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Getting Started

WELCOME!

Welcome to this ecumenical Bible study, *Claiming the Promise!* We are called today to face a troubling dilemma in the church, a danger and snare that divides and hurts us all. That dilemma, simply put, is whether the church will unconditionally welcome, or refuse to welcome, lesbian women and gay men into the full life and ministry of the church.¹

In this study we will explore what it means for those among us who are lesbian and gay Christians to claim kinship as daughters and sons of God—heirs apparent with Christ.² We will explore what it means for the rest of us to affirm and rejoice in that claim. We will seek to listen to and understand the different assumptions and beliefs that keep some of us from affirming the reality of that promise for lesbian women and gay men.

As we try to solve this dilemma in the life of the church, we naturally turn to the Bible to discern God's Word.³ Yet it is some of the words of the Bible that create this dilemma for some Christians today. We are called to sort through those specific—and perhaps troubling—biblical references prayerfully, as we seek to discern God's living, healing, saving Word.

We will study the issues that are embedded in this current church dilemma, not as an academic exercise, but as a dialogical discernment process that can literally save lives. We will attempt to help our class participants know, hear, and understand individuals who are gay or lesbian—and their families. As we study, may we continually be reminded that people who live and work and worship among us are personally affected by this current church dilemma and by our responses to God's promise.

Welcome to you, the planners and class leaders, who have chosen to offer this study in your local church, through your campus ministry, or in some other educational setting. Come and explore how we—as individuals and as communities of Christians—might discern God's promise and claim it. Welcome to the journey!

Notes

¹See "gay men" and "lesbian" in glossary (page 48, study book). References to the study book will hereafter be noted as (p. #, study). References to this leader's guide will be noted as (p. #, leader).

²*Publisher/co-publishers' note:* We recognize that bisexual persons are clearly and often painfully affected by biblical interpretations on same-sex conduct. We also recognize that, while bisexuality raises some different issues of biblical interpretation, overlap does exist. We hope this resource will facilitate initial discussion of broader issues of orientation and gender. We have, however, focused this curriculum directly and specifically on the Bible and homosexuality, as noted in the subtitle of this leader's guide. A Bible study related to bisexuality would be a welcome companion resource.

³See "God's Word" in glossary (p. 48, study).



ORGANIZING A CLASS

Choosing your Commitment Level

1. Optimal Plan

The basic teaching plan in this leader's guide assumes seven two-hour classes, plus an initial hour and a half orientation session. It assumes that class participants will covenant to prepare before coming to class. Preparation includes (1) reading the chapter in the study booklet, (2) reading relevant scriptural references, and (3) answering the question boxes in the study booklet.

2. Fewer Than Seven Sessions

The column at right provides ways to do this study in less time. You will not, of course, be able to do the study as thoroughly, so pick sessions and activities to fit the greatest needs in your group.

3. One Teacher or More

Team teach this study. Invite one person to lead the music, art, body movement, and rhythm activities. This person might also do the set-up for the arrival activities each week and guide early arrivals.

4. Sessions of Ninety Minutes

Use the two-hour teaching plan and cut thirty minutes of activities from it.

5. Sessions of Forty-Five to Sixty Minutes

Chapters 1-6 of the leader's guide suggest *two* forty-five minute teaching plans which divide the chapter's activities into two sessions. Do chapter 7 in one session. This makes it possible for you to do thirteen sessions during a regular Sunday school quarter. If you have fifty or sixty minutes, use the one-hour plan.

6. Retreat Setting or Workshop Format

If you are using this material in a retreat setting, organize the schedule into "blocks of session time" interspersed with your other retreat activities. If you have seven blocks for session time, you can use the leader's guide as it is. If you have fewer than seven blocks of time for study, use one of the options above under "Fewer Than Seven Sessions." If some people in your group are rooted in the literal biblical approach, we strongly urge doing some activities from chapter 1 and doing the Talking Circles for each chapter you use. If your group is thoroughly rooted in the historical critical biblical approach already, you might consider emphasizing the "prophetic voices" and "promise" sections of activities from several sessions. These will not work well by themselves in groups of mixed biblical approaches.

Promoting the Class

1. Plan How You Will Promote the Class

Get announcements into your church or campus worship bulletin and newsletter. If you are inviting others to join you, create a flyer to post on bulletin boards (including in lesbian and gay bookstores). Get an announcement in local newspapers (including gay and lesbian newspapers).

2. Encourage People of Different Views to Participate

This study is designed to help people listen to and accept differences. Although it obviously has a point of view, teaching activities are designed to affirm people wherever they are in their process of understanding biblical references to same-sex conduct. Consider making telephone calls to encourage specific people to come to the class.

Getting Started

Fewer than Seven Sessions

- ◆ Six sessions:
Use chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, and 7.
- ◆ Five sessions:
Use chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7.
- ◆ Four sessions:
Use chapters 1, 2, 3, 7
(or 2, 3, 4, 7).
- ◆ Three sessions:
Use chapters 1, 3, 7
(or 2, 3, 7) (or 2, 3, 4).

Note: If members of your class have major differences in biblical interpretation (that is, between literal and critical approaches), we strongly recommend using chapter 1. If they do not have major interpretive differences, consider using the alternative suggestions listed with the four-session and three-session models.

Getting Started

Supplies Needed

- ❑ Mark p. 7, leader, so you can find "Understanding the Icons" easily.
- ❑ Make copies of "Our Covenant" (p. 57, leader) for each participant.
- ❑ Mark p. 56 in this guide so you can find "A Lesbian's Witness" easily.
- ❑ (Optional) Make copies of "A Quick Tour" (p. 58, leader) for each participant.
- ❑ Gather several annotated study Bibles (for "Quick Tour" activity).
- ❑ *HarperCollins Study Bible*, NRSV, with apocryphal/deuterocanonical books.
- ❑ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, NRSV, with the apocrypha.
- ❑ Other versions of the Bible, for comparison purposes.
- ❑ Make printed directions for any special assignment you want to give out.
- ❑ Make copies of the "Litany of Awareness" for each participant.
- ❑ Find the hymn "Lead On, O Cloud of Yahweh" by Ruth Duck (*Everflowing Streams*, #77).

ORIENTATION SESSION

Purposes

- ◆ to hand out study booklets and familiarize participants with the format
- ◆ to acquaint participants with the goals
- ◆ to invite participants to covenant with each other on attendance, homework, and style of participation in the class
- ◆ to introduce the Talking Circle and share personal experiences
- ◆ to explore a study Bible
- ◆ to give the first assignment

Helpful Reading

- ❑ "Welcome" and "Road Map" (pp. 2-3, study).
- ❑ "Welcome" (p. 2, leader).
- ❑ "Our Covenant" (p. 57, leader).
- ❑ "A Lesbian's Witness" (p. 56, leader).
- ❑ "A Quick Tour" (p. 58, leader).
- ❑ "Planning the Sessions" (p. 6, leader).
- ❑ "Understanding the Icons" (p. 7, leader).

Schedule Outline

7:00 p.m. Open with your Own Prayer

7:05 p.m. Look at the Study Books

- a. Hand out and look through study books together. Note first the introduction and seven study chapters.
- b. Point out:
"This study doesn't just look at the biblical references to same-sex conduct. Chapter 1 introduces interpretive approaches to the Bible that affect how people interpret same-sex conduct references. Chapter 2 introduces the promise that is our ultimate focus. Therefore, we won't get to specific references on homosexuality until chapter 3."
- c. Find the glossary and abbreviations (p. 48, study).
- d. Note the four question boxes in each chapter. Read aloud the box on p. 3 which explains those question boxes.
- e. Point out the four icons in chapter 1 (golden calf, pillar of fire, prophetic voices, and promise/butterfly). Note how each chapter has pages with those icons.
- f. Find and read the four purposes of this study (p. 2, study).

7:15 p.m. Discuss the Icons

Summarize the meaning and purpose of the icons in the study booklet. Draw from p.3, study and p. 7, leader.

7:25 p.m. Share and Sign the Covenant

- a. Hand out the "Our Covenant" sheets and read through together.
- b. Invite everyone to sign at the end of the eight statements.
- c. Discuss the additional four agreements about commitment and level of participation in the class.
- d. Invite persons to sign the second part of the covenant. Optimally, everyone would check and sign all four. Realistically, some may not.

7:40 p.m. Introduce the Talking Circle

- a. Share the following:

"Each session of *Claiming the Promise* will include a Talking Circle activity. The Talking Circle is a non-confrontational dialogue. It will always start with a brief witness which the leader(s) or some of you will present. Then we will discuss our feelings and opinions about that public witness. The Talking Circle is intended to operate so that each person feels included and heard in a respectful way, no matter what position that person takes on the Bible and homosexuality. The other activities in this class, and of course the study book itself, all take a position about the issues we will be discussing. However, the ultimate goal in this study is to come to a deeper agreement about the

common promise we claim as Christians—that we are all God’s children—even though we may claim that promise in diverse ways. The Talking Circle is meant to help us explore how to live with that diversity and how to respond to God’s promise. We will strive to create a mood in the Talking Circles where all will be respectfully heard and where we share our thoughts and feelings without trying to win other people over to our ways. We will also strive to create a safe and confidential place.”

b. Ask for questions about the purpose of the Talking Circle.

7:50 p.m. Experience a Talking Circle

- a. If you are not already in a circle of chairs, ask participants to form a circle now.
- b. Put all booklets and other materials under chairs.
- c. Read “A Lesbian’s Witness” to the group (p. 56, leader).
- d. Discuss:
 1. What feelings do you have about the witness statement?
 2. What experience from your past led you to hold a particular view about homosexuality?
 3. Would others like to share what it is in your own current life situation that leads you to hold the view you do about gay and lesbian people?
 4. (If people don’t share) Who held power to affirm or reject in the witness statement? What effect did that power have on her?
 5. (If your whole group is lesbian, gay, and bisexual) How did (or do) the biblical references on same-sex conduct affect your own “coming out” journey?
- e. Ask people to call out words “popcorn” style about how they *felt* doing this activity. (Examples: afraid, affirmed, vulnerable.) Thank people for sharing.
- f. Encourage the group to continue sharing with each other informally about the past and current situations that influence their thinking.

8:10 p.m. Do “A Quick Tour” of a Study Bible (optional)

If you are doing this in ten minutes, you will need to lead the group through the steps rather quickly. If you have more time, consider dividing the group into small groups to work through the steps.

- a. Hand out the study Bibles you have collected and invite participants to gather in twos or threes to look at them while you lead them through the steps.
- b. Lead them through the steps of “A Quick Tour.” Try to do parts 1 and 2. Part 3 is optional.

8:20 p.m. Discuss Assignments

- a. Give out any assignments you want students to do.
- b. Depending on covenant agreements, invite class to:
 1. Read the introductory chapter and chapter 1.
 2. Look up and read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
 3. Complete the questions in the four boxes.
- c. If you plan to offer the journaling arrival activity (see activity 4 in session 1), urge participants to bring a notebook or journal each time for writing personal reflections.

8:25 p.m. Close with Worship Moments

- a. Read responsively “Litany of Awareness.”
- b. Sing “Lead On, O Cloud of Yahweh.”
- c. Close with a prayer circle.

Getting Started

Litany of Awareness

Leader: God of our wondering and our wandering

People: We sense you hovering in the pillar of fire before us.

Leader: Through the night of our modern dilemmas,

People: We are struggling with our beliefs about sexuality.

Leader: As we listen for your living Word

People: We may find ourselves being led where we did not plan to go.

Leader: We are being led by you

People: Through a different kind of wilderness.

—Corlette Pierson and
Mary Jo Osterman

Getting Started

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any hurtful* way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:23-24 NRSV

*alternate translation of Hebrew word

Optional Assignment before First Class

If you do not offer the orientation class (p. 4, leader), decide if you want to get study books into participants' hands before the first class. Invite them to:

1. Read the introductory chapter and chapter 1.
2. Read the 2 Timothy verses.
3. Complete the questions in the four boxes in the study book.
4. Bring a notebook or journal each time for writing personal reflections (if you plan to offer the journaling arrival activity). See activity 4 (p. 13, leader).

PLANNING THE SESSIONS

Welcome as a teacher of *Claiming the Promise!* We are pleased that you have made a commitment to teach this study. As you begin planning for your class or group, take a few minutes to meditate on the psalm at left. Offer your own prayer to God to guide you as you plan.

Purposes of the Study

We invite you to work with your participants to:

- Identify* assumptions about biblical authority and how we engage in biblical interpretation
- Examine* alternate understandings of biblical references that people sometimes apply negatively to gay men and lesbian women
- Explore* the place of those biblical references within a comprehensive understanding of the Bible's liberating message of justice-love and freedom in Christ
- Claim* the promise of being God's *heirs apparent* by identifying how we might live as welcoming, reconciling disciples of Christ.

Each of the seven sessions also has four purposes—*identify, examine, explore, and claim*—that relate to the session content and to these overall purposes.

A Leader's Road Map

This leader's guide follows the same basic format through all seven chapters to help you plan more easily. Each session has

- ◆ four session purposes related to the overall purposes
- ◆ suggestions for getting started
- ◆ background reading for leaders to do
- ◆ supplies needed
- ◆ a two-hour plan (the optimal plan)
- ◆ a one-hour plan
- ◆ two forty-five minute plans (thirteen in all for a quarter's study)
- ◆ extra activities

The plans suggest the number of minutes for each activity.

- ◆ If you have more than two hours per session, add additional minutes to the activities in the two-hour plan or add an activity.
- ◆ If you have ninety minutes per session, cut one or more activities from the two-hour plan. Do not reduce the time suggested for an activity; you will feel quite rushed.
- ◆ If your class meets for forty-five to sixty minutes, plan to do thirteen sessions using the two forty-five minute plans.

Most classes will want to do one of the plans suggested. However, the sessions are designed to allow you to assess your own class's needs. If you have no controversy within your group, focus more time on particular concerns related to the pillar, voices, and promise sections of the study book.

If your group has been together before, they may take more time than the schedule allows to discuss questions. Adjust times and omit activities as needed.

This study requires the teacher to do a fair amount of preparation, both in studying the content and in preparing supplies for certain activities. You will need several hours to prepare for each class thoroughly. You may need more time if you are not familiar with the biblical material in the sessions.

UNDERSTANDING THE ICONS

The four icons used in the study book are symbols to remind you and your class of the flow of material in each chapter. Each page of content relates to one of the purposes of the session and to one of the purposes of the entire study.

Golden Calf



While Moses was up on Mt. Sinai talking with God, Aaron created a *golden calf* (in reality, a young bull) for the people in the wilderness to worship (Exodus 32:1-35). The people were anxious and afraid. Their faith in God was wavering. They sought a solid, visible presence of their God. Their worshipping of the golden calf was a clear departure from Moses' understanding of God and God's ways. The golden calf represents a loss of faith in the invisible, living, moving One who beckons us ever onward to freedom and deeper faith. It represents a breaking of the biblical covenant. When we focus on static interpretations of the Bible, we may obscure our vision of where God is leading us—especially at times when God is (or may be) doing a new thing!

Pillar of Fire



The *pillar of fire* is another image taken from the Exodus story. As God led the people out of Egypt through the wilderness, God went before them as a “pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and as a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people” (Exodus 13:21-22 NRSV). The pillar metaphor for God, like the shepherd metaphor in the twenty-third psalm, reminds us that God is present with us, constant and reliable.¹ The pillar of fire is a reminder to us to follow and trust the living, moving God.

Prophetic Voices



Prophets have had a diversity of roles and functions. They often spoke of injustice. They called the people to more radical obedience and relationship to God. They did not all speak with one voice. Rather, they spoke out of the particularities of their situations. “*Prophetic voices*” symbolize a cloud of witnesses who are emerging from the margins of our church and from its closets. They follow in the footsteps of Moses and Miriam, Peter and Mary Magdalene, Paul and Prisca, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Dorothy Day, and Harvey Milk. Each of these leaders searched for truth and meaning. When they found their “voice,” they spoke out clearly, calling God's people to be new creations.

Promise



The *promise* discussed in this study is God's promise through Abraham and Sarah that all their descendants are God's children. The promise is that God long ago claimed us all. The butterfly, a Christian symbol of new life, symbolizes God's promise and saving action through Christ. God's promise and action call for us to respond by *being new creations in Christ*.²

Getting Started

Notes

¹*New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 789.

²You may want to read the “promise” pages with the butterfly symbol of each chapter in the study book to get a fuller flavor of where this study is headed in its discussion of claiming the promise and being new creations.

Getting Started

Study Materials Needed by Participants

- ◆ *Claiming the Promise* study book (necessary).

The study book contains space for participants to write in answers and reflections. We also urge participants to do some reading and at-home work.

- ◆ A *Study Bible*, New Revised Standard Version (optional)

Class activities assume participants have a recent NRSV study Bible with its introductory material and notes. Options would be the *HarperCollins Study Bible* (HCSB, 1993) or the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NOAB, 1991). Not all participants will have these; encourage sharing and comparing of translations and annotations in the class sessions.

Note

For a brief discussion of various translations and their translators' points of view, see "Modern English Versions of the Bible," *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), pp. 22-32.

Order in Advance

See activity 12 in chapter 6. You may want to order the tape of music for this song. Address is on p. 60, leader.

SETTING UP YOUR ROOM

Make the Room Inviting and Usable

Make the room comfortable. If possible, remove extraneous pictures, maps, old Sunday school materials, and so forth. Visually the class will be invited to focus on this study without distraction. We recognize that churches have a variety of spaces for adult study. Almost any space can be set up with a work space and a reflection/worship space. Be creative! Create a large sign that says "Claiming the Promise." Display it prominently in the room.

Create Work and Worship Spaces

Some activities in the sessions call for participants to work at tables or to have some kind of space where books and art materials can be laid out. Some of these activities will be done in small groups. Others are done in the whole group. Other activities will call for participants to join in a circle. If you have space, set up a separate "talking circle" of chairs to use only for that activity and for worship. This will visibly and physically indicate a change from study/discussion to reflection/worship.

Gather Basic Equipment

You will need the following on hand each week:

- ◆ a sturdy easel on which to hang a pad of newsprint
- ◆ colored marking pens
- ◆ masking tape
- ◆ a piano or a keyboard for music (or someone with a guitar)

Create a Class Library

Establish a bookshelf (or a cart on wheels that you can store elsewhere between sessions). Substitute as necessary. Try to get up-to-date biblical reference books and some range of theological opinion in the commentaries. Have at least one *HarperCollins Study Bible* available if possible. Borrow resources from your pastor, local library, or interlibrary loan. Consider buying some items for your church library.

Besides their own Bible and their copy of *Claiming the Promise*, class members will need to have access to five kinds of resources during this study:

- ◆ a basic set of reference books
- ◆ several key books
- ◆ optional books
- ◆ optional commentaries
- ◆ optional references

These resources are listed on the next page.

Why do you need these resources? This study is set up to help participants do some actual biblical research and study. To do that, they need to have a variety of biblical critical tools and resources. If you are doing a shortened version of this curriculum or do not want to put your emphasis on this aspect, you may want to omit the research activities (in arrival activities and outside assignments). If so, look at each teaching plan itself to see what resources you will definitely need.

RESOURCE LIST

Key Books

- * Comstock, Gary David. *Gay Theology Without Apology*. 1993.
- ** Fortune, Marie. *Love Does No Harm*. 1995. (key background for chapter 4)
- Furnish, Victor Paul. *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*. Rev. ed. 1985.
- Furnish, Victor Paul. *Romans—Philippians*. Journey through the Bible Series. Cokesbury curriculum.
- Hall, Sidney G. III. *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul's Theology*. 1993.
- ** Helminiak, Daniel A. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*. 1994.
- McNeill, John J. *Freedom, Glorious Freedom: The Spiritual Journey to the Fullness of Life for Gays, Lesbians, and Everybody Else*. 1995.
- ** Morrison, Melanie. *The Grace of Coming Home*. 1995.
- ** Scanzoni, Letha Dawson and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* Rev. ed. 1994.
- Siker, Jeffrey, ed. *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*. 1994.
- Soards, Marion L. *Scripture & Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today*. 1995. (conservative viewpoint)
- Scroggs, Robin. *The New Testament and Homosexuality*. 1983.

Optional Books

- Bess, Howard H. *Pastor, I Am Gay*.
- Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*.
- Boyd, Malcolm and Nancy L. Wilson, eds. *Amazing Grace: Stories of Lesbian and Gay Faith*.
- Brawley, Robert, ed. *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality*.
- Countryman, L. William. *Biblical Authority or Biblical Tyranny?*
- Countryman, L. William. *Dirt, Greed, & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today*.
- Davies, Susan E. and Eleanor H. Haney, eds. *Redefining Sexual Ethics: A Sourcebook of Essays, Stories, and Poems*.
- Edwards, George R. *Gay/Lesbian Liberation: A Biblical Perspective*.
- Geis, Sally B. & Donald E. Messer. *Caught in the Crossfire: Helping Christians Debate Homosexuality*.
- Glaser, Chris. *Coming Out to God: Prayers for Lesbians, Gay Men, Their Families and Friends*.
- Gomes, Peter J. *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*.
- Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. *Sensuous Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism*.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*.
- Segovia, Fernando F. and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds. *Reading from This Place. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation: The American Scene*.
- Seow, Choon-Leong, ed. *Homosexuality and Christian Community*.
- Spahr, Jane Adams, et. al., eds. *Called Out: The Voices & Gifts of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Presbyterians*.

