

BIBLE STUDIES

The intentionality of spending time in Scripture is an important aspect of every Christian mission experience and pilgrimage. While you may pick one guiding Scripture for your trip, you may also want to spend time in several passages.

While they can be used as is, the following Bible Studies have been submitted by the Rev. Michael Battle, Sarah Sartain, and Ariana Gonzalez—Bonillas to serve as samples and guides as you put together the Bible Study most appropriate for your group.

BIBLE STUDY ONE

Called to Mission within a Culture

Michael Battle

Introduction

This Bible study is designed for your mission and journey of faith, especially as you listen and learn from other cultures. Your mission, however, requires training. Why? If a successful mission is to occur, faithful and intelligent persons are needed. This is especially important given some of the horrible examples of human history in which those of dominant cultures take advantage of other cultures (e.g., colonization, slavery, and holocaust). Some of us who have called ourselves Christians have even participated in and justified such tragedies. Instead of making the world worse by our living here, God, in Christ, beckons us to a deeper mission: becoming God's agents of reconciliation. Bono, from the rock group U2, helps us respond to this call from God when he (of Irish descent) sings to Yahweh (the unspoken Jewish holy name of God):

Take these hands

Teach them how to carry

Take these hands, don't make a fist, no

Take this mouth

So quick to criticize Take this mouth, give it a kiss

Again, keep in mind that Bono sings this to God. His song sounds more like a prayer because he personally knows of the deep culture wars in his homeland of Ireland. He knows about all of our tendencies to make matters worse by how we live. Instead of personally making matters worse, Bono prays to God that he may be used as an agent of reconciliation. Bono's prayer appears to be answered as Time magazine declared him the "Person of the Year 2005" for his work in debt relief in Africa.

Before you say to yourself, "But I'm not Bono," let us look at what God's mission looks like for us all—even for those who cannot sing!

Now, you are asked to meditate more deeply on how you can join Bono's prayer as

we turn more explicitly to our Episcopal Bible study. Usually, when Bible lessons are learned, there are lessons from the Old Testament and the New Testament. We follow this same pattern as we learn from the books of Exodus and John.

Optional Method of Bible Study

1. Start with the Exodus lesson below. Have someone read it aloud slowly.
2. Then allow three minutes of silence to reflect on it individually and then reread the passage of scripture (appoint a time keeper).
3. So as not to allow the extroverts to dominate the introverts, take turns, allowing each person in the group to prayerfully respond to the question(s) for each lesson. The group can decide on how much time is needed for each person to speak.
4. To monitor those who are better at talking in public, you may want to allow one minute of silence between each person. This may seem awkward, but it creates a prayerful atmosphere for the whole group.
5. After everyone is given an opportunity to speak, summarize your engagement from Exodus in group discussion, drawing on common insights and themes.
6. If you are able to play the song "Yahweh" from U2, do so before you move to the lesson of John. Allow some time for discussion of the song (entire lyrics are printed below).
7. Follow steps 1–5 above for the lesson from John.

Exodus:17

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready

to stone me.” 5 The LORD said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

Questions

1. Take several minutes before anyone speaks and prayerfully consider the ways in which you identify with Moses in the above passage.
2. In what ways do you feel like God is setting you up for failure when you meet other cultures and different types of people? Anticipate and specify their criticisms against you. Anticipate and specify any family or friends’ criticism for your call to mission.
3. Like Bono, in what ways do you see God taking your hand and giving you means

John:14 v

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him.” 8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves. 12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; 14 if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

Questions

1. Prayerfully consider to whom you are deeply connected.
2. Jesus seems to take offense at Philip's request to see God. Jesus' offense was not so much in Philip's longing for the wrong thing, but because Philip's object of desire was always before him in Jesus. What strategies do you propose to correct this common blindness of God as you encounter different cultures?
3. For some reason, all of us tend to neglect and even harm those close to us when we're irritable or not at our best. How much more so is this a problem for how we treat those of different cultures?
4. In what ways do you plan to deepen connections around you, at home and with different cultures, so as to make matters better than when you first met them?

After spending time discussing these questions and others that you as the group leader bring to the table, close with the song "Yahweh" from U2. You could play the song for the group and give them the words to follow along.

Yahweh

Take these shoes

Click clacking down some dead end street

Take these shoes and make them fit

Take this shirt Polyester white trash made in nowhere

Take this shirt and make it clean, clean

Take this soul Stranded in some skin and bones

Take this soul and make it sing, sing

Yahweh, Yahweh

Always pain before a child is born

Yahweh, Yahweh

Still I'm waiting for the dawn

Take these hands

*Teach them how to carry
Take these hands, don't make a fist, no
Take this mouth So quick to criticize
Take this mouth, give it a kiss
Yahweh, Yahweh
Always pain before a child is born
Yahweh, Yahweh
Still I'm waiting for the dawn
Still waiting for the dawn
The sun is coming up
The sun is coming up on the ocean
This love is like a drop in the ocean
This love is like a drop in the ocean
Yahweh, Yahweh
Always pain before a child is born
Yahweh, Yahweh
Why the dark before the dawn
Take this city
A city should be shining on the hill
Take this city if it be your will
What no man can own, no man can take
Take this heart
Take this heart
Take this heart
And make it break*

Prayer

End the Bible study time with a prayer. You can include prayers from the resources section of this document, or end by allowing time for your group to pray for the people they will encounter on their trip.

