



COMMUNAL BIBLE STUDY (CBS)
SELECTED STUDIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

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Original title: *Estudio comunitario: Evangelio de Lucas*

Translated and adapted into English by E. Autero

1.1 Introduction

This manual has its origins in the author's small living room in Finland in 1999. As a student of theology I used to facilitate Bible studies for a small group of friends. Though I did not understand it at that time it was a very similar Bible study method that I employ today, even if the early version was less community oriented and less clearly articulated. I had learned this basic Bible study method in England few years earlier in an Evangelical students' university group. In 2003 I had an opportunity to spend almost a year in Cochabamba, Bolivia and practice missionary work. I had a chance to teach in a Bible college, work with street children, in a drug rehabilitation center, and meet with many wonderful people. This time opened my eyes to see the importance of ministering to the poor and the needy and to the whole person in a community setting. It seemed impossible to talk about salvation of person's soul without considering the other pressing needs, whether food, clothing, or proper housing. Subsequent ministry time in India (2004-2005) and almost two years as a drug rehab therapist in jail in US further convinced me of the need for these kinds of Bible studies. In 2011 I was invited to teach at the Bolivian Evangelical University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The primary focus was my doctoral work but in a sense these studies are based on my empirical field research with local communities, both poor and affluent in the city of Santa Cruz. Though my time in Bolivia was too short, it seems that this manual will have a broader reach than Bolivia. Let your Kingdom come!

Blessings in the name of our Savior Lord Jesus Christ,

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2.1 The Method of Communal Bible Study (CBS)

The method of Communal Bible study (CBS) has a basis in the conviction that the Holy Spirit (HS) lives in each believer and wants to speak through each and every member of the body of Christ. This can be seen for example in the Corinthian church, when Paul teaches that everyone may participate in the service (1 Cor 14:26). Jesus Christ also promised to send the Spirit of Truth to guide the church (John 14:26-27; 16:13-15; 1 John 2:17). Yet, this does not mean that the church has no need of leaders or those who have a special gift and calling to teach, preach, and encourage the people of God. However, sometimes the Holy Spirit uses people who are not part of the official leadership of the church and appear weak or timid (1 Cor 12:22-25). Jesus told his disciples to learn spiritual lessons from children (Matt 18:1-5), to carefully observe the birds and the grass of the field (Luke 12:22-31), and imitate the poor widow in her generosity (Luke 21:1-4). Jesus used all of these, and many others, to teach his disciples that God's reign comes to us through unexpected people and surprising situations. The communal Bible study aims to facilitate a process through which HS may speak in an unexpected way.

The CBS has two important facets that need to be considered. It is a **community oriented** study – this means that the facilitator's role is not to preach or give lengthy teaching episodes, but rather to facilitate the participation of the group members. What often happens in CBS is the following: The Holy Spirit illuminates an idea or section in or through the text. This is further elaborated through a personal encounter or an experience. Others in the group are able to identify with the experience and the HS enables others to understand the text and their own experience through this process of reflecting on the text. Despite this, it is important to note that not every comment or sharing of an experience is edifying or come from God. Therefore, the second important aspect of CBS is **discernment**. God's people need to learn to use the gift of discernment (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:21; Heb 5:14; 1 John 4:1-2). Unfortunately, the gift of discernment is often neglected in the churches today. Further, discernment is never the exclusive privilege of one single individual but it belongs to the community of God's people. Even if some have a specific gift of discernment, it is an area that each person needs to grow further. Communal Bible study is also a good place to try and practice this gift of discernment and thus grow in spiritual maturity.

As was indicated earlier, communal Bible study is not just about individuals but has to do with the community. That is, the community of God's people which is the church – as well as the participation of the church in the matters, problems, and things of the larger community in a particular socio-geographical location. That is why it is so important to learn to look and see people inside and outside the church like Jesus did. Unfortunately the church does not always have a reputation of mercy or even an attitude of love that characterized Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus had a reputation of being "friend of sinners and tax collectors" and ministered especially among the weak (e.g. woman who was bent forward, Luke 13), children (Matt 18:1-5), prostitutes (Luke 7:34), "crazy" people (e.g. demon possessed man in Luke 8:26-39), thieves (e.g. Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10), the poor and the sick (e.g. blind Bartimeus, Mark 10:46-52). Why was it that Jesus reached out particularly to those who were poor, blind, sick, and ill-reputed? What is our attitude toward the poor, the marginalized, and

the outcast? Do we fix our attention rather to wealth, power, reputation, and our own desires and needs? Jesus met people where they were and ministered to those in most dire need. If we really want to listen to the voice of the Spirit through these studies, it might very well mean that He directs us to reach out to the **least and the lost in our community** as well. This may also necessitate that we will become active participants in the community's concrete challenges and problems that we are part of. In this sense "neighbor love" is not an option for Christians. That is why each study ends with a **practical commitment** – or at least a challenge to take a practical **step toward transformation and change**. True commitment is not something vague or general, such as "I am going to be a better Christian" or alike, but rather a concrete plan of action that moves us to really do something tangible. The commitment may take various forms, be it an initiation of a new ministry program, restructuring old ones or a wider plan to reach out to the community in some capacity. As a body of believers, locally and globally, we cannot isolate from the surrounding community and its problems, or merely try to save people's "souls". After all, it is impossible to make a neat distinction between salvation of person's soul from other aspects of salvation that occurs in a person's life.

