
 - What resonates with you?
 - What will you think more about?
 - How has this understanding expanded your boundaries?

Matthew 15:21-28

The Bible Passage

Matthew 15:21-28

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And daughter was healed instantly.

Discussion Questions

1. In what way(s) do you hear this text as law? In what way(s) do you hear this text as gospel?
2. How does this passage show forth Christ? What does this text tell us about the person, the character of Jesus?
3. What other passages from the Bible help us to understand this passage? How does the context of this text inform your understanding of it? How does the reading and interpretation of the other passages inform your reading of this text?
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Galatians 3:26-29

The Bible Passage

Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Discussion Questions

1. In what way(s) do you hear this text as law? In what way(s) do you hear this text as gospel?
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Luke 10:25-37

The Bible Passage

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” ³⁷He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Discussion Questions

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Isaiah 43:1-7

The Bible Passage

Isaiah 43:1-7

¹But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

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