



Facilitator Materials

Reflection Groups

Reading Scripture Through Other Eyes

Guidelines for Theological Reflection Groups

Theological reflection groups provide a venue to explore the issues that emerge from the symposium on theology and the marketplace. You may wish to modify these suggestions to your particular needs, experience, and circumstances.

Small groups are an integral part of the conference. Learning often best takes place in an environment that provides an opportunity for self-expression, reflection with others, and an occasion to review the ideas and passions that emerge, so that what we learn may be applied in a useful way.

Create a group where everyone counts:

- Beginnings and endings are important. Take to set the stage and provide an opportunity for personal introductions. Start and finish on time. At the end of the conference, provide an opportunity for closure and farewell.
- Share your thoughts, feelings, experiences, and questions as openly as seems appropriate.
- Speak briefly and to the point so that others may have an opportunity to offer their contributions.
- Feel free to remain silent. Do not press others to speak if they are not willing or ready to do so. Silence gives those who need time to form their thoughts the opportunity to do so.
- Listen to others to understand their points of view and know them better, as well as to clarify your own positions. Avoid trying to convince others that you are right.
- Speak for yourself, not others. Some examples of “do’s” and “dont’s” are:
 - a. *I think that...* (not *Christians believe...*)
 - b. *I feel, glad, sad, mad, scared* (not *Most people feel that...*)
 - c. *I wish that...* (not *Everyone wants...*)
 - d. *I notice that...* (not *It is obvious that...*)
 - e. *My practice is...* (not *All civilized people...*)
- Sometimes it helps to remind the group that “I” statements” are the best way to speak for oneself. This is not a debate. It is a time for reflection on the meaning of what we are encountering.
- Maintain confidences:
 - Keep to yourself who said what; do not reveal personal details contributed by others.
 - Feel free to share the topics that were discussed and their impact on you.



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Gathering the Community - Reflection Group Session I

Purpose: We meet in our theological reflection group to prepare ourselves for the conference and initiate our reflection on *Reading Scripture through Other Eyes*.

Goals

- Meet our fellow group members
- Begin to develop a sense of community with one another
- Become alert to our contexts in studying and understanding the Bible

Design

Open with prayer provided by Steed Davidson

Introductions:

10 minutes Ask everyone to state their names and something they would like others in the group to know about them

5 minutes Review the purpose of the group, the norms for working together, and the schedule of the conference

30 minutes Bible Study — Genesis 32:22-32

- Begin with silence
- Read the passage followed by silence
- Read the passage a second time and allow time to let it sink in
- Share a word or image that might have emerged for you

Topics for discussion:

5 minutes Introduce the concept of “mutual invitation.”

25 minutes Discuss by mutual invitation: What is the Bible for you?

Adjourn to attend the Opening Eucharist in Trinity Church

Program

Eucharist and Opening of the Conference.
The Rev. Dr. Steed Davidson, preacher



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Reflection Group Session II

Walter Brueggemann and Panel

“Where Is the Scribe?”

Purpose: This session considers the implications of critical biblical scholarship for the “ordinary reader” and the church in light of new methods that Brueggemann identifies. This is a time to grapple with the purpose of critical study of the Bible.

Goals:

- Identify our perspective on and participation in critical study of the Bible
- Discern approaches to faithful reading of scripture, both individually and corporately

Design

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| 10 minutes | Open with prayer provided by Walter Brueggemann. Check-in and introduce new members of the group |
| 10 minutes | In pairs address this question: What surprised or especially interested you in this morning’s presentation? |
| 35 minutes | As a group address these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With what lenses or perspectives do you read the Bible?• What contribution does critical biblical scholarship make to your reading and understanding of Scripture? |
| 20 minutes | When do we know we are making a faithful reading and interpretation of scripture? |
| 12:15 p.m. | Break for lunch |



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Reflection Group Session III

Teresa Okure and Panel

“What Is Truth?”

Purpose: This session considers how our cultural contexts influence the truths we find — or even are able to see — in Scripture. This is a time to explore how our contexts shape the way we read the text and how the text in turn shapes our contexts.

Goals:

- Identify your own personal contexts
- Recognize that truth is mediated by culture, context, and personal perspectives
- Recognize that truth also transcends culture, context, and personal perspectives

Design

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| 5 minutes | Open with the prayer provided by Teresa Okure |
| 15 minutes | Ask the members of the group to brainstorm what cultural contexts have shaped their lives (write on newsprint) |
| 25 minutes | What assumptions does your faith tradition provide regarding the nature of truth? |
| 30 minutes | What did you hear Sr. Teresa say about how truth in scripture can transcend our cultural contexts? |
| 5:00 p.m. | Break for the evening |



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Reflection Group Session IV

Mary Gordon and Panel

“Has Not God Made Foolish the Wisdom of the World?”

Purpose: This session considers how we tell our own stories. This is a time to consider that the four Gospel narratives tell us not only who Jesus is but also who we are.

Goals:

- Examine how we tell our personal stories to identify who we are
- Explore how the Gospel stories reveal who Jesus is
- Draw out how our stories intersect with the Gospel stories

Design

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| 5 minutes | Check in with one another. |
| 5 minutes | Open with prayer provided by Mary Gordon. |
| 25 minutes | Taking some time to ponder, think back to an occasion when you were offended by scripture or the way it was used. Working in pairs, share what this experience touched in you and how you responded. |
| 25 minutes | Return to the group and share a time when a Gospel story changed you or your response to something. |
| 15 minutes | What difference does the intersection of your story and the Gospel story make for the Body of Christ in the world? |
| 12 Noon | Break for lunch |



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Reflection Group Session V

Gerald West and Panel

“Do Two Walk Together?”

Purpose: This session considers the implications of the Bible study led by Gerald West, in particular how it reveals Jesus’ message in multiple contexts, especially those of the poor and marginalized. This is a time to explore how we may “read scripture through other eyes” beyond this conference.

Goals:

- Process the Bible study we have just experienced
- Find ways to continue the conversation in our communities
Name significant insights and implications we take away from the conference
- Say farewell to those who have journeyed with us in this group for the past three days

Design

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| 5 minutes | Open with prayer provided by Gerald West. |
| 20 minutes | Was this Bible study different from others you have experienced? If so, in what ways? |
| 20 minutes | What did you find in this Bible study that you want to use at home? |
| 20 minutes | What do you take away from this entire conference that you will find useful? |
| 10 minutes | Take time to say farewell and to express your appreciation for what you shared and learned in this group. Offer a closing prayer. |
| | Move to closing plenary session in the church |