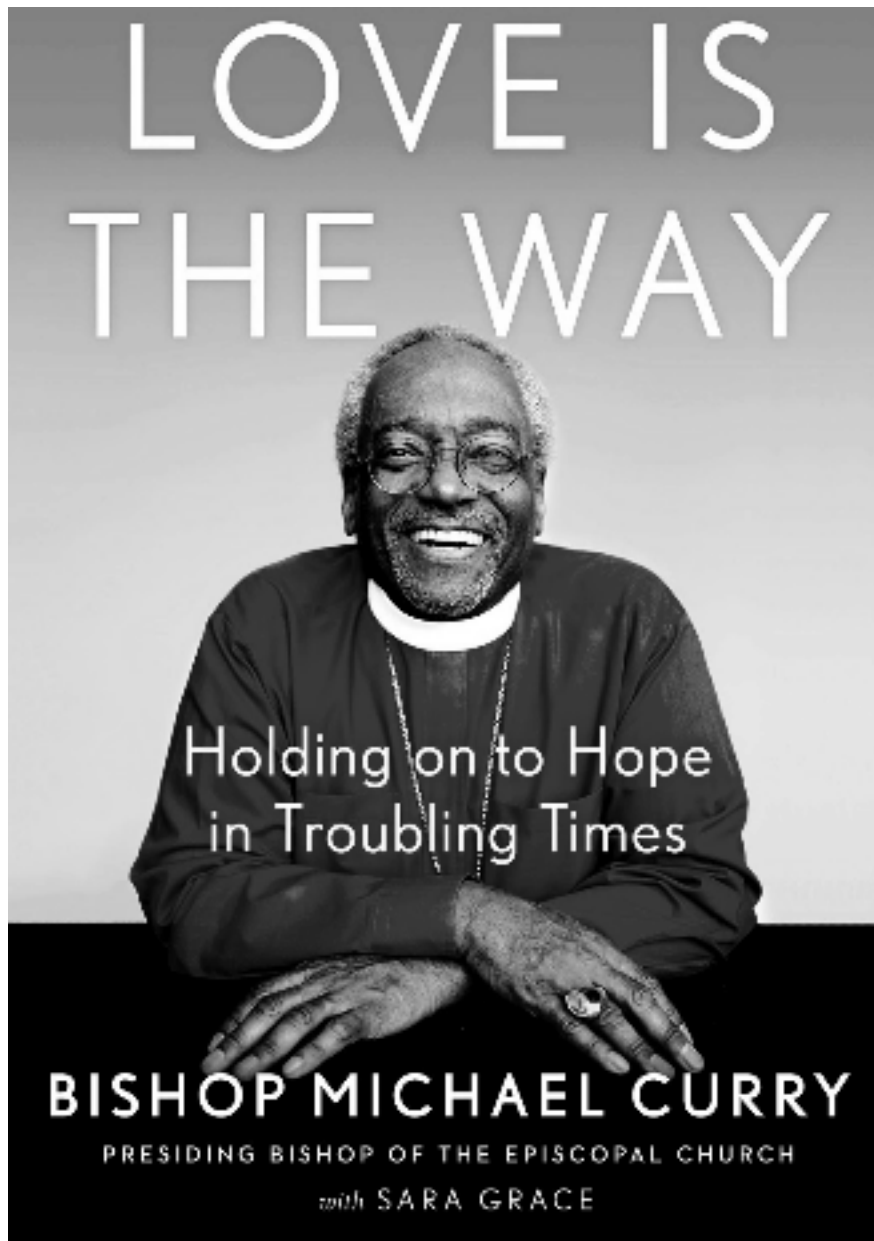


A Six-Week Small Group Discussion Guide *for*



**Love is the Way by Bishop Michael Curry is available from online and local booksellers. This guide is free for individual or congregational use. Customize for your community. Contributors are listed on the final page.*

About this Guide

Love is the Way offers a message of hope, inviting readers to embark on a journey of living the way of love. This small group guide is designed to lead small groups in a six-week journey of reflecting on the stories and thoughts of Bishop Curry to discover the gifts God has given you to live the way of love and bring hope to the world. The guide begins with a note to facilitators and continues with a framework for engaging in prayerful conversation and exploration. The six-week framework can be easily adapted for a four-week study.

