

Summary of Bible Study “Rediscovering the Book of Faith,” Session 1, 2/3/21

Due to copyright rules, we can't record these three sessions of Bible study. But here is a summary of what we talked about. Please join in next week on the Zoom Bible study at 10:00 am on Wednesday, February 10th. You can participate even if you don't have a Zoom account; even if you don't have a camera on your computer; even if you just call in over the phone. We'd love to have you there!

- Find a family picture – on your phone, in your house. Or maybe it's a family picture album, or a family Bible, or something else that represents a memory. Think about the story of that memory or picture, and share it with someone if you can.
- Today we'll be talking about how the stories of faith – the stories of God's people – were passed down through the generations to become what we call the Old Testament today. Get in the mindset of what stories and memories are significant in your family's past, and how they still are important to you today. Get into the mindset of *how* those stories have made it to you today.
- Opening prayer from *Rediscovering the Book of Faith*: Gracious God, we thank you for the memories and stories we have to share. We thank you for the people and events that have shaped us. As we gather to rediscover our book of faith and the stories of your people of old, help us understand that these people and stories have helped make us who and what we are today. Open our eyes to your presence and your promises shown through the Bible. Amen.
- At this point in the Bible study we watched a five-minute video that is part of the class. It told the story of how the present form of the Old Testament came to be, and touched on things like oral tradition, canon, and types of writing in the Bible.
- Many centuries, if not millennia, passed before the passages and books of the Old Testament were written down. Up until that point, the stories and songs were passed on via oral tradition, with honored elders with the gifts of storytelling sharing the stories with their clans and tribes. We followed a short “imagining” of what it may have been like, and talked about the honor felt by the elders to tell the stories accurately, and how seriously they took that responsibility.
- We also talked about the difficulty of understanding the written language of Hebrew – how it comes from a different alphabet, a different mindset, a different worldview. How it has no real vowels. We talked about the different types of writing in the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible), including history (although not like a history textbook of today), poetry, songs, genealogies, wisdom literature, prophecy, and more. However, as difficult as it can be to understand the Old Testament sometimes, the New Testament makes no sense without it. Jesus and the disciples and Paul and other New Testament authors were all Jews, and the New Testament is full of direct quotes, indirect references, acknowledgements, and allusions to the Old Testament.
- All these factors mean that the variety we have in the Old Testament, and the Holy Spirit's constant activity to draw us into the Living Word of Scripture, gives us a deeper, richer, better-rounded story and picture of the story of God and God's people.
- We also talked briefly about “canon” (not to be confused with “cannon,” the big gun on a pirate ship). The Sadducees would have restricted the Hebrew Bible to just the first five books (also known as the

Pentateuch, or Torah). The Pharisees advocated keeping almost all the books we currently have. The Pharisees were the group that endured, so our Bible looks more like their plan. From the Bible study: “As the stories of God’s people were written down, there were debates about which scrolls to regard most highly. The debate was not about which stories were true records of the past, but about which had more authority for how people ought to live now. The scrolls considered most important were those that helped a new generation discover God.”

- Finally, I gave out some “homework.” I asked folks to fill out a “Life Graph” (see other attachment). Chart some highs and lows from the last twenty years of your life. Consider that some events might be both a high and a low, for different reasons. Also graph out what you hope or expect for the next five years. What are the stories – of all types of events – that you would share with generations to come, with your family and closest friends? Other “homework” options include: creating a family album or scrapbook; creating an audio or video recording of some stories or family history and passing it on to others; writing a letter to someone in the future, like a written time capsule; or digging into the stories of a community or congregation you have been a part of.

These homework assignments are intended, like the opening activity of telling the story that goes with a picture, to get you in the mindset of oral tradition and the stories you would want to be passed on to others, intact and impactful. After you try these out, then go back to the Bible and read some Old Testament stories again, and see how they feel to you as the stories of our faith-family’s past, preserved and still living for us today. I suggest the book of Ruth. But you can take any Old Testament book and spend 15 minutes a day reading it for the next week.

- I thanked everyone for their participation, encouraged them to invite more to participate next week, and closed in prayer: Gracious God, we thank you for the memories and stories we have to share. We thank you for the people and events that have shaped us. As we go our separate ways, help us to acknowledge the story we hold in common, the story of your love for your people in every time and every place. Give us courage to share this story with those we love and those we meet along our journey. Amen.

- The phrase in the prayer, “as we go our separate ways” hit me; we’re already separated, having our conversation over Zoom. But stories unite us. The stories of our families; the stories of our communities; and especially the stories of our shared faith and mighty God. No matter what might separate us through time and distance, we are bound together by the Holy Spirit, and there is power in God’s stories to do that binding.

That’s the short version of what we covered. This doesn’t include the stories and conversations folks shared. I hope you can join us text week in the Zoom meeting itself. Here is the information for next week. There is a link for those on the internet, and call-in information for those who aren’t.

Messiah Lutheran is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Messiah Lutheran's Zoom Meeting

Time: Feb 10, 2021 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84176941468?pwd=MnZsVUxEaEdscXRkMTI2elhSeUFXUT09>

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SESSION 1

[LEADER SUPPORT]

Life Graph

	High Points	Low Points
5 years from now		
today		
5 years ago		
10 years ago		
15 years ago		
20 years ago		

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