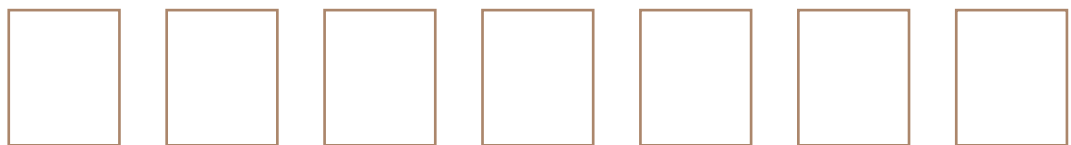
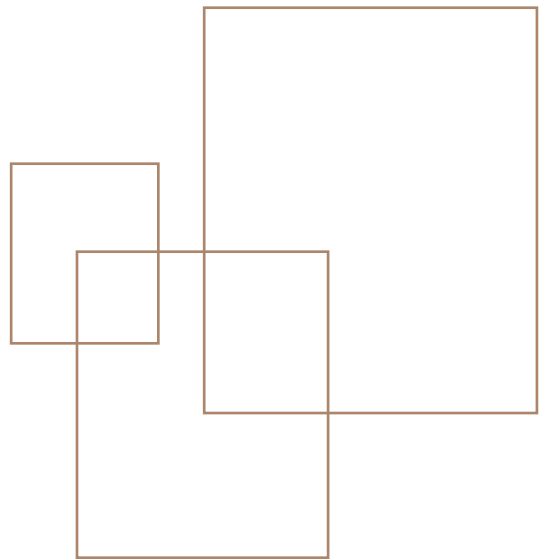




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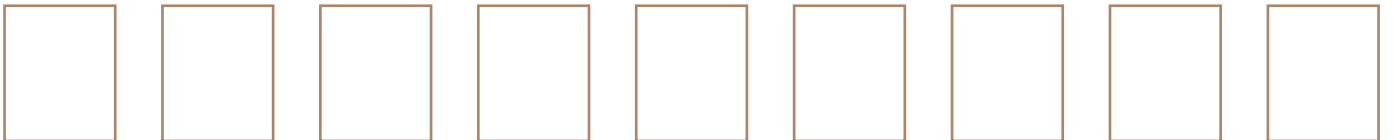
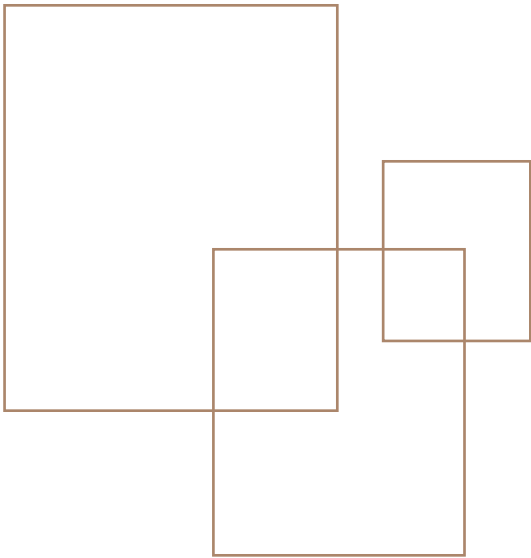
Speaking of Sexism: Called to Trust and Risk

Justice for Women, Office of the Presiding Bishop



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Prepared by Mary J. Streufert, Ph.D., director
Justice for Women, Office of the Presiding Bishop



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To begin the work of right relationship requires change.

Sometimes we resist change. Sometimes we resist change—even when we know that the change required of us and our communities is necessary in order to serve the neighbor—to be in right relationship with God and with others. As this church proclaims through “Freed in Christ,” the social statement on racism, “We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America rejoice in our freedom in Christ Jesus. But we know we must persevere in our commitment to follow Christ and to serve neighbor, and live up to our specific commitments.”

A first step in transforming interlocking systems of oppression, including sexism, is to name the problem.

Social transformation is on the decline in this country because our social capital is in decline, asserts sociologist Robert Putnam. In effect, we do not know how to talk about difficult issues with each other, points out Katie Day, professor of Church and Society at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, and we continue to avoid engagement on matters of

urgent importance to us socially. We thereby set ourselves up to avoid social transformation. (See Katie Day, *Difficult Conversations*, The Alban Institute.)