A Note to Facilitators

If you've never been a small group facilitator before, don't worry. This might be your time to start! Simply pay attention to what you already know through your experiences in groups, including your family of origin, friend groups, committees, or teams. Make a list of what made the experience fruitful. The following questions will be helpful.

Did the gathering have a ritual? Small group gatherings work best when they follow a rhythm. A predictable pattern puts people at ease and builds community through a shared repeated experience. We suggest beginning with a prayer and check-in before digging into the content of the book.

What role did the facilitator play to engage every member of the group? One of the most important roles of a facilitator is to hold the space for the group. Rather than being the

experts, facilitators nurture and encourage conversation, drawing out the wisdom of the group. A facilitator can gently navigate groups to make room for those who are slow to speak and help those eager to talk to take their turn listening. Take some time to reflect on the good small group discussions that you've had in the past.

How can you best prepare? Praying for your group, reading the materials assigned and reviewing the questions are all essential ways to prepare. Find a few minutes on your own before and after each group meeting to pray and listen for God's wisdom. Share with God your ideas, hesitations, doubts, and hopes for the group. Before the session begins, set aside your concerns so you can be fully present and let group members know they are heard.

Group Norms

Group norms help to set brave spaces for conversation, setting expectations that, when adhered to, pave the way for honest conversation. A brave space isn't brave simply by acclamation. Group norms will help build trust necessary for brave spaces. Norms are reminders of behavior that reflect the needs of your group.

We recommend presenting a few group norms to group at your first gathering. Take a look at the Kaleidoscope Institutes [RESPECT framework](#) or Coming to the Table's [Touchstones](#). Present suggested norms at your first gathering, discuss them and provide everyone with a copy. Briefly reference and revisit the values at the beginning

of each gathering. Norms will help set healthy boundaries and reduce anxiety for participants.

One way to ground your group as a “brave space” of vulnerability and open conversation is to read [this poem](https://bit.ly/2Jm2rxk) together (<https://bit.ly/2Jm2rxk>).

Consider having your own norms as a facilitator. Knowing your limits might be a norm. If you feel someone needs support beyond your capacities, consider referring the person to a staff person responsible for pastoral care.

Mutual Invitation

We recommend the process of mutual invitation during the check-in time. The process of mutual invitation builds community by connecting individuals with one another as they invite one another to speak, emphasizes the active role of the participants by decentralizing the role of the facilitator, and recognizes the authority of each person’s individual narrative. Here is the [process of mutual invitation](#).

Reading Schedule for Participants

Week 1	Chapters 1-2 + pp. 249-250 + box on p. 251.
Week 2	Chapters 3-4 + p. 251, Step 1
Week 3	Chapter 5-6 + p. 252, Step 2
Week 4	Chapter 7-8 + p. 253, Step 3
Week 5	Chapters 9-10 + p. 254, Step 4
Week 6	Chapters 11-12 + refine your rule of life

A note about the reading schedule: Bishop Curry is clear. Love is an action. In the appendix to *Love Is the Way* (pp. 249-55) Bishop Curry invites readers to turn love into action by building a rule of life. A rule helps to support an intentional and purposeful life. We suggest creating that rule of life together as a small group throughout your time together. This reading schedule assigns a portion of the appendix each week. We recommend using the check-in time at the beginning of each session to support one another as the group takes the next step in building their rule of life together.

The Pattern of Gatherings

Each session is designed with the following elements:

- 5 Minutes - Opening Prayer with the option of singing or listening to a hymn
- 15 Minutes - Check-in (Holy Habits)
- 30 Minutes - Discussion questions
- 10 Minutes - Concluding worship

A note about check-in: This pattern of gatherings is a suggestion. You know your community best, so customize it to fit your group. Check-in time can be used for a variety of purposes. While check-in most often is a time for individuals to share briefly about their life, we have chosen a different approach with this guide. Rather than, “how are you” questions, we are using check-in time to help participants begin to create a rule of life. Bishop Curry sets out a four-part process starting on page 249. Each week, participants are invited to take one step in the process. Check-in time is used to share how that process is going. Again, this is just a suggestion. If you’d prefer a more traditional check-in, there are plenty of resources online for check-in questions.