BIBLE STUDY TWO

Called to Mission: Sarah Sartain

Background

This Bible study is designed to assist the participant in discerning the gifts God has bestowed upon them, and identify ways those gifts can be offered in the mission field to further the kingdom of God.

It is my experience that we often see another's gifts more clearly than our own, especially the ones that are spectacular and very visible. It is harder for us to claim those gifts that aren't as evident or that are, in one's opinion, of less value. I am reminded through the prophet Isaiah that God created us and has blessed us with all that we need to heal this broken world. It is our pledge to keep our eyes fixed on God, listen for direction, and claim those blessings given at baptism. ("Listen, my servant whom I have chosen. He who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will always help you... Do not be afraid for I will pour out my spirit upon you and your descendants.")

How do we hear God speak to us? How do we discern our gifts? Where can our gifts be nurtured and applied? These are all questions we will explore. The great author Frederick Buechner once said, "The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Introduction

Open by sharing Frederick Buechner's quote with the entire group. For visual learners, you could have it displayed on a poster in the meeting space. Let the group know that God's call, deep gladness, and the world's greatest need will be the focus of the Bible study today.

Read I Samuel 3:1–11

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down. So he went and lay down. Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up

and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call you; go back and lie down.” Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord; the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” The Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Questions

- Why was it so hard for Samuel to identify the voice of God?
- It seems that Samuel was willing but was unsure of what to do. If you have ever identified with this, how did you resolve the situation?
- How does God speak to you?

List on paper the different ways God speaks to the entire group.

Read Matthew 28:16–20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Questions

- Where do you see yourself in this passage?
- How does Jesus empower his disciples?

5 Star Exercise

Have the following statements on paper, and assign each to a specific area in the room, depicting a star. Read through the following list of situations and ask youth to select one that speaks to them at this particular time in their spiritual journey, and to go to that place in the room. Ask youth to share what led them to choose that

particular task. Gather back together and note any other reflections, such as, did more people go to one area than another? Was there an area that was vacant? etc.

1. Tell someone who is hurting emotionally or physically that you believe in the healing of Christ and will pray for them.
2. Help a friend turn away from certain behaviors that harm them and their relationships.
3. Intervene when you see someone being mistreated, harassed, insulted, or shamed.
4. Make a special effort to get to know that person you have disliked in the past.
5. Make a commitment to participate in a program that assists those who are victims of poverty, homelessness, and abuse.

Reflection

Ask youth to reflect silently and list at least three attributes or gifts needed to engage in the particular task they chose. Ask for volunteers to share with the group.

Let youth know that their situation selection and the gift identification are tools that, hopefully, are helping them identify their deep passions, or as Buechner would say, deep gladness.

Jesus Christ's call to follow him is summed up in our Baptismal Covenant (BCP page 304). The five questions asked of the congregation during the service serve as a road map for following Christ. Throughout our Christian journey, it is our deep desire to hear God's call to engage in all of these ministries. It is impossible for any faithful follower to engage in all of these at the same time. God calls us at different times for different reasons. For example, Jimmy Carter was first a businessman, then the President of the U.S., and then a humanitarian. The key for us is to listen for what God is calling us to do.

The attributes/gifts youth listed are those that have been bestowed upon them through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. This deep gladness or passion is a gift from God to be embraced. This deep gladness is directly related to what God is calling

them to do through baptism.

What similarities do you see between the situation you selected and our ministry as baptized Christians?

1. Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?
2. Tell someone who is hurting emotionally or physically that you believe in the power of prayer and will pray for them.
3. Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
4. Help a friend turn away from certain behaviors that harm them and their relationships.
5. Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ? Intervene when you see someone being mistreated, harassed, insulted, or shamed.
6. Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
7. Make a special effort to get to know that person you have disliked in the past.
8. Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
9. Make a commitment to participate in a program that assists those who are victims of poverty, homelessness, and abuse.

Let us revisit what the great author Frederick Buechner once said, "The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger

meet.”

Questions

- In light of what you have gleaned from this reflection, what do you hear God saying to you this day?
- How can you use your gifts/deep gladness in the mission field?

God’s call, deep gladness, and the world’s greatest need! May this be in the forefront of your mind as you journey into the mission field. Ever listening, ever discovering, and ever engaging.

Close in Prayer.

BIBLE STUDY THREE

By Ariana Gonzalez—Bonillas

James 3:2

We all make mistakes often, but those who don't make mistakes with their words have reached full maturity.

This verse lets me know that God knows that we are not perfect. God knows that we make mistakes because of what we say. We slander, lie, gossip. The language we use tends to shape our thoughts. Once we say something, we do not like to apologize for it because then we would admit we were wrong. We tend to think after we say, but if we could think before we spoke, then there would be fewer insults, slurs, quick judgments.

- How does this verse speak to you?
- Have you forgiven yourself for the slander you have used? Have others? God has.

Galatians 3:26–28

You are all God's children in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized in to Christ have clothed yourselves in Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:11–14

In this image there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ in all things and all people. Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord

BIBLE STUDY THREE

forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Both of these verses tell me that it does not matter who we consider worthy of love or eternal life, it is God who loves us all. It also reminds me that we need diversity; just as God loves all people, so should we. This is how we bring heaven to earth. We need to see Christ in everyone, love everyone, and be Christ—like. We need to be inclusive because Christ is inclusive, he does not discriminate in his love.

- How does this verse speak to you?
- How do you show love to all peoples?