

Pathways

Session 3

Gods' story with his people



RESOURCES FOR THE PRESENTER



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Purposes of Session 3

For the participants to:

- Consider God's story, the Bible
- Explore the ways the Bible can be helpful for spiritual growth

Reflection stimulus

Who is this God at the heart of Christianity?

So what god or gods do Christians worship? In one sense it is the god without a name, a god who responds, when asked for a name, 'I am there whoever I am there', who frustrates every effort to be named. In another sense it is a god with three names: Creator, Redeemer, Spirit –that lives-in-us. In another sense it is the god with only one name, Love – Love that embraces the world in a way that takes the shape of a cross, a love that, in turn, transforms everything and can be shared by each of us by embracing our world and those in it.

That's the story at the heart of the Lutheran telling of the Christian vision, which is itself a telling of an old Hebrew story of a loving God. That's the story about which we ask 'How does this story inform knowing, learning, teaching and human becoming in the contemporary world? What kind of college or university should be built and maintained by those who tell such a story? What kind of work is there for us to do in such a place?'

[Tom Christenson, The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education]

Focus questions

- What do I know or believe about the Bible?
- Why is the Bible important for Christians?
- How does the school witness to the importance of the Bible?

Biblical focus

Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path'.

Psalms 119:105 (GNB)

Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement the Scriptures gives us.

Romans 15:4 (GNB)

So he decided long ago to adopt us as his children. He did it because of what Jesus Christ has done. It pleased God to do it. All those things bring praise to his glorious grace. God freely gave us his grace because of the One he loves. We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Through his blood our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because God's grace is so rich. He poured his grace on us by giving us great wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:5-8 (NIRV)

Theological Focus

In the Bible God reveals himself to us so that we can honour, love and trust him as our God. The Bible contains the story of God working with his people and through his people and it makes known God's marvelous plan for saving the fallen world (the 'history of salvation') which reached its climax in the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, to live, die and rise again as the savior of the world.

The biblical narrative reveals God as the creator who continues his creative activity in the world. It reveals Jesus Christ as the way of salvation and the Holy Spirit as the one who brings us to faith and who in this way creates and preserves the Christian community. The Bible links together the way in which God revealed himself to his people in the Old Testament, at the time of Christ, and still reveals himself today.

So that we and all people of all time can know what God has revealed and the word he has spoken through the prophets and apostles and particularly through Jesus Christ, the Word who came in human flesh, God has given us his written word in the books of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is a library of books in various forms, written in human words by human beings. Although God used the personality and style of the human writers, their language, literary methods, knowledge of nature and history, experience of God, etc, the Bible is also a divine book because the various writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore God is the author (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). Just as Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine, so too the Bible is human and divine in all its parts. This cannot be explained rationally but is accepted in faith.

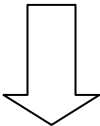
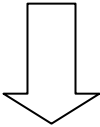
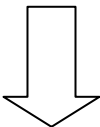
The centre of the Bible is its witness to Jesus Christ ('christocentric'). Jesus challenged his hearers to recognise that the Scriptures testify to him (John 5:39; Luke 24:25-27). This means that the Bible must be interpreted in the light of Christ and the gospel. The clear message of God's love and grace and forgiveness must come through for the reader.

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:

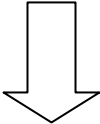
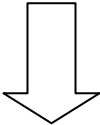
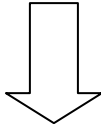
- recognising that Jesus Christ is the centre of the biblical story
- the Bible is not a book of laws, doctrines, etc

WORKSHOP Option 1

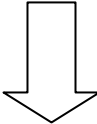
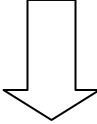
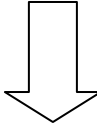
Stimulus 	<p>Participants read the Christenson quote and the theological focus notes on the Resource Handout, <i>Reflection stimulus</i>, with the related Bible readings</p>
Reflection 	<p>The participants reflect on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your understanding of the message of God's story? • How could God's story inform knowing, learning, teaching and human becoming in the contemporary world? • What kind of college or school should be built and maintained by those who tell such a story?
Sharing 	<p>Participants discuss their responses to questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think are common misconceptions about the Bible? • Is the concept of the Bible as God's story helpful? • How could God's story inform knowing, learning, teaching and human becoming in the contemporary world? • What kind of school should be built and maintained by those who tell such a story?
Prayer	<p>Participants choose one of the Bible readings from the Resource Handout, <i>Reflection stimulus</i>, for meditation and prayer.</p>

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

WORKSHOP Option 2

<p>Stimulus</p> 	<p>Share with the participants the Resource Handout, <i>National Church Life Survey</i>, about the Bible as an important resource for spiritual growth.</p>
<p>Reflection</p> 	<p>Participants reflect on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do Christians read the Bible? • Why is a person's Bible reading linked to a person's spiritual growth? • Why do you think Bible reading and study may be an important part of the life of a Christian community?
<p>Sharing</p> 	<p>Participants discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is a person's Bible reading linked to a person's spiritual growth? • Why do you think Bible reading and study may be an important part of the life of a Christian community? <p>Provide time for the participants to read the Resource Handout, <i>Theological focus</i>. Discuss any questions they may have.</p>
<p>Prayer</p>	<p>Provide time for the participants to individually develop a plan for reading the Bible in the next week. Ask them to consider establishing a consistent time, place. Make available some different options such as reading through the gospel of Mark, reading one of the shorter epistles such as Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, meditating on a Bible passage related to a theme.</p>

WORKSHOP Option 3

Stimulus 	<p>Share the information from the Resource Handout, <i>The Bible as God's story</i>, with the overview of God's story.</p>
Reflection 	<p>Participants can be asked to choose a favourite Bible passage or story. They reflect on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I believe about the Bible? • How do my beliefs about the Bible impact on the way I read and interpret the Bible? • Why is the Bible important for Christians? • Is the concept of the Bible as God's story helpful?
Sharing 	<p>Share with the participants the Resource Handout, <i>Imagery used in the Bible</i>, to describe God's word as a lamp, a sword and seed. Provide time for the participants to read these and to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of these metaphors do you find most helpful? • Do the metaphors suggest different ways that the Bible impacts on a Christian's spiritual growth? • Can you think of another helpful metaphor?
Prayer	<p>Provide time for silent prayer and reflection on the Bible readings.</p>