SESSION 1

Chapters 1-2

PREPARATION

When inviting your small group to the first session, clearly communicate expectations. When and where will you meet? Will you pray? If so, who will lead prayer? How can participants prepare? For the first session, ask participants to prepare by reading Chapters 1 and 2 of *Love Is the Way* as well as pages 249-250, including the box on page 251.

If you choose, in your communication, explain that in addition to reflecting on the book, individuals will be invited to begin to create a rule of life. Throughout the book, Bishop Curry recommends that we live with intentionality. In the appendix, Curry is more directive and invites readers to adopt what's called a *rule of life*, a set of commitments to help support living intentionally. Check-in time will be devoted to supporting one another in writing and beginning to live by such a rule.

OVERVIEW

Opening Questions

What is love?

And how do I find God's love?

Scripture References

1 Corinthians 13

Romans 8:35-39

Summary

In chapter 1, Bishop Curry answers the question, "What is love?" by explaining the different kinds of love we experience and clarifying that he's talking about agape love - the love that connects us as members of the human family. Bishop Curry offers several examples of what that love looks like in people close to him, like Miss Josie, and close to us all, like Fannie Lou Hamer and Frances Perkins. Scripture reference is 1 Corinthians 13, with a focus on faith, hope, and love, with love being the greatest of these.

Chapter 2 answers the question of how we find God's love with stories of how he found it in a time of extreme grief. Bishop Curry tells us that while God is love, people are the vessels of love. His grandmother told him: "you know where the spirit of the lord is when you see people love." Scripture

reference is Romans 8:35-39. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing. God's love does not end, and neither does the love of those gone before us.

SMALL GROUP TIME

Opening Prayer

God of love, you bless us with your presence wherever we are. Thank you for the gift of this community and the opportunity to witness your love in each other. Keep us strong in mind and spirit as we seek to understand your way of love. We beckon the Spirit to reveal how you would have us show that love to each other today. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
(Chapter 1)

<https://youtu.be/MRGZrv0HI6k>

His Eye Is On the Sparrow (Chapter 2)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTkfpQjoi8>

Hymn 529 "In Christ There Is No East or West" (Chapter 1)

<https://youtu.be/Kf4M6fWSdh0>

O Love that Wilt Not Let Me Go
(Chapter 2)

<https://youtu.be/n08WO3N6yIE>

Michael, Row the Boat Ashore (Chapter 2)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJy3IjBlxRo>

Check-in Question (Holy Habits)

Whether you are aware of it or not, we likely already live by a rule of life. Think of a rule as a habit that we repeat each day or week. Reflect for a moment about one of your habits that supports you in leading a loving life. Share one of those habits with the group. As the leader, consider answering first, setting the tone for vulnerability and boundaries. As you listen to others make note of what you observe about group members' personalities, willingness to share, and potential group dynamics that may inform how you facilitate. Perhaps you want to add a holy habit. Try connecting something you want to add with something you already do. For example, after brushing my teeth (a habit we all have) I will...

Questions for Discussion

1. Bishop Curry defines three significant types of love (agape, eros, and philia - p. 14) and invites us to share agape love with the world. When have you given agape love? Talk about a time when you received that love. (Chapter 1)
2. Have you had a relationship like the one Bishop Curry had with Josie Robbins? Talk about a time when you loved for no other reason than because it was the right thing to do. (Chapter 2)
3. Bishop Curry talks about the power of community. Where do you find love in your faith community? Share an example. (Chapter 2)
4. A village of people helped Bishop Curry and his family during a very challenging time in his life. How do you share your love in and for your communities? (Chapter 2)
5. Often, we know the joy of sharing love and feel reluctant to feel the joy of receiving that love, particularly when we need it most. Share a time when you asked for help. How did it feel to receive it? (Chapter 2)

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Read Chapters 3 and 4 as well as pages 241-252. Complete step 1 for creating your rule of life.

Closing Worship

Whether in person or meeting online, light a candle. Invite participants to center themselves and breathe deeply, bringing to mind the conversation during the past hour, giving thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of stories and love. After a moment of silence, invite each person to share one word that they will take with them into the week. End with a prayer of gratitude.

SESSION 2

Chapters 3-4

Opening Questions

How do I find the energy to keep loving when the world seems to be going the other way?
And can love really change the world?

