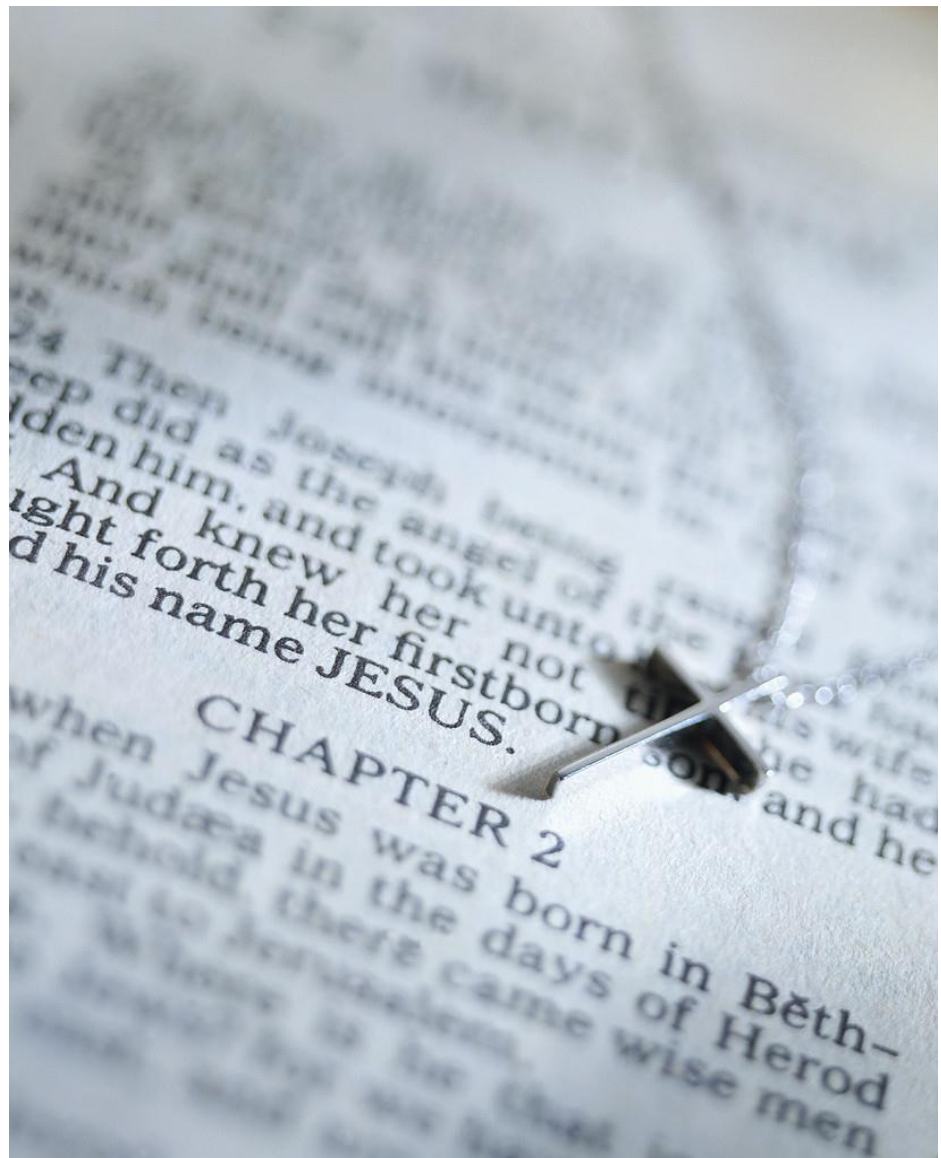


Pathways

Session 4

God's message for me



RESOURCES FOR THE PRESENTER

RESOURCES FOR THE PRESENTER

Purposes of Session 4

For the participants to:

- explore some key themes of the Bible
- reflect on the Bible's message for each person

Reflection stimulus

O Lord Jesus, your words to your Father were born out of your silence. Lead me into this silence, so that my words may be spoken in your name and thus be fruitful. It is so hard to be silent, silent with my mouth, but even more, silent with my heart. There is so much talking going on within me. It seems that I am always involved in inner debates with myself, my friends, my enemies, my supporters, my opponents, my colleagues, and my rivals. But this inner debate reveals how far my heart is from you. If I were simply to rest at your feet and realize that I belong to you and you alone, I would easily stop arguing with all the real and imagined people around me. These arguments show my insecurity, my fear, my apprehensions, and my need for being recognized and receiving attention. You, O Lord, will give me all the attention I need if I would simply stop talking and start listening to you. I know that in the silence of my heart you will speak to me and show me your love. Give me, O Lord, that silence. Let me be patient and grow slowly into this silence in which I can be with you. Amen.

[Henri Nouwen, Writings selected with an introduction by Robert A Jonas, p 11]

Focus questions

- What are key themes of the Bible?
- What is the Bible's message for each person?
- What is God's message for me?