Optional Commentaries

- Barrett, C.K. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*.
- Betz, Hans Dieter. *Galatians*.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols.
- Harrington, Daniel. *The Gospel of Matthew*.
- Sampley, J. Paul, et. al. *Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, the Pastoral Epistles*.
- Stuhlmacher, Peter. *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*.

Getting Started



Basic Reference Set

Make one set available in class.

- HarperCollins Study Bible, NRSV
- Harper's Bible Commentary
- Harper's Bible Dictionary
- Women's Bible Commentary
- A standard dictionary

Optional References

The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes
(Volume 1 would be especially helpful)

The Original African Heritage Study Bible, KJV, ed. by Cain Hope Felder
(Explores African roots of the biblical story)

The Complete Parallel Bible with Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books
(Includes NRSV, Revised English, New American, and New Jerusalem Bibles)

The Inclusive New Testament. Brentwood: Priests for Equality, 1994

The New Testament and Psalms. Oxford, 1995
(Inclusive)

Other annotated study Bibles

- * Book is needed in a regular class activity.
- ** Key background reading for leaders.

Getting Started



(Post in your classroom)

Tips for Individual Study of Study Book

1. Preview the chapter first: turn the pages of study book and note section headings.
2. As you read, underline key words in each paragraph.
3. Look in glossary if there are words you don't understand.
4. At the end of each section of a chapter, summarize in one sentence the meaning of that section as you understand it. You might want to write your summary in the margins.
5. Note questions you hope to get clarified in class.

GENERAL TIPS

Ten Tips for Better Teaching

1. Be clear about the purposes for the session.
Realize that some purposes will not show immediate results. We are sowing seeds.
2. Keep in mind the experiences, needs, and abilities of the participants.
The "art" of teaching is knowing who your learners are and then finding some activity that challenges them to dig just a little deeper.
3. Customize the teaching plan to help you achieve the purposes with your participants.
Ultimately, we teach people, not materials or ideas.
4. Include both talking/thinking and expressive/feeling activities.
People learn by sharing and exploring feelings as well as ideas. Don't skip all the art, music, body movement, poetry, and rhythm activities. These help people internalize ideas. Also, we sometimes gain different insights when we look at a text with our hearts, or experience it with our bodies, in addition to studying it with our minds.
5. Respect honest views expressed by participants.
Biblical understandings are not objective; they are deeply tied to our faith. We're asking people to change the way they "faith" and that's hard.
6. Watch for people who want to say something, but can't get into the conversation.
Act as "gate-keeper" to help them in. Say, "I think Mary has something to say."
7. Don't be afraid to introduce new ideas that might seem controversial.
People learn when a minor sense of "dis-ease" is created. New ideas that don't fit old understandings have to be responded to somehow. Rejection of a new idea may be the first, but not the last, step.
8. Be ready to adjust your teaching plan—if one part takes longer, skip another part.
Just do it. Don't tell the class they took too long; makes them anxious and hesitant to talk.
9. Keep discussions moving.
Everyone does not have to say something about every question, or even in every session. Strive for a range of responses to a question and then move on.
10. At the end of a session, ask people what they have learned.
It's a quick way to find out if the activities did help accomplish the purposes. You might just be surprised at the insights people will share!

Tips for Doing Small Groups in a Class

1. Be sure the groups understand the tasks they are to work on. Give them instruction sheets or put instructions on the easel.
2. Be clear about the time allowed. Too little time is better than too much time. Pull the groups back together even if some are not finished. It's boring for some to have to sit and wait!
3. If time is limited, *appoint* a discussion leader or a recorder who will report to the total group. The group will spend too much time deciding on leadership.
4. Indicate to the groups when they have about three minutes left to finish their tasks.

ADAPTING FOR YOUTH STUDY

1. **Use the study “as is” with senior highs.** The conceptual level of the material is appropriate for older youth. Because younger youth are in a different world developmentally, the activities would need serious adaptation to be effective.
2. **Know where youth are.** As you prepare to teach, be aware that youth are struggling with questions of sexual identity. They are trying to define who they are sexually. Most youth wonder if their basic identity is heterosexual or homosexual. Be sensitive to the reality of that struggle (even if it is never voiced) so that your comments and responses will communicate openness. Some youth will automatically approach a study of the Bible and homosexuality with the attitude, “The Bible says homosexuality is a sin and that’s that.” In working with these youth, help them struggle with questions of biblical authority and how one applies that authority in modern life. The study material will help you do that in ways that will be helpful to all youth. Other youth will approach the study with the attitude, “Why can’t people just be free to be who they are?” In working with these youth, help them struggle with the same questions of biblical authority, but from an entirely different perspective. The **key to the study** will be to help all youth listen to and try to understand each other. The Talking Circle is the time in each session when listening and understanding can happen. Don’t neglect this important part of the session.
3. **Try to do the youth study in a retreat setting, where there is time to struggle with the issues.** A retreat that begins Friday evening and ends Sunday at noon will allow time for digging into the sessions and reflecting on new ideas and issues. A retreat setting for the study also means you have to gather additional resources only once. As part of the preparation for the retreat (which should also include the normal parental permission and health care forms), emphasize the covenant (see p. 57, leader) and what it will mean for the life of the group during the retreat. Emphasize that youth should come with open minds and hearts. If you choose to do the study on Sunday morning, or a similar setting with time restrictions, consider using the outlines for “A One-Hour Plan” or “Two Forty-Five-Minute Plans” in each session.
4. **Follow the outline for the session.** The outline is experiential, even though the material is oriented to content and cognitive ways of learning. Take advantage of this built-in feature. Adapt activities where necessary, but stay with the basic plan. In each session you will: *identify*, *examine*, *explore*, and *claim*. These activities are related to the icons: the golden calf, the pillar of fire, the prophetic voices, and the promise. This is a helpful way to approach the biblical perspective.
5. **Be sure that you always deal with the activities on biblical authority.** Explore how we interpret the Bible. The Bible can be both our greatest resource and our greatest stumbling block for this study.
6. **Be honest and open.** This is crucial. You dare not come at the study wanting to convince youth of the “truth” of a particular position. Be honest about how you feel and what you think. Also be open to other understandings and sensitive to feelings and concerns.
7. **Read the background material carefully.** Know it well enough that you can find the information you want quickly.
8. **Enjoy your teaching role.** Youth are wonderful people with whom to work. You can learn a great deal from them, even as you teach.

—John Gooch
Former United Methodist Youth Curriculum Editor and Writer

Getting Started



Chapter 1

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any hurtful way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

—Psalm 139:23-24 NRSV adapted



2 Timothy 3: 16-17

In This Session You Will Help Participants To...

...Identify how a common translation and interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 has shaped our approach to reading the Bible



...Examine an alternate translation and interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16, based on critical research, as a possible step out of our dilemma



...Explore three biblical interpretive approaches, noting especially how the sociocultural approach helps us look at a biblical reference from the point of view of marginalized people



...Claim our own experiences of being diminished by religious enemies as a first step toward all of us being able to "claim the promise"



Getting Started

- ❑ Begin your preparation in prayer by meditating on the psalm above.
- ❑ Read "In This Session" at left and glance through the teaching plan below.
- ❑ Decide whether to ask someone to do Activity 3 as an outside class assignment and report on it in activity 11.
- ❑ Think about who will be in your class. How might they respond to the "dilemma" statements in the study book? What concerns might they have about biblical authority and interpretation?
- ❑ Pray for each participant.
- ❑ Do some background reading from the list below.
- ❑ Customize the teaching plan to meet class needs and your time schedule.
- ❑ Omit activities 7 and 8 if you did an Orientation Session. Use maximum times on activities 9-11.
- ❑ Gather all supplies from list below.
- ❑ Set up activities before class (see "Before class" notes on each activity).
- ❑ Decide on optional outside assignments for next session (see "Next Session," p. 17).

Helpful Reading

- ❑ Study book, chapter 1.
- ❑ "2 Timothy: Overview" (p. 47, leader).
- ❑ "Three Approaches to Biblical Interpretation" (p. 48, leader).
- ❑ Furnish, Victor Paul. *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, pp. 14-18.
- ❑ Helminiak, Daniel A. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, pp. 21-34.
- ❑ Commentaries on 2 Timothy 3:16-17, such as Sampley in "Resource List" (p. 9, leader).

Supplies Needed

- ❑ **Outside assignment for chapter 1:** *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 422-23; copy of instructions for activity 3.
- ❑ **Activity 2:** Photocopies of "A Quick Tour" (p. 58, leader); study Bibles.
- ❑ **Activity 3:** Basic Reference Set, esp. the dictionaries (see p. 9, leader).
- ❑ **Activity 4:** Newsprint, marker, masking tape for the journaling statement.
- ❑ **Activity 5:** Newsprint, masking tape, markers, index cards (see "Before class" instructions in activity 5).
- ❑ **Activity 8:** Copies of "Our Covenant" (p. 57, leader).
- ❑ **Activity 9:** Newsprint on easel, marker (or chalkboard/chalk); hymn "Help Us Accept Each Other" (Disciples, #487; Presbyterian, #358; UCC *New Century*, #388, UMC, #560). Hymn is suggested in every session.
- ❑ **Activity 12:** Long length of newsprint, yardstick, markers, 4"x6" index cards for timeline entries (see "Before class" instructions in activity 12).
- ❑ **Activity 16:** Hymn: "Dame La Mano" (*Everflowing Streams*, #46; *Sing Shalom*, 2nd ed.); "This Is a Day of New Beginnings" by B. Wren (Brethren/Mennonite, #640; Disciples, #518; UCC *New Century*, #417; UMC, #383); or "Spirit," verse 4, by J. Manley (*Everflowing Streams*, #45; UCC *New Century*, #286).
- ❑ **Extra activity 2:** Two index cards for timeline (see "Before class" instructions in activity).
- ❑ **Extra activity 3:** Two index cards for timeline (see "Before class" instructions in activity).
- ❑ **Next session outside assignment:** Printed instruction sheets for activity 2 (p. 17, leader).

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive (0 min. class time)

Offer participants choices from activities 1-5 as they arrive, especially if they arrive early and at different times. This will allow participants who did not read the study book or do questions to complete some of it while others do other arrival activities.

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: If participants have not read their study books before class, invite them to do this activity.

- Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in their Bibles.
- Answer “What Does It Say?” and “What Does It Mean?” (pp. 5, 6, study).

2. Take “A Quick Tour” of Study Bible

Before class: See “Supplies Needed” (p. 12, leader).

In class: Invite participants to do the worksheet if they feel unfamiliar with a study Bible.

3. Look Up “Inspiration”

Before class: Write the following instructions (a. and b.) on an index card and place it with the dictionaries at the work table:

- Look up “inspiration” in the *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* and in a standard dictionary.
- Be prepared to share what the *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* says, especially the kinds of metaphors used to describe the Spirit’s work.

In class: Ask an early arrival to do this project.

4. Get in Touch

Before class: Print on newsprint the following uncompleted sentence: *Over the years, the Bible’s authority in my life has...* Post it on a wall in a quiet area of room.

In class: Invite early arriving participants to reflect on the unfinished sentence and write in their journals.

5. Add to a Graffiti Wall

Before class: Hang newsprint (2-3 layers to protect walls). Write a large title across the top: *Our Favorite Images in the Bible*. Place brightly colored markers in a container nearby. Write the following instructions on an index card. Hang it near the newsprint:

- Choose a colored marker that represents a major *feeling* you have about the Bible.
- Draw a picture or a symbol of your favorite *image* from the Bible.

In class: As participants arrive, invite them to add their images to the “graffiti wall.” No discussion is planned for this activity. It is meant simply to draw people into the act of thinking about the Bible.

Gather Together

6. Begin with Prayer (2 min.)

Use the prayer (p. 4, study).

7. Introduce Claiming the Promise (10 min.)

Before class: Mark p. 4 in this leader guide so you can find it quickly.

In class: Use the 7:05 p.m. section of the Orientation plan (p. 4, leader).

8. Introduce and Sign “Our Covenant” (15 min.)

Before class: See “Supplies Needed.”

In class: Use the 7:40 p.m. section of the orientation plan (p. 4, leader).

A ONE-HOUR PLAN

Tip: Highlight (in the two-hour plan) the activities (or parts of activities) you are using.

- Open with Prayer (2 min.)**
Use the prayer (p. 4, study).
- Do the Talking Circle (10 min.)**
Use activity 9 (parts a, d, and e1).
- Identify a Literal Approach to Scriptural Authority (10 min.)**
Use activity 10.
- Examine a Critical Approach to Scriptural Authority (10 min.)**
Use activity 11 (parts a and c).
- Explore Three Interpretive Approaches (15 min.)**
Use activity 13 (parts a, d, g2, g3, and g4).
- Claim Feelings of Diminishment (10 min.)**
Use activity 14.
- Close with Prayer (3 min.)**
Use the prayer (p. 9, study).

TWO FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLANS

Tip: Highlight (in the two-hour plan) the activities (or parts of activities) you are using. Use one color for session one; a second color for session two.

Session 1

- Open with Prayer (2 min.)**
Use the prayer (p. 4, study).
- Introduce the Study Books (10 min.)**
Use the 7:05 p.m. section of the orientation plan (p. 4, leader).
- Identify a Literal Approach to Scriptural Authority (15 min.)**
Use activity 10.
- Examine a Critical Approach to Scriptural Authority (15 min.)**
Use activity 11.
- (If time) Begin the Timeline (3 min.)**
Use activity 12.

Session 2

- Explore Three Interpretive Approaches (25 min.)**
Use activity 13.
- Claim Feelings of Diminishment (15 min.)**
Use activity 14.
- Close with Worship (5 min.)**
Use the psalm as a litany and the prayer (p. 9, study).

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

- 9 If you are doing activity 8 during this session, skip part "a." Also, cut time of Talking Circle from 25 to 15 minutes. Skip questions e2 and e3 and the hymn.
- 9e If you have Roman Catholics in your group, acknowledge that the *magisterium* serves as the primary authority, not scripture itself. This study, however, will look directly at scripture, so we are exploring how scripture has authority.
- 9e1 Sketch this out on newsprint on easel as they offer ideas.
- 9e4 Let people struggle with this! No simple answers exist!
- 9f For those who wish to use more inclusive language, or who want to be clear about who Lord refers to, "Christ" or "God" may be substituted for "Lord."
- 10b Encourage people to do these questions before class in the coming sessions.
- 11a1 The point here is to help class understand that the annotations are interpreters' points of view, not translator notes. *Interpretation* is commentary, explanation, annotation, clarification, or point of view about what a translation says.
- 11a2 Answer 2 deals with translation options. *Translation* is an attempt to render something accurately (though not literally) from one language to another.

9. Join the Talking Circle (15-30 min.)

Before class: Invite 2 people to be ready to read the "dilemma" statements on p. 4 of the study book. See "Supplies Needed."

In class:

- Share with participants the purpose of the Talking Circle. Say to the group:
"The talking circle is meant to help us explore how to live with diversity and how to respond to God's promise. We will strive to create a mood in the talking circles where all will be respectfully heard and where we share our thoughts and feelings without trying to 'win' other people over to our ways. We will also strive to create a safe and confidential place."
- Invite participants to settle into a Talking Circle mood. Invite them to look for and respond to the kernel of truth in every statement.
- Say: "Our Talking Circle today focuses on exploring our joint dilemma in the church."
- Ask two participants to read aloud the two dilemmas (p. 4, study).
- Ask the group to reflect together. Begin with the following questions:
 - If we placed these two dilemma statements on a continuum, what other positions would we add? Where would they go on such a continuum?
 - What hopes are being expressed in the statement you chose?
 - What concerns are being expressed in the statement you chose?
 - What commonalities might connect these two points of view?
- Sing "Help Us Accept Each Other," verse 1.

Identify a Common Approach to Scripture



10. Discuss 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (10-15 min.)

In class:

- Together, locate and read the scripture. If people have different translations, quickly note any differences by reading the verse aloud while others call out the different words they have in their Bibles.
- Review answers to "What Does It Say?" (p. 5, study)
Answers:
 - Key words are "scripture," "all," "inspired," and "useful." There may be others.
 - For teaching, reproof, training—in order to enable people to do good works.
- Discuss: How does this passage influence the way people interpret the biblical references on same-sex conduct?

Examine an Alternate Approach



11. Examine a Critical Approach (15-20 min.)

In class:

- Share several people's answers to "What Does It Mean?" (p. 6, study)
Answers:
 - Depends on which version of Bible your group has.
 - All scripture is inspired by God and is useful.
Every scripture inspired by God is also useful.
- Examine the meaning of "inspiration"
 - Ask participants to share their research (activity 3), especially the metaphors for how the Bible is "inspired."
Answer: Two metaphors are suggested: God/Spirit dictating to human secretary (biblical writer); the Spirit "playing on a musical instrument."
 - Ask:
 - What other metaphors might be used to describe how God

inspired the Bible?

b) Which ones imply a literal and infallible inspiration? Which ones don't?

3. (If time) Look up Genesis 2:7 where God breathes life into the first human. "Inspire" can mean "God-breathed."

c. Discuss: How might the alternate translation of 2 Timothy 3:16 help us out of the dilemma the church has about welcoming or rejecting lesbian and gay people?

d. (If you have more time) See extra activity 1.

12. Begin a Timeline (5 min.)

Before class: Hang a 6 to 8 foot length of butcher paper or paper/plastic tablecloth. Draw a horizontal line through the center and mark off centuries, from 2000 B.C.E. to 2000 C.E. Prepare an index card with the following: 2 Timothy written. See photos, p. 29, study; pp. 17, 51, leader.

In class: Share that you will do a timeline each week. Add "2 Timothy written" at 100 C.E. This Letter was probably written between 90-110 C.E.

Explore Three Interpretive Approaches



13. Explore Interpretative Approaches to Scripture (20 min.)

Before class: Invite three people to be prepared to read the three approach paragraphs on p. 7, study.

In class:

a. Quickly divide the class into three groups.

b. Say: "Sometimes we get new insights by using our whole bodies instead of only our minds. Listen to these descriptions *with your whole body*."

c. Have three participants read the three approaches (p. 7, study).

d. Assign one approach to each group.

e. Say to the whole class:

"You are to portray physically your assigned approach. Remember the old group activity of becoming an inter-connected 'human machine' where each person was a moving part? Your group is to do a group movement (with individuals doing different parts of that group movement) to portray the approach assigned to you. Overall, your group movement should illustrate as many aspects as you can of the interpretive approach assigned to you. Try to get 'inside' the approaches and portray them with full body movements. Don't caricature or stereotype the approach. Try to portray the core features of it in a fair way, even if you don't agree with it. Go to it!"

f. Invite each group to demonstrate their group body movement for the class.

g. Debrief by asking one or more of these questions:

1. How did you personally feel about being in your "moving picture"?

2. How would you put into one sentence the "core" process of each approach?

3. What are the values and potential problems of each approach?

Possible answers:

Values: Literal approach conserves Christian tradition. Critical approach provides solid research for new interpretations. Sociocultural approach helps us view scripture through the eyes of marginalized or oppressed people.

Problems: See footnotes 11, 12, and 14 (p. 7, study).

4. How might these different approaches help solve the church's dilemma about fully welcoming and nurturing gay and lesbian people?

h. (If you have time) Do extra activity 4 on how the church has changed

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

12 If you prepare all materials ahead of time, it will take only a minute or two of class time. This activity will help your class greatly since the study moves between Old and New Testament texts several times.

13 Participants in test situations reported good insights from this activity. Don't skip it because your group never does anything like this! Give instructions confidently and most groups will do it—and have fun!

13e If a group gets stuck, share one of these examples:

1. The **literal** approach's idea that the Bible is divinely authored might be portrayed with hand movements that move from "heaven" to someone holding an imaginary book. Others in that group could do movements drawing from "tradition" to reach "plain meaning."

2. The **critical** approach might be illustrated by "digging" for information or writing down facts.

3. Part of the **sociocultural** approach might show oppression or ignoring some people by others and then show the lifting of oppression and the inclusion of marginalized people.

13g1 Look for a range of feelings; then go on to the next question. Everyone does not have to speak.

13g2 No right answers here. Personal opinions only! Encourage respectful and active listening to each other's views.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

Section tip:

Remember to look back at the full purpose statements, p. 12, leader.

its interpretation of biblical references about slavery and women's leadership roles.