With this in mind, the objectives of communal Bible study are the following:

- Develop knowledge about God (theology) and understanding of practical ministry that is suitable for a particular context.
 - Each country, city, and place has its own customs, culture, and challenges. There needs to be an authentic expression of Christian faith in each place that is formulated under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and auspices of the Canon of Scripture. Each church, denomination, community, and region has its own challenges.
- Bring salvation and fullness of life to the least and the lost – that means, it is imperative to develop and design concrete action and ministries that reach out to the most needy in the local community (the poor and the needy; sick, people with disabilities, oppressed, excluded, and so on).
- Grow in the knowledge of God through community Bible study process.

2.2 Practical Instructions for the facilitator

This type of community oriented Bible study has certain challenges for the leader or facilitator of the group. Most these have to do with the group dynamics. For example, how to manage dynamics in a group that the facilitator is not familiar with; What if the group members are reluctant to share and discuss the passage; what should be done if the group moves to discuss topics that are completely irrelevant to the study at hand; what should the facilitator do if one person starts to dominate or give a sermon.

It is impossible to discuss each and every issue that might arise in a group study, but I would like to offer few tips to help the facilitator to manage group dynamics. Here are some:

How should one motivate a group that is reluctant to discuss or participate?

This often happens when the facilitator is not known to the group and/or comes from a different cultural or denominational background. This aspect is even more pronounced if the group members do not know each other. In this case it is very important to start with an “ice breaker” – an activity that lightens up the atmosphere and helps ‘break the ice’. The activity need not be long; often 10-15 minute activity is enough to help people get more comfortable with each other. Here are just few sample ice breakers that I personally like:

- Write three things about you in a piece of paper – one of them has to be lie. Present the three things to the group while others try to guess which one is the lie.
- Numerous other ice breakers may be found on line e.g.:
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/prs/campus-ministry/saltandlight/Retreat%20Resource%20Manual/Meaningful%20Small%20Group%20Ice%20Breakers.html
<http://www.cfdl.org/ministry.php?id=32>

It is also possible that people in the group have never participated in a group Bible study and frankly do not understand how it works – or that their opinions might be valid or worth bringing out into the open. Other times the participants may not understand the objectives or the goal of the Bible study – for example, sometimes participants wonder why there needs to be a discussion at all or why does not the leader or the pastor just give us the correct (or spiritual) answer to these questions. At other times participants may find it difficult to investigate and read the text closely or articulate their opinions and views of the passage (some may also have difficulties reading a text or have dyslexia). Generally, this may be simply because they have never done this kind of Bible study before or they may think that their opinions are of any value. In this sense it is very important that the facilitator encourages everyone to participate and give their own opinion about the passage. Therefore, after the first reading of the passage the facilitator starts with a simple question: what is this passage all about? Or what jumps out of the page? or alike. These opening questions are meant to stir up a spontaneous discussion about the passage. It is important to emphasize that there is no strictly speaking right or wrong answers to this question – nor is anybody asking for a theologically elaborate answers. If nobody seems to want to comment, the facilitator can encourage group members to discuss their opinions with a person next to them before giving an answer.

How to manage group dynamics?

It is also important that the facilitator knows how to manage the group dynamics so that everybody has a chance to share and voice their perspectives. This might be difficult particularly in groups that have a strong sense of hierarchy or among those whose idea of a Bible study means listening to a sermon or a study by a single expositor. Sometimes even if the idea of communal sharing is accepted in principle, in practice the few leaders (or those

who want to be leaders) dominate the conversations. That is why it is important that the facilitator carefully explains the concept of communal Bible study and how the Holy Spirit wants to speak through each and every one. One way to encourage the timid members is to encourage them to share in the small groups prior to bringing the conversation to the whole group. In addition, the facilitator may choose to ask directly quiet members to share their opinions of the passage as long as that is done discreetly. Nevertheless, what should the facilitator do if one (or more) start to preach or dominate the conversation. Often, it is sufficient to let the person give his or her little speech and then thank the person for the contribution. Then, the facilitator may redirect the next question to others. If the person continues to dominate or preach, it is better to interrupt him/her and thank the person for the contribution – e.g. by stating “thank you X for your comment, but let’s give others a chance to give their commentary as well (facilitator looks at Y and says) – what do you think Y this passage is all about?”, or something similar.

If a dispute arises over a difficult or controversial theological question, it is best to have the group talk for a few short minutes. If there seems to be no conclusion or the debate continues, it is best to redirect the group to the main point. For example, the facilitator may say: “this theological question is very interesting; however, it is best to discuss this with your pastor afterward”. The purpose of the Communal Bible study is not to start arguing or debating questions such as the nature and function of spiritual gifts, whether it is possible to loose salvation or other topics where sincere Bible believing Christians disagree.