Biblical focus

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (GNB)

Theological focus

The Bible is not only the story of God working in the world as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but it is also the story of God working for me and with me. In the Bible, God's story and my story intersect. The biblical story tells me that I am enclosed in God's grace and forgiveness – that what Jesus came to do in his life, death and resurrection, he came to do also for me.

God's story in the Bible also links me with Abraham, Moses, Miriam, David, Isaiah, Elizabeth, Mary, Peter and all the nameless people of God in the Bible. It also links my story with that of all Christians everywhere and it shapes my story as I interact with others.

The central question which the Bible addresses to me is the same question that Jesus addressed to his disciples (Mat 16:15); 'Who do you say that I am?' How I answer that question determines how I relate to Jesus Christ and the grace and forgiveness which he offers to me. Led by the Holy Spirit, I can confess with Peter, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!'

Since God has revealed himself and his gift of salvation to us in his word, the Bible is the basis for Christian meditation. God's word is the power (Rom 1:16-17) which makes Christian spirituality possible. Remaining in contact with that word is crucial for the life of a Christian.

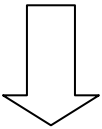
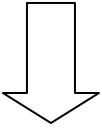
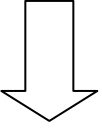
Christian meditation has its focus on God and his word rather than on any potential within us as individuals. We stand under the word of God and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through that word with the outcome of a joyful response to God in confession, prayer and praise rather than finding one's 'true self' or solving one's personal problems. Martin Luther spoke of a three-fold approach to meditation based on the word of God. First comes prayer for the Holy Spirit to speak through the word of God and inspire our thoughts. Secondly comes meditation, which Luther practiced by reading and repeating the word aloud so that the word moves from the tongue to the ear and to the heart (not from the eye to the brain!). Thirdly, Luther identified the process of testing as the word has its impact on one's life and the difficulties and suffering (also from the temptation of the devil) which lead the Christian back to Christ and the gospel.

Concepts in focus

The biblical narrative as the story of God and his creation, his work of salvation and the work of creating Christian community:

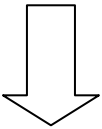
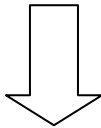
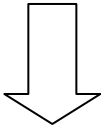
- recognising that Jesus Christ is the centre of the biblical story
 - the Bible is not a book of laws, doctrines, etc
 - exploring key themes of the Bible, eg, creation (continuing), rescue, community
- appreciating** that the biblical story is also the story of God working with and for me
- the biblical story shows that I am enclosed in God's grace and forgiveness
 - at the centre of that story I am asked to respond to the invitation of the gospel and the person of Jesus Christ who asks, *Who do you say that I am?*
- appreciating** that through faith in Jesus Christ I am a member of the Christian community
- I live within that community and continue to grow within it
 - I can therefore draw on the resources of that community

WORKSHOP Option 1

<p>Stimulus</p> 	<p>Share with the participants that this session will involve spending some time in reflection and mediation of God's word. Provide the participants with the Resource Handout, <i>Key themes of the Bible</i>, and share these themes with them.</p>
<p>Reflection</p> 	<p>Ask the participants to find a quiet meditative place to conduct their reading and reflection of the Bible readings. Alternatively, have them make themselves comfortable within the room and play some music to assist with developing a meditative atmosphere. As the participants read ask them to individually reflect on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can I learn about God and God's relationship with people? • What key words or phrases make an impact for you? • Do any themes emerge from the readings?
<p>Sharing</p> 	<p>Ask the participants to share their responses to the questions with a partner or in small groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which Bible reading did you find most helpful/interesting/meaningful? • What key words or phrases made an impact on you? • What key themes emerged from your reading? <p>Each pair or group can be asked to report on what they found to be important key words, phrases or themes.</p>
<p>Prayer</p>	<p>Place a Bible in the centre of the group space. Read aloud two or three of the Bible passages allowing pauses for reflection and personal prayer. Close with a prayer of thanks and praise for God's message for all people.</p>

[Note: From the two workshop options provided, please choose the option that best suits your staff needs]

WORKSHOP Option 2

<p>Stimulus</p> 	<p>Provide the participants with the Resource Handout, <i>Reflection stimulus</i>, and provide time for them to read it and discuss with a partner the aspects of the quote they can relate to?</p> <p>Tell them that the majority of this session will involve a time of silence as they read, reflect and mediate on selected Bible passages.</p>
<p>Reflection</p> 	<p>Ask the participants to find a quiet meditative place to conduct their reading and reflection of the Bible readings. Alternatively, have them make themselves comfortable within the room and provide some music to develop a meditative atmosphere. As the participants read ask them to reflect individually on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can I learn about God and God's relationship with people? • What key words or phrases make an impact for you? • Do any themes emerge from the readings?
<p>Sharing</p> 	<p>Give each participant some clay and ask them to create a sculpture that depicts the key themes of the Bible and God's relationship with people.</p>
<p>Prayer</p>	<p>Close with a prayer from the Bible. Three are included in Resource Handout, <i>Prayers in the Bible</i> [Psalm 100; the prayer of Simeon, Luke 2:29-32; Philippians 4:7-9].</p>