Claim the Promise



14. Name Feelings of Diminishment (15 min.)

In class:

- Review the last paragraph (p. 8, study) about how people on all sides of the church debate on homosexuality feel "diminished" by those we see as our "enemies."
- Ask:
 - When and how do you personally feel diminished by other people in the current debates about homosexuality in the church?
 - How do we help each other "be" where we are, each claiming our own approach and understandings without discounting the other?

15. Summarize Learnings (5 min.)

In class: Ask participants to reflect:

- What have I learned today about biblical authority and biblical interpretation?
- (If time) What concerns do I still have?

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

16. Close with Worship (8 min.)

In class: Use one or more of these as your time permits. Invite participants to put down books, pens, and so forth. Move into a worship mood in the Talking Circle of chairs.

- Use "A Psalm of Serendipity" (p. 9, study) as a litany.
- Move into a prayer circle and invite participants to offer prayer concerns for the coming week.
- Sing a hymn: "Dame La Mano"; "This Is a Day of New Beginnings"; or "Spirit," verse 4.
- Close with unison prayer (p. 9, study).

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Share Background on 2 Timothy (5-10 min.)

- Read paragraphs 1-3 of "2 Timothy: Overview" (p. 47, leader).
- Share:

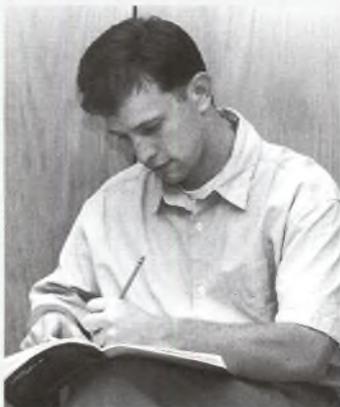
"The author of 2 Timothy was referring to Hebrew Scripture—the Old Testament—which was canonized by Christians as scripture in 90 C.E. Paul's letters were written in the 50s C.E. and the earliest gospel (Mark) was possibly written in the 60s C.E. However, the official list (the canon) of New Testament books emerged slowly over the next three hundred years."

2. Explore How David and Jesus Re-interpreted Hebrew Law? (15-25 min.)

Before class: Prepare two index cards for timeline: "David lived" and "Jesus lived."

In class:

- Divide into two groups. Ask the "David" group to answer question 1 and the "Jesus" group to answer questions 2 and 3 of the question box (p. 7, study).
- Share answers.
- Add to timeline: "David lived" (1000 B.C.E.); "Jesus lived" ("0").
- Share "David and Jesus Reinterpret Hebrew Law" (p. 48, leader).



e. (If time) Ask:

1. What generalizations can we draw about Jesus' re-interpretation of Hebrew law?
2. What can we say *as a group* about Jesus and the law (from this story)?

3. Compare Paul with Timothy (15-20 min.)

Before class: Prepare two index cards: "Paul wrote" and "Timothy wrote."

In class:

- a. Read aloud Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- b. Ask: How are these two statements alike? How do they differ?
- c. Add to timeline: "Paul wrote" (50s C.E.); "Timothy wrote" (100 C.E.).
- d. Say:
"Some people say that Paul's writings are more 'authoritative' than later ones written by his disciples. Some say further that the gospels or what we think are the actual sayings of Jesus are the 'most authoritative'. Some say the New Testament is more authoritative than the Old for Christians. Others would say that the prophetic books are just as authoritative as the gospels. These different assumptions contribute to our disagreements over whether certain scriptures apply to us as Christians today."
- e. Invite responses.

4. Examine Changed Interpretations (10-20 min.)

- a. On Women's Place
 1. Read 1 Timothy 2:8-12.
 2. Ask: What would be different today in our own church if we read these verses as God's Word for women today?
 3. Share paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 5 of "Slavery and Women: Changed Perspectives" (p. 49, leader).
- b. On Slavery
 1. Read Ephesians 6:5.
 2. Ask: What would be different today in our denomination and our country if we read this verse as God's Word?
 3. Share paragraphs 1, 2, 4, and 5 of "Slavery and Women: Changed Perspectives" (p. 49, leader).



TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

- 2e1** List the group's ideas on newsprint or chalkboard.
- 2e2** This question asks the class to try to come to consensus on a statement. Don't spend too long on this. Just get them to experience the process!

NEXT SESSION

- 1. Encourage people to read chapter 2 and relevant biblical references and to answer the question boxes. Remind them to bring their Bibles and journal books.
- 2. Decide before session 2 if you want class members to do activities 2 and 3b and 3c in session 2 outside of class. If so, prepare printed instructions and hand them out at the end of session 1. See p. 19, leader.
- 3. Ask a guitarist or pianist to teach the song "Pues Si Vivimos" as an early arrival activity for session 2 and then lead it during closing worship. See activities 5 and 13, chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Let your steadfast love become
my comfort
according to your promise to
your servant.

—Psalm 119:76 NRSV



Galatians 3:23-29; 5:13-23; 6:15

In This Session You Will Help Participants To...

...Identify our temptation to live by the law rather than by faith in the promise



...Examine what Paul was saying about the law and the promise



...Explore Paul's meaning of "called to freedom"



...Claim God's promise by being "new creations"



Getting Started

- Begin your preparation in prayer by meditating on the psalm above.
- Read "In This Session" at left and glance through the teaching plan below.
- Think about your class and what ideas and questions they might have about being God's children and heirs.
- Pray for each participant.
- Do some background reading from the list below.
- Customize the teaching plan for your class and your time schedule.
- Gather all supplies from list below.
- Set up activities before class (see "Before class" notes on each activity).
- Recruit people for readings for activity 8 (and 11, if you want a class member to read the Wray witness statement).
- Recruit someone to play guitar or piano to teach song in activity 5.
- Decide on optional outside assignments for session 3 (see "Next Session," p. 23, leader).

Helpful Reading

- Study book, chapter 2.
- "Galatians: Overview" (p. 50, leader).
- "Galatians, the Letter of Paul to the," in the *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 327-29.
- Furnish, Victor Paul. *Romans—Philippians*. Journey through the Bible Series; Cokesbury curriculum. See ch. 11 on being God's heirs.
- Hall, Sidney G. III. "Galatians: Before Moses Was Abraham," in *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul's Theology*, ch. 4.
- McNeill, John J. "Liberation from

Fear" and "Trusting in God" in *Taking A Chance on God*, chs. 6 and 8.

- Siker, Jeffrey S. "Gentile Wheat and Homosexual Christians: New Directions for the Heterosexual Church," in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*. ed. by Robert L. Brawley, ch. 9.
- Siker, Jeffrey S. "Homosexual Christians, the Bible, and Gentile Inclusions: Confessions of a Repenting Heterosexualist," in *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*. ed. by Siker, ch. 13.

Supplies Needed

- Outside assignments for chapter 2:** Printed instructions for activities 2, 3b, 3c; Hall's book for extra activity 2.
- Activity 2:** Index card; *Harper's Bible Dictionary*; *Harper's Bible Commentary*; *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1.
- Activity 3:** *Harper's Bible Dictionary*; commentaries on Galatians, including *HBC*.
- Activity 4:** Newsprint, marker, masking tape to set up journaling question.
- Activity 5 (and 12):** Hymn "Pues Si Vivimos" (UMC, #356; UCC *New Century*, #499; *Celebremos II*, 1983); guitar or piano.
- Activity 7:** One index card; marker, tape for item for timeline; possibly *HBC*, *HBD*.
- Activity 9:** Three index cards, marker, tape for items for timeline; large newsprint, marker for writing questions (see "Before class" instructions).
- Extra activity 2:** Sidney Hall's book.
- Extra activity 3:** Art materials.
- Next session outside assignments:** Printed instructions and books to hand out (see "Next Session," p. 23).

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive (0 min. class time)

Offer class members choices from activities 1-5 as they arrive, especially if they arrive early and at different times. This will allow participants who did not read the study book or do questions to complete some of it while others do other arrival activities.

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: If some participants have not read their study books, invite them to do this activity.

- Read Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-7, and 5:13-26 in their Bibles.
- Answer “What Does It Say?” and “What Does It Mean?” (pp. 11, 12, study).

2. Identify the Promise

Before class: Print the following instructions on an index card and place it at the work table with the Bibles, dictionaries, and commentaries:

- Read Genesis 15:4-6. This is the verse Paul refers to in Galatians 3:6.
- Look at Genesis 17:4 and 17:15-16 (an alternate version of the promise).
- Look up Galatians 3:6-9 in *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, pp. 1207-8.
- Look up Genesis 15:6 in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 1, p. 445, if available.
- Look up “promise” in the *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, pp. 825-26.
- Prepare a very short summary about these interpreters’ views on what God’s promise is that Paul names in Galatians 3:6-9.

In class: Invite several people to work on this project.

3. Look Up “Inheritance”

Before class: Print the following instructions on an index card and place it with the dictionaries and commentaries at the work table:

- Look up “inheritance” in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* to see how it is used in a theological sense.
- Look up Galatians 3:19-29 in *Harper’s Bible Commentary* and summarize that interpreter’s points to share with whole class.
- Find the passage in other commentaries and note any different points made by those interpreters.

In class: Invite one or two participants to do this project when they arrive.

4. Get in Touch

Before class: Print on newsprint the following sentence: *What does it mean to me to be a “child” or “heir” of God?* Post it on a wall in a quiet area of room.

In class: Invite early arriving students to reflect on the question and encourage them to write in their journals.

5. Learn a Song

Before class: See “Getting Started” and “Supplies Needed.” This is the only non-talking activity, so try to do it if at all possible.

In class: Learn the Mexican folk song “Pues Si Vivimos.” It means “When We are Living.” The chorus says “We belong to God.” Practice it for closing worship.

A ONE-HOUR PLAN

- Open with Prayer (2 min.)**
Use the prayer (p. 10, study).
- Identify the Galatians’ Dilemma (10 min.)**
Use activity 7 in the two-hour plan. See activity 12, p. 15, to start timeline.
- Identify the Parallels with Us (Talking Circle) (13 min.)**
Use activity 8. Note the reduced amount of time.
- Examine Paul’s Response to Troublemakers (10 min.)**
Use activity 9.
- Explore Paul’s Point about Freedom (10 min.)**
Use activity 10 (parts a, b, and d4).
- Claim Being New Creations in Christ (10 min.)**
Use questions in “What Do You Think?” (p. 14, study). This is crucial!
- Close with Worship Moments (5 min.)**
Use activity 12.

TWO FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLANS

Session 1

- Begin with Prayer (2 min.)**
Use prayer (p. 10, study).
- Identify the Galatians’ Dilemma (15 min.)**
Use activity 7 in the two-hour plan. See activity 12 p. 15, to start timeline.
- Identify Parallels with Us (Talking Circle) (28 min.)**
Use activity 8.

Session 2

- Examine Paul’s Response to Troublemakers (15 min.)**
Use activity 9 (parts f and g).
- Explore Paul’s Point about Freedom (10 min.)**
Use activity 10 (parts a, b, and d4).
- Claim the Promise (Talking Circle) (15 min.)**
Use “What Do You Think?” (p. 14, study). This is crucial!
- Close with Worship (5 min.)**
Use activity 12.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

7a Write the summary outline of Galatians on newsprint or chalkboard as you present it.

7c2 See "Galatians" in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, p. 1204, for more detail if the class is troubled about this point.

8d Do not read Siker's footnote. Share it later in the discussion if it seems helpful.

8e2 People may have several different kinds of points. Let them be stated without anyone trying to refute them. This connection of "Gentiles" with us as Christians today will be new to many people.

Identify Temptation to Live by Law



6. Begin with Prayer (2 min.)

Use the prayer (p. 10, study).

7. Identify the Galatians' Dilemma (15 min.)

Before class: Prepare index card for the timeline: "Galatians written."

In class:

a. Introduce the topic to be studied today by sharing "Galatians: Overview" (p. 50, leader).

b. Add to the timeline: "Galatians written" (48-55 C.E.).

c. Discuss

1. Who were "Gentiles"?

2. Who were the "troublemakers"?

3. What was the basic problem Paul was addressing in the Galatian church?

Answers:

1. Review the glossary entry (p. 48, study); also see entry in *Harper's Bible Dictionary* if necessary.

2. Biblical scholars disagree about this: most say Jewish Christians. Some say libertine spiritualists or gnostics.

3. The problem was that the new Christians' lacked an understanding of the meaning of faith and freedom. They didn't understand why the Jewish law wasn't for them.

8. Identify Parallels (Talking Circle) (25 min.)

Before class: See "Getting Started."

In class:

a. Invite participants to settle in to the Talking Circle where all persons' opinions may be heard in a respectful way without attempting "win" people over. Encourage them to engage in active listening, trying to hear the deep concerns of others as they speak.

b. Topic: "Identifying parallels in Galatians with our dilemma today."

c. Ask two people to read aloud the dialogue on p. 11 of the study book (use paragraphs 3 and 4).

d. Read aloud to the class "Jeffrey Siker's Witness" (p. 55, leader).

e. Discuss:

1. Our dilemma involves what to do with the biblical passages that refer to same-sex conduct. How is this dilemma like the Galatians' dilemma (what to do about the Jewish law that said one had to be circumcised to be part of God's covenant)?

Possible answers:

a) In the case of the Levitical law against same-sex conduct, both we and the Galatians are dealing with a law that wasn't originally meant for us.

b) The Galatian "troublemakers" were making certain assumptions about what led to salvation or what constituted inclusion in God's covenant relationship with humanity; so do we today. And the underlying issue is the same: Does obedience to the law lead to Christian salvation?

c) Both are struggling with whether one set of assumptions apply to all people (that is, circumcision = inclusion in covenant; heterosexuality = inclusion in covenant).

2. How are the two situations not parallel?

Examine Law and Promise



9. Examine Paul's Point in Galatians 3:26-29 (30 min.)

Before class: Prepare index cards for the timeline: "Abraham and Sarah lived"; "Genesis completed"; and "Paul wrote." Write the two

questions under part “g” on newsprint (or chalkboard). Write large enough so people around the room can read them.

In class:

- a. Read together the *beginning* of Paul’s proclamation of the gospel: 3:6-9. Point out: Seeking more context for the verses we are studying is a step in the critical approach to interpreting scripture.
- b. Read Galatians 3:23-29.
- c. Say: “This is one major point of Paul’s response to the troublemakers: Verses 26-29 form the *conclusion* of this part of Paul’s ‘defense of the gospel’ against those troublemakers who were preaching another gospel.”
- d. Review answers to “What Does It Say?” (p. 11, study) and hear a report of those who did activity 3.
- e. Add to the timeline: “Abraham and Sarah lived” (about 1900 B.C.E.); “Genesis completed” (pulled together from numerous sources over five hundred years: 1000-500 B.C.E.); “Paul wrote” (about 50 C.E.).
- f. Divide the class into pairs. Say:
“Genesis 15 and 17 are the scriptures Paul was referring to when he mentioned Abraham’s belief and his offspring (Galatians 3:6, 29). One of these chapters is the scripture Paul’s opponents in Galatia were referring to when they demanded that the Galatian Christians be circumcised. Read the questions and then answer the questions posted on the newsprint.”
- g. Discuss these questions after the pairs have answered them:
 1. What verses was Paul specifically referring to when he talked of Abraham’s belief?
 2. What verses were Paul’s opponents referring to?

Answers:

 1. Paul referred to Genesis 15:6.
 2. Paul’s opponents referred to Genesis 17:10, 14.
- h. Hear a brief report of those who did activity 2.

Explore “Called to Freedom”



10. Explore Adult Freedom in Christ (20 min.)

In class:

- a. Look up and read together Galatians 5:13-14.
- b. Review the main points in “Called to Freedom” (p. 13, study).
- c. Review the questions in “What Does ‘Called to Freedom’ Mean?” (p. 13, study).
- d. Discuss:
 1. How do you understand Paul’s admonition not to use your freedom as an opportunity for “self-indulgence”?
 2. What are all the different ways we might misuse our freedom?
 3. How does this passage apply to heterosexual activity?
 4. Some people charge that all same-sex activity is “self-indulgent.” Do you agree? What do you think “freedom, but not self-indulgence” means for gay or lesbian sexual expression? For heterosexual expression?

Claim the Promise by “Being New Creations”



11. Claim Being a New Creation (Talking Circle) (25 min.)

Before class: Read paragraphs 6 and 7 in “Claiming the Promise” (p. 14, study).

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

9d Answers are clearly found in biblical text.

9f If you have less time, don’t divide into pairs; do most of the sharing of ideas yourself.

10d Help your class to make connections: gay and lesbian sexual activity is no more or less “self-indulgent” than heterosexual activity. Freedom means choices of behavior for all of us. Be sure to distinguish between behavior and orientation.

Section tip:

Reread the “Claim” purpose on p. 18, leader.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

11c Don't skip these! These are crucial ones!

1 If you choose this activity, be prepared to discuss issues about the slavery imagery.

In class:

- a. Remind the class about covenant agreements and then share the following personal witness statement:

"I came out as lesbian in early 1969. In 1973, trying desperately to be straight, I married a man. Twelve years later, while studying Galatians 5:1, I discovered the freedom of the truth once again. Trying to be faithful to a relationship that was not 'natural' for me was slavery indeed. I reclaimed my freedom in Christ and now stand firm in that freedom, joyfully an out lesbian."

—Judith Hoch Wray, July 1996. Used with permission.

- b. Ask:

1. What seems right to you about Wray's comparison of her situation with the Galatians?
2. What is problematic for you?

- c. Discuss the questions in "What Do You Think?" (p. 14, study).

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

12. Close with Worship Moments (3 min.)

Use one or more of these as your time permits.

- a. Sing: "Pues Si Vivimos" (see "Supplies Needed" for activity 5).
- b. Close with prayer (p. 15, study).

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Examine Paul's Illustration about the Law (15-20 min.)

In class:

- a. Ask participants to look up Galatians 4:1-7. Have someone read it aloud.
- b. Share: "Paul continues his 'defense' of the gospel by offering the Galatian Christians another analogy."
- c. Discuss:
 1. What is the analogy Paul uses?
 2. What is the "proof" Paul offers that the Galatians are not slaves, but heirs?

Answers:

1. A young child is like a slave: no rights; the Galatians before believing in Christ were enslaved.
 2. They have received the Spirit because they cry "Abba"—directly addressing God. (Betz in his commentary on Galatians notes the large place Paul gives to the Spirit manifestation as a cornerstone of Galatian liberty.)
- d. Note Paul's casual use of slave language in this passage. He, like the rest of the writers of Old and New Testament, does not demonstrate any understanding that his society might be wrong in approving of slavery.
 - e. Discuss the "radical" thing commentator Carolyn Osiek points out (p. 13, study).
 1. Does Osiek's view make sense?
 2. Does it help you understand Paul? Why or why not?

2. Explore Paidagogos

Outside assignment: Check translations and meaning of *paidagogos*

Directions:

- a. Look up Galatians 3:24 in several translations to see how the Greek word *paidagogos* is translated by different versions of the Bible.
- b. Review Sidney Hall's chapter 4 (see footnotes 2, p. 10, and 6, p. 12, in study book; also "Focused Reading").

c. Discuss:

1. How is *paidagogos* translated and what does it mean?
2. How might Paul's use of this illustration be anti-Semitic?

Answers:

1. King James: "schoolmaster"; Modern: "custodian"; Living Bible: "teacher and guide"; Revised Standard: "custodian"; New English: "tutor"; Philips Modern English: "strict governess"; New International: "put in charge to lead us." NRSV says "disciplinarian." The disciplinarian was a slave who guarded and supervised children, according to the *HarperCollins Study Bible* annotation. Not a teacher.
2. Law as disciplinarian relegates the Jews to position of minor children, no longer heirs of the promise. The Mosaic Law was given as guide and mentor, not disciplinarian, to the Jews who were to be a light to the (gentile) nations to bring them into the inclusive Abrahamic Promise. Paul expresses his hope that Jews will understand that inclusive promise, that Gentiles are included without becoming Jews. When Paul said Jews needed to receive the Spirit of Christ, too, he didn't mean they needed to convert to Christianity, but that they needed to understand that Christ came to fulfill that inclusive Abrahamic Promise: that all the nations were/are God's people. (Note: This is not mainstream Pauline theology. See Sid Hall, *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul's Theology* for more discussion of this.)

In class: Share report and discuss.

3. Create a Sacred Genealogical Tree Banner (5-30 min.)

Before class: Locate a length of light colored cloth; determine how to hang it (loops or a "hem" for a dowel stick); gather scraps of cloth, crayons for cloth, glue or rubber cement or some other method to secure to cloth.

In class:

- a. Reread together Galatians 3:29 as a summary of Paul's point in our chapter today.
- b. Discuss how this statement implies a genealogical tree.
- c. Create a "tree" that represents this promise.



TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

3 Use this as a visual summary activity of Paul's ideas. If you don't have time to do this as a banner, draw it on newsprint or chalkboard as a summary image.