If the group moves completely away from the Bible study topic, the facilitator can always redirect the group to focus on the passage or questions at hand. In this way the Bible study process does not get off track. It seems that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus poses a special challenge in this regard (Luke 16:19-31), since the afterlife terminology and imagery attracts a lot of comments and speculation. There is always a temptation to debate and ponder the details of the afterlife imagery or the location of “Abraham’s bosom” and so on (see some helpful comments for the facilitator on the section of Luke 16:19-31 in this manual). Nevertheless, the facilitator should make sure that the main point(s) of the parable are explored with sufficient emphasis – such as the how one lives in the present, especially in regards to one’s possessions, has implications to the afterlife as well as to the well-being of one’s neighbor in the present. The afterlife imagery is not the main point and spending too much time on it, especially since it is a *parable*, may actually distract the group from exploring the parable’s main points. That is why it is important that the facilitator prepares well for the study.

2.3 Steps of the Communal Bible Study (CBS)

It is important that the facilitator is well-prepared for the study. The main steps of the CBS are the following:

1. Introduction and welcome:
 - a. Explain who you are and the purpose of CBS
 - b. Briefly explain the goals of the CBS

- i. This is a community-based Bible study – that is, *everybody gets to participate and share from their own life experience with God.*
- ii. Holy Spirit speaks through each and every one
- iii. There is a chance to make a personal and communal commitment to advance the kingdom of God after each study session.

2. Ice-breakers:

- a. E.g. write three things about you in a piece of paper, one of which is a lie – let others try to guess which one of the three is a lie.
- b. Select other type of ice-breaker that fits the your context better
- c. The following ice-breaker is of more serious type and may be used to gain some information for the facilitator about the community and the group (assuming the that group members live in the same area/community) – this may help frame the questions and make the facilitation easier:
 - i. Divide the group into smaller groups of 2-3 persons and give each group a pen and a piece of paper. Let each group write in the paper the following:
 1. **2-3 positive and good things about life your community'**
 2. **2-3 challenges or things that make life difficult, in your community.**
 - share in the larger group

3. Place, dates, and time

- a. Make sure that everybody is in agreement of the time, place, and the dates of CBS if you decide to hold multiple studies. Also, make sure that there is one Bible available for each participant.

4. Steps of the Study

- a. Each CBS session has the same steps – introduction, step I and step II.

INTRODUCTION: Introduce the passage that is being studied. For example, “Tonight we are going to study a passage that is often called the ‘Programmatic statement of Jesus – or the program of Jesus’. In this passage Jesus...” (see section Introduction in each study for a suggested introduction).

STEP I: This step introduces the biblical text of the day. Each participant reads the passage first quietly from his/her own Bible and then the passage is read out loud by one group member. The facilitator opens the study by asking “What do you think this passage is all about?” The purpose of this first step is to open a spontaneous commentary of the passage and share observations about it.

STEP II: In this step it is common to form groups of 3-5 persons. The facilitator then gives each group a piece of paper and a pen to write down answers and make notes. The facilitator then gives each group the first set of questions that the small groups will discuss among themselves first and then share with the rest of the groups. The purpose of the small group discussion is

to read the text more closely and think about the answers before sharing with others.

It is important to note that the STEP II has two parts. The first step focuses more on the text whereas the second part emphasizes the application or appropriation part more. After each part it is important that all groups come together to discuss their findings in the larger group. The final commitment is a challenge for everyone individually but also for the whole group or community. The final part may include the following aspects: 1) Personal and community commitment 2) Evaluation of the resources within the church and community – this may also include things such as checking with church and community authorities; overlapping ministries and services in the community. It is important to remember that one cannot force a commitment from anyone. It needs to be genuine and lasting to have a true impact. That is why much prayer and discernment is needed to make a lasting commitment and impact.

If a group discovers a theme or need that touches the community, it is possible that they want to start a ministry - or build on a program that already exists. If the same facilitator spends a longer time with a group, it might be wise to postpone a final (more extensive?) commitment until the group feels ready to make one. This does not mean that the individuals could not make a personal commitment after each study.

Finally, it is not necessary to have a lot of financial resources to help the community one is part of. There are multiple practical ways one can help the needy in the community with little or no financial resources. The greatest obstacle is usually one's unwillingness and lack of creativity. For example, generally it costs very little to help children in a poor community. It is possible to organize games, activities, or help them with school work or tutoring. More than anything else, one needs a willing heart and a little bit of time and effort. A good biblical example is the story of feeding the multitude (Luke 9:10-17). The little boy brought the little he had to Jesus (bread and fish) and the Master multiplied the little to the whole crowd. The same principle works here as well. Start with little – be faithful in little things and the Lord will multiply it. Other applicable principles are faithfulness and perseverance. Without these one gets tired and the work ends quickly.