Day describes the tensions that resulted when a new student brought up a controversial topic at a campus convocation. The room fell into an embarrassed hush because a contentious topic had been named in public. She points to the learned habits of the entire seminary community to avoid painful, controversial topics and problems. In response to the realization that the seminary community needed to be able to work through tough dialogue, the faculty developed a course to encourage and engage in difficult conversations. The book of the same name she later wrote is a tool to encourage church members to engage in hard moral deliberation with each other in order to prompt, encourage, and sustain social transformation.

The first step in having difficult conversations is to name the concern for discussion.

It can be difficult to feel comfortable with words like “sexism” and “racism.” Sociologist Allan Johnson

agrees with Martin Luther that we must “call a thing what it is,” as Luther proclaimed in “The Heidelberg Disputation.” Johnson writes, “[I]f we dispense with the words, we make it impossible to talk about what’s really going on and what it has to do with us” (Allan G. Johnson, Privilege, Power and Difference, 2).

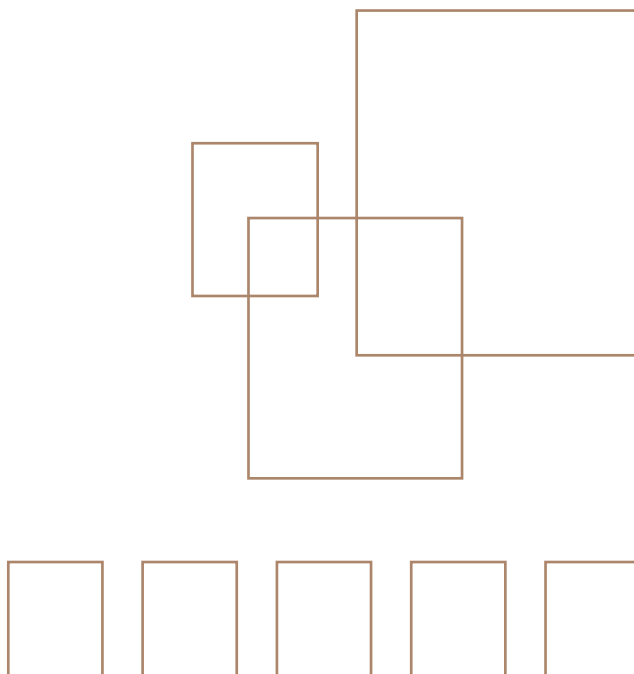
Sometimes naming the problem is difficult: it is painful to see and to acknowledge. Yet these tough conversations are essential to transformation and change. Sexism is a problem. It is the hope of the Justice for Women program that this Bible study on dismantling sexism is a helpful way for various communities, groups, and individuals to engage in thoughtful transformation away from sexism and towards right relationship with God and with one another.

The series is designed to be centered in both familiar and less familiar texts, often visiting them from a new angle. The series is also designed to be ever expanding, with ongoing session updates.

Most importantly, this Bible study series is designed to be useful for men and women together. Just as

it takes the commitment and work of white people to understand and transform racism, it takes the commitment and work of men to understand and transform sexism.

You may want to consider working through the highly accessible and easily used book referenced above: Difficult Conversations: Taking Risks, Acting with Integrity by Katie Day (The Alban Institute, 2001). Although created for congregational use as a guide to talking about and acting on difficult issues, it is useful for other groups or organizational settings. Working through the readings and guided discussions in the book with a focus on sexism could very well be done in tandem with or before the Bible study.





RESISTANCE TO AND READINESS FOR CHANGE: RISK, TRUST AND TRANSFORMATION

You may begin with a prayer and/or hymn. Suggestions follow.

**O God of the wilderness,
draw near to us.
Quench our thirst.
Satisfy our hunger.
Shape us into your people.
Guide us today
so that the words of our mouths
and the meditations of our hearts
may be acceptable to you.
In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.**

*Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymn
#326 “Bless Now, O God, the Journey”*

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the first session is the story of Israel’s exodus out of Egypt and into the wilderness with God, where the Israelites learn to respond to God’s call to be in right relationship. God’s grace extends to Israel through and in this covenantal relationship. The call to right relationship means Israel needs to change, but as we know, the newly freed slaves of Egypt are not always ready for change and often resist it.