3c Roots = God's promise to Abraham/Sarah; trunk = Christ; branches = class members. Add a title such as "Heirs According to the Promise."

NEXT SESSION

□ 1. Ask someone to look up Romans 11:17-24 in several commentaries and prepare a very brief report on any differences they find in the various interpreters' comments. See extra activity 2, chapter 3.

□ 2. Prepare the following instructions on slips of paper (and attach them to the particular books to hand out).

Instructions: What does this scholar think Paul means by "unnatural" in Romans 1:26-27? See pp. ##, in book attached.

Possible books to assign:

Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, & Sex*, pp. 113-14.

Furnish, *Moral Teaching of Paul*, pp. 72-77.

Furnish, "The Bible and Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality in the Church*, ed. Siker, p. 31.

Gaventa, "Romans," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 316-17.

Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says*, pp. 65-66.

Meyer, "Romans," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, p. 1159.

Scanzoni and Mollenkott *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor*, rev. ed, 1994, pp. 66-74, 81-83, 149-52.

Scroggs, *New Testament and Homosexuality*, pp. 109-17.

Chapter 3

Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
Confirm to your servant your promise
which is for those who fear you.

—Psalm 119:37-38 NRSV



Romans 1:26-27 ♦ Psalm 139:1-18

In This Session You Will Help Participants To...

...Identify how Romans 1:26-27 may or may not refer to Adam and Eve and a divine plan that assumes only heterosexuality



...Examine what Paul meant by “natural” and “unnatural”



...Explore a psalm which affirms God's gift of sexuality and compare that vision with Paul's reality statement



...Claim God's good gift of sexuality to all of us



Getting Started

- ❑ Begin your preparations by meditating on the psalm above.
- ❑ Study “In This Session” at left and the teaching plan below.
- ❑ Think again about your class. What will their concerns be about sexual orientation in relation to the Romans verses?
- ❑ Pray for each participant.
- ❑ Do some background reading from the list below.
- ❑ Customize the teaching plan for your class and time schedule.
- ❑ Gather all supplies from list below.
- ❑ Set up activities before class (see “Before class” notes on each activity).
- ❑ Decide on optional outside assignments for next session (see p. 29).

Helpful Reading

- ❑ Study book, chapter 3.
- ❑ “Romans: Overview” (p. 51, leader).
- ❑ Countryman, William. *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, chs. 3, 4, and 6.
- ❑ Furnish, Victor Paul. “The Bible and Homosexuality: Reading the Texts in Context,” in *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*, ed. Jeffrey S. Siker, pp. 18-35.
- ❑ Hays, Richard B. “Awaiting the Redemption of Our Bodies: The Witness of Scripture Concerning Homosexuality,” in Siker, pp. 3-17.
- ❑ Helminiak, Daniel. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, ch. 6 on different interpretations of Romans.
- ❑ McClain-Taylor, Mark. “But Isn't ‘It’ a Sin?” in Seow, *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, ch. 7.
- ❑ Scanzoni and Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*, rev. ed., ch. 6.

Supplies Needed

- ❑ **Outside assignment for chapter 3:** Paper for instructions; books (p. 23).
- ❑ **Activity 2:** (Optional; see “Before class”) index card; *Harper's Bible Commentary*; *Harper's Bible Dictionary*.
- ❑ **Activity 3:** Newsprint, marker, tape for setting up journaling question.
- ❑ **Activity 4:** Gift wrap paper; a box with a removable lid; wrap the box and lid separately (see photos, p. 16, study; p. 25, leader); small slips of paper, pencils in a cup or can.
- ❑ **Activity 6:** Three index cards for making instructions; 3-5 index cards for timeline.
- ❑ **Activity 8:** (Optional) newsprint, marker, tape for outlining content; easel.
- ❑ **Activity 9:** Hymn, “Help Us Accept Each Other” (see “Supplies Needed,” ch. 1, leader).
- ❑ **Activity 10:** Newsprint, butcher paper, or paper tablecloth length for psalm banner; colored markers; ruler or yardstick (for making straight lines); a long table to work around (see “Before class” instructions; see photo, p. 27, leader).
- ❑ **Activity 11:** Newsprint and easel or chalkboard, marker or chalk, perhaps some notes for yourself for doing activity.
- ❑ **Activity 13:** Music for hymn words (p. 21, study). Use tune to “Be Thou My Vision” (Brethren/Mennonite, #545; Disciples, #595; Episcopal, #488; Presbyterian, #339; UCC *New Century*, #451; UMC, #451).
- ❑ **Next session outside assignment:** Printed instruction sheet(s) for activity 3 in session 4 (p. 31, leader).

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive *(0 min. class time)*

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: If some participants have not read their study books, invite them to do this activity.

- Romans 1:26-27; Romans 11:24; Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:24 in their Bibles.
- Answer "What Does It Say?" (p. 17, study).
- (If they have time) Work on "What Does It Mean?" (p. 18, study) and "What is the Psalmist's Point?" (p. 19, study).

2. Explore "Blessing" and "Curse" in Genesis

Before class: (Use this activity if you want to do extra activity 3. If you do not offer this activity to participants, you will need to prepare a short summary yourself from the references listed in "a" and "b.") Print the following instructions on an index card and place it at the work table with the commentary and dictionary.

- Look up "Genesis: Introduction" in the *Harper's Bible Commentary*, p. 86. What are the "blessings" God promised to the Israelite ancestors?
- Look up "Curse and Blessing" in the *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, p. 198. How does this writer explain blessing and curse in Genesis?
- Be prepared to share a very brief summary with the whole class.

In class: Invite several participants to do this activity when they arrive.

3. Get in Touch

Before class: Print on newsprint the following sentence: *What is it about my sexuality that is a good gift from God?* Post it on a wall in a quiet area of room.

In class: Invite those early arriving students who wish to do so to reflect on the question and write in their journals.

4. Write an Affirmation

Before class: Set up the gift box, slips of paper, and pencil cup where people can sit and write. See "Supplies Needed."

In class: Invite participants to write something on a slip of paper about how their sexuality is a "good gift from God." Put slips into the gift box. Put the box in your worship area for use at the end of the class.



A ONE-HOUR PLAN

- Open with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p.16, study).
- Identify Possible "Roots" of Paul's Thought** (15 min.)
Use activity 6 (parts d and g).
- Examine Paul's Use of "Unnatural"** (15 min.)
Use activity 8. Skip c1 and c2.
- Explore Psalm 139 (Talking Circle)** (10 min.)
Use activity 9. Skip the hymn.
- Claim God's Good Gift of Sexuality** (10 min.)
Create litanies. Use activity 12.
- Close with Worship Moment** (3 min.)
Use the litany or song (p. 21, study).

TWO FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLANS

Session 1

- Open with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p.16, study).
- Identify Possible "Roots" of Paul's Thought** (23 min.)
Use activity 6.
- Examine Paul's Use of "Unnatural"** (20 min.)
Use activity 8.

Session 2

- Explore a Psalm** (10 min.)
Use activity 9 or activity 10.
- Examine Sexual Identity Labels** (15 min.)
Use activity 11.
- Claim What Makes Sexuality a Gift** (15 min.)
Use question 1 of "What Do You Think?" (p. 20, study).
- Close with Worship Moments** (5 min.)
Use litany or song (p. 21, study).

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

- 6 You should have “Paul wrote” and “Genesis written” already on timeline from activity 9e from session 2. If not, make those cards too.
- 6a Remember, the Wisdom of Solomon is found in the middle of the *Harper-Collins Study Bible*. The Wisdom of Solomon was probably written about 30 B.C.E. (although maybe as late as 50 C.E.). Paul might logically have referred to this book, written by a hellenized Jew, when writing to the church at Rome which had many Jewish Christians who might have known the book.
- 6g The point here is that none of these three theories about the “roots” of Paul’s thoughts in Romans 1:26-27 can be proven.

Identify Paul’s Possible “Sources”



5. Open with Prayer (2 min.)

Use prayer (p. 16, study).

6. Explore Possible “Roots” of Paul’s Thought (30 min.)

Before class: Print each of the instructions below (a, b, c) on a separate card. Also prepare index cards for the timeline: “Leviticus written” and “Wisdom of Solomon compiled” and “Solomon lived.”

- Many biblical scholars believe that Paul was drawing on the Wisdom of Solomon when he wrote Romans 1:26-27.
 - Compare what Paul says in Romans 1:18-32 about idolatry and wrongdoings with what the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon says in 14:12-14 and 14:24-27.
 - What evidence do you find that Paul might have drawn from this book which was written in the late first century B.C.E.?
- Some scholars believe Paul was drawing on Leviticus 18:22 when he wrote Romans 1:26-27.
 - Compare Paul’s verses with the Levitical verses.
 - What evidence do you find that Paul might have drawn from this Jewish purity code?
- Some scholars believe Paul was drawing on Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:24 when he wrote Romans 1:26-27.
 - Compare Paul’s statements with the verses in Genesis.
 - What evidence do you find that Paul might have drawn from Genesis?

In class:

- Divide into three groups and hand out the instruction cards. Give the groups 10 minutes.
- Gather back together. Provide a historical context with the timeline. Point out when Paul wrote and when Genesis was written Add: “Leviticus written” (500s B.C.E.); “Wisdom of Solomon compiled” (30 B.C.E.–50 C.E.); and “Solomon lived” (970–930 B.C.E.).
- Ask the three groups to summarize their findings very briefly for the whole class.
- Ask:
 - What can we say about Paul’s “sources” behind Romans’ 1:26-27?
 - How certain can we be that Paul referred to Genesis?

7. Discuss Genesis Further (10 min.)

In class:

- Review Richard Hays’ comments (p. 17, study).
- Review answer to question 1 in “What Does It Say?” box (p. 17, study).
- Ask:
 - What, if anything, do you find in the two creation stories or in Romans 1:26-27 to support Hays’ point?
 - Do you think Paul’s statement in Romans 1:26-27 translates into a timeless biblical command for us to obey? Why or why not?

Examine “Natural” and “Unnatural”



8. Examine Paul’s Use of “Unnatural” (20 min.)

Before class: Prepare to share “Romans: Overview” (p. 51, leader).

In class:

- Share information from “Romans: Overview” (p. 51, leader).
- Review answers to the questions in “What Does It Mean?” box (p. 18, study).

Answers:

- Paul often introduced his major point in the opening remarks of his letters. In Romans 1:16-17 we hear that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Instead of using the Jewish way of classifying people into Jews and Gentiles, Paul continues the Greek way he started in 1:14—Greek and barbarians.
 - Romans 1:26-27 is part of an indictment against the Gentiles (1:18-32). That is followed by an indictment of the one who judges others (2:1-16) which is followed by an indictment of the Jews (2:17-29). In 3:20, Paul concludes his indictments against all of humanity, and in 3:21 begins to state the solution: There is no distinction; all fall short; all are now justified by God’s grace through Christ. Those who have faith are saved, not those who live under the law. (We see in Romans 4 another version of Paul reaching back in time to Abraham’s faith.)
 - Answers will vary.
- c. Discuss:
- What do we believe about Paul’s condemnation of same-sex conduct in Romans 1:26-27?
 - Do those verses have a message for us? What is that message?
 - Should these verses influence how we relate to gay and lesbian Christians in our churches? If so, how? If not, why not?



Explore the Vision and the Reality



9. Explore Psalm 139 (Talking Circle) (15 min.)

In class:

- Invite participants to settle into the Talking Circle mood where all persons’ opinions are heard in a respectful way. Encourage them to engage in “active listening,” trying to hear the deep concerns of others as they speak, and trying to discern and respond to the kernel of truth in every statement.
- Introduce the topic of the Talking Circle today as: “Being wonderfully made by God.”
- Invite participants to be in a meditative mood while you read Psalm 139:1-3, 7-8, and 13-16a (stop after “unformed substance”).

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

8b2 For easier presentation, outline this on newsprint ahead of class or write it on chalkboard as you present it in class.

8c Try to get class to tie its answers (whatever they are) to Paul’s solution which is summarized in answer 8b2.

9c Read slowly and in a meditative way. Pause a minute to let them reflect silently after verses 3, 8, and 16a.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

9e "Christ" or "God" may be substituted for "Lord."

10b See photo, p. 20, study.

11a See "Natural Sexuality," p. 16, study.

12b These do not need to be long; two or three statements are fine. Be aware that some people—gay, bisexual, or straight—may have trouble writing positive statements about their own sexual nature. If this is voiced, reassure people that this is hard because our religious backgrounds have sometimes made sexuality a negative thing for us.

- d. Begin discussion by asking:
 1. What feeling does this psalm bring forth in you?
 2. What does this psalm say to you about natural sexual nature? (not behavior)
 3. How is our sexual nature "gift-ed"? By whom?
- e. Close the Talking Circle by singing verse 1 of "Help Us Accept Each Other." Move out of the circle into the art activity.

10. Illustrate Psalm 139 (10 min.)

Before class: Print out the poetic lines of Psalm 139:13-14 on a large sheet of newsprint, paper tablecloth, or butcher paper (long enough to look like a banner). Leave a wide margin all around the verses so participants can draw. Anchor the paper to a large table so people can work all the way around the table. Provide colored markers.

In class:

- a. Invite the class to create images in the margins illustrating the psalm.
- b. Hang it on a class wall or share it elsewhere in your church.

Claim God's Good Gift of Sexuality



11. Examine Sexual Identity Labels (15 min.)

Before class: Draw the continuum mentioned in "b" on a sheet of newsprint or have newsprint and marker (or chalkboard/chalk) available.

In class:

- a. Introduce by saying: "In our study book, human sexual orientation is identified as a continuum from homosexual to bisexual to heterosexual. This idea comes from Kinsey's research."
- b. Present the continuum you prepared before class. Or draw a horizontal line on newsprint or chalkboard. Mark the left end "exclusively heterosexual" and the right end "exclusively homosexual" and the middle "bisexual."
- c. Say to the class:

"Those 'labels' mark off the general range of sexual orientations. However, they cannot be used as rigid markers or boxes. Whether the concept of an orientation continuum fully reflects God's creation of human sexual beings still remains to be seen. Some would say that we have so limited, oppressed, and constricted human sexuality into our artificial labels and boxes that we truly do not yet begin to understand the full complexity of natural human sexuality."
- d. Discuss:
 1. What do you think about the adequacy of the three labels to describe our sexual identity?
 2. How do these labels (or any other set we might come up with) relate to our understanding of ourselves as children of God?
 3. What keeps us from celebrating the range of human sexual orientation as God's good gift?

12. Create Personal Litanies (10 min.)

In class:

- a. Explain that a litany is a series of statements, each of which is followed by the same refrain. Share the simple, playful example below.

The grass is green/Praise God
The sky is blue/Praise God
I'm in love/Praise God
Life is good/Praise God
- b. Invite participants to create personal litanies about the goodness—

the blessing—of their sexual nature. For the refrain, use Psalm 139:14a:
I praise you, God, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

- c. Invite one or two people to share.
- d. Close this activity with an “Amen!” or “Praise God!”

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

13. Close with Worship Moments (8 min.)

Use one or more of these as your time permits.

- a. Begin with parts of page 20, study, as an affirmation.
- b. Join together in the “Litany of Reconciliation” (p. 21, study).
- c. Draw several slips from the gift box and read them. Invite the class to affirm each statement with an “Amen.”
- d. Sing: “O God who made us” (p. 21, study).
- e. Close with prayer.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Examine Paul’s List of Wrongdoings (5-10 min.)

In class:

- a. Look at the rest of the list of wrongdoings (Romans 1:28-32) that Paul names. Paul says God has “given up” all those who commit these wrongdoings.
- b. Discuss:
 1. If we consider same-sex conduct in Roman 1:26-27 to be sinful and “incompatible with Christian teaching,” shouldn’t we consider Paul’s whole list the same way? with the same penalties and exclusions?
 2. Why would we single out only the same-sex conduct as so sinful that it keeps people from participating in our churches and as leaders and pastors?

2. Examine Another Place Where Paul Used *Para Physin* (10-15 min.)

In class:

- a. Look up Romans 11:17-24, a metaphorical story of how God has, *para physin* (contrary to nature), grafted wild branches onto a cultivated olive tree.
- b. Read the story together; then read the notes in a study Bible to understand the symbolism.
- c. Check several commentaries on Romans to see how biblical scholars have interpreted this passage.
- d. Paul certainly doesn’t mean God was sinful because God acted “against nature.” What does Paul mean?
- e. Does this shed light on how Paul might have used *para physin* in Romans 1:26-27?

3. Go Deeper: Sexuality as Blessing (15-20 min.)

In class:

- a. Ask participants who did activity 2 to share their understandings of “blessing” and “curse.”
- b. Read aloud to the class Genesis 1:26-28a and Psalm 139:13-16a.
- c. Discuss:
 1. How does “blessing” apply to both passages?
 2. What does “blessing” have to do with human sexual nature?
 3. How does “curse” relate to human sexuality?

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

- 12c If you have participants representing a range of sexual orientations, who are able to be out and able to celebrate their identities, try to call on people so as to get a range of litanies. One of the values of this exercise will be for heterosexual people to hear gay and lesbian people praising God for their gay or lesbian sexual natures.
- 13c If you didn’t do activity 4 when class members arrived, ask the group to call out endings to this sentence: “My sexuality is a good gift from God because...” Have the group respond with an “Amen” to each ending shared.

NEXT SESSION

1. Prepare instructions and gather books for doing activity 3 as an outside of class activity. See p. 31, leader.
2. Ask someone to teach “Spirit” or “In the Midst of New Dimensions” to early arrivals and then lead it in closing worship moments. See activities 5 and 14 in chapter 4.
3. Participants will need access to a number of translations of the Bible in order to answer the “What Does It Say?” box (p. 23, study). Decide how to make them available, or tell the class you will have them available in class next week. See activity 7b in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Let the words of my mouth and
the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O God, my rock and my redeemer.

—Psalm 19:14 NRSV



1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 16:14

In This Session

You Will Help Participants To...

...Identify difficulties in translating Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:9



...Examine curious shifts that have taken place in the translation of 1 Corinthians 6:9



...Explore an ethical process of "ethical discernment" and apply it to Paul's words



...Claim the possibilities of ethical discernment along with Paul's vision-type ethic "be a new creation"



Getting Started

- Begin your planning in prayer by meditating on the psalm above.
- Review "In This Session" at left and the teaching plan below.
- Think again about your class. What will their concerns be about how to understand sexual relationship standards in relation to the Corinthian verses?
- Pray for each participant.
- Do some background reading from the list below.
- Invite someone to read "A Bishop's Witness" (p. 55, leader) for activity 12.
- Customize the teaching plan for your class and time schedule.
- Gather all supplies from the list below.
- Set up activities before class (see "Before class" notes on each activity).
- Decide on outside assignments for next session (see p. 34, leader).

Helpful Reading

- Study book, chapter 4 and appendix A, p. 46.
- "A Bishop's Witness" (p. 55, leader).
- "Fiorenza's Analysis" (activity 8a).
- "Cultural Shifts" (p. 54, leader).
- Fortune, Marie. *Love Does No Harm*.
- Helminiak, Daniel A. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, pp. 61-83.
- Martin, Dale B. "Arsenokoites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences" in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality*, ed. by Brawley, pp. 117-36.
- Scanzoni and Mollenkott. "Proposing a Homosexual Christian Ethic" in *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* rev. ed., ch. 9.

Supplies Needed

- Outside assignment for chapter 4:** Instructions; books for activity 3.
- Activity 2:** Index card, various translations of the Bible, including an NRSV study Bible; *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor*, rev. ed.
- Activity 3:** Index card for instructions; Helminiak, Scroggs, and Siker books (p. 31, leader).
- Activity 4:** Newsprint, marker, tape for journaling question.
- Activity 5:** "Spirit" by Jim Manley (*Everflowing Streams*, #45; *UCC New Century*, #286) or "In the Midst of New Dimensions" by Julian Rush (*UCC New Century*, #391).
- Activity 7:** Various translations of the Bible; see "What Does It Say?" (p. 23, study).
- Activity 8:** Newsprint/easel/marker or chalkboard/chalk.
- Activity 9:** Copies of "Translation Chart" (p. 59, leader).
- Activity 12:** One copy of "A Bishop's Witness" (p. 55, leader) to give to a reader.
- Extra Activity 2:** Nine small slips of paper with Bible verses (see "Before class" instructions); a hat or basket or other container.
- Next session outside assignments:** Two copies, "Howard Miller's Witness" (p. 56, leader); instruction sheet for assignment 1 in "Next Session" (p. 34, leader).

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive (0 min. class time)

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: If some participants have not read their study books before class, invite them to do this activity.

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 16:14 in their Bibles.
- Answer the “What Does It Say?” and “What Does It Mean?” question boxes (pp. 23, 24, study).

2. Explore How Jesus Used the Word *Malakoi*

Before class: Print the following instructions on an index card and place it at the work table.