Remember also that it is possible to cooperate with other churches – and I dare to say that even with denominations and traditions other than one's own. This also includes governmental and non-governmental organizations, neighborhood associations, rehabilitation centers, and so on. One just needs to approach them with a prayerful attitude, humility, and ideas of common good. We should not limit God and His ways of working through people who may not share all of the same beliefs and convictions that we do. Of course, this is a

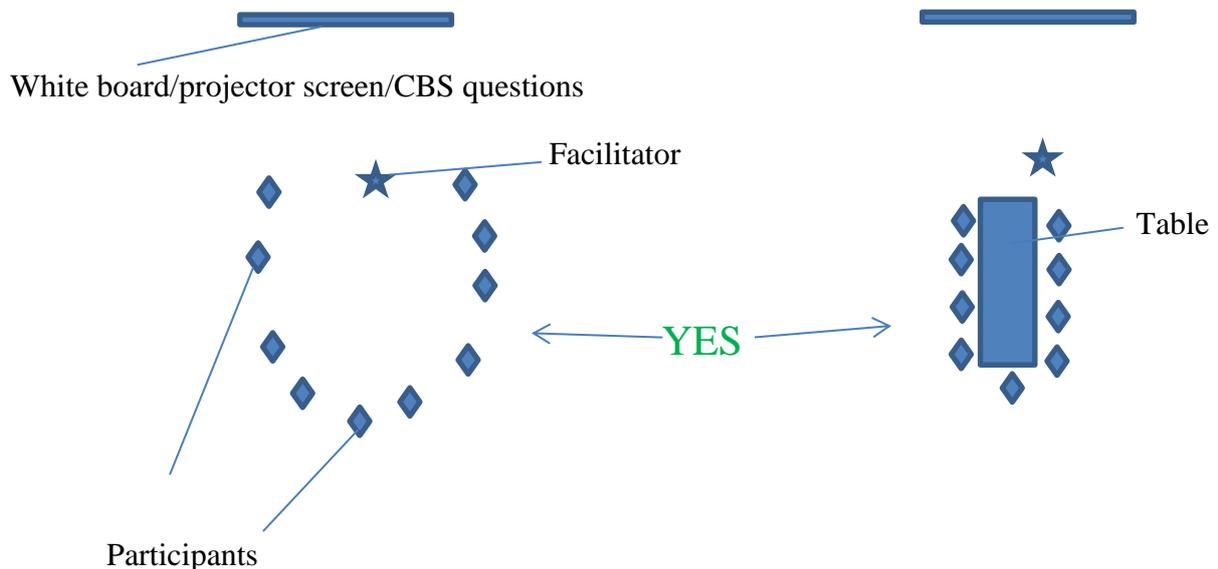
matter of discernment as well and each step needs to be considered prayerfully and in light of Scripture.

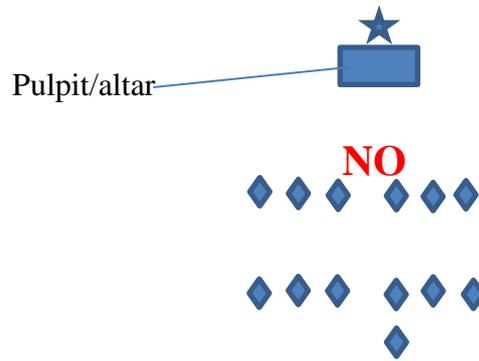
2.4 Tools and Practical steps

It is important that each CBS is prepared well. In addition to spiritual preparation, there needs to be practical arrangement, as was mentioned earlier. These are some of the most pertinent steps to prepare:

1. Study the passage well before the CBS session
2. Be familiar with the facilitator materials in this manual
 - a. Practice introducing the lesson and each step
 - b. Have all the relevant materials ready at hand
3. Have ready all the materials and anticipate the amount of participants
4. Visit and be familiar with the place where the CBS is conducted – e.g. does the place have enough seats, Bibles and so on? Is there a powerpoint projector, white board etc.?
5. Make sure to arrive in time to arrange the seats, organize the room, and so on.

The placement of seats is very important of CBS process, since certain seating arrangements encourage, while others do not, participation and sharing. For example, if the facilitator is standing behind a pulpit (or altar etc.), it subtly communicates that he/she is in charge and that others are merely supposed to listen. Below is an example of correct (first) and incorrect (second) seating arrangements for CBS.





The second picture does not encourage participation and everyone cannot see well.

Summary list of needed materials:

1. Bible for the facilitator and each participant
2. This manual, including the Bible study questions on a large piece of paper, whiteboard, ppt or alike.
3. Tape to hang questions on the wall, white board or ppt & screen; paper and pens for the groups

3.1 Select Studies in Luke's Gospel

The Bible studies in this manual have a special focus. Nearly all of them have something to do with Jesus' teachings and actions about needy people in one way or another – whether the sick, marginalized people, poor, disabled, oppressed and alike. As will be seen, this was one of the central aspects of Jesus' earthly life and the same theme continues in the history of the early church as well as in the teachings of the apostles (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-34; 11:27-30; 1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2:10; 1 Tim 6:9-10; Jam 1:9-11, 27; 4:13-17; 5:1-6; 1 John 3:17-18; Rev 18:1-20). This does not mean that other themes would not be important; however, it does seem to highlight the urgency of this often forgotten or depreciated aspect of Christian faith. In addition, there are few countries in the world where this would not be directly relevant at the level of local communities.

Mary's Song - Luke 1:45-56

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on the "Mary's Song" in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that is often referred to as *Magnificat* or "Mary's Song". It is a poetic song that was sung by a bold young girl.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 1:45-56). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. What kind of person was Mary according to this passage and what has God done in her life?
3. What groups of people do you find mentioned in 1:51-53? Can you find an example of these groups in Luke's Gospel or other Gospels?
4. What is God's attitude and actions toward the groups mentioned in 1:51-53? Why?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives **the second set of questions** for groups to ponder

5. You have identified the groups in 1:51-53. Who are corresponding groups in our context and what does God think of them?
6. What does this passage speak to us concerning God and His work in the world?
7. How should we apply the message of this passage in our lives?

