

Lent 2024: How to Eat Bread

based on Miranda Threlfall-Holmes' book and videos.

Session 1: The Devil Quotes Scripture

Activity

- Go round the group and 'introduce' your own personal copy of the Bible to the group, or a treasured memory connected to the Bible. In what ways has the Bible been important and nourishing to you?

Watch the Video

This includes the reading Luke 4.1-30

If you are on zoom and watching the video separately beforehand, read through the passage together.

Questions to reflect on

- This passage shows that the Bible can be used for harm as well as for good. Have you ever experienced the Bible being used 'against' you in any way, so that you did not know how to answer it?
- Which of Miranda's insights about how Jesus responds to the Devil quoting scripture do you find the most helpful?
- In the light of your answer, how would you now respond to the person or the group who used the Bible against you?

Close the meeting with a prayer.

Session 2: Meditating on the Law

Watch the Video

This includes the reading Psalm 1

If you are on zoom and watching the video separately beforehand, read through the passage together.

Questions to reflect on

- What has been your experience of how the Church has talked about the Law?
- How important (or not) have the Psalms been in your Christian life?
- What stories in the Bible are really important 'roots' for you, that nourish and anchor your faith?

Activity

Draw a large tree with roots and label each root with the name of a Bible story that is important to you. Then consider what sorts of fruits might emerge from this story at the root.

If your group is meeting in person, do this as a joint activity with a large piece of paper and thick felt pens. Discuss and react as you go along and add more.

If your group is meeting on Zoom, participant could try this exercise beforehand after they have watched Miranda's video (or doodle it while in the group), and then all compare notes when you meet.

Close the meeting with a prayer.

Session 3: A Great Cloud of Witnesses

Watch the Video

This includes the reading Hebrews 11.1-12.2 abridged.

If you are on zoom and watching the video separately beforehand, read through the passage together.

Questions to reflect on

- What precautions do you take to ensure that your sources of information generally can be trusted?
- Over your life as a Christian, what sources of inspiration (including people) have you relied on and trusted the most?

Activity

Choose one of the Bible stories that featured in your last session as an important 'root', particularly if more than one person agreed with it. Read it together. If you can't choose one, maybe take one like the dream of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37.1-14).

Fill in the table on the next page with your thoughts.

'First' – what happened in the past, that might have caused this story to be created?

'Then' – why was this story, among so many others, chosen to be included in the Bible – what might it have meant to them historically?

'Now' – what is the impact of this story on you now?

'Next' – What part are we called to play in handing this story on?

<p>First: Why was this story created?</p>	<p>Then: Why was it included in the Bible?</p>
<p>Now: What is the story's impact now?</p>	<p>Next: How do we hand this story on?</p>

Then share what you have written in each quarter. If you are meeting in person you could even post sticky notes in different parts of the room and read each other's. Is any quarter particularly full or empty, and why might that be?

Close the meeting with a prayer.

Session 4: Arguing with God

Watch the Video

This includes the reading Genesis 18.20-33.

If you are on zoom and watching the video separately beforehand, read through the passage together.

Questions to reflect on

- How do you respond to the story about Abraham arguing with God and negotiating with him about the fate of Sodom?
- How does it fit with what you have been taught about reverence towards God in prayer?
- 'Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked!' Is there any contemporary situation that might call forth a similar complaint to God?

Activity

- Read together the story of Jacob wrestling with an angel of God (Genesis 32.24-32) and share how you respond to it. Have you ever 'wrestled' with God, and if so how did it change you?

Close the meeting with a prayer.

Session 5: Stories that anger or upset us

Watch the Video

This includes the reading 2 Samuel 12.1-10.

If you are on zoom and watching the video separately beforehand, read through the passage together.

Questions to reflect on

- How do you respond to Miranda's argument that for some stories in the Bible, how we respond emotionally, may be the point?
- The Ignatian method of reading the Bible involves engaging our emotions (see p.86 in the book). Discuss your experiences in using your imaginations and feelings whilst reading the Bible.

Activity

Choose a story which often inspires very mixed feelings in readers, e.g. Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22) or the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20.1.16).

- Read the story round the group and share your immediate feelings about it.
- Then take a few moments to consider privately what your feelings might say about you:
 - Is there something in there about your shadow side?
 - Do your feelings reveal something about your deep passions?
 - Could there be a vocation here for you – a cause you might give your energy to?
- Then do some sharing of insights, perhaps in buzz groups of three.

Finally

Leave some time at the end for members of the group to share what they have valued in this Lent group, which they will take away.

Close the meeting with a prayer.

Annexe. Some prayers for use at the start and end of meetings. You may prefer to hold silence together and close with a simple prayer.

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Almighty God,
we thank you for the gift of your holy word.
May it be a lantern to our feet,
a light to our paths,
and a strength to our lives.
Take us and use us
to love and serve
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls:
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lighten our darkness,
we beseech thee, O Lord;
and by thy great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night;
for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God.
How sweet are your words to the taste,
sweeter than honey to the mouth.
How precious are your commands for our life,
more than the finest gold in our hands.
How marvellous is your will for the world,
unending is your love for the nations.
Our voices shall sing of your promises
and our lips declare your praise. Amen.

Loving God,
you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven;
by it you nourish our faith,
increase our hope,
and strengthen our love:
help us to hunger for the true and living bread,
and enable us to live by every word
that proceeds from out of your mouth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O God, from whom all holy desires,
all good counsels,
and all just works do proceed:
give unto thy servants that peace
which the world cannot give:
that both, our hearts being set
to obey thy commandments,
and that, by thee,
we being defended from the fear of our enemies
may pass our time in rest and quietness,
through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Loving God,
help us as we wrestle with your word,
that we would meet with you
and find nourishment and challenge. Amen.