Scripture References

Isaiah 64:8

Romans 12:9-21

Philippians 4:12-13

Song of Solomon 8:7

Summary

In chapter 3 Bishop Curry tells how his grandma and ancestors “made do” with what they had, whether it be in the kitchen or in their faith. They took a little and made a lot, he says, “that’s a miracle. That’s taking something old and making something new.” Bishop Curry gives us the recipe for making do, the ingredients are tradition, imagination and God.

In chapter 4 Bishop Curry talks about people who dared to dream another reality and the power of dreams, especially in the darkest of times. He reminds us, “in the dark of midnight, many lost sight of love’s vision.” This is where faith matters, love is greater and we are called to dream. Can it work? he asks and has been asked, yes, if we have courage, faith and love.

SMALL GROUP TIME

Opening Prayer

Gracious and loving God, help us make do with all you have given us. We are the clay and you are our potter, mold us into people who use our imagination, dream and follow the way of love. Help us to put love into action and strive to be good in spiritual and bodily health. Amen

Hymn Suggestions

O God Unseen Yet Ever Near (Chapter 3)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysbMFBdCvIA>

Yes, God is Real (Chapter 3)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlGbDHM9QzQ>

Check-in Question (Holy Habits)

What are the core values or principles that you named in Step 1 for creating a rule of life that you would like to live more deeply into? What or who inspired those values?

Questions for Discussion

1. Bishop Curry talks about the recipe he learned from his grandma for “Making Do.” Making do takes tradition, imagination, and God. Ingredient one, tradition is the wisdom of ancestors. How has a family member’s faith touched your life and helps you today? (Chapter 3)
2. Ingredient two is imagination, which can move us from the given reality to create a new possibility. How and/or where can you use your imagination, childlike faith, to create new possibilities in a ministry, in a cause or in your life in Christ? (Chapter 3)
3. Ingredient three is God. Bishop Curry reminds us that prayer matters because when God is brought into the equation, something changes and other possibilities emerge. What do you need to pray for? Who do you need to pray for? (Chapter 3)
4. Bishop Curry says, “Dreams are love’s visions.” We are called to dream another reality, the dream of God. What is your dream? (Chapter 4)
5. Bishop Curry shares 9 of the 10 Commandments of Nonviolence by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, on pages 92-94. Read the commandments together. Choose one or two and talk about how practicing it would change the world. (Chapter 4)

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Read Chapters 5 and 6. Complete step 2 for creating your rule of life on page 252.

Closing Worship

Whether in person or meeting online, light a candle. Invite participants to center themselves and breathe deeply, bringing to mind the conversation during the past hour, giving thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of stories and love. After a moment of silence, invite each person to share one word that they will take with them into the week. End with a prayer of gratitude.

SESSION 3

Chapters 5-6

Opening Questions

Won't loving everybody make me a dormat?

I'm just a regular person, so how can my love have an impact?

Scripture References

Exodus 20:2-3

1 Corinthians 3:6

1 Corinthians 13:12

Summary

In chapter 5 Bishop Curry focuses on how self-love, and being true to your own heart, can open the door of another's heart. Bishop Curry reflects on how becoming our true selves and deeply loving ourselves (seeing ourselves as made in the image of a loving God) is discovered in the process of making hard life choices. John Coltrane's decision to heal from a life of drug addiction, Bishop Harris's choice to radically be her true self in the face of rejection and oppression, and ultimately Bishop Curry's decision to be fully himself as priest, presiding bishop, and preacher at the royal wedding are all examples of people making the decision to live into their true selves, freeing them to truly love others.

In chapter 6 Bishop Curry discusses that the work of love and the nature of progress is a struggle. Accepting that progress of loving and building the kingdom of God is a struggle, can be difficult. Bishop Curry reflects on how the struggle of systemic racism in Lincoln Heights, OH and his work there changed the way he understood progress and loving action. Collective action must be grounded in love, and community capacity building can increase our strength and resolve to do our part in the struggle. Hope, he says, comes from surprising places. We cannot do everything, but we can do our part and do it with our whole hearts.