8. Is there something concrete that we (or I) should do to make the message of this Scripture a reality in our community?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about what resources (people, talents, money) are available in the church and the community as a whole. You may also think about the other available ministries in your church and the area as well as the decision-making process in your church/community.

The Programmatic Statement of Jesus - Luke 4:16-21

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on the “Program of Jesus” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that is often referred to as “The programmatic statement of Jesus” or “the program of Jesus”. Jesus visits a synagogue in Nazareth where he grew up and reads a passage from the prophet Isaiah.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 4:16-21). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. For what purpose was Jesus anointed with the Spirit?
3. Who were the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed during the time of Jesus?
4. Can you find an example of each group in Luke’s Gospel or in another Gospel?
5. What does Jesus mean when he says “proclaim the year of Lord’s favor”? Read also Deut 15:1-11 and/or Lev 25

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives **the second set of questions** for groups to ponder

6. Who are the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed in our context?
7. What does this passage say about salvation that Jesus brought?
8. How should we apply the message of this passage in our lives?

9. Is there something concrete that we (or I) should do to make the message of this Scripture a reality in our community?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about what resources (people, talents, money) are available in the church and the community as a whole. You may also think about the other available ministries in your church and the area as well as the decision-making process in your church/community.

SHORT COMMENTARY on the passage (4:16-21) for the facilitator:

Historical background: Many people during Jesus' time were suffering due to politics of Herod Antipas and the religion based on the Temple and the Law. Many people remained marginalized, oppressed, and poor. Taxes were heavy and the political leaders silenced those who had a different opinion. God's Law was used by some Jewish leaders to justify the exclusion and exploitation of people.

Some comments on the terminology:

Poor: This refers particularly to the materially poor (actually the passage does not refer to poverty but to people who are poor [or lack material resources]). It also has a social and spiritual connotation. See also 7:22; 14:13, 21; 1:52-53; 3:10-11; 6:20-21; 18:9-17, 23.

Prisoners/captives: This term also includes an economic dimension (6:24, 34-36; 11:41; 12:33; 14:12-14, 33; 18:22; 19:8) and a spiritual dimension – especially those who are captives to Satan. This causes sicknesses, demonic oppression, and mental problems, like the woman who was bound and “bent over” (13:10-17; 4:31-41). See also captivity to sin and shame (5:17-32; 1:77; 3:3).

The blind: This refers to physically blind (18:35ff), other people with debilitating conditions (7:22), and spiritual blindness (1:79; 2:32; Acts 26:17ff).

Oppressed: Those oppressed by Satan – this causes illnesses, demonic oppression, and mental problems (13:11, 16; 4:31-41). Also, oppression that is caused by sin (5:17-32; 1:77; 3:3).

Year of Lord's favor: This refers to either the Jubilee year (Lev 25; every 50th year) or the Sabbath year (Deut 15:1-11; every 7th year).

The Sabbath year was celebrated every seventh year. It included setting free Israelite slaves and remission of debts so that “there would be no poor among you” (Deut 15:4; Acts 2:45; 4:34). During the Jubilee year the land was also returned to its original owners (Lev 25).

Jesus proclaimed that Year of Lord's favor, remission of debts and sins was now at hand through the proclamation of God's Kingdom and his ministry. Though Jesus wanted to save everybody, during his ministry on earth his focus on earth was the poor, marginalized, and the oppressed. Thus, salvation which Jesus brought meant manifestation of God's rule through proclamation and actions of healing, setting free, bringing hope, giving dignity, and practical actions.

Blessings and Woes – Luke 6:17-26

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “Blessings and Woes” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage about kingdom proclamation – who does God congratulate and lament.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 6:17-26). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

SHORT COMMENTARY: The passage focuses on “Blessings” and “Woes”. Blessings refer here to being blessed or happy from God’s perspective. It is not about how to obtain or receive blessings. Rather, it is a declaration from the perspective of God: “Blessed...the poor”. The Woes mean the opposite; that is, prophetic exclamation of lamentation from God’s perspective: “Woe...to the rich...”.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

1. What types of people are declared “blessed” and who are declared “Woe”?
2. What promise is given to each group and *what is the timing* of the promise?
3. How is it possible that Jesus declared that the poor are blessed and the rich are woe? How should one understand these promises and threats?

SHORT COMMENTARY: Many Jews of the time thought that the poor (and sick) were punished for their sins and therefore lacked resources and that riches were a sign of God’s blessing (They used Scripture to support that position Gen 13:1-2; 24:35; 26:12; Deut 8:7-19; 15:6; 28:1-14; Job 42:12; Prov 3:9-10). Jesus turns this belief

upside down when he says that the poor are really the ones who are blessed and happy and the rich who exploit them are woe. Jesus repeatedly talks about the “reversal theme” or reversal of places in Luke’s Gospel. This means that the rich and powerful are brought down and the poor and lowly are lifted up (Luke 1:51-53; 10:21; 14:16-24; 16:19-31; 18:9-14). This reversal includes a strong socio-economic dimension. Remember that Jesus ministered first and foremost to the poor, needy, and the marginalized. In this passage (6:20-26) Jesus demonstrated God’s perspective and declared prophetically that this is already, though partially, happening in his ministry and proclamation of the kingdom. However, its full realization needs to wait for the future manifestation of the kingdom. That is why Jesus taught his followers to pray “Let your kingdom come on earth as it is heaven.” (11:2). We as God’s people participate in bringing God’s kingdom to earth even if its full manifestation was not realized until Jesus’ second coming (Rev 21:1-22:5).