- Look up Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25 in as many translations of the Bible as you have available. Compare them to the NRSV translation where Jesus talks about *soft (malakos)* robes.
- Answer this question: How much variation is there in the translation of the word *malakos* as Jesus used it?
- Look at Scanzoni and Mollenkott’s *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*, p 78 (last paragraph) to see how poet John Milton may have caught the biblical meaning behind the word *malakoi*, which the King James Version translated as “effeminate.”

In class: Invite participants to do this activity when they arrive.

3. Examine “Vice” Lists

Before class: Print the following instructions on a card and place it at the work table.

- Check out what scholars say about vice lists: read Helminiak, pp. 92-93; Scroggs, pp. 101-109; Furnish in Siker, p. 24.
- Be prepared to share your general understandings about these lists and how they were used in Paul’s day.

In class: Invite participants to do this activity when they arrive.

4. Get in Touch

Before class: Print on newsprint the following sentence: *How do I know—or how will I know—when I am in “right relationship” with an intimate sexual partner?* Post it on a wall in a quiet area of room.

In class: Invite early arriving students to reflect on the question. Encourage them to use their journals.

5. Learn a Song

Before class: See “Supplies Needed.”

In class: Invite early arrivals to practice the song for closing worship.



A ONE-HOUR PLAN

- Open with Prayer (2 min.)**
Use the prayer (p. 22, study).
- Identify Translation Difficulties (10 min.)**
Use activity 7. Focus on “b.”
- Examine Shifting Translations (15 min.)**
Use activity 9.
- Explore an Ethic of Discernment (15 min.)**
Use activity 11.
- Claim our Own Ethical Process (15 min.)**
Use activity 13 in a Talking Circle.
- Close with Worship Moments (3 min.)**
Use prayer or song (p. 27, study).

TWO FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLANS

Session 1

- Open with Prayer (2 min.)**
Use the prayer (p. 22, study).
- Identify Translation Difficulties (13 min.)**
Use activity 7. Focus on “b.”
- Present a Scholar’s Analysis (15 min.)**
Use activity 8. Skip c1 and c2.
- Examine Shifting Translations (15 min.)**
Use activity 9. Skip b.

Session 2

- Explore Changing Ethical Processes (10 min.)**
Use activity 10.
- Explore an Ethic of Discernment (15 min.)**
Use activity 11.
- Claim our Own Ethical Process (15 min.)**
Use activity 13 in a Talking Circle.
- Close with Worship Moments (5 min.)**
Use prayer or song (p. 27, study).

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

7c Just get class to begin speculating. Activity 9 will pursue this further.

8 Use newsprint or chalkboard to list the progression of the lists so participants can visualize Fiorenza's point better. Adjust the time for this activity based on how much time activity 7 took.

8a **Source:** Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's material is from "1 Corinthians," *Harper's Bible Commentary*. Greek words inserted in place of NRSV translations. Also see Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, pp. 102-106.

9b The word is translated as soft or fine or expensive (silks and satins) clothing, implying a softness, richness, or perhaps, self-indulgence or idleness of those who wear them.

Identify Translation Difficulties



6. Begin with Prayer (2 min.)

Use the prayer (p. 22, study).

7. Identify Difficulties with 1 Corinthians 6:9 (15 min.)

Before class: If class will need to do "What Does It Say?" (p. 23, study) in class, gather as many different translations of the Bible as possible.

In class:

- Read together 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Note that our focus in this session is on two words that Paul used in his list of wrongdoers: *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*.
- Review the answers to the question about translations in "What Does It Say?" (p. 23, study). If participants haven't done the question, hand out different translations to look up 1 Corinthians 6:9.
- Ask:
 - What do you make of the different translations in different versions of the Bible?
 - What difficulty do these different translations make for a literal or plain meaning approach to these verses?

Examine Shifting Translations



8. Present an Analysis of Paul's Vice Lists (20 min.)

In class:

- Present Fiorenza's analysis of Paul's vice list:

"Biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza notes that Paul uses similar lists in 1 Corinthians 5:10, 5:11, and 6:9. However, says Fiorenza, he 'is not interested in the specific items on the list but rather clearly shows an interest in increasing them to have a cumulative effect.'

1 Cor. 5:10 (four items)	the immoral, the greedy, robbers, idolaters
1 Cor. 5:11 (six items)	same four—plus revilers, drunkards
1 Cor. 6:9 (ten items)	same six—plus adulterers, <i>malakoi</i> , <i>arsenokoitai</i> , thieves

Fiorenza also notes: 'While it goes without saying that Paul disapproves of all these activities, in the context of the [whole] Letter [to the Corinthians] he is clearly concerned with heterosexual sins and marriage difficulties.'

- Ask the class to look up 1 Corinthians 5:10, 5:11, and 6:9 and compare with what you have listed on the board.
- Discuss:
 - Do you agree with Fiorenza's *analysis* that the lists increase in size?
 - What do you think of Fiorenza's *conclusion* that Paul's concern is for heterosexual sins, not homosexual ones?
 - What does this discussion about the "vice" lists have to say to us about our dilemma today in the church?

9. Examine Changing Social Realities and Translation Issues (20 min.)

Before class: See "Supplies Needed."

In class:

- Ask participants to look up Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25.
- Ask those who did activity 2 to share how the word *malakos* was used by Jesus. How much variation in translation is there in Matthew and Luke?
- Point out that the *key words* (*soft robes*, NRSV) is a translation of the Greek word *malakos*.

- d. Hand out copies of the Translation Chart and ask participants to compare *malakoi* (plural) in 1 Corinthians 6:9 with *malakos* (singular) as Jesus used it in Matthew and Luke.
- e. Ask:
1. How do you account for the different translations of *malakoi* in 1 Corinthians and in Matthew/Luke?
 2. Do you agree or disagree with Dale Martin's view (p. 24, study, p. 54, leader) that the changes in translation in 1 Corinthians are due to changing social standards, not new biblical research?
 3. What does this analysis have to say about our dilemma in the church today?

Explore Ethical Decision Making



10. Explore Changing Ethical Processes (10 min.)

In class:

- a. Review what Marie Fortune says about the two ethical systems that have been competing against each other since the 1960s (p. 25, study).
- b. Discuss:
 1. Where do you see the rules-based ethical process being used in society today?
 2. What examples can you give of where the situation-based ethical process is used in our society?
 3. Do you agree with Fortune that these two systems have produced great tension and a "vacuum" in sexual ethics? Why or why not?

11. Apply Marie Fortune's Discernment-Based Ethic (20 min.)

In class:

- a. Review Fortune's discernment-based ethical process (pp. 25, 46 study).
- b. Apply her standard and guidelines to Countryman's view of *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*, using the questions in the box (p. 25, study).
- c. Discuss:
 1. What kinds of heterosexual interactions would *not* meet Fortune's guidelines?
 2. What kinds of homosexual interactions would *not*?
 3. What kinds of bisexual interactions would *not*?

Claim a New Sexual Ethic

12. Explore a Bishop's Ethic (Talking Circle) (20 min.)

Before class: See "Getting Started" and "Supplies Needed."

In class:

- a. Invite participants to settle into the Talking Circle where all persons' opinions are heard in a respectful way. Encourage them to engage in "active listening," trying to hear the deep concerns of others as they speak, and trying to discern and respond to the kernel of truth in every statement.
- b. Introduce the topic as: "Personal ethics."
- c. Invite participants to be in a meditative mood while someone reads "A Bishop's Witness." Pause a minute to let them reflect silently.
- d. Begin discussion by asking:
 1. What *bothers* you—or what do you *like*—about Bishop Wheatley's distinction between "being" and "doing" as it relates to people's sexual identities?



TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

9e2 You may need to stop and review what Martin said.

10b1 Think about external rules laid down by Bible, church, family, governments. Examples: Using Leviticus to condemn gay/lesbian persons; the tithe; parentally-determined curfews; the Defense of Marriage Act; traffic laws.

10b2 Think of external rules that are broken because of specific situations. Examples: Kevorkian's assisted death decisions; a poor person saving for retirement rather than tithing; speeding to get a seriously ill person to the hospital.

Section tip:

Reread the full purpose for this section on p. 30, leader.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

12d2 Another phrase we use is “personal morality.”

12e “Christ” or “God” may be substituted for “Lord.”

1 This activity attempts to apply Fortune’s ethical model to Paul. Paul, of course, never set out to write out a systematic ethic. We are extrapolating it from Paul’s letters to particular churches about particular situations.

1b2 *Caution:* Students need to know Paul’s letters fairly well to be able to recall possible statements that would be examples of an ethic and guidelines.

NEXT SESSION

❑ 1. Recruit two participants (man/woman) to prepare “Howard Miller’s Witness” (p. 56, leader) for the Talking Circle. Make two photocopies ahead of time to give to them. See activity 11, p. 38, leader.

❑ 2. Invite someone to look up Genesis 19 and Judges 19 in several commentaries and prepare to share in class what different interpreters say about the similarities and differences between these two stories. See activity 3, p. 36, leader.

❑ 3. Invite someone to teach “Jesu, Jesu” to early arrivals and then lead it in the closing worship moments. Provide them with the song. See activity 5, p. 35, leader.

2. What does “personal ethics” mean to you?

e. Continue with Activity 13 or close by singing verse 4 of “Help Us Accept Each Other”

13. Claim our Own Ethical Process (10 min.)

In class: Discuss the questions in “What Do You Think?” (p. 26, study).

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

14. Close with Worship (3 min.)

Use one or more of these as your time permits.

a. Use prayer (p. 27, study).

b. Sing “Spirit” or “In the Midst of New Dimensions.”

c. Close with prayer circle. Invite people to offer their own prayers. When each one finishes, the whole group claims it by saying “Amen.”

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss Paul’s “Ethic” (20-30 min.)

In class:

a. Review the answers to questions in “What Does It Mean?” (p. 24, study).

b. Ask:

1. If we were to identify one of Paul’s comments as his basic ethic (like Fortune’s “do least harm”), what would we say is his “ethic”?

Answer: No right answer here; one possibility is “Be a new creation” (Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. What statements did Paul make that might be considered “relational guidelines” (like Fortune’s five guidelines, p. 46, study)?

Answer: Again, no right answers here; some possibilities might be 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 16:14; Galatians 5:13-14; Romans 12:1-15:13.

3. If the things we have just identified are Paul’s “ethic,” what is 1 Corinthians 6:9-10?

4. Would there be any differences between heterosexual people applying Paul’s “ethic” (as we have defined it) and gay/lesbian/bisexual people applying it? Why or why not?

2. Examine Other Vice Lists in the New Testament (15 min.)

Before class: List each of the biblical references on separate slips of paper and put them in a hat or basket: Mark 7:21-22; Romans 1:29-31; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5, 8; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:2-4; Titus 3:3; and 1 Peter 4:3.

In class:

a. Pass around the hat and ask participants to pull out a slip of paper. If you have more than nine people, ask them to work in teams.

b. Say: “Each slip is a Bible reference about a “vice” list. These lists are similar to the one in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Look up your verse. How is it similar? How is it different?”

c. Ask the group to share findings.

d. Ask participants who did activity 3 to share their findings on what various scholars have said about those lists.



Chapter 5

The mouths of the righteous
utter wisdom
and their tongues speak justice.
The law of their God is in their hearts;
their steps do not slip.

—Psalm 37:30-31 NRSV

Genesis 19:1-29

Getting Started

- ❑ Begin your planning by meditating on the psalm above.
- ❑ Study “In This Session” at right and the teaching plan below.
- ❑ Think about your class. What ideas and questions might they have about the story of Sodom and about hospitality and abuse?
- ❑ Pray for each participant.
- ❑ Do some background reading.
- ❑ Customize the teaching plan for your class and time schedule.
- ❑ Gather all supplies.
- ❑ Set up activities before class (see “Before class” instructions in activities).
- ❑ Decide on optional outside activities for next session (see p. 38).

Helpful Reading

- ❑ Study book, chapter 5.
- ❑ “A Context for Sodom” (p. 52, leader).
- ❑ Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, pp. 91-99.
- ❑ Furnish, Victor Paul. *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, rev. ed., pp. 52-58.
- ❑ Helminiak, Daniel. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, ch. 3.
- ❑ Scanzoni and Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*, rev. ed., pp. 56-62.

Supplies Needed

- ❑ **Outside assignments for chapter 5:** Instruction sheets for activity 3 in this session. Two copies of “Howard Miller’s Witness” (p. 56, leader). Copy of “Jesu, Jesu” for someone to practice.
- ❑ **Activity 2:** *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*; standard dictionary; index card for instructions.

- ❑ **Activity 3:** *Harper’s Bible Commentary*; index card for instructions.
- ❑ **Activity 4:** Newsprint, marker, tape for journaling question.
- ❑ **Activity 5:** Hymn, “Jesu, Jesu” (words by Tom Colvin; Hope Publishing; available in these hymnals: Disciples, #600; Episcopal, #602; Presbyterian, # 367; UCC *New Century*, #498; UMC, #432).
- ❑ **Extra Activity 1:** Newsprint, markers for creating verse to song.
- ❑ **Extra Activity 2:** Index card for timeline.
- ❑ **Next session outside assignments:** Written instruction sheets for assignments to be done before session 6; Comstock, *Gay Theology Without Apology*, for activity 10 (p. 41, leader); Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, for activity 2. See “Next Session” (p. 38, leader).



In This Session You Will Help Participants To...

...Identify how the theme of hospitality and inhospitality in Sodom has been (mis)interpreted to condemn same-sex conduct



...Examine elements of hospitality and divine justice in the larger story of Sodom



...Explore a sociocultural interpretation of the Sodom story



...Claim the promise of divine acceptance and justice and decide how to personally practice hospitality and human justice-love



A ONE-HOUR PLAN

1. **Begin with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p. 28, study).
2. **Identify the Context for the Sodom Story** (10 min.)
Use activity 7.
3. **Examine the Sodom Story** (15 min.)
Use activity 8.
4. **Explore the Story from your Social Location** (15 min.)
Use activity 9.
5. **Claim the Promise by Responding Faithfully** (15 min.)
Use activity 10 or 11 plus question 3 in "What Do You Think?" (p. 32, study).
6. **Close with Worship Moments** (3 min.)
Use prayer (p. 33, study) or song, "Jesu, Jesu."

TWO FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLANS

Session 1

1. **Begin with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p. 28, study).
2. **Identify the Context for the Sodom Story** (15 min.)
Use activity 7.
3. **Examine the Sodom Story** (20 min.)
Use activity 8.
4. **Explore the Story Further** (8 min.)
Use activity 9d only in this session.

Session 2

1. **Explore the Story from your Social Location** (15 min.)
Use activity 9a, b, and c.
2. **Create Modern Hospitality/Inhospitability stories** (10 min.)
Use activity 10. You won't have time for people to perfect these or tell them to the whole group. Focus on creating and then use 10d.
3. **Claim the Promise by Responding Faithfully** (15 min.)
Use activity 12.
4. **Close with Worship Moments** (5 min.)
Use prayer (p. 33, study) and song, "Jesu, Jesu."

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive (0 min. class time)

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: If participants have not read their study books, invite them to do this activity.

- a. Read Genesis 19:1-29 in their Bibles.
- b. Answer "What Does It Say?" and "What Does It Mean?" (pp. 29, 30, study).

2. Look Up "Righteous"

Before class: Print the instructions below on a card. Place on the work table near the dictionaries.

- a. Look up "righteous" in *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (or another recent Bible dictionary, such as the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 174, 197).
- b. Look up the word in a standard dictionary.
- c. How does the writer use "righteous" in Genesis 18:19, 23?
- d. Be prepared to share its definitions with the class.

In class: Invite early arrivals to do this activity.

3. Compare Stories of Sodom and Gibeah

Before class: Prepare an instruction card with the following:

- a. Read Genesis 19 and Judges 19 and compare them: How are the two stories alike and different?
- b. Read the annotations and notes in a study Bible for these two stories. (optional)
- c. Look up Genesis 19 and Judges 19 in *Harper's Bible Commentary* (or another one) to get scholars' views. (optional)
- d. Prepare a short comparison and interpretation to share with the whole class.

In class: Hand early arrivals the instruction card and invite them to do this activity.

4. Get in Touch

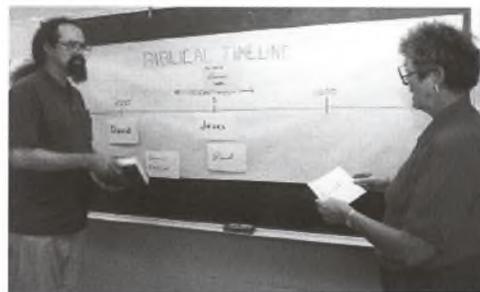
Before class: Print on newsprint the following sentence: *How do I practice hospitality with strangers?* Post it on a wall.

In class: Invite early arrivals to reflect and write in their journals.

5. Learn "Jesu, Jesu"

Before class: See "Supplies Needed."

In class: Practice the African (Ghanaian) folk song, "Jesu, Jesu."



Identify a Usual Interpretation of Sodom



6. Begin with Prayer (2 min.)

Use the prayer (p. 28, study).

7. Identify the Context for the Sodom Story (15 min.)

In class:

- Read or summarize “A Context for Sodom” (p. 52, leader).
- Review answers to “What Does It Say?” (p. 29, study).

Answers

- By inviting them in, giving them shelter, offering them means to wash feet.
 - They would spend the night in the square. Lot objects (as hospitality then required of him). They perhaps were testing Lot?
 - The men want Lot to turn over the visitors to them so they could rape them. The visitors ultimately intervene by striking the men with blindness so they can't find the door.
 - The visitors advise Lot to get out of Sodom; but Lot lingers; the visitors finally put his family outside the city. Lot bargains not to have to flee to the hills.
- Review the timeline entry on when Genesis was written.

Examine the Larger Story of Sodom



8. Examine Hospitality and Justice (15-20 min.)

In class:

- Review answers to “What Does It Mean?” (p. 30, study).

Answers:

- To check on the “rumor” that Sodom was so bad.
 - Writer of Genesis seems to be showing that God listens to us; that we have responsibility to speak out on behalf of others who may be victimized. Without Abraham, the implication is that Lot might have been destroyed also.
 - God destroyed Sodom for its evil ways and saved Lot for his righteous ways.
 - Various answers.
- Invite students who did activity 2 to share their learnings about the meaning of the word “righteous.” Or, share your own summary.
 - Discuss:
 - How are God's justice and mercy both illustrated in this story of Sodom?
 - Do you agree that the emphasis of the whole Sodom story is really God's saving action (mercy) rather than God's destroying action (justice)?

Explore Sociocultural Implications



9. Explore Sodom from your Social Location (15-20 min.)

In class:

- Review “Looking Back” (p. 31, study). Discuss the Lance example.
- Invite participants to look at Genesis 19:1-11 again, this time thinking about it from their own “social location.” Say:

“Social location means the particularities of your life situation and history: your gender, race, age, sexual orientation, nationality, social and economic class, etc. Pick out one of the persons in the story you most identify with—and explore why.”
- Share reflections and insights gained by looking at the story this way.
- Discuss further:
 - Why was it deemed okay for Lot to offer his daughters to be raped?

Answer: In Lot's world (and in that of the writer of Genesis), women were considered property of their fathers or their husbands. But also note the financial loss to Lot if the Sodomites had accepted his daughters. They would be “used goods” and not easily married off.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

8c See final paragraph on page 30, study book, for context for these two questions.

9b Another way to look at Genesis 19:1-11 from one's social location is to ask: “Which of the persons in the story would you have least liked to be—and why?”

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

Section tip:

Reread the "Claim" purpose on p. 35, leader.

- 10b Ideas to get started:** Include a gay or lesbian couple in your story as strangers who have to remain in your town for a day or two, but have no money to stay in a motel. Include a pastor, a local church, some church people, and the question of whether and how to show hospitality to the stranger(s). Use the story of Sodom as a loose structure.

NEXT SESSION

- ❑ 1. For activity 2, chapter 6, ask someone to read Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, pp. 48-53, on the difference between "abomination" and "sinful." Be prepared to add definitions to the class list.
- ❑ 2. For activity 10, p. 41, leader, ask someone to read Gary Comstock's analysis in *Gay Theology Without Apology*, pp. 68-87, of major parallels between the post-exilic time of Leviticus and 20th century conditions in the U.S. Ask them to prepare a large newsprint with the parallels and be prepared to report in the next class session.

2. Having identified both inhospitality and attempted rape in this story, how do you now identify Sodom's sin?

Claim Hospitality and Justice-Love



10. Create Modern Hospitality/Inhospitability Stories (20 min.)

In class:

- a. See box "Who is Hospitable?" (p. 31, study).
- b. Invite participants to work in teams of two or three. Invite half the groups to create a positive hospitality story, and half the groups to create an inhospitality story, that a modern Genesis writer might tell today.
- c. When stories are completed, share stories as you have time.
- d. Discuss: What did you learn about yourself and hospitality as you helped create this story?

