

Synod Journey Story Kit Resource:

Encountering Biblical Texts as a Lutheran Session Two: Lutheran High Five

This session builds off the “Overview of the Bible” shared in the last session. This lesson looks specifically at 5 key points Lutherans consider when reading the Bible. Lutherans read the Bible using an understanding called the “Lutheran High Five”. Five fingers - five Lutheran beliefs about the Bible.

The “Lutheran High Five” is adapted from Mark Allan Powell, “Lutheran Insights that Open the Bible” Lutheran Study Bible, pp. 1538-1543. More resources available at www.bookoffaith.org.

Supplies Needed:

Bibles

Cheap sunglasses for every person

Masking tape

Nametags

Markers

25 piece puzzle

Images of a comma and a question mark

Suggested: Copies of the “Wrap-Up” for each person

Session 2: The Lutheran High Five

GATHERING ACTIVITY:

Have everyone go around and “high 5” everyone in the group, saying the other person’s name as they give them a high 5.

Leader: **Lutherans read the Bible using an understanding called the “Lutheran High Five”. Five fingers - five Lutheran beliefs about the Bible. We are going to explore these five beliefs.**

FIRST HIGH FIVE FINGER: The Bible holds up Christ.

Leader: **We say that we read all of scripture, Old and New Testament, “Through a Christ lens”.**

ACTIVITY: Give everyone a cheap pair of sunglasses (or pass around one pair). Instruct everyone to put on their glasses and look around the room. Point out that sunglasses slightly change/tint the way we see things. Pass around masking tape. Using the masking tape, have everyone tape a cross on the front of each of the lenses of the sunglasses. Have them look around again.

Leader: **Imagine reading your Bible this way. We see everything we read through the cross, through our understanding of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. We read all of the Bible, Old and New Testament, knowing what God has done for us in Christ.**

SECOND HIGH FIVE FINGER: Law and Gospel

ACTIVITY: Have your youth partner up. Give each person a nametag. Have one person in each pair label their nametag “law”. Have the other label their nametag “gospel”. Play “Law and Gospel” tag. The people with “law” nametags begin as the “its”, chasing their partners wearing the “gospel” nametag. Once they tag their partner with the “gospel” nametag, the “gospel” partner then becomes the “it” and must chase down their “law” person. Let the play go back and forth like this.

Leader: **Law is God’s rules/demands and Gospel is the good news of God’s forgiveness and unending love. We read scripture looking for both law and gospel in all the writings.**

There is a constant back and forth between the law and gospel. The law reminds us that we don’t live as God wants us to and reminds us that we need the gospel, the good news of God’s continued forgiveness and love. Because of this good news of what God has done for us we want to read the law and try to be more like God wants us to be. It’s a loop – the law leads us to the need for the gospel, the gospel makes us want to know and live by the law.

THIRD HIGH FIVE FINGER: Scripture interprets Scripture

ACTIVITY: Give each person a piece of a puzzle and a post it note. By looking at only their piece, have them write down on their post it notes what they guess the puzzle is a picture of. Have them share their guesses.

Then assemble the puzzle as a group.

Leader: **Were any of the guesses right?**

We understand a piece much better when it is put into the wider picture. We can even misinterpret what the piece is until it part of the bigger picture. We read all scripture within the wider scripture to accurately understand it.

We believe that we need to read each of the Bible verses and books within the understanding of the whole Bible. If you take one verse alone and don't look at the whole story of God it can be misused or misunderstood. For example, in the letters Paul writes verses saying that woman should not be in ministry leadership and yet within the context of all the letters we see Paul positively lift up and reflect on the ministry work of women in his community. Bible verses can have meaning on their own but we must always make sure that they represent the wider story of scripture.

FOURTH HIGH FIVE FINGER: We read the Bible in community

Read this story:

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today."

They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg.

"Oh, no! it is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail.

"Oh, no! it is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant.

"It is like a big hand fan" said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant.

"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant.

"It is like a solid pipe," Said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about the elephant and every one of them insisted that he was right. It looked like they were getting agitated. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason every one of you is telling it differently is because each one of you touched the different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features that you all said."

Leader: It is important to read the Bible on our own but we always want to read the Bible within a bigger community too. We all bring different understandings and perspectives to our reading. By reading the Bible as part of a community we learn more from others. We are also able check to make sure our understanding is consistent with the understanding of others and not just a reflection of what we want it to say.

FIFTH HIGH FIVE FINGER: The Bible speaks to us today.

ACTIVITY: Set out the image of a question mark and a coma.

Ask: Which do you think best represents the Bible? Argue your point.

Leader: The United Church of Christ has a slogan “Don’t put a period where God has placed a coma. God is still speaking.” While the Bible was written a long time ago within a certain culture and context that may have been different than ours, we believe it still speaks to us today.

We always read the Bible asking three questions: What? So what? Now what?

What is going on in the text?

Try to understand the text within the context that it was written. Consider the writer, the culture of the time, the placement of the text within the book.

So what?

Why was this text important at the time it was written? What does it tell about God and God’s people?

Now what?

How is this relevant today? What is this text telling me? How does this text influence how I understand God or live as God’s child?

WRAP UP:

Over the next 5 sessions we will explore five scripture texts. As we encounter these texts remember the Lutheran High Five. End this session by handing out copies of the next page, the “The Lutheran High 5”, to all youth and adults to have in their Bible for future Bible encounters. Take turns reading a review of the five before closing.

This session was developed by Shivon Miller, NE MN Synod Journey Worship Team Leader, over the course of many years in ministry and from inspiration of many resources and colleagues. It is provided for the use of congregations in the NE MN Synod, ELCA, in preparation for the 2018 NE MN Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering. For congregational use only.

The Lutheran High 5

As you explore texts, remember the Lutheran High 5:

1. The Bible holds up Christ. Read with a Christ Lens.
 - a. What does this text tell us about Christ?
 - b. How does what we know about Christ's life, death and resurrection affect how we understand this text?
2. Law and Gospel
 - a. What law do you hear in this text? What does it tell us about how to live as God's people
 - b. What gospel (good news) do you hear in this text about God's love for us?
3. Scripture interprets scripture.
 - a. Look around the text – what happens before or after these verses in the Bible.
 - b. What other Bible stories help you understand this story?
4. Bible in Community
 - a. Read the text with others. What do they hear in the text? Share what you heard. Did you learn anything new from reading it together? Did you have an opportunity to teach anything?
5. Bible speaks to us today.
 - a. What? What is the story about?
 - b. So what? Why do you think this story is in the Bible?
 - c. Now What? What does this story tell you about your relationship with God? How does this story impact how you live today?

Adapted from Mark Allan Powell,
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Lutheran Study Bible, pp. 1538-1543.

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