4. Do other texts in Luke’s Gospel help us understand this passage? (e.g. 1:45-56; 4:16-18; 12:22-34; 14:12-14) How?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

5. What reasons do people give for the fact that some are poor, hungry, and persecuted?
 - a. People’s opinion within the church
 - b. People’s opinion within the wider society

SHORT COMMENTARY: In many countries people of means think that people are poor and hungry because of laziness and thus put the blame squarely on the poor – others think that the reason is uneven distribution of resources, structures within the society or other types of discrimination. What is the situation in our context/community?

6. According to this passage, what does God think of those who are poor, hungry, those who cry or are persecuted? What about those who are rich and happy? To what extent can we apply this perspective in our context?
7. Can you identify with one or more of these groups? Which one and why? Why not?
8. What is the message of this passage in our context and what do we need to do as a result?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the

ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

Faith, Healing, and Perseverance – Luke 8:40-56

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “Faith, Healing, and Perseverance” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage about hopelessness and faith.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 8:40-56). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. Tell the stories in your own words and look carefully at the details.
3. What type of people are the main characters in the story and why do they want to see Jesus?
4. Describe the condition of the woman before and after her meeting with Jesus.

SHORT COMMENTARY: It is possible that at least some religious Jews saw the woman in the story as impure due to her continuous blood flow. According to this belief the woman would have been unable to come close to religious people. She would also be excluded from going into the Temple or participate in the services in the Temple (Lev 15:25-27). She was unable to have children – this was considered the most important task of women of the time. She was excluded by the religious system as well as by her community. Her condition made her physically weak and she lived without a family, community, and access to the presence of God.

5. What aspect catches your attention in the story of Jairus?

SHORT COMMENTARY: Jairus as a leader of the synagogue does not show the type arrogance that the religious leaders tend to do in the other parts of the Gospel. He also does seem to be bothered by the fact that Jesus touches the woman who is suffering from the flow of blood. That Jesus touches her indicates that he became ritually impure in the eyes of Jewish religious leaders.

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

6. In what sense is the experience of the people in this story similar and different from the people in our community?
7. What religious and secular systems oppress and marginalize women and men today in our community?
8. What is the message of this passage for us and what do we need to do as a result?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

The Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “The Good Samaritan” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage violence, prejudice, and solidarity.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 10:25-37). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. Tell the stories in your own words and look carefully at the details.
3. What are the two questions of the Lawyer?
4. Who are the main characters in the parable what does each do?

SHORT COMMENTARY: Jews and Samaritans were enemies since 722 BC.

Samaritans were the people who were mixed with the Assyrians. Jewish people considered them idolaters, infidels, and from the devil (John 4:9; 8:58; Luke 9:51-54) even though they believed in the Law of Moses in their own form. Priests were the official religious leaders and the Levites were the second in charge. Both were closely associated with the Jerusalem Temple. The Temple where they are coming from was the center of religious, political, and national life. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was considered very dangerous. It descended from the mountain to the valley was known for robbers and thieves who hid in the many caves in the area.

5. What does the Samaritan do concretely to help the man in distress?
6. How does the parable answer the Lawyers two questions?

SHORT COMMENTARY: The priest and the Levite were going down to Jericho – this means that they had just completed their service in the Temple. Both look and see the wounded man but choose to do nothing. Why do they ignore the wounded man? We are not told but here are some possible reasons: Maybe they were afraid of contracting impurity – that is, if the man was already dead they would have become impure. If the man was found to be dead they would have had to return to Jerusalem to complete rituals of purification. During this time they would not have been able to minister to the people or collect tithes and offerings. Purification could have lasted up to one week. Maybe the victim was not a Jew. It was impossible to tell, since the man was without clothing and was unable to communicate. In the Law neighbor was first and foremost a fellow Israelite (Lev 19:17-19) but it also indicated foreigners who had attached themselves to the people of God and lived according to their ways. However, during the time of Jesus “neighbor love” often means only the Jews and also many times Jews of one’s own sect or ‘denomination’. The members of the Dead Sea sect (Qumran) taught that they were to ‘love the children of light and hate the children of darkness’. Maybe they were afraid of the bandits or robbers. The road was known for the robbers and thieves. How different was the attitude and actions of the Samaritans. He used all of his resources to help the victim: he used oil and wine as medicine, his vehicle (donkey), and his money and kindness. Two denarii was a salary for two full days and would have been able to sustain the man in the inn for about 1-2 weeks. Can you imagine the personal risk that the man took. A hated Samaritan brought a half dead Jew to an ill-reputed inn. He also took a great financial risk when he promised to pay for the extra costs (would be it be the same as leaving a credit card today?). The Samaritans’ neighbor love is concrete, practical, sacrificial, generous, and includes a considerable personal risk.