11. Claim a Hospitable Approach (Talking Circle) (25 min.)

In class:

- a. Invite participants to settle in to the Talking Circle where all persons' opinions are heard in a respectful way. Encourage them to engage in active listening, trying to hear the deep concerns of others.
- b. Introduce the topic of the Talking Circle as: "Practicing hospitality."
- c. Invite participants to be in a meditative mood while two participants (recruited ahead of time) read "Howard Miller's Witness" (p. 56, leader). Pause to let the class reflect silently.
- d. Begin discussion by asking:
 1. How were Howard and his pastor practicing hospitality?
 2. What might it mean for us and our church to *practice* hospitality with people with whom we disagree and whom we believe to be sinful?
- e. Close the Talking Circle by singing verse 2 of "Help Us Accept Each Other." Or continue with questions in activity 12.

12. Respond Faithfully (15-20 min.)

In class: Use "What Do You Think?" (p. 32, study). Focus especially on question 3 if time is limited.

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

13. Close with Worship (3 min.)

- a. Use the prayer (p. 33, study).
- b. Sing: "Jesu, Jesu."

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Write a New Verse to "Jesu, Jesu"

Invite early arrivals to write a new verse about gay and lesbian Christians claiming God's promise.

2. Compare Sodom with Gibeah

Before class: Prepare an index card for the timeline: "Judges finalized." If students won't do activity 3b and c, prepare a summary to share.

- a. Invite participants who did activity 3 to share their comparison of Sodom's story in Genesis with that of Gibeah in Judges. Or, divide into small groups and look at the two stories in class.
- b. Add "Judges finalized" to timeline at 550 B.C.E. (during the Exile).



Chapter 6

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in
my secret heart.

—Psalm 51:6 NRSV

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13 ♦ Luke 10:25-37

Getting Started

- ❑ Begin your planning by meditating on the psalm above.
- ❑ Review “In This Session” at right and the teaching plan below.
- ❑ Think about what ideas and questions your class might have about the verses in Leviticus and about holiness.
- ❑ Pray for each participant.
- ❑ Do some background reading.
- ❑ Customize the teaching plan for your class and time schedule.
- ❑ Gather all supplies.
- ❑ Set up all activities before class.
- ❑ Decide on outside assignments for closing session (see p. 42).

Helpful Reading

- ❑ Study book, chapter 6.
- ❑ “Leviticus: Overview” (p. 53, leader).
- ❑ “Jesus and Purity Law” (p. 54, leader).
- ❑ “Leviticus,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, pp. 36-41.
- ❑ Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, pp. 100-106.
- ❑ Comstock, Gary David. *Gay Theology Without Apology*, ch. 4.
- ❑ Helminiak, Daniel A. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, chs. 4 and 5.
- ❑ Scanzoni and Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*, rev. ed., pp. 63-66.

Supplies Needed

- ❑ **Outside assignments for chapter 6:** Helminiak and Comstock books for two possible assignments (see “Next Session,” p. 38, leader).

- ❑ **Activity 2:** Index card for instructions, newsprint, markers, tape, several Bible dictionaries.
- ❑ **Activity 3:** Index cards; *Women’s Bible Commentary*; *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*; Comstock book.
- ❑ **Activity 4:** Newsprint, marker, tape for journaling question.
- ❑ **Activity 7:** Index card for timeline.
- ❑ **Activity 9:** (Optional) study Bibles for looking at Isaiah annotations.
- ❑ **Activity 10:** Tape for hanging newsprint chart of Comstock’s parallels; make the chart if a participant is not doing this assignment.
- ❑ **Activity 11:** Newsprint, marker, tape to prepare questions for small groups.
- ❑ **Activity 12:** Copies of “Love and Justice” song (p. 60, leader). Tape of the music (if you ordered it earlier) or someone with guitar to play it (or use it as a reading).
- ❑ **Next session outside assignments:** Written instructions, music, etc. for any preparation for worship in closing session.



In This Session

You Will Help Participants To...

...**Identify** the assumptions in Leviticus about God and holiness



...**Examine** purity and holiness as part of Israel’s ancient religious life



...**Explore** the social context which shaped the “reclaiming of the land” after the Exile and how Leviticus fit into that strategy



...**Claim** a New Testament understanding of purity, holiness, justice, and love



A ONE-HOUR PLAN

1. **Open with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p. 34, study)
2. **Identify Assumptions in Leviticus** (10 min.)
Use activity 7. Skip b.
3. **Examine Views of Purity and Holiness** (10 min.)
Use activity 8, parts a and c.
4. **Explore the Social Context of Leviticus** (10 min.)
Use activity 10.
5. **Claim New Testament Views** (20 min.)
Use activity 11.
6. **Close with Worship** (8 min.)
Use litany (p. 39, study) and “Love and Justice” song, (p. 60, leader).

TWO FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLANS

Session 1

1. **Open with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p. 34, study)
2. **Identify Assumptions in Leviticus** (15 min.)
Use activity 7.
3. **Examine Views of Purity and Holiness** (13 min.)
Use activity 8, parts a, c, and f.
4. **Explore the Social Context of Leviticus** (15 min.)
Use activity 10.

Session 2

1. **Claim New Testament Views** (20 min.)
Use activity 11. Note reduced time.
2. **Claim a Vision of Justice-Love (Talking Circle)** (20 min.)
Use activity 12.
3. **Close with Worship** (5 min.)
Use litany (p. 39, study) or “Love and Justice” song, (p. 60, leader).

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive (0 min. class time)

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: Invite participants to:

- a. Read Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.
- b. Answer “What Does It Say?” and “What Does It Mean?” (pp. 35, 36, study).

2. Look Up Key Words

Before class: Write the following instructions on an index card. Place it at the work table with Bible dictionaries.

- a. Look up: “purity,” “holiness,” “abomination,” “sin,” “Samaritan.”
- b. Write short definitions on newsprint to share with the class.
- c. Find out: Who were the Samaritans and why were they enemies of the Jews?

In class: Invite several people to work on this project.

3. Explore Levitical Views of “Patriarchy” and “Inheritance”

Before class: See “Supplies Needed.” Print the following instructions on a card and place it on the work table.

- a. Read “The Place of Women in the Book of Leviticus” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, p. 38.
- b. Read “The Bible as a Patriarchal Document” and “Patriarchal Sexual Ethics” in Comstock, *Gay Theology Without Apology*, pp. 33-36, 36-38.
- c. Read “Inheritance” in the *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*.

In class: Invite three participants to explore the patriarchal worldview and how Leviticus 18:22 fits into it.

4. Get in Touch

Before class: Print on newsprint: *How do I understand God: as “separate and holy” or as “inclusive and holy”?* Post it on a wall.

In class: Invite early arrivals to reflect and write in their journals.

5. Imagine a Different Scenario

Before class: Print a, b, and c on an index card.

- a. When the post-Exile Israelite leaders returned from Exile in Babylon, they found a diverse, inter-mixed population (with its diverse religious beliefs and practices) living on the land.
- b. Explore:
 1. What might have happened if those leaders had *accepted* the diversity they found?
 2. What would have been lost if Israel had accepted the diversity of people and religions?
 3. What changes in their understanding of God and how to relate to the Divine One would have had to happen?
 4. Would any of those changes (in questions 2 and 3) have been beneficial? Why or why not?
- c. What does this have to do with welcoming gay men and lesbian women in the church?

In class: Invite several people to do this activity.

Identify Assumptions in Leviticus



6. Begin with Prayer (2 min.)

Use the prayer (p. 34, study).

7. Present Background on Leviticus (15 min.)

Before class: Prepare a timeline card: "Cyrus's decree ends Exile."

In class:

- Share "Leviticus: Overview" (p. 53, leader).
- Review answers to "What Does It Say?" (p. 35, study).
- Note on the timeline when Leviticus was finalized (during the Exile in Babylon by the priestly group of leaders). Add "Cyrus's decree ends Exile" (536 B.C.E.).
- Review "Why Bother?" (p. 34, study), especially the last paragraph stating the larger "issues" of this session.
- Ask those who did activity 3 to share ancient assumptions about patriarchy and inheritance.

Examine Purity and Holiness



8. Examine "Purity" and "Holiness" in Leviticus (20 min.)

In class:

- Review answers to question 1 of "What Does It Mean?" (p. 36, study).
Answer: HCSB annotation refers to "three rings of decreasing holiness"—priesthood, Israel, and humankind—which center around a holy God. Israel, to be holy, must hold to higher standards than the rest of the nations.
- Ask those who did activity 2 to share meaning of "purity" and "holiness" in ancient Israel.
- Review the answer to question 2 in "What Does It Mean?"
Answer: HCSB notes in Leviticus 18:3 that other nations are accused by biblical writers of engaging in incestuous, promiscuous, and homosexual unions. The message is: therefore, Israel to be more holy should not engage in such. (This is a major point in the Levitical moral justification for conquest of the land after the Exile.)
- Ask those who did activity 2 to report on "abomination" and "sin."
- Ask: How do Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 fit this view?
- Review answers to question 3 of "What Does It Mean?"
Answer: Women were considered less pure and holy in ancient Israel—largely due to the fact that women menstruate and give birth. Both blood and childbirth were considered impure. See Leviticus 12:1-5 and 15:19-32.

Explore the Social Context of Leviticus



9. Compare Two Post-Exilic Understandings of God's Ways (10 min.)

In class:

- Divide into two groups. Ask one to look up Isaiah 56:1-8; the other to look up Isaiah 58:1-9, 11. Check study Bible annotations.
- Ask:
 - What is this writer (known "Third Isaiah") saying that is different from the message of Leviticus?
 - According to Isaiah, how does God want people to relate to God?
 - Who's "inside" and who's "outside" in Isaiah?

10. Compare Post-exilic Times with Ours (15 min.)

In class:

- Ask for the report on parallels between our current times in the U.S. and post-exilic Levitical times.

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

7c Read "Cyrus II" in *Harper's Bible Dictionary* for helpful background on who Cyrus was and what role he played in history.

8b If class members did not do this activity, you will find it helpful to read the "purity" and "holiness" items in *Harper's Bible Dictionary* and prepare a short summary of meanings.

8e See the pillar discussion, p. 36, study.

10 If you did not assign someone to prepare the chart of parallels from Comstock's book, you will need to do it (See "Next Session" assignment 2, p. 38, leader).

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

11 Wait to post this when you introduce the activity.

11c Jesus turned the purity law inside out and denied that holiness equaled separation. Peter's new insight and the Council of Jerusalem's decision marked a major transition for the early Christian movement which allowed it to expand to non-Jews. Paul raised an ethical and pastoral concern for those whose faith is weak and who therefore rely on the law.

12d2 Read the glossary item "Justice-love," p. 48, study.

1e See p. 38, study, next to last paragraph for a possible point Jesus was making about purity/holiness laws.

NEXT SESSION

□ Decide how to do the special closing worship for the last session. Invite people to help. See activities 5 and 12, chapter 7.

b. Discuss:

1. What does Comstock's analysis say about the relevance of Leviticus 18:22 for us today?
2. Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

Claim New Testament Understandings



11. Claim New Testament Views of Purity (30 min.)

Before class: Write the questions from part "b" on newsprint.

In class:

- a. Divide into four small groups and assign one of these passages:
 1. Luke 10:25-37 (Jesus and the Samaritan parable).
 2. Acts 10 and 15 (Peter/Cornelius and the Jerusalem Council).
 3. Rom 14:13-23 (Paul on clean/unclean).
 4. Mark 7:1-5 and 14-23 (Jesus on clean/unclean).
 - b. Ask the groups to read their passages and report on:
 1. What is the specific issue about purity in this story or passage?
 2. What point was made about Jewish purity regulations?
 - c. Ask: What generalizations can we make about how the New Testament treats the issue of purity?
 - d. Share "Jesus and Hebrew Purity Code" (p. 54, leader).
- ### 12. Claim a Vision of Justice-Love (Talking Circle) (20 min.)

In class:

- a. Invite participants to settle into the Talking Circle where all persons' opinions are heard in a respectful way.
- b. Introduce the topic: "the difference between love and justice."
- c. Sing (or read) Judy Fjell's song "Love and Justice" (p. 60, leader).
- d. Discuss:
 1. How does Fjell distinguish between "love" and "justice"?
 2. Why are some things identified as *both* "love and justice"?
 3. What insights do you have now about justice-love and the kind of "inclusive holiness" modeled by Jesus?
- e. Sing verse 2 of "Help Us Accept Each Other."

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

13. Close with Worship (8 min.)

- a. Use litany (p. 39, study).
- b. Close with prayer circle: Hold hands. Invite people to offer personal prayers. "Pass" the benediction around the circle. Leader starts by looking at the person to her/his left and saying: "May the love in my heart pass through my hand to you."

EXTRA ACTIVITY

1. Create a Modern Neighborly Story (20 min.)

In class:

- a. Divide into teams of two or three.
- b. Ask for activity 2 report on who the Samaritans were.
- c. Ask teams to create a story where a gay or lesbian person is the neighborly Samaritan.
- d. Share at least one story when they have finished.
- e. Ask: How is Jesus' parable a model of "inclusive holiness" in action?



Chapter 7

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!

—Psalm 133:1 NRSV

Gift-ed are we

whose transgressions are forgiven..."

—Psalm 32:1-2 NRSV adapted

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 ♦ Matthew 5:43-48

Getting Started

- ❑ Begin your planning time by meditating on the psalms above.
- ❑ Review "In This Session" at right and the teaching plan below.
- ❑ Think about your class's concerns about discipleship and reconciliation in relation to the church's dilemma about welcoming lesbian women and gay men.
- ❑ Pray for each participant.
- ❑ Do some background reading.
- ❑ Do "Where Do You Stand?" (an adapted Riddle scale.) (p. 47, study).
- ❑ Study the key to the Riddle scale on p. 45, leader.
- ❑ Determine how you will do the closing worship (see activity 12). Recruit people to help.
- ❑ Decide which music to use. Invite someone to teach any new songs to early arrivals.
- ❑ Customize the teaching plan.
- ❑ Gather all supplies.
- ❑ Study the directions for activity 9 so you can do it easily. Don't skip this activity! Test sites report excellent insights from it! If you don't feel comfortable doing it, ask a musician to lead it.
- ❑ Set up all activities before class.



Helpful Reading

- ❑ Study book, chapter 7.
- ❑ "2 Corinthians" by Victor Paul Furnish in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. Especially see "Theme" section.
- ❑ Check your denominational welcoming program's materials for biblical/theological statements about reconciling, welcoming, and affirming actions.
- ❑ Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. *Sensuous Spirituality*, ch. 12, on building bridges.
- ❑ Morrison, Melanie. *Grace of Coming Home*, pp.144-45, on justice and love.

Supplies Needed

- ❑ **Activity 2:** Index card; *Harper's Bible Dictionary*.
- ❑ **Activity 3:** Index card; *Harper's Bible Dictionary*; *Harper's Bible Commentary*.
- ❑ **Activity 4:** Newsprint, marker, tape for journaling question.
- ❑ **Activity 5:** Song(s) to practice for worship. Use one from previous sessions, such as "This is a Day of New Beginnings" or "In the Midst of New Dimensions" (pp. 12, 30, leader).
- ❑ **Activity 7:** Index cards for timeline.
- ❑ **Activity 10:** Newsprint, marker, masking tape for posting Riddle's interpretation key.
- ❑ **Activity 12:** Supplies for whatever activities you include in worship.
- ❑ **Extra activity 1:** White typing or construction paper, colored markers, colored drawing pencils, colored chalks, or watercolor paints.
- ❑ **Extra activity 2:** Large "fat" colored pipe stem cleaners (3-4 per participant); cardboard squares or foam board squares for bases; staplers.

In This Session

You Will Help Participants To...

...**Identify** how God took steps to reconcile with humankind



...**Examine** Jesus' command to "love your enemies" and experience it as "dancing" with folks who are different from us



...**Explore** a homophobia scale to gain insights on how we and others move from positions of rejection to nurturance



...**Claim** our ministries of reconciliation, which are our responses to believing God and claiming God's promise



A ONE-HOUR PLAN

1. **Open with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p. 40, study).
2. **Identify God's Reconciling Actions** (10 min.)
Use activity 7 (parts a, c, and e).
3. **Meditate on Jesus' Words** (10 min.)
Use activity 9.
4. **Explore a Rejection/Nurturance Continuum** (10 min.)
Use activity 10 (parts a and c).
5. **Claim our Ministries (Talking Circle)** (20 min.)
Use activity 11.
6. **Close with Worship** (8 min.)
Use items from activity 12.

ONE FORTY-FIVE MINUTE PLAN

1. **Open with Prayer** (2 min.)
Use prayer (p. 40, study).
2. **Identify God's Reconciling Actions** (10 min.)
Use activity 7 (parts a, c, and e).
3. **Explore a Rejection/Nurturance Continuum** (10 min.)
Use activity 10 (parts a and c).
4. **Claim our Ministries (Talking Circle)** (15 min.)
Use activity 11.
5. **Close with Worship** (8 min.)
Use items from activity 12.

TWO-HOUR TEACHING PLAN

As Participants Arrive (0 min. class time)

1. Complete the Question Boxes

In class: Invite participants to read 2 Corinthians 5:19 and Matthew 5:43-48 in their Bibles and answer question boxes if time allows.

2. Look Up "Reconciliation"

Before class: Write the instructions below on a card. Place it at the work table.

- a. Look up "reconciliation" in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*.
- b. Look up the New Testament references that are mentioned in the *HBD* item on reconciliation. Who gets reconciled? Who does the reconciling?
- c. Prepare a short summary of your findings to share.

In class: Invite early arrivals to do this project.

3. Check Out the Meaning of "Be Perfect"

Before class: Write instructions on a card. Place it at the work table.

- a. Look up the word "perfect" in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*.
- b. Read one or more of the biblical references mentioned (1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:20; Hebrews 5:14; 6:1) to get a broader idea of what "perfect" means in our passage, Matthew 5:48.
- c. Look up Luke 6:36. What word does Luke use instead of "perfect"? What do the notes in your study Bible say about this difference?
- d. Look up Matthew 5:48 and Luke 6:36 in the *Harper's Bible Commentary*. What does it say about "perfect" and "merciful."
- e. Prepare a short summary of your findings.

In class: Invite several participants to do this activity.

4. Get in Touch

Before class: Print on newsprint the following question: *How might I reconcile with someone in the church who believes differently than I do about homosexuality?* Post it on a wall.

In class: Invite early arrivals to write in their journals.

5. Learn a Song

Before class: See "Supplies Needed."

In class: Invite class members to briefly practice new songs to use for worship.

Identify God's Claim on Us



6. Open with Prayer (2 min.)

Use the prayer (p. 40, study).

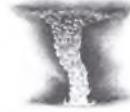
7. Identify God's Reconciling Actions (20 min.)

Before class: Prepare index cards for the timeline: "2 Corinthians written" and "Matthew written." Prepare a report for "c" if students are not doing so.

In class:

- a. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20 together.
- b. Review the answers to "What Does It Say?" (p. 41, study).
- c. Ask participants who did activity 2 to report on the meaning of the word "reconciliation."
- d. Add to the timeline "2 Corinthians written" (54-56 C.E.).
- e. Discuss: Who needs to be reconciled? By whom? With whom?

Examine "Love your Enemies"



TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in Two-Hour Teaching Plan

8. Meditate on Jesus' Words (15 min.)

In class:

- Read Matthew 5:43-48 together and review "What Does It Mean?" (p. 42, study).
- Discuss:
 - What does "love your enemies" mean to you in practical terms?
 - To love your enemy is to label her/him as such even during the loving. How can we (or can we?) move beyond this step?
- Invite participants to meditate as you read "Love Your Enemies" (p. 45, study). Allow a few minutes of silence.

9. Experience "Drumming" to Different Beats (15 min.)

In class:

- Review Douglas-Klotz's comments on "enemies" (p. 42, study).
- Ask each class member to decide a "beat" to do (clap hands, tap table, use pencils, etc.)
- Ask them to watch while you point to one after another to begin their "beat."
- Keep encouraging them to do their *own* distinct beat.
- When the beats are strong and rather chaotic, say loudly: "Now, begin to *listen* to other people's beats. Try to *harmonize* your beat with theirs. Don't mimic theirs, just harmonize."
- Let the beats change. When a harmony has been created, call a stop, and discuss:
 - How did it feel to do your own beat?
 - How did it feel to harmonize beats with each other.
 - Which was easier? harder? Why?
 - What does this activity say to us about reconciliation with folks who are different from us?

9 If you don't do activity 8, read Matthew 5:43-48 to the class before doing this activity.

9c Point randomly, not around the circle.

9f4 Douglas-Klotz says the Syraic-Aramaic has no indication of "being nice" to enemies. Something much deeper and harder and different is called for. What does he mean?

Section tip:

Review the "Explore" purpose on p. 44, leader, to help keep these activities focused.

