

Inspired Bible Reading
Session 1: The Bible and its Proper Place

Changes have been happening: Reconciled In Christ congregations and synods (incl. GMS) – almost 1,000 partners across USA and Canada. Churchwide Assembly memorials called for development of study by 2005 on questions of ordination and unions. Votes were taken at Churchwide Assembly in 2009, which affirmed the rostering of gay and lesbian clergy in committed, same-sex relationships and called for development of a rite of blessing for same-sex unions.

Discussion is happening. Changes continue. Some parts of our society, seemingly led by conservative evangelical Christians, have been pushing back on recent gains by LGBTQ+ people.

How will the discussion proceed? NEED FOR DIALOGUE, RESPECT, CALM. We must remember that we are not only discussing texts and ideas, we are also discussing people and a matter very central to their identity as personhood. *Whether you know it or not, those people are in this room and represented by people in this room. We will conduct our conversations accordingly.*

Where do we start? **The Bible and its proper place.**

An Exercise: look up-

Exodus 21: 7 (selling daughter into slavery)

Exodus 35: 2 (working on the Sabbath)

Leviticus 11: 10 (shellfish)

Leviticus 19: 19 (two crops, two fabrics)

Leviticus 19: 26-28 (prime rib au jus)

Deuteronomy 22: 23-25 (city/country rape)

Leviticus 20: 13 (man with man = kill)

Leviticus 18: 22 (man with man = abomination)

How do we justify throwing out some, not others?

Luther: “The laws of Moses bind only the Jews and not the Gentiles.” (LW 35, p. 164)
We must ask who God is speaking to. Not every message is for us. It is all God’s word, but it is not all for us.

Luther: “We have the gospel. Christ says, ‘Go and preach the gospel,’ not only to the Jews as Moses did, but to ‘all nations,’ to ‘all creatures’ [Mark 16: 16]. Again, ‘Go and do to your neighbor as has been done to you.’ These words strike me too, for I am one of the ‘all creatures.’” (LW 35, p. 171) (See also housefather story, next page.)

Luther: “All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate (treiben - teach) Christ. And that is the true test by which to judge all books, when we see whether or not they inculcate Christ. For all Scriptures show us Christ. . . .” (“Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude” (1522) LW 35, 396)

Chilstrom/Erdahl – “What is the fundamental purpose of the Bible? . . . lead us to a living faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior. (Sexual Fulfillment, p. 113) (2001)

The purpose of scripture is not to be a moral handbook or a compendium of laws but to be a vehicle through which we experience God in Jesus Christ and come to a personal relationship with our Savior.

The Bible, essentially, is about who God is, who we are, and the relationship between us. It is a record of our ancestors and how they experienced God. (Deuteronomy 26: 5-10) God, however, is still at work – what was started at Pentecost is not over. (Acts 2) We believe that the Spirit is still active, still speaking through faithful people (and unfaithful sometimes), still creating life out of death and community out of isolation. We have Scripture to look to for guidance along that path.

Our part in the decision making process

Our roots as people: Genesis 2: 4b-7, 18-25

1. Spiritual creatures – verse 7: “breath” and “spirit” same Hebrew word.
2. Meant for community – verse 18: “It is not good that the [earth creature - adam] should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”
3. Power to name and choose – verses 19-20: “So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal. . . and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. . . but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.”
4. Power to name and choose – verse 23: “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman (ishshah), for out of Man (ish) this one was taken.’”