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

7. What is the (dangerous) ‘road to Jericho’ in our context and what is happening there?
8. How does violence affect our community and what can the church do about it?
9. The Lawyer thought that his neighbor is only his own people. What prejudices can be found in our community and church and how can we become a more equal?
10. What do we need to concretely to make the message of this passage a reality in our life?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

Worries and the Kingdom of God – Luke 12:22-34

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “Worries and the Kingdom” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that challenges us to reflect on what we worry about in life.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 12:22-34). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. What are the things the disciples should not worry about?
3. What aspects of natural world is Jesus asking the disciples to imitate?
4. What should be the main focus in the lives of the disciples according to Jesus?
5. According to vv. 32-34, what actions and attitudes are contrary to worrying?

SHORT COMMENTARY: During the time of Jesus 80-90% of people were struggling to meet the basic necessities of life. Despite this, here the disciples are asked to give up everything and give alms to the poor (12:33; also 14:33; 5:11; 18:22). How should this be understood? God promised to take care of them – in light of Luke’s Gospel giving up on possessions and sharing with the poor is very important. The command should not be spiritualized to mean “humble attitude”, “spiritual poverty”, “being a sinner” or alike. It refers to, first and foremost, concrete and material sharing of possessions with those who do not have anything. Nevertheless, in the context of Luke’s Gospel and Acts (same

author), it is clear that Jesus does not indicate or command that everybody is to give up all of their possessions at once (see e.g. Luke 3:10-14; 8:1-3, 38-39; 10:25-37; 19:1-10).

6. Read Luke 12:13-21. What are the similar themes and connections with 12:22-34?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

7. What types of worries have you experienced in your life in the recent weeks and months? What has helped you overcome them? What are you still struggling with?
8. What is the most difficult aspect of this teaching for you?
9. How should we apply the message of this passage in our lives?
10. Is there something concrete that we (or I) should do to make the message of this Scripture a reality in our community or in my life?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

Feasting and the Kingdom of God – Luke 14:1, 12-14

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “Feasting and the Kingdom” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that tells us something about feasting in the Kingdom of God.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 14:1, 12-14). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. According to this passage who was normally invited to parties and feasts? Why?
3. According to Jesus who should be invited to the feasts and why?

SHORT COMMENTARY: During Jesus’ time it was common to invite one’s family and people who were of the same social status; or those who had higher status and wealth in order to receive benefits from them. Parties and social gatherings strengthened social ties between family, friends, and social networks. There was an underlying assumption that the invitation was reciprocated with the same or greater gift or invitation.

4. What would have happened if people would have practiced this teaching of Jesus?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

5. Who are invited and excluded from the feasts today in your community? Why?
6. Give a vision [in words, a song, poem, picture or a drama] of a church or a community that practices this teaching of Jesus? What would happen in a) the church b) community c) society as a consequence?
7. What does this passage speaks to us?
8. Is there something concrete that we (or I) should do to make the message of this Scripture a reality in our community or in my life?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

Feasting and the Kingdom II – Luke 14:1, 15-24

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “Feasting and the Kingdom II” in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that tells us something more about feasting in the Kingdom of God.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 14:1, 15-24). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. Tell the parable in your own words and pay attention to the details carefully.
3. Who are unwilling to participate in the feast and why?

SHORT COMMENTARY: In biblical times it was almost impossible to turn down an invitation to a feast – it would have been a great shame and disregard of the host.

4. Where do the servants go to invite people and who do they invite?
5. What did Jesus want to communicate with this parable?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

6. Imagine that Jesus was with us today. How would he tell this parable to us?
7. Are there any connections between this parable and 14:12-14? What are they?
8. What is the message of this parable to us today and who do we need to as a result?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

Rich Man and Lazarus – Luke 16:19-31

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on “Rich Man and Lazarus” in a safe environment
2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary
3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that tells us something about feasting in the Kingdom of God.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 16:19-31). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. Tell the parable in your own words and pay attention to the details carefully.
3. Describe what the life of the Rich Man and Lazarus was like?
4. What do you think was the greatest agony in Lazarus’ life?
5. What separated the two before and after their death?
6. Describe the attitudes of the main characters in vv. 24-31. What does it tell of each?

SHORT COMMENTARY: The Rich Man, which is not named, lived in luxury as his lifestyle indicates (e.g. 16:19 he wears purple clothes that generally only kings wore [cf. Prov 31:22] and a luxury undergarment from Egypt). His lifestyle was a total opposite from the poor Lazarus (Lazarus is the only person in the gospel parables who is named) – his name means “God helps”. There was an underlying assumption that the invitation was reciprocated with the same or greater gift or invitation.