Riddle Scale: Interpretation Key

Homophobic Levels of Attitudes

- Repulsion** (Total rejection)
- Pity** (Heterosexual chauvinism)
- Tolerance** (Indulgence)
- Acceptance** (Still implies there is something to accept.)

Positive Levels of Attitudes

- Support** (The basic ACLU position: work to safeguard rights)
- Admiration** (Still implies person is somehow special)
- Appreciation** (Still sees persons as part of diversity cause)
- Nurturance** (Full, unconditional welcome/support)

Note: Descriptions in () are not Riddle's.

Explore Reconciling Steps



10. Explore a Rejection-Nurturance Continuum (25 min.)

Before class: List on newsprint the "Riddle Scale: Interpretation Key" (at right).

In class:

- Ask class members to read silently the eight statements of "Where Do You Stand?" (p. 47, study).
- Ask:
 - Where do you think our society is on the scale? Write "society" by that statement.
 - Where is our denomination? Write "denomination" by that one.
 - Where is "our local church"?
 - Where are you?
- Share the "key" to the continuum and discuss:
 - How does a person or a church or a denomination move from one step to the next on this continuum?
 - What does "reconciliation" mean across those distances on the continuum line?
 - Does a commitment to justice preclude working on reconciliation or can we do both?

TIPS

Numbers refer to activities in
Two-Hour Teaching Plan

Section tip:

Review the full “Claim” purpose on
p. 44, leader.

11a This activity is modeled on Mollen-
kott, *Sensuous Spirituality*, p. 182.

11c Adapted from 2 Cor 5:19.

CLOSING PRAYER

Spirit of the One and the Many

Spirit of the One and the Many,
You who live in us and through us:
We feel so connected in this
intertwining,
We feel alive in your/our passion.
We feel heard and affirmed by your/
our love.
You who whisper in the deepest
parts of us:
Still us into a peace we dare to
imagine.
Center us in you—in us—to break
free.
Peace and Passion us into liberation.
Then let us soar with you,
yet be grounded in us,
in the
healing of the earth,
in the
healing of each other.

—Janie Spahr
More Light Prayers,
January 1993, pp. 3-4
Used with permission of
More Light Update

Claim the Promise



11. Claim our Ministries (Talking Circle) (25 min.)

In class:

- Share the topic: “Engaging in a ministry of reconciliation.”
- Invite participants to be in a meditative mood.
- Read slowly: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to God’s Self, not counting our trespasses against us, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”
- Say: “As you continue to meditate, silently ask the Holy Spirit to teach you what steps you can take to become reconciled with people here in this group—or elsewhere—who differ from you on the issue of gays and lesbians in the church.” (Pause for a few minutes.)
- Discuss:
 - What did you sense about yourself during the silence?
 - How can we reconcile in two directions: the church with gays and lesbians; and people on each side of the dilemma with each other?
 - What next steps do we need to take individually? As a church?
 - How can we work on reconciliation & justice together?

EXPRESS OUR FAITH

12. Close with a Special Worship (18 min.)

- Prayer: “Spirit of the One and Many” (left).
- Litany: “Prayer of Reconciliation” (p. 45, study).
- Sing a hymn (see “Supplies Needed,” p. 43, leader).
- Offer communion or a Love Feast.
- Prayer circle. Invite spoken and unspoken prayers.
- Prayer circle benediction:
Turn to the person on your left and say: “*May the love in my heart pass through my hand to you.*” Invite each person to pass along the prayer-blessing to her/his left until it has gone around the circle.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Do one of these after the meditation in activity 8. See “Supplies Needed.”

1. Create an abstract image of “love your enemies” (10 min.)

Use color and shape and movement to create an abstract image of “love your enemies.”

2. Create a sculpture image of “dancing with different folk” (10 min.)

Use large colorful pipe stem cleaners to sculpture an image.



BIBLE BACKGROUND MATERIALS

2 Timothy: Overview

The two Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus are called the Pastoral Letters. They portray Paul as a pastor concerned with the ongoing leadership of the churches he has established. All three are written as if from Paul to two of his associates, Timothy and Titus. However, their vocabulary, style, and content, as well as the historical situations they describe in relation to Paul's travels and imprisonment, seem inconsistent with Paul's known letters and his life. Some scholars account for this by saying a secretary wrote from brief notes or that a later author wrote them from fragments of Paul's authentic letters.¹ However, many scholars today believe that an unknown author, addressing problems in unknown post-Pauline churches early in the second century, used Paul's name to give his letters more authority. This was a commonly accepted practice in Paul's day.

Two major concerns were facing the second generation Christian churches. One was the continued activity of leaders who taught a diversity of ideas. These "false teachers" were teaching Jewish purity law and Gnostic thought, along with promoting ascetic elements and a spiritualized idea that the resurrection had already happened. Second century Christians were no longer convinced that the world was coming to an end with Christ's imminent return. This led to the second major concern of the writer or writers of the Pastoral Letters: finding leaders and establishing roles and leadership functions to carry on the life of the church in the tradition of the apostle Paul. In fact, 2 Timothy reads like a farewell address of a dying leader who is "passing the torch" to new leaders. As *Harper's Bible* commentator Ralph Martin notes, "these Letters reflect the beginnings of the 'institutional church'."

The writer of 2 Timothy is concerned to defend the gospel. He especially defends what he understands to be Paul's teachings of the gospel (Pauline orthodoxy) against the "false teachers" who are influencing Paul's churches. He makes his point about the inspiration of scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as part of that defense.²

From a sociocultural approach, we see that a process of religious syncretism was occurring, making some Christian leaders, like the writer of 2 Timothy, anxious. Elements from different religions—and different points of view within early Christianity—were being consciously or unconsciously combined into something new. From a sociocultural point of view we ask, "Why was that such a threat to second-century leaders? Who has the power here?" We see that a syncretised religion draws from many sources and acknowledges many different leaders. The second generation Pauline leaders may have been losing control of the people. Blended, evolving religion would not be acceptable to those who claimed that Paul had the true interpretation of the gospel.

Appendix A

Notes

¹For a list of scholars who hold/held this view, see Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), p. 371, note 10.

²Sources for the first three paragraphs: Jouette M. Bassler, "1, 2 Timothy Introductions," *HarperCollins Study Bible*, pp. 2229-30, 38; J. L. Price, "Timothy...", *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, p. 1075; Ralph P. Martin, "1, 2 Timothy and Titus," *Harper's Bible Commentary*, pp. 1237-38.

Appendix

A

Three Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

Without getting into technical classifications of biblical interpretation, we may identify three general interpretive approaches which Christians in the pews tend to draw on in discussions about the Bible. These are the literal, critical, and sociocultural approaches.¹

The *literal approach* emphasizes as fact that the Bible is divinely authored and inspired. It is a sacred text which contains the full and complete revelation of God and therefore can be consulted to gain a direct understanding of

God's will for us today. The primary method of literal interpreters is a "plain meaning" reading of a text which draws on tradition for the meaning. In its purest form, the literal approach discounts any reference to historical context. However, some literalist interpreters do recognize the diversity of biblical writings and their historical situations. Those literal interpreters are open to some of the methods and findings of the critical approach.

The *critical approach* emphasizes that the Bible is an historical and literary document drawn from many sources. If studied critically, it can tell us about significant features of the biblical writings themselves, the writers, their original audiences, and original intents. From their research findings on such issues, historical and literary critical interpreters first try to identify the "meaning" of a text for its author and original audience. Only then do they move on to questions of meaning and relevance for us today. The critical approach emerged when scientific research methodologies were being refined in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It has gained prominence in the biblical field in the twentieth century.

The *sociocultural approach* emerged as people and groups became aware that the "neutral" meanings derived by critical biblical interpreters were in fact shaped by the interpreters' sociocultural locations (their social, racial, economic, political, national, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual orientations). The sociocultural approach emphasizes the fact that no biblical study or interpretation is value-free or neutral. Rather, each of us reads and interprets the Bible while standing within our own sociocultural location. Most sociocultural interpreters begin with an assumption that the Bible itself "sides" with the poor and oppressed, though not necessarily with women. They

do so on the basis of such passages as Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 19:10; Psalm 10;2, 35:10, Isaiah 3:14-15, and so forth. They also assume that biblical authors themselves wrote from within their own sociocultural locations which were largely patriarchal in nature. They use critical interpretive methods modified by new interpretive principles that take into consideration the sociocultural locations of biblical writers and biblical interpreters.²

David and Jesus Re-interpret Hebrew Law

"We may observe in [the] connection [which Jesus made with David's interpretation] that Jesus went beyond the letter of the law. He reoriented the text, as it were, and made a hermeneutical [interpretive] leap to interpret the Sabbath theologically. David's violation of the law had nothing to do with the Sabbath, yet Jesus appealed to David's action as a scriptural principle for pointing beyond the letter of the Sabbath prohibition. In each case—for David and for Jesus—human needs provided the hermeneutical [interpretive] key for understanding the legal tradition. In each case the theology is 'from below,' so to speak, beginning with the reality of human needs. Neither David nor Jesus began, as their interrogators did, with dogma—a theology 'from above.' To be sure, by defending the technical violation of the Sabbath injunction, Jesus did not render Sabbath observation invalid. The Sabbath principle of rest was still valid. But the radical hermeneutical move did relativize the Sabbath commandment, subsuming it under a theology of God's creation and human need. The Sabbath was established for the good of humanity—as a sign of God's perpetual covenant (Exodus 31:15-17)—but the law was not meant to be absolutized. Hence, some Christian ethicists would apply Jesus' theological interpretation of the Sabbath injunction in the homosexuality debate as well: 'Marriage is made for men and women, not they for marriage'."

—Choon-Leong Seow
"Textual Orientation"

Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture
ed. Robert L. Brawley. Westminster John Knox, p. 20
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Notes

¹For more extensive discussion of interpretive biblical approaches and methodologies, see "Biblical Criticism" in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 129-33; "Reading and Interpreting the Bible," *Harper's Bible Commentary*, pp. 2-13; introductory articles (pp. 33-187) in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, esp. Justo L. Gonzalez, "How the Bible Has been Interpreted in Christian Tradition," pp. 83-106.

²See Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*. (Beacon, 1984, 1995), p. 15. Also, see *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. (Beacon, 1992).

Slavery and Women: Changed Perspectives

Biblical writers assumed that women were inferior to men and slaves were inferior to free persons. Both women and slaves were considered the property of free-born men. Biblical writers never denounced either of these assumptions as unjust. Yet many, if not most, Christians today would denounce both.

How can it be that we no longer read some passages literally? Women and racial minorities have learned to stand firmly in touch with their oppression as they read and critique the Bible and its long-standing assumptions. As a result, we are now able to “see” unjust systems of racism and sexism in the Bible.

In 1 Timothy 2:8-15, the writer gave instructions about women’s “dress,” “place,” and “proper role.” Yet today women dress differently, speak up in church, hold places of church leadership, don’t always have children, and so on. Most of us now disagree with 1 Timothy’s interpretation of Genesis, which the writer used as a rationale for his instructions. That interpretation was based on an assumption of male superiority. The Bible still *says* the same thing, but we balance biblical statements like 1 Timothy 2:8-15 with other parts of the Bible where women were more equal (Prisca, Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19; Phoebe, Romans 16:1; and Mary, Romans 16:6). We listen for God’s Word of equality in the Bible (“No longer male and female...,” Gal 3:28) and to God’s Word in our own experiences today.

Likewise, when the writer of Ephesians directed slaves to obey their masters, he assumed that slavery was a natural part of life (Ephesians 6:5). He encouraged slaves to make the best of it. They were to think of their services as something offered ultimately as “slaves in Christ” rather than as slaves of human masters. However, the writer of Ephesians did radically depart from his society’s norms. He urged the masters to be responsible, and he stated that *God* knows no partiality even if human society does (Ephesians 6:9). Early elements of a sociocultural approach to the Bible brought to our consciousness the injustice of the biblical commands about slavery.

The gospel message played a central role in our shifts in interpretation about slavery and about women’s “place” and “role.” Jesus taught equality and love. Paul preached that gospel of equality and love also. Many came to see that slavery and oppression of women violated both of those ideals. Commitment to Christ brought about our shifts in interpretation. The Bible still *says* the same thing, but we no longer see Paul’s words about slavery and women as authoritative.

Appendix A

Being Human and Faithful: Interpretive Principles

“Ideas about the social status of women have changed over time. In the world of the biblical writers, wives and daughters were a kind of family property. A hundred years ago, even in the Western world, women suffered significant legal disadvantages. During this century, the equality of women with men has been increasingly recognized. What should the roles of Christian women be in this changed (and changing) social situation? There’s no point in expecting a simple and direct answer from the scriptures. They originally addressed people whose basic presuppositions about women were radically different from ours. Instead, we have to find ways to ask the Bible about the fundamental principles of being human and faithful—and see how we can interpret those for our own times.”

—L. William Countryman
“What Does the Bible’s Creation Narrative
Tell Us About Homosexuality?”
Integrity, n.d., p. 2

Jesus and Slavery

“Jesus spoke of slaves and masters in his teachings, a fact obscured by biblical translators who continue to translate *doulos* as ‘servant’ (which in King James English had a connotation of involuntary servitude) even though *doulos* is the specific word for ‘slave’. Now, however, the NRSV has corrected its translation in some places—the only modern translation I am aware of that has had the nerve to do this. So Jesus’ parable of the talents, for example, in Matthew 25:14-30 is about a master who called his three slaves to him... It seems incredible that Jesus would have so casually—here and elsewhere—used the language of master and slave unless he accepted slavery as part of the givens of his culture. But would we want to accept slavery as a given? And if slavery must be challenged by tradition, reason, and experience, then heterosexism must be challenged by the same principles.”

—H. Darrell Lance
Letter to Osterman, 19 January 1996

Appendix A



Galatians: Overview

Paul's Letter to the Galatians (written 53-55 C.E.) "reflects a critical moment in the early Christian movement's struggle to define its mission and identity."¹ The Christian men in Galatia were being influenced by others to be circumcised. These "troublemaker" leaders also may have been urging the converts to observe other Jewish customs and laws such as sabbath, festivals, and dietary laws. Some commentators believe the troublemakers were Jewish Christians; others believe they were gentile converts to Christianity who were interested in Jewish purity law as a way to salvation. They were threatening to replace Paul's gospel with one of their own. Paul responded that they were "offering a gospel that was not a gospel at all" (1:6-7). He wrote an agitated, impassioned letter to them in which he defends the gospel he had earlier preached to them. He hoped to dissuade them from adopting the religious practices others were urging on them, since such practices pulled them away from the truth of the gospel as he understood it.²

An Outline Summary of Galatians

I. Introduction

- (1:1-5) Begins with Paul's customary introductory pattern.
- (1:6-9) Is the only one of Paul's letters which rebukes the readers instead of offering thanksgiving for them.

II. Paul's response to troublemakers; his "defense" of the gospel

1. Narrative (1:10-2:21) Paul describes the events leading up to the crisis in the Galatian churches
2. Proclamation (3:1-4:31) Paul's restatement of the arguments from scripture, noting the Abrahamic promise was fulfilled in Christ. Note that 3:26 is part of this proclamation of the gospel: "You all are children of God through faith." You all are heirs. A strong inclusive statement.
3. Appeal (5:1-6:10) Paul summarizes his main point about being free in Christ, with a strong appeal not to be circumcised, but to seek the fruit of living in the Spirit.

III. Postscript

- (6:11-18) Concludes with a customary postscript, written in Paul's own hand to authenticate a letter presumably written in the hand of a scribe. It sums up the major points of the letter.³

Notes

¹Richard B. Hays, "Galatians," *HarperCollins Study Bible*, introductory notes, p. 2181.

²Hans Dieter Betz, "Galatians," *Harper's Bible Dictionary (HBD)*, p. 327; also, Carolyn Osiek, "Galatians," *Women's Bible Commentary*, p. 333.

³The outline summary was adapted from Betz, *HBD*, pp. 328-29.

Romans: Overview

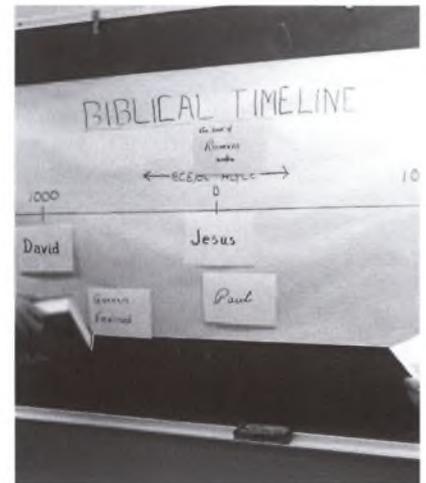
Paul's Letter to the Romans is his most mature and sustained statement of the gospel. It is perhaps his last letter. Paul wrote this letter as he was completing his work in the Aegean region and preparing to return to Jerusalem with funds he had collected from his gentile churches. Some biblical scholars debate whether Paul wrote to the Romans because he wanted their prayers for his trip to Jerusalem or their support for a trip he planned to Spain when he left Rome. Others propose that he wrote to the Romans because of some problem within the Roman church.

We do not know who founded the Roman Christian church or when, but it was apparently in existence by 49 C.E. when the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (including Jewish Christians such as Aquila and Priscilla whom Paul met in Corinth while they were in exile). Most likely, a gentile Christian community remained and continued to grow during the five years of Claudius' ban. When Jewish Christians returned to Rome, tensions certainly might have surfaced between the two groups, calling for reconciliation efforts. When Christianity was first spreading, Jewish Christians needed to be convinced to include gentile Christians into their circle without requiring them to become circumcised Jews. But in Rome in 54 C.E., the situation was likely reversed: gentile Christians had to be convinced to include Jewish Christians into their circle.

In his letter to the Romans, written sometime between 55-58 C.E., Paul was probably speaking to these two groups of Christians. Paul said, you are all sinners and God offers redemption through Christ to all of you. He answered a whole series of theological concerns he suspected would be brought up about the meaning of the gospel, some by Jewish Christians, others by gentile Christians (1:18-11:36). Finally, he concluded with a series of exhortations (12:1-15:13) which end with "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (15:7).

The often-quoted statement of Paul's about same-sex conduct occurs in Romans 1:26-27 as part of his larger theological statement of the gospel. Same-sex conduct was not a major concern for Paul. The two verses about same-sex conduct fall in a section of examples of the consequences of Gentiles having turned away from God. To make his point, with an audience in Rome that included both Jewish Christians and gentile Christians, Paul started out with stereotypical Jewish insults of Gentiles common in his culture to establish that Gentiles stood in need of redemption. Verses 26-27 are one such illustration. Then, lest his Jewish Christian readers felt superior to the Gentiles, he told them they too were under the power of sin, unable to boast just because they had the Jewish law to follow (2:17-29). Paul summarized his opening point: "For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (3:22-23). Then he turned to the solution: God has saved you all—Jew and Gentile—in Jesus; new life is promised to all who have faith in Jesus Christ (3:21).¹

Appendix A



Note

¹Sources for this background article were Leander Keck, "Romans: Introduction," in *HarperCollins Study Bible*, pp. 2114-16; Paul W. Meyer, "Romans," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, pp. 1130-33; Calvin J. Roetzel, "Romans," in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 876-79; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Romans," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 313-15.

Appendix A

A Context for Sodom

The book of Genesis answers a series of questions. The answers given are the faith answers of the writers of Genesis. And more than that, they are answers from the heart of a people's journey of faith.

How did the world begin?

God said "Let there be..." and it came to be. God said, "Let us make human-kind in our image..." and it came to be. God imagined us and created us!

Why did the world get created?

Because God wanted it. Because God was so loving and creative that God stepped out into the void and made a world to which to relate.

Why do we live in relationship?

Because God created us for companionship and for procreation so life would go on in this new world.

Why is life so hard?

Because the first people turned away from God.

What did God do?

God punished the people, but then offered them a new covenant, and another.

These faith questions are all answered in Genesis 1-11. The rest of Genesis, chapters 12-50, answers one question.

How did Israel become God's special community of faith among all the people of the world?

Because God chose Abraham and Sarah and they responded obediently in faith and so did their son Isaac, grandson Jacob, and great-grandson, Joseph—at least some of the time.

This is a story of a people's struggle to be faithful and obedient to God. These stories of the "patriarchs of Israel" end with Joseph in slavery in Egypt. The promise that God made to Abraham and Sarah has only been partially fulfilled.

They do have descendants, but they do not yet have the land God promised them. (For that part of the story, we have to turn to Exodus and Joshua.)

The story of Sodom comes early in this four-generation saga of the beginnings of God's people. Abraham and Sarah have answered God's call to leave their home in Haran, have journeyed to the land of Canaan, have left it to go to Egypt during a famine. Abraham's nephew, Lot, has been with them throughout these early journeys. After the famine ended, they all returned to Canaan where they apparently have prospered. The story of Sodom begins in chapter 13 when a quarrel erupts between Lot's and Abraham's herdsmen, a quarrel over land or water or perhaps space to grow. Lot and Abraham decide to separate their family holdings.