SMALL GROUP TIME

Opening Prayer

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(You can join Bishop Curry leading the Collect for Social Justice at this link:

<https://episcopalchurch.org/from-book-common-prayer>)

Hymn Suggestions

John Coltrane's poem set to A Love Supreme
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCwkqsnLzks>

#742 Loving Spirit in *Wonder, Love and Praise*.
<https://youtu.be/kiCQKWVQysk>

Inching Along
<https://youtu.be/A8sMWtCc4y4>

Check-in Question (Holy Habits)

What promises have you identified in Step 2 that would help you live the core values or principles you would like to live more deeply into? In what ways do you already live those promises? Which do you find challenging? If your group is having a hard time choosing a vow, look at the promises we take at baptism, or others take on our behalf. You can find them on pp. 304-305 in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Questions for Discussion

1. Loving yourself, Bishop Curry says, is a required balance in the commandment to love God, Neighbor and Self. (p.96) How do we know when we have struck the balance of self-love? What are ways you find love for yourself? How does your body feel, when you are in balance with love of God, Neighbor and Self. (Chapter 5)
2. Bishop Curry says when faced with difficult decisions, he realized, "if he felt the presence of God, it was more like a computer program running in the background. It's there and it has an effect, but it doesn't require your immediate attention." With so much requiring attention these days, how do you pay attention to God in your daily life? Does God require your immediate attention? (Chapter 5)

3. “Opening the door to love’s calling, you will find the true you, the you that brings you closer to love” (p.102) Do you have a memory of standing at the door of love’s calling? Did you open it? Was it easy or hard to answer the call? What did you find on the other side? Are you standing at the door of love’s calling now? What do you need to answer your call? (Chapter 5)
4. Bishop Curry mentions the poet Nikki Giovanni. Read one of her poems together. How does her poetry reflect a struggle for a better world? You can find her poems here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/nikki-giovanni>. (Chapter 5)
5. Bishop Curry says “the journey is always a struggle.” When you hear this, how do you feel? What is your relationship to comfort, and how does accepting that the journey is always a struggle challenge the level of comfort in your life now? (Chapter 6)
6. Bishop Curry says, our job is to do our job..we cannot take on every part of the struggle but we must do our part. When you consider systemic racism, and our call to build the kingdom of God, The Beloved Community, what is your part? Do you feel equipped to do your job? (Chapter 6)
7. How is your community or church preparing to answer love’s calling and enter the struggle, together? Do you see hope in the struggle, name one time that you “found hope in a surprising place.” (Chapter 6)

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Read Chapters 7 and 8. Complete step 3 for creating your rule of life on page 253.

Closing Worship

Whether in person or meeting online, light a candle. Invite participants to center themselves and breathe deeply, bringing to mind the conversation during the past hour, giving thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of stories and love. After a moment of silence, invite each person to share one word that they will take with them into the week. End with a prayer of gratitude.

SESSION 4

Chapters 7-8

Opening Questions

I'm told to love my neighbor, but who is my neighbor?

What if love reveals me to be a hypocrite?

Scripture References:

Luke 24:49

Jeremiah 17:9

Philippians 3:14

Summary

In chapter 7, "Leave No One Behind," Bishop Curry introduces Martin Buber's principle of I-Thou, seeing every person as a sacred individual. When we see others in this way, acknowledging them fully, we can better become a church that exists primarily for those who are outside it.

Chapter 8, "When the Spirit Reworks You," reflects on how God calls us to change and transformation, sometimes even in our deepest assumptions and beliefs. When we remain open to the Holy Spirit's re-workings, we can be free to love and lead in faith.

SMALL GROUP TIME

Opening Prayer

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Prayer for the Human Family, from the Book of Common Prayer. You can also join Michael Curry in this prayer with this video: (<https://episcopalchurch.org/from-book-common-prayer>)

Hymn Suggestions

“Only Begotten, Word of God Eternal”

H1982

<https://youtu.be/JUDevKnfnQ>

“Oh Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt69WDtYNLo>

Check-in Question (Holy Habits)

Share with your group one or two habits that you identified in Step 3 that will help you fulfill the vows have you identified. What one habit can you commit to taking on each day for the next week?