The premise that grounds this study is this: Changes involved in addressing sexism (and other systems of oppression) are changes towards right relationship with God and with each other.

The goals of this study are:

- to think about what change is asked of Israel and of us
- to begin to recognize when Israel and we resist change
- to understand why they and we resist change
- and to identify what it takes to work through resistance to change.

In other words, the goal is to identify what it takes to look at sexism as a system that disrupts right relationship with God and with each other and what it takes to move through resistance to change in order to move towards transformation. Talking about, understanding, and acting to subvert sexism is not easy work.

This session's texts contain perhaps very familiar stories and images. One strong image in these texts is that change is difficult. In the book of Exodus, God calls Israel to right relationship with God's self. In this book, Yahweh claims Israel and works consistently to help the Israelites learn to be in authentic, responsive relationship with God. The focus of this session is on the ways in which God works at schooling Israel in right relationship with God's self, but God is also thereby calling Israel into right relationship among the people of Israel.

The story of Israel's exodus from Egypt is important in part because it is a communal story of identity. It is a foundational identity text for both Jewish and Christian communities, particularly among African-American Christian communities. Stories shape us. Families, for example, are shaped by stories. Think about family gatherings and the stories told at them. We repeat familiar family stories. We tell them to remember our identities in the family individually, to remember our communal family identity, to accept certain patterns or behaviors and to reject others.

Take a moment to remember and share a story of family or communal identity. What does the story and its retelling express about this body of people and their relationships? (The story could involve as few as two people and as many as you could dream.)

The Exodus text, as a communal story, provides a framework for understanding

ourselves as a community of God, commentary on our relationship with God, and lessons on God's vision of right relationships.

To summarize, in one respect, the exodus story is a communal story about change: how the Israelites responded to God's call to relationship, the changes a relationship with God required of them, and how they responded. Try to see yourselves in the story as you consider it.

COMMENTARY

The book of Exodus holds images of a people moving out of bondage, out of a place of constriction. In fact, in Hebrew, "Egypt" is the word *mitsrayim*, which means "place of constriction."

At the Red Sea, Israel starts to resist the changes necessary to be in right relationship with God, to move out of the place of constriction. This session focuses on the ways they resisted, why they resisted, and what helped them to move through their resistance and into right relationship with God.

The Red Sea passage is for the Israelites a physical passage away from the place of constriction and into new life in the wilderness. In a similar way, Lutherans confess that baptism is the sacramental passage from the constricted space of sin and death into new life in Christ.

Sometimes living in our baptism seems like the wilderness. We don't know what

will happen next and we do not have control over the ways that God interacts with us.

But the wilderness can also be a place or space to embrace as a people and as individuals. Some theologians interpret the wilderness positively by understanding it as God's school, a place of formation towards right relationship with God and with others.

Allow yourselves to be in the wilderness in this positive sense, trusting that taking another look at sexism through theological education and discussion is one way of seeking right relationship, even though what may come from studying and talking together may not be predictable.

THE READING

God's desire: *Read Exodus 6:6-9.*

- What does God want?
- How does Israel react?

While the Israelites were still in Egypt after the 10 plagues but before the exodus, we see the specifics of the rite of Passover in Exodus 12. In this next passage, we see one time when it is easy for Israel to do what God asks.

Read Exodus 12:24-28, 50-51.

- Under what circumstances is it easy for the Israelites to follow God?

Israel exits Egypt and approaches the Red Sea: *Read Exodus 14:10-14, 30-31.*

- How do the Israelites react in the transition from Egypt into the wilderness, from slavery into freedom?
- In this circumstance specifically, how do they react once they are saved?

Israel endures what are described as tests in the wilderness. Discuss these with the subsequent questions, individually or as a group:

15:22-27	thirst
16:2-18	hunger
16:5; 16:19-30	greed
17:1-7	thirst

You may want to choose one or more of the tests.

1. Why do the Israelites resist in this passage?
2. What do they do when they resist?
3. What happens when they resist?
4. What helps them work through their resistance?
5. Who asks the Israelites to change?
6. What are they asked to do? Why?
7. What are the anticipated results of changing in this instance?