Ancient Hospitality

In ancient times in the Near East, offering hospitality to the stranger and wayfarer was a serious and sacred custom which all were expected to observe. Travelers did not find inns as they passed from town to town. They were dependent on a host, often a stranger to them, to shield them from physical or social harm. Ancient hospitality was a ritual that involved receiving strangers into one's home and turning them into guests. This process included (1) testing strangers to be sure they did not constitute a threat to the host or the host's community; (2) inviting strangers to become honored guests; (3) offering one's best to the guests and expecting guests to be on their best behavior in return; and (4) protecting one's guests. In return for this hospitality, the stranger guest praised the host far and wide.¹

Note

¹The source for this description is *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 408-9.

Leviticus: Overview

Leviticus lies in the center of the Torah (law or instruction) of the Hebrew Bible, with Genesis and Exodus preceding it, and Numbers and Deuteronomy following it. Its title implies concern with priestly or Levitical matters. Rabbis in early Judaism sometimes called it the Priest's Manual. Indeed, chapters 1-16 deal with priestly matters: regulations about sacrifices (1-3), priestly ordination (8-10), purification regulations (11-15), and the Day of Atonement (16). Leviticus, in the form we have it now, was a priestly compilation of earlier sources made in Jerusalem from about 500 B.C.E. onward; that is, it is a post-exilic document.

One of those earlier sources forms the basis of chapters 17-26, which are collectively called the Holiness Code because they focus on the holiness and transcendence of God and the need for Israelite men to live a life of purity or be repurified (if they have somehow become "unclean") in order to approach God. (Regulations in Leviticus which governed women were designed to maintain and support male holiness and purity; a woman was never pure enough to approach God.) The Holiness Code lays out rituals, regulations, and prohibitions for the people to be holy and pure. These chapters focus on matters of sexual relations (18-20) and ritual community life (21-25), including regulations about festivals, offerings, ethical concerns, and the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. Chapter 26 lays out the harsh terms of the covenant of the post-exilic God with the people of Israel: Do all these things and you will prosper and defeat your enemies and I will walk with you. If you don't, "I will bring terror on you..." says God (26:16). Chapter 27 is a kind of appendix outlining the "worth" or equivalence of people and things which were offered to God. Since they became "holy" when offered, they must be "desanctified" through a payment based on their worth when they are returned to the "normal" state.¹

Appendix A

Sexual Prohibitions: Corporate Rationales

"If one wishes to discover a rationale for the distinctive shape of sexual prohibitions in a particular culture, [Claude] Lévi-Strauss directs us to look for a corporate explanation.... The Holiness Code is a fine tapestry with a variety of hues, but the interwoven value concepts are matters of urgent concern to the community: the protection of the system of patrilineal land tenure, purity of descent, the special status of the priests, and dwelling securely in the land. In a quite literal way, if their system of land tenure fails (a system based on patrilineal inheritance within the clan), the 'sons of Israel' will find themselves to be landless. A clan's hold on the land is ensured by clear lines of descent and many pure descendants...rules of inappropriate sexual intercourse serve to protect pure patrilineal descent."

—Sarah J. Melcher

"The Holiness Code and Human Sexuality"
Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture
ed. by Robert L. Brawley
(Louisville: Westminster John Knox) pp. 87, 98
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Note:

¹Sources used for this overview were *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 558-59; *The Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 37, 38.

Appendix

A

Jesus and the Hebrew Purity Code

Jesus approached the Holiness Code of his religion with the same conviction he approached many other things. For him, God's love was radically inclusive; the exclusion of some people from the circle was sin. Part of his guiding interpretive principle came from Leviticus: "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). He drew from Deuteronomy 6:5 (the Shema) to identify what he thought formed the "heart" of the law: Love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength—and love neighbor as self (Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-27).

One of the roots of our understanding of "normal" and "abnormal" in the twentieth century comes from the Levitical purity code with its focus on the need to offer one's very best to a holy God whose energy blazed out so that one needed to be protected. Gifts for sacrifice were pure and unblemished—and priests who made the offerings needed to be pure and unblemished—as a way of "controlling" that divine energy's power.

Jesus denied this view of God and he rejected the Levitical idea that blemishes disqualified anyone from approaching God. Instead of a God who demands holiness and separation, Jesus offered us a God who reached out in love and mercy, especially to the marginalized and rejected. Jesus, in rejecting the rules of ritual purity, broke down the distinctions that kept people in their "proper place" and that allowed some to dominate others. Jesus offered us an image of God who shows no partiality, no distinction between pure and impure, holy and profane, Gentile and Jew. Jesus (by example) and Paul (in words) added that God shows no partiality between male and female. Modern prophetic voices are adding "God shows no partiality among homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual."¹

Cultural Shifts

Biblical scholar Dale Martin says the word *malakoi* definitely means "effeminate" and that Paul would have seen effeminacy as a serious offense for a man in the ancient biblical world, based on his presumed natural superiority of man over woman. Yet, translators do not consistently translate *malakoi* as "effeminate." In the fourth century it became "masturbators"; in the sixteenth, "effeminate" (KJV); and in the twentieth century, "sexual perverts," "homosexuals," "male prostitutes," etc. Why do translators make such varied decisions about this word in Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 6:9?

Martin concludes that "curious shifts" of translation have taken place, based not on definitive criticism work, but on ideological shifts of understanding of sexuality. Being an effeminate male today may be embarrassing in some circles, but it certainly isn't a sin so awful the person could not inherit the kingdom of God! Therefore, translators, needing an understanding that made sense to modern readers of the Bible, shifted the meaning of *malakoi* to fit twentieth century concerns and prejudices. They made their translation mean *less* than the word actually means: passive gay men rather than all effeminate men.

Arsenokoitai, says Martin guardedly, probably refers to some kind of economic exploitation, possibly sexual, perhaps same-sex. Again, however, ideology rather than definitive biblical criticism is determining translation. In this case, translators have generally made their translation mean *more* than it actually means: active homosexuals or homosexuality rather than some unknown form of economic exploitation.²

Notes

¹Sources for this background include Melanie Morrison, *The Grace of Coming Home*. (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1995), p. 23; Walter Wink, "'Holy and without Blemish before God': Disability and Normalcy," *Auburn Views 1* (Spring 1993), pp. 1-7; Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984), pp. 51-200.

²This is a paraphrased summary from Dale B. Martin, "Arsenokoites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences," in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*. ed. by Robert L. Brawley. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), pp. 117-36.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

A Bishop's Witness

"I am an enthusiastically heterosexual male. Is my heterosexuality a virtue? A sign of righteousness? Either an accomplishment or a victory of some kind on my part? Of course not!

I had nothing whatsoever to do with my being heterosexual. It is a mysterious gift of God's grace communicated through an exceedingly complex set of chemical, biological, chromosomal, hormonal, environmental, developmental factors—totally outside of my control. My heterosexuality is a gift—neither a virtue nor a sin. What I *do* with my heterosexuality, however, is my personal, moral, and spiritual responsibility.

My behavior as a heterosexual may be, therefore, very sinful—brutal, exploitative, selfish, promiscuous, superficial. My behavior as a heterosexual, on the other hand, may be beautiful—tender, considerate, loyal, other-centered, profound....

Homosexuality, quite like heterosexuality, is neither a virtue nor an accomplishment. It is a mysterious gift of God's grace communicated through an exceedingly complex set of chemical, biological, chromosomal, hormonal, environmental, developmental factors—totally outside my homosexual friends' control.

[Their] homosexuality is a gift—neither a virtue nor a sin. What [they do] with their homosexuality, however, is their personal, moral, and spiritual responsibility. Their behavior as a homosexual may be, therefore, very sinful—brutal, exploitative, selfish, promiscuous, superficial. Their behavior as a homosexual, on the other hand, may be beautiful—tender, considerate, loyal, other-centered, profound...."

—Bishop Melvin E. Wheatley, UMC
Excerpted from a longer statement written in 1981
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Jeffrey Siker's Witness

"Before I came to know various Christians who are homosexual in their sexual orientation, I was like [those] Jewish Christians who denied that Gentiles could [be fully part of God's plan without being circumcised]. But just as Peter's experience of Cornelius in Acts 10 led him to realize that even Gentiles were receiving God's Spirit, so my experience of various gay and lesbian Christians led me to realize that these Christians have received God's Spirit as gays and lesbians and that the reception of the Spirit has nothing to do with sexual orientation. Indeed, the church has long honored as esteemed brothers and sisters in Christ many gays and lesbians who were simply never known as such. I once thought of gays and lesbians as Peter and Paul thought of "gentile sinners," but now, with Peter, I am compelled to ask, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"...Peter and Paul called the Jewish Christian church in their day to move beyond the marginal toleration of gentile Christians and welcome their full inclusion. Similarly, in our day we in the heterosexual Christian church are being called by God to move beyond our marginal toleration of homosexual Christians and welcome their full inclusion."¹

—Jeffrey S. Siker

"Gentile Wheat and Homosexual Christians: New Testament Directions for the Heterosexual Church," *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture* ed. by Robert L. Brawley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox) p. 146
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Appendix B

Siker's Note

¹There are, of course, limitations to the analogy between gentile Christians in the first century and gay and lesbian Christians in the present day. Gentile Christianity became the dominant form of Christianity by the end of the first century; it cannot be argued that the acceptance of homosexual Christians would result in the church's becoming predominantly homosexual, since persons with a homosexual orientation represent a small portion of the overall population, while Gentiles have always far outnumbered Jews. Further, whereas homosexuality is a category of sexual orientation, Gentile is a kind of ethnic description referring to anyone who is a non-Jew. The crux of the analogy, however, lies in the observation that early Jewish Christians viewed Gentiles as sinners because they were Gentiles, just as today most heterosexual Christians see openly homosexual persons as being sinners because they act according to their orientation.

Appendix

B

A Lesbian's Witness

"The first time I was really aware of the existence of homosexuality was in 1963 when I was finishing college. A friend confronted me with the fact that I was attracted to her. She put the label 'homosexual' on that attraction. She also put a negative interpretation on the experience. This attraction was something I was supposed to deny and resist. Good Christians were not homosexual, especially not those who were headed for full-time work in the church as I was. That image and interpretation of homosexuality stayed with me all through my twenties and thirties. It was not until 1981 that I was able to grasp and embrace a positive image of myself as a lesbian woman. That change occurred because my pastor courageously and persistently preached a positive image and message from the pulpit about gay and lesbian people."

—Anonymous

Howard Miller's Witness

In 1993 Howard Miller, a deacon in his small, rural American Baptist congregation in Rhode Island, suspected that his minister was lesbian. Howie was originally upset because, as he said: "I want to be able to go to my pastor with moral issues and have them respond in a biblical sense..." Howie went to some key people in his church to let them know of his feelings. Several church meetings were held in which the pastor, Brenda Moulton, came out to the church. The Board of Deacons recommended the church ask her for her resignation, but the church said no. Two years later, Brenda and Howie discuss their process. Listen to a few of their reflections.

Brenda: According to your interpretation of scripture, homosexuality is wrong, and here I was as pastor saying "I'm gay and homosexuality is OK." That went against everything you believe, so therefore, how could I be your pastor and proclaim the gospel?

Howie: Exactly. That was the major conflict for me.

Brenda: ...[and] we still haven't resolved [this issue].

Howie: I guess not, not for everybody.... As for your being a pastor, well I certainly feel you are called by God. That one issue of your sexuality, that's between you and God. It's out of my hands... that's how I've resolved it.

Brenda: What keeps us in ministry together in the midst of our differences?

Howie: For me, I've got to trust God. He's either going to have to point out to one or the other of us that we're wrong, or work around it, or work with it; but, bottom line, it's God's job....

Brenda: What is it about our church that kept people there [even after they discovered I was gay]?

Howie: ...There's just too strong a nucleus here to let anything break it up.

Brenda: But that's not typical. What holds us together?

Howie: God...the Holy Spirit. I have no other explanation....

Brenda: Yet so many other people would say "My commitment to God says I have to leave. I can't stay in this place where there's this sin." People use the same argument, their commitment to Christ, to leave [as our church used to stay].

Howie: That reminds me of the scripture where Jesus said "I come to heal the sick." I don't need to go to a church where everybody's all set.

Brenda: The scripture I thought of was "Christ is our peace and has broken down the walls of hostility between us." Do you think there's any connection between what we've been through and the growth we're experiencing now?

Howie: Yes. There's tolerance for accepting other people for who they are.... We don't challenge each other with different doctrine and scripture....

Brenda: We maintained respect for one another and for our opinions—even when those opinions differed. We saw the Christ in the other and valued God's creation in that other person.

Howie: Yes, and if you have compassion for people, you'll get through whatever you have to get through. A lot of things boil down to compassion for people. You either have it or you don't.... If you have it, sometimes you have to see the other side even if you never agree with it.

—Brenda J. Moulton and Howard Miller

"Living With Our Differences"

Open Hands, Spring 1996, pp. 10-11

Excerpted from longer dialogue. Used with permission

OUR COVENANT

1. We assume that God's Word is God's liberating, saving message. We assume that Word has been spoken through the Bible, through prophets and church leaders, and most perfectly through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We also assume that God continues to speak to us today. Therefore, we covenant to "test" any divine Word we hear against our understanding of Christ, God's incarnational Word.
2. We assume that no person is able to gain a perfect understanding of God's Word. Therefore, we covenant to remember that no one has "the last word" about God's Word. We covenant to avoid trying to "win" someone over to our way of thinking or believing. We covenant to seek out each other's insights, skills, experiences, and faith journeys so that we all might receive God's Word more fully, richly, and completely.
3. We assume that every person is a child of God, one of God's heirs apparent. We remember that "God so loved the world (all of us), that God sent God's only Child that we all might have new life and become new creations" (paraphrased from John 3:16). Therefore, we covenant to treat each other as persons of integrity. We covenant to avoid putting each other down as unchristian and to avoid acting in ways that assume that we are more faithful or moral than others.
4. We assume that as finite human beings we will arrive at a variety of understandings about scripture. We assume that God understands that we will not be "of one mind." Therefore, we covenant to keep a sense of humor, acknowledging that our differences "will not disturb God as much as it will some of us."
5. We assume that very few of us will know Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, the original languages of the writings of the Bible. Therefore, we covenant to use a variety of English versions of the Bible as we try to understand any particular text.
6. We assume that the differences between and among us are real—and important—differences. We therefore covenant to honor those differences rather than trying to ignore them or reconcile them too quickly.
7. We assume that even though our understandings and beliefs are different, we can become or remain "warm Christian friends" because we are all heirs of God's promise. Therefore, we covenant to seek out common bonds that exist between and among us.
8. We recognize that neither the world nor the church is yet a safe space for gay, lesbian, or bisexual people—or their families. When some of us share with the rest of us, we risk our safety, our careers, loss of family support, and possible loss of custody of our children, as well as general acceptance in society and the church. Therefore, we covenant to keep confidential any personal comments that are made within this group. We recognize that no public space is completely safe, but we covenant to make our study group as safe as possible.

Signed: _____

We also covenant with each other

- to attend this class regularly
- to read the chapter and biblical references before class
- to answer the study questions (four boxes in the chapter) before class
- to volunteer for one extra assignment (to make a very brief report in class)

Signed _____

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Appendix C



Note

Dick Murray's "Principles for Adult Class Bible Study" were the original impetus for developing this covenant statement. See *Strengthening the Adult Sunday School* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), p.102.

Appendix

D

A QUICK TOUR

We recommend using an NRSV “study” Bible, such as *The HarperCollins Study Bible*.

1. How does your Study Bible differ from your favorite Bible?

- a. Look at the beginning and end of the Study Bible to see what “helps” are available: a timeline? gospel parallels? maps? informative articles?
- b. Find Malachi at the end of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and Matthew at the beginning of the New Testament. If you have a “study” Bible, in between Malachi and Matthew may be a section of the *apocryphal* and *deuterocanonical* books of the Old Testament (see glossary, p. 48, study).

2. Look at Matthew as an example of how the books are set up.

- a. Notice the introduction (written by biblical scholars to help you understand the book’s overall structure as well as its author, date, audience, and message).
- b. Notice the way chapters are marked in large bold numbers and how verses are marked with smaller numbers, many of them buried within the text.
- c. Look up Matthew 1:1 (chapter 1, verse 1). Notice the solid line toward the bottom of the page. It separates the actual verses of the Bible from “annotations” which give some explanation of the verses. These are the viewpoints of the persons doing the annotations, not the viewpoints of the translators. The annotations also list cross references to other places in the Bible where we find similar ideas or background for the verse being read. Read some of the annotations. Find a cross reference and look it up to see how it relates to the verse in Matthew.
- d. Notice also the lettered “footnotes” in Matthew 1:1. Find the corresponding notes above the solid line. The footnotes give you alternate translations from the original language. These notes do come from the translators of the version of the Bible you are reading. Leaf through a few pages of Matthew and read the footnotes.
- e. Notice the “sub-headings” (added by scholars, either within the text or at the top of the page, to help you see logical divisions in the text). These are also useful when you want to skim a whole biblical book to quickly see what is in it.

3. Think about the different times and ways we use a Bible.

- a. Do you approach the Bible differently when you are studying it than when you are seeking comfort from it or using a passage for your daily meditations?
- b. What is different?
- c. What remains the same?

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TRANSLATION CHART



Appendix E

Version	1 Cor. 6:9	Matt. 11:8; Luke 7:25
Greek	<i>malakoi /arsenokoitai</i>	<i>malakos</i>
Latin Clementine Vulgate, New edition, 1946	<i>molles/masculorum concubitores</i>	<i>mollibus vestitum (Matt) mollibus vestimentis (Lk)</i>
Luther's Bible, 1522-45	effeminate/violators of boys	soft clothing
King James, 1611	effeminate/abusers of themselves with mankind	clothed in soft raiment
American Standard, 1901	effeminate/abusers of themselves with men	clothed in soft raiment
American (Goodspeed), 1935	sensual or given to unnatural vice	luxuriously dressed
Weymouth NT, 1943	men guilty of unnatural crimes	fine clothes
Revised Standard, 1946,52	homosexuals	clothed in soft raiment
J.B. Phillips, NT, 1960	effeminate/pervert	fine clothes
Jerusalem, English, 1966	catamites/sodomites	fine clothes
Jerusalem, French	depraved; persons of sordid morals	
Jerusalem, German	sissies	
Today's English, 1966	homosexual perverts	fancy clothes
New English, 1961, 1970	guilty of homosexual perversion	dressed in silks and satins
New American, 1970	homosexual perverts/sodomites	luxuriously dressed
Living Bible (paraphrase), 1971	homosexuals	man dressed as a prince; expensive clothing
Revised Standard, 1971	sexual perverts	sexual perverts
New International, 1978	male prostitutes	fine clothes
New Jerusalem, 1985	the self-indulgent/sodomites	fine clothes
New American, 1986 (NT)	boy prostitutes/practicing homosexuals	fine clothing; fine garments
Revised English, 1989	sexual pervert	dressed in finery; fine clothes
New Revised Standard, 1989	male prostitutes/sodomites	soft robes
NT and Psalms: Inclusive, 1995	male prostitutes	soft robes

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Appendix

F

LOVE AND JUSTICE © 1990 JUDY FJELL (BMI)

*Inspired by instances of love and justice and the writings of
Reinhold Neibuhr and Carter Heyward*

What's it all - a - bout? — It's all a - bout love —

What's it all - a - bout? — It's a - bout jus - tice —

What's it all - a - bout? — It's a - bout love and jus - tice - and the

way - we all live - in the world. —

Same melody for verse and chorus

CHORUS

What's it all about? It's all about love
What's it all about? It's about justice
What's it all about? It's about love and justice
and the way we all live in the world.

1. When you let down a wall, it's all about love
When you tear down a wall, it's about justice
Buildin' bridges, crumblin' walls; it's about love and justice
and the way we all live in the world. CHORUS
2. When you share your thoughts with me, it's all about love
When people agree to disagree, it's about justice
Oh the freedom to speak; it's about love and justice
and the way we all live in the world. CHORUS
3. When you beat a man who's down, it's not about love
When you let those four men go, it's not about justice
We still have a dream about love and justice
and the way we can all live in the world. CHORUS
4. When you break bread with someone gay, it's all about love
When ordination is okay, it's about justice
When the church doors are wide open, it's about love and justice
and the way we can all live in the world. CHORUS

Judy Fjell tours throughout the U.S. performing concerts and leading Music Empowerment workshops. She offers summer music camps in Montana and Oregon.

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Notes

The original song has nine verses. These four are used by RMN with permission.

Verse 3 refers to Rodney King and the four police officers who were acquitted of beating him.

The song is available in parts and on tape from Honey Pie Music, P.O. Box 1515, Big Timber, MT 59011. 406/932-6468; womamu@aol.com fax: 406/932-4665.