Questions for Discussion

1. Bishop Curry introduces the teaching of Martin Buber of I-It and I-Thou. It is easy for us to see others as “it,” a caricature or object, but we are called to see other people as “Thou,” with all dignity and holiness. Have you ever had the experience of considering someone as “I-It”, and having that relationship transformed to “I-Thou”? What happened to help you see them differently? (Chapter 7)
2. How does your faith community live out William Temple’s vision of an organization that exists for the sake of those outside it? (Chapter 7)
3. In Chapter 8, Bishop Curry describes his first “earthquake,” when as bishop of North Carolina he was called to lead communities toward equality of marriage and ordination for LGBTQ+ Christians. He was pushed to discern around questions in a new way. When have you been pushed to ask new questions and discern decisions? (Chapter 8)
4. The Bishop described the inner dilemma of leading this change as “the pragmatist and the idealist were in conflict within me.” Have you ever felt this push and pull between idealism and pragmatism? What happened? (Chapter 8)
5. Bishop Curry says, “The Bible could guide me only if it was in conversation with real life.” How do you look to the Bible for guidance? How do you bring scripture into conversation with your real life? (Chapter 8)

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Read Chapters 9 and 10. Complete step 4 for creating your rule of life on page 253.

Closing Worship

Whether in person or meeting online, light a candle. Invite participants to center themselves and breathe deeply, bringing to mind the conversation during the past hour, giving thanks for the presence

of the Holy Spirit and the gift of stories and love. After a moment of silence, invite each person to share one word that they will take with them into the week. End with a prayer of gratitude.

SESSION 5

Chapters 9-10

Opening Questions

Do I have to love even my enemy?

How can love overcome what divides us and move us forward together?

Scripture References

Ephesians 5:2

Galatians 3:28

Summary

In chapter 9, Bishop Curry discusses the challenge that he believes to be greatest for the Church, the nation, and the world - how to walk together in Christian love even when we are working through significant differences. He shares his passion for moving forward in hope and love together, rejoicing in our shared concern for a better world, and leaving behind the contempt that will always work against the best interests of all. By sharing the personal stories of his experience of the 2015 meeting of Anglican Communion Primates, the Presiding Bishop gives the reader a glimpse into how “agreeing to love is the greatest agreement.”

In chapter 10, Bishop Curry continues to express his concern over divisions - racial, socioeconomic, and political - in our nation and the world, reminding the reader of the particular pain suffered by all who feel unheard, ignored, or under siege. He reiterates his confidence in the power of love to overcome such pain and division, and speaks to the healing power of the sharing of our stories. Telling his own story, and that of the Reverend Canon Stephnie Spellers, of reconciliation and activism work with the Sioux at Standing Rock, the Presiding Bishop emphasizes the importance of deep listening and truth-telling.

SMALL GROUP TIME

Opening Prayer

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 832. You can also join Michael Curry in this prayer with this video:

<https://episcopalchurch.org/from-book-common-prayer>)

Hymn Suggestions

“Lord, whose love through humble service”

H1982 #610

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKSgHPQEjCU>

[jCU](#)

“God of grace and God of glory”

H1982 # 594

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9rWrw3XBO8>

[BO8](#)

Check-in Question (Holy Habits)

How has the practice of your new habit been going? What have you noticed about your practice? Has it impacted other parts of your day or week?

Questions for Discussion

1. Bishop Curry names the priority (his own and that of the Episcopal Church) to refocus on “work that would make a difference not primarily for the church, but for our society and global community.” Discuss the balance between self and other in your own life of service and/or in the life of your faith community. How does it feel and what does it mean to shift priorities in the way Bishop Curry suggests? (Chapter 9)
2. Bishop Curry insists that love allows us to remain in relationships even when there are strong disagreements. Do you believe this to be true? Talk about an example from your own life or from history that illustrates this truth, or where you now believe Bishop Curry’s kind of love would have led to a better outcome. (Chapter 9)
3. Bishop Curry emphasizes that “truth comes before reconciliation,” and he admits that telling our true stories and listening to those of others, must take us outside our comfort zones. Discuss what makes it difficult to talk about and listen to truth. (Chapter 10)
4. The chapters’ true stories about the beginning of healing through “showing up,” listening, telling, and ritual with the Sioux are a powerful witness to work that must be done with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. That work can begin with this small group talking openly and honestly about their own knowledge, experience, and feelings around the stories of our First People. What commitment can individuals, and perhaps the group, make today to this work? (Chapter 10)
5. At the close of chapter ten, Bishop Curry the work of the Reverend Charles Robinson with *The Project for a Deeper Understanding*. Our final question for discussion and listening comes from Charles: “For a particular issue, what is the story of your life that brought you to that conclusion?”