Once you have looked at the text of a test, reflect on your answers to the following questions.

1. What stood out to you? What did you hear?
2. Again, what are the Israelites being asked to do (in the tests)?

3. What helps them to let go of their resistance to change?

But even after they “get it”—even after they know what it means to take risks and to trust God—the Israelites still falter.

1. Why do the Israelites falter?
2. What do you think they want?
Remember that God considers Israel especially called. (*See Exodus 19:4-6a.*)

Israel falters: *Read Exodus 32:1*

1. Why do the Israelites falter?
2. How do the Israelites seem to feel?
3. Of what are they uncertain?
4. What do they want?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Decide if you would like to first share your initial reactions together, take time for reflection and writing, or work with a combination of initial reactions and writing. If working in a group, choose a style that allows time to listen to all of the voices in your group. If working alone, you may want to write down your reflections for later reference.

1. When has change been demanded or asked of you?
2. Who asked for the change?
3. What were you being “asked” to do? [birth, death, a new relationship, natural disasters, changing a habit, etc.]
4. How did you respond?
5. If you resisted the change, explain why.

6. How did you move through your resistance? What supported you to let go of your resistance?
7. What do you notice when you think about your own experiences compared to Israel’s experiences?
8. Discuss your own readiness for change and the readiness of your community or group for change. What will it take for you (individually and collectively) to take risks and trust each other in the process of transformation away from sexism and towards right relationship with God and with each other?

CLOSING

Israel resisted change when they were thirsty, hungry, or greedy. They resisted change when their future was not in their own hands.

Israel resisted change when they were afraid, when they were uncertain about their leader, when they felt threatened, and when they felt out of control.

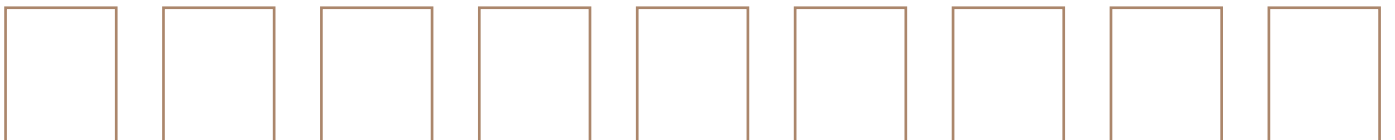
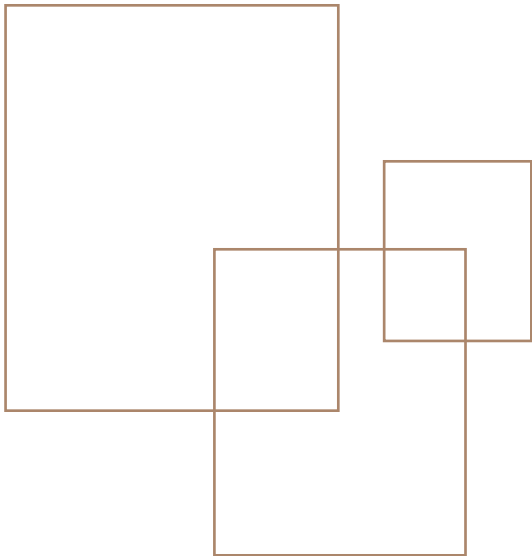
Israel learned the hard way that they needed to take risks and to trust God in order to work through their resistance to change. Israel was called to a trusting relationship with God.

We, too, are learning what it feels like to be in right relationship with God, and through trust and risk are able to live in the freedom from oppressing others that God promises.

You may close with a prayer and/or song. Suggestions follow.

**Mighty God of smoke and fire,
lead us.
Soften our resistance.
Nurture in us your fierce love.
By your Holy Spirit,
transform us into your people
through the life, death, and
resurrection
of our Lord, Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Evangelical Lutheran Worship #669
“Rise Up, O Saints of God!”



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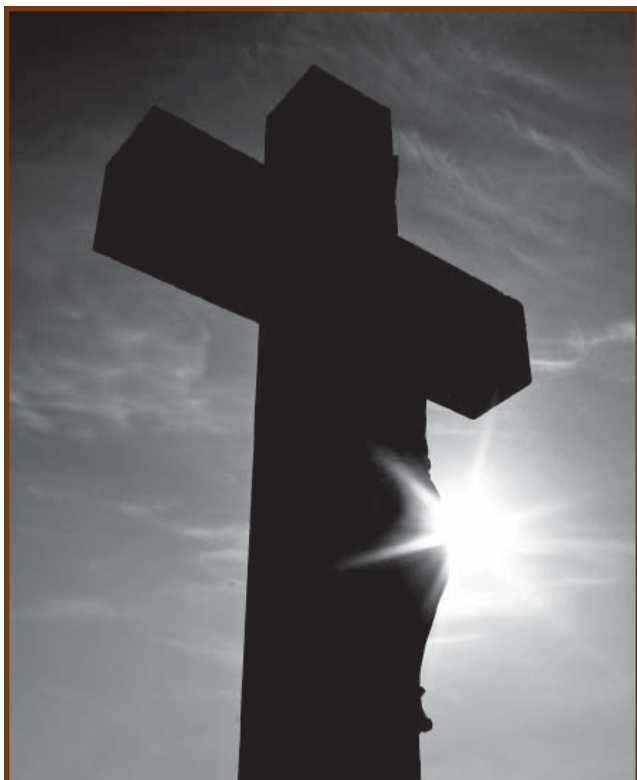
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SUFFERING AND POWER IN MARK 8:34

OPENING

You may begin with a prayer and/or a hymn or song. Suggestions follow.

O, God!
Where are you?
Our suffering often takes over us.
We see no way out.
We squirm with the pains of sorrows
and of the flesh.
O, God!
Where are you?
Take our suffering away.
In Jesus' way we pray,
Amen.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship #347, "Go to Dark Gethsemane," st. 1-2, 4

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark is most likely the earliest written of the four canonical gospels and evokes images of an often terse but healing Jesus. Within this contrast of terseness and compassion in Mark, Jesus both uses power and invites others into the power of the kingdom of God. This session on a Markan understanding of suffering and power is a critical introduction to session three, which looks at power and privilege.

The goals of this study are:

- to think about the two forms of suffering implicitly understood in the Gospel of Mark
- to see that the suffering caused by sexism is not that to which Jesus calls us
- to see that the suffering of the cross is connected to persecution for the sake of God's way in the world.

THE READING

Read Mark 8:34, aloud, silently, or both. Write down or share with others in your group anything that strikes you. **What is your first reaction to this passage?**

COMMENTARY

Mark 8:34 is a pivotal passage in discerning the way Jesus understands and uses power in this gospel: "[Jesus] called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves

and take up their cross and follow me” (NRSV). Unfortunately, our modern sense of individualism has prevented many interpreters from grasping the meaning of the passage for Mark’s audience. One common understanding of this passage is that following Jesus means bearing a great deal of human suffering that comes one’s way. Such an interpretation all but legitimizes powerlessness in some contemporary contexts, such as for women who suffer from the effects of sexism, particularly violence. Indeed, Mark 8:34 is often cited as a key text that supports the oppression of women in many guises. As we shall see, this is not the best interpretation of the passage.

Suffering and Power

Instead, feminist work on this pivotal passage lifts up two important elements for contemporary readers to grasp: how the writer of Mark understands suffering and power. First, Mark appears to distinguish between two kinds of suffering: ordinary human suffering and the suffering of persecution. Ordinary human suffering is the kind of suffering that in the ancient world was a given fact of existence. In other words, if you lived, you suffered from a variety of physical maledictions. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, we see Jesus healing people from these states of suffering. See, for example, Mark 1:21-28; 1:29-34; and 1:40-45. Jesus’ healing releases people from spiritual and physical suffering.

Second, Jesus clearly gives the power to heal to others. That is, disciples have Jesus’ power of the kingdom of God to

use for the good of others—to heal people. See, for example, Mark 6:7-13. The followers of Jesus heal people spiritually and physically.

Mark’s sense of time is that God’s reign in Jesus overlaps the present day, and followers share in the power of the kingdom. However, using the power of God does not mean that Jesus’ followers have the power of the kingdom of God at their disposal to use against other people in force or domination. Power is redefined in the Gospel of Mark.

In contrast to the power of imperial Rome, the power of the kingdom of God is explicitly linked to faith. Those who are healed by Jesus “have faith;” the lack of faith in Jesus’ home town means that Jesus “could do no deed of power there” (Mark 6:1-6), and the disciples’ failure to exorcise a demon from a boy is marked by lack of faith (Mark 9:14-29). To Jesus’ followers is given the gift of healing. They are sent out two-by-two in order to proclaim AND to heal. In sum, although ordinary human suffering was unavoidable in the ancient world, Jesus and his followers used the power of God to heal others from ordinary suffering.

In contrast, the suffering that Jesus implies in Mark 8:34 to “take up [your] cross” does not refer to ordinary suffering. The cross within Mark’s context means persecution. If you follow Jesus, you will not avoid being persecuted. You will suffer persecution by people who are opposed to God’s way in the world. Avoiding this type of suffering is possible, unlike general

human misery. All one must do to avoid this kind of suffering is to deny Jesus. Then you will not be persecuted.

The “Self”

With this understanding in mind, let us look again at the passage. Read Mark 8:34 once more. As many scholars have noted, there is a pattern to the verse:

Follow Jesus
Reject “self”
Take up cross
Follow Jesus

Having learned more about the way the writer of Mark appears to understand suffering, we also need to go back to the tricky problem of contemporary individualism and how that affects our reading of the Bible. Our contemporary notions of a free individual—the self—were not operative in the ancient Near East. The basic unit of society in the post-Enlightenment Western world is the individual. This was not the case in Jesus’ world. Rather, the basic unit of society was the kinship group, which was a paternally-ordered hierarchy with the father or eldest male at the top making decisions for the clan.

Why does this matter in trying to understand suffering and power in Mark? Jesus calls followers to reject the “self.” This may sound like a call to self-sacrifice to us, but rejecting the “self” in the Markan context would mean rejecting the basic social unit to which you belonged, a paternally ordered kinship group. Rejecting the “self” is not a call to radical self-sacrifice but a radical

call to subvert basic social patterns by renouncing one’s kinship group and joining Jesus’ group.

What we see is Jesus’ guidance towards a radical kinship group that included him. If one rejected one’s kinship group in the ancient world, one would be without the economic and social support and structure necessary to live. People would be upset that someone had bucked the system, so to speak. People were not to go outside of the accepted social norms of society, the family kinship unit. We see that following Jesus in the kingdom of God can mean subverting accepted social patterns, where God’s power is used to heal ordinary human suffering.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Decide if you would like first to share your initial reactions together, take time for reflection and writing, or work with a combination of initial reactions and writing. If working in a group, choose a style that allows time for all of the voices in your group to be heard. If working alone, you may want to write down your reflections for later reference.

1. What do you think of this re-reading of Mark 8:34? What thoughts do you have in relation to the commentary after your first reaction to the passage at the beginning of the session?
2. Mark’s audience is urged to reject the hierarchical family kinship unit to live in kinship with Jesus. How would you describe an analogy to this verse in contemporary terms?

3. What social patterns do you as an individual reject in order to follow Jesus?
4. What social patterns do you think the church at large is compelled to reject in order to follow Jesus? What about your local congregation, community, or social group?
5. What persecution (and therefore suffering) is unavoidable for being in kinship with Jesus and Jesus' followers?
6. The cross in Mark's context would be the instrument of persecution that followers of Jesus would not easily avoid. What might "your cross" look like from this perspective? Try to identify the instruments of persecution and execution today.
7. What power is available to you in your life, either individually or as part of a group? Do you use this power? How do you use this power?
8. Is it helpful to think about the power of the kingdom of God as a power for the healing of others? How does this relate to your baptism? What suffering are you able to help others to alleviate?
9. In the re-reading of Mark explored in this study, Jesus gives the power to heal to others. Think about your life in the context of the many groups to which you belong. Where do you see the explicit and implicit effects of sexism? What is your role in alleviating the suffering that results from sexism?

CLOSING

You may end with a prayer and/or a hymn or song. Suggestions follow.

**O Jesus who suffered,
heal us. Live in us
so that we may live to take away the
suffering of others.
Be with us in our time of need
when we suffer for the sake of your
way in the world.
Amen.**

Evangelical Lutheran Worship #351,
"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded," st. 1

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POWER AND PRIVILEGE IN MARK 7:24-30

OPENING

You may begin with a prayer and/or a hymn or song. Suggestions follow.

**Creator and Redeemer of all,
we commit ourselves to you
and trust in your love for us
and for all you create.**

**Stay with us
as we learn ever anew
how to live
with the power you give us
through Jesus Christ.**

Amen.

*Evangelical Lutheran Worship #793,
“Be Thou My Vision,” st. 1-3*

INTRODUCTION

In the first Bible study of this series, you saw by means of the story of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt and journey through the wilderness that it takes trust and risk to embrace and support changes away from sexism and into right relationship with God and with others. In the second Bible study of this series, you sharpened your skills of discerning what kind of suffering we are called to through the cross of Jesus and of focusing on the power of the kingdom of God as a means of resistance to sexism.

In this third Bible study of the first series, we turn a critical eye to another text in Mark, the story of the Syrophenician woman (7:24-30) and look for a deeper understanding of the ways power and privilege play out between the woman and Jesus. Who has what kind of power and what kind of privilege? What do we learn about resisting the power of privilege in this passage?

Important to the work of dismantling sexism is a clearly understood vocabulary and analysis of sexism. Specifically, a few definitions from sociological work on sexism are helpful in discussing power and privilege in this study’s text. (Please see “Vocabulary for Understanding Sexism” on the Justice for Women Web site for a full list of definitions and citations: www.elca.org/justiceforwomen.)

Sexism refers to that which promotes male privilege.

Sex refers to biology.

Gender refers to the social aspects of biology and is often interpreted as a social construction of what we think it means to have particular biology.

Privilege, within systems of oppression, is an advantage that people in a particular social group have that they have not earned and that is not available to people outside the social group.

Power in a system of patriarchy is usually defined as control over people or things. Theologically, Lutherans understand God's power as the power to redeem for the sake of the world. Subsequently, the power incumbent upon Christians through baptism is God's saving and healing power for the sake of the world.

Paths of least resistance are the easiest possible or most acceptable avenues of response or action or thought shaped and reinforced by social systems.

The goals of this session are:

- to identify and think about forms and uses of privilege and power
- to see how privilege and power are working in the story of the Syrophenician woman
- to look for resistance to or subversion of paths of least resistance in this text
- to ask ourselves how we use texts to reinforce power and privilege.

Using the definitions given, either write your own answers for reflection or discuss the following questions with others.

1. What is a form of privilege you have?
2. Describe a time when you received, gained, or were excused because of your privilege.
3. Describe a time when the privilege you have because you belong to a particular social category caused others suffering, harm, or dishonor.
4. What power do you have? Briefly describe the power you have as an individual and as part of a social group.
5. When have you used power to control others?
6. When have you used power to liberate or promote life for or among others?

THE READING _____

Read Mark 7:24-30, aloud, silently, or both.

What is your first reaction to this passage? Write down or share with others in your group what you notice.

COMMENTARY _____

Power

Most of the readings in the tradition of biblical interpretation have concentrated on the ways religion and ethnicity come together in this text. Religiously, the woman is a Gentile; she is outside

of Israel because she is not Jewish. Ethnically, the woman is Greek, from the Syrophenician province. By reading the text in Mark through the parallel text in Matthew, the common interpretation of this text has usually focused on the Gentile mission of the church: Jesus ministers to a Gentile, as he does numerous times in the Gospel of Mark.

Yet if we come to this text with different questions, we see something different. What is going on in this text? Why are we sometimes uncomfortable with the way Jesus responds to the Syrophenician woman? When we take another look at this text, we see privilege and power dynamics that previous readings may not have uncovered.

First let's look at Jesus' power. Jesus has the power to heal, but he is reluctant to do so in this text. Why does Jesus refuse to heal her daughter? Does he refuse because she is a Gentile? There is no such reluctance to heal the male Gerasene demoniac, who is also outside religious boundaries (Mark 5:1-20). The Syrophenician woman needs the same healing for her daughter: an exorcism. Is it because she is a woman? The bleeding woman approaches Jesus and was not punished for possibly crossing gendered expectations of men and women by touching Jesus (Mark 5:25-34).

