

Reflection Guide

The Way of Love with Bishop Michael Curry: Bless

Sharing & listening to stories of life

How to Use This Guide

For personal devotion

Listen to the podcast episode one or two times. Next, set aside 20 minutes of quiet time to reflect on the following Scripture and questions. Consider writing your responses to the prompts in a journal. Close your time in prayer.

As a group

Before you meet, ask members to listen to this episode. Open your meeting by sharing the Scripture. Next, you may either listen to the episode again as a group or move on to the Questions for Reflection. As a group, discuss your thoughts about and answers to the questions. Finally, close your time together with the prayer.

Scripture

Take a moment to read this passage (aloud if possible).

What words or phrases jump out to you?

John 4:1-26

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John”² —although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?”¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.”¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’;¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet.”²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Questions for Reflection

Use these questions for personal reflection, group discussion, or both.

1. One of the core aspects of the practice we call “bless” is evangelism. But evangelism is not about achieving a determined outcome, such as making more Episcopalians or more Christians, although those are great. Instead, it “is to be on a journey with someone else, and journey with them into a deeper relationship with the living God that we know in Jesus Christ.” We do this by the gift of our presence, the gift of our story, and most especially through the gift of listening – seeking, naming, and celebrating where God is at work in our community, our lives, and the lives of our neighbors. Evangelism is relational – it is a circle of blessing. When has the sharing of spiritual stories – the stories of how God has showed up in daily life – impacted you? Consider times both when you took the step to share and when you blessed another by listening.
2. In this episode, Canon Stephanie Spellers reflects that “part of what happens when we bless or are blessed is an unveiling. What blessing does is pours forth whatever is necessary so that the thing being blessed becomes what it was always supposed to be.” Often, this unveiling happens when we are blessed by the caring presence of a counselor, a friend, or a mentor. Bishop Curry shares a story of when deep listening helped him discover his call to the priesthood. When have you been blessed by deep listening from another? What did that listening unveil or call forth in you?
3. Not only are we blessed when we listen to others or when others listen to us, but we also are practicing bless when we listen to ourselves. Bishop Curry, expanding on a quote by Maya Angelou says, “Listen to your life, listen to the stories that it tells, and listen to how God can be an author of that story.” One way that Bishop Curry recommends listening to your own life is this: Every few months set aside some time to review your recent calendar. Look back on the previous months, reflecting on events or encounters you may have forgotten. Ask yourself whom you were with and what you were doing. Next, see if you notice any patterns of God’s presence woven throughout those months – either through the events or the people around you. What were the blessings that rise to the top through those patterns? Right now, in your group or in your journal, simply think over the past few days: Where do you see blessing?

Prayer

Just as Jesus called his disciples to give, forgive, teach, and heal in his name, we are empowered by the Spirit to bless everyone we meet, practicing generosity and compassion and proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ with hopeful words and selfless actions. Help us, O Lord, to boldly share our stories of blessing and invite others to follow your Way of Love. Amen.