Preparing for the Next Gathering

Read Chapters 11 and 12. Review your rule of life for sustainability and make refinements.

Closing Worship

Whether in person or meeting online, light a candle. Invite participants to center themselves and breathe deeply, bringing to mind the conversation during the past hour, giving thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of stories and love. After a moment of silence, invite each person to share one word that they will take with them into the week. End with a prayer of gratitude.

SESSION 6

Chapters 11-12

Opening Questions

Does love mean avoiding politics?

How can love make “E Pluribus Unum” real in America without erasing anybody?

Scripture References

1 John 4:7-8

Jeremiah 8:18-22

Summary

In chapter 11 Bishop Curry shares how the group *Reclaiming Jesus* was formed out of a shared concern for the soul of Christianity in America. The group recognized extremists were drawing out the silent majority in faith and politics. The group agreed on core values and that we were called to be in the public square in peace and love. The way of love does not keep us from engaging with the world. Rather it calls us to engage differently--by shifting the conversation to higher ground. To search for common values and principles and then move back into the issues. For Christians the Golden Rule is the value against which all must be measured.

In chapter 12 Bishop Curry stresses the way of love is a commitment “to seeking the good and well-being of others.” It’s intentional and must be practiced. Bishop Curry shares two stories of mountain top experiences where the way of love brought people together and healing ensued.

SMALL GROUP TIME

Opening Prayer

Lord God Almighty, who hast made all the peoples of the earth for thy glory, to serve thee in freedom and in peace: Give to the people of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with thy gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen. (BCP, 207)*

Hymn Suggestions

How Great Thou Art (Chapter 12)

<https://youtu.be/dnvg00tupul>

There is a Balm in Gilead (Chapter 12)

<https://youtu.be/BN9JALQRMb0>

Check-in Question (Holy Habits)

The steps for creating a rule of life invite us to draw on the support of others to practice a rule of life. Identify an accountability partner from the group and check in with one another twice a month by phone, text, or even zoom. Or, what other community can you draw on for support?

Questions for Discussion

1. Bishop Curry opens Chapter 11 with the question, “Does love mean avoiding politics?” (p. 225) What is your first reaction to this question? How do you respond to the adage, “there should be a separation of church and state.” (Chapter 11)
2. Bishop Curry describes how he and Jim Wallis bonded over a shared concern for the soul of Christianity. Bishop Curry argues we need to take our faith into the public square--“keeping our faith and staying engaged.” How do we do that AND recognize the many faiths of the American people? How do we engage our faith in politics without othering those who have a different or no faith? (Chapter 11)
3. While Bishop of North Carolina there was an intentional decision to relocate the diocesan offices to be closer to the state capitol building. It was a tangible witness to the Gospel. (p. 228) What is something your congregation can intentionally do to be a tangible witness to the Gospel in your community? (Chapter 11)
4. In Chapter 12 Bishop Curry writes about mountaintops or thin places as moments where heaven and earth seem to touch. Have you ever experienced one of these moments? Were you surprised? Did you recognize it at the time? If you are comfortable, share with the group. (Chapter 12)
5. Is it possible to create opportunities for mountain top experiences or do they just happen? In Bishop Curry’s story about the man he met while the keynote speaker at a church convention, he admits he was slightly wary. The encounter ended up being one of the thin places he describes. How do we step out of our comfort zones and open possibilities to meet Christ in another? (Chapter 12)
6. Bishop Curry concludes by saying we can’t live on the mountaintop but the mountaintop can live within us. (p.248): “When God, who is love, becomes our spiritual center of gravity, and love our moral compass, we live differently, regardless of what the world around us does.” It doesn’t just happen. We must work for it and be intentional. What is one thing you can start to do this week to keep God as your spiritual center? What do you need to do to be able to listen for love, trust it, give into it and obey it? (Chapter 12)

Closing Worship

Whether in person or meeting online, light a candle. Invite participants to center themselves and breathe deeply, bringing to mind the conversation during the past hour, giving thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of stories and love. After a moment of silence, invite each person to share one word that they will take with them into the week. End with a prayer of gratitude.

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