NOTE: It is important to note that this passage is a parable. Therefore, it is not necessary to think that all of the details of the parable correspond to reality in the same way as a regular historical narrative would (like crucifixion). Parable is not a historical account but a story that is meant to teach important spiritual truths. That is why the passage is not meant to answer questions like where is Abraham's bosom or Hades; how is it possible that the Rich Man saw Lazarus; it is so also in heaven etc. The purpose of the parable is to teach that people's actions here and now have an influence beyond grave. There the facilitator should guide the discussion so as not to focus exclusively on details that have to do with the place or manner of the afterlife (e.g. Where is Hades?). What the facilitator may do is to clarify terms such as 'Hades', 'Abraham's bosom' and then redirect the conversation to other aspects of the parable. **Clarification of Terminology:** Hades – the place of the dead which include two sections: torment and joy which is the bosom of Abraham. Some scholars think that the place where the Rich Man is should be equated with hell and that Abraham's bosom is same as Paradise (or heaven).¹

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

7. In what sense this parable is similar and different from our situation? How and Why?
8. Why did Lazarus enter Abraham's bosom and the Rich Man in torment?
9. What does Jesus want to communicate through this parable to us?
10. Is there something concrete that we (or I) should do to make the message of this Scripture a reality in our community or in my life?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.

¹ This question is rather complicated in the historical and theological context. E.g. LXX (Greek translation of the Old Testament) translates the Hebrew word *sheol* as *hades*. Generally in the Old Testament the word *sheol* refers to grave and death and sometimes to the place of the dead. This is a place of silence and shadows. Old Testament has another relevant word that depicts judgment which is *gehenna* in Greek (LXX) and *gehinnom* in Hebrew. It was originally a pagan place that was used to sacrifice children (2 Kings 23:10) and was used symbolically as a place of God's judgment. The two words (*hades* in Matt 11:23; Luke 10:15; 16:18, 23; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14; and *gehenna* Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; Jam 3:6) are not defined clearly in the New Testament. Two possibilities include: 1) *Hades* is the place of the dead before the final judgment [place of both the righteous and unrighteous] and *gehenna* is the place of torment after the final judgment (i.e. hell). According to this view both the Rich Man and Lazarus are in *hades* waiting for their final judgment 2) *Hades* and *gehenna* are both places of final judgment (i.e. hell). According to this view the parable indicates that the final judgment has already taken place. The Rich Man is in hell and Lazarus in Paradise, or heaven. If one wants to research further this area, it is recommended that the facilitator or group consult good commentaries and Bible dictionaries on the topic.

Zacchaeus – Luke 19:1-10

Steps: 1) Spontaneous reading 2) Reading in small groups 3) appropriation/application

Materials: White or black board; markers or chalk; CBS questions (or computer with ppt projector); 5-25 participants; Bibles for all participants; pens and paper for the participants.

Objectives: 1) Discuss, study, and reflect on the story of Zacchaeus in a safe environment 2) Discern the voice of the Spirit in and through this biblical passage and group commentary 3) Make a concrete personal and communal commitment to advance the Kingdom of God.

Introduction: Tonight we are going to read a passage that tells about a man who was marginalized in the community and how his salvation affected everyone.

STEP I: Reading of the passage (Luke 19:1-10). Each person reads the passage first silently and then one person is asked to read the passage out loud.

FACILITATOR:

1. What is this text all about? Is there something that jumps out of the page?
(If there is no responses, wait for about 10 seconds for a response – after that you can ask people to discuss the passage with a person next to him or her.) Allow the group to discuss the passage for 5-20 minutes.

STEP II: Form groups of 3-6 people – each group should have a pen and a paper to write answers to questions.

Show the following questions for the groups to ponder and allow the groups sufficient time to discuss and think among themselves.

2. Tell the story in your own words and pay attention to the details.

SHORT COMMENTARY: The tax collectors or publicans collected taxes and tolls on the road sides from merchandise (Luke 5:27-28). Zacchaeus was the boss of these toll collectors. He was wealthy, corrupt, and connected to the Roman system of domination. Taxes and tolls were not collected for the purpose of helping people or providing public services but rather to finance the lifestyle of the wealthy and the rulers. The Romans sold the rights to collect tolls and taxes for the best bidder. The one who obtained the right to collect tolls returned a certain amount to the Romans and kept the rest to himself. It was customary to collect more than the prescribed amount (Luke 3:12-13) and thus rob the people. Many Jews did not think that it was wrong to lie to a toll collector. The taxes and tolls were generally high and cost a lot especially to those who were poorer.

3. Who are the main characters in the story and what perspective or theology does each represent?

SHORT COMMENTARY: People thought that Zacchaeus was a “sinner”. Accordingly, they had excluded Zacchaeus from the community (as much as it was possible). Jesus represents the Kingdom of God – love and justice of God.

4. What opinion do the people have of Zacchaeus? Why? [What system does the crowd’s voice in the story represent?]
5. How did Jesus challenge the two ways (crowd’s and the Romans) of thinking that are represented in the story?
6. How did Zacchaeus’ salvation affect him? and the whole community?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions

Facilitator gives the **second set of questions** for groups to ponder

7. Who are the “Zacchaeus” of today and what corrupt systems or ideologies are they part of?
8. How does corruption and corrupt systems affect you and your community today?
9. Zacchaeus was labelled a “sinner” and was excluded from the community. Who are not given a change to change in your community and why?
10. How does salvation affect today’s Zacchaeuses? – and their community?
11. How does the message of this story challenge us today?

Facilitator led **DIALOGUE**; groups give a summary of their responses to the questions – groups may also ponder a practical action that they might make as a result of reading this passage.

When considering practical action, think about the following: 1) My personal commitment to action and community action 2) My commitment in relation to the ministries in the church and the community 3) Resources available in my community and the church that might be helpful to make the action plan a reality.