The direct speech in the text takes our attention to something other than healing. We must turn to her economic status to try to see an answer.

Privilege

The city of Tyre itself is on an island just off modern day Lebanon. It was populated mainly by Gentiles, including Greeks. The region of Tyre, to which the text refers, included rural farming areas as well, and these were largely populated by Jews. The region of Tyre was a borderland of sorts, a crossroads. The tensions in this region were economic, religious, and cultural.

The leading woman in this text is portrayed as a Gentile city dweller, a person with the privilege of class, of economic power. She therefore belonged to the social (and religious) group that was the cause of suffering for rural Jews. Her people were the exploiters in the region; hence, the reference to "bread" in the text truly has resonance. The Syrophenician woman has privilege.

Jesus says that he must stick with the priority of the oppressed, the rural poor. "Let the children be fed first," Jesus answers her request for an exorcism (Mark 7:27). According to the portrayal of Jesus' ministry in Mark, it is to the rural Jews that Jesus' ministry is directed.

Here is the tension: the Syrophenician woman has privilege. Jesus resists putting the woman with privilege before the rural Jews without privilege.

The Reversal

Jesus seems to change his decision based upon the woman's witty retort, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs," playing upon the connection

between bread and the economic privilege she has in the region of Tyre (Mark 7:28). Two things happen in the self-reversal the woman creates through her response. First, she lets go of the privilege that Jesus' response imputes to her. Jesus' response derides her and separates her from the rural Jews in the region. Second, she uses the insult to claim that she can have the leftovers—that she can be in the place in the kingdom of God where the rural poor have been: the recipients of God's healing and restorative power.

This re-reading of Mark 7:24-30 yields at least two shifts in how the text can be interpreted. Such a reading, as noted above, moves away from an interpretive focus on the Gentile mission of the church and from interpreting the woman as the embodiment of the oppressed because she is female. As some scholars have argued, this reading matches the socioeconomic context of the region of Tyre and the primacy of Jesus' ministry to the outcast in Mark.

What does the Syrophenician woman's self-reversal mean for us?

At heart, we see a reversal of privilege for the sake of discipleship. In other words, the woman of privilege in this text is willing to take a lower place, "under the table," in order to negate the socioeconomic privilege she possessed but did not earn in order to participate in Jesus' ministry.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

The Syrophenician woman resists being

turned away from Jesus. At heart, we see a reversal of privilege for the sake of discipleship. In other words, the woman of privilege in this text is willing to take a lower place, "under the table," as the negation of the socioeconomic privilege she possessed, but did not earn, in order to participate in Jesus' ministry.

A central question is this: **What does the Syrophenician woman's self-reversal mean for us?**

As a form of discipleship, how might you and others in your community who benefit from this social privilege turn this privilege "under the table?" In other words, if there is a "price" of discipleship because of the social privilege you are given, what might it be?

1. Name a form of social privilege that you have as part of a particular social group. For example, you might "possess" male privilege, white privilege, socioeconomic privilege, etc.
2. Describe what it might look like to turn this privilege that you are granted by society on its head—"under the table"?

When we allow ourselves to see that Jesus responds harshly to a woman who has a universal human need, to have a child healed, we are led to the ambiguity of other questions having to do with privilege.

1. Must the non-poor be insulted in order to participate in Jesus' ministry?

2. Must the privileged be devastated first in order to receive healing?
3. Why is it a woman who is to be insulted and devastated?
4. Are there ways in which interpretations of this text have implicitly or explicitly reinforced privilege?

Lastly, we are called to think about the power we have and use for the sake of the kingdom of God and how we use this power to resist the socially reinforced paths of least resistance that keep sexism strong.

1. What power is available to you for the sake of the kingdom of God?
2. How do you use this power?
3. What opportunities do you have to use power to resist paths of least resistance in order to end sexism?

CLOSING

You may end with a prayer and/or a hymn or song. Suggestions follow.

The Lord's Prayer.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship #808,
"Send Me, Lord"

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