

Session One: Lutherans and Scripture



Mark 7:24-29 (NRSV)

²⁴From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice,²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.²⁷ He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."²⁸ But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."²⁹ Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter."

Four ways to read the Bible:

Devotional reading: What does the Word stir up in you?

Historical reading: What is the ancient historical context and how does it relate to us today?

Literary reading: Read with special attention to the story itself and all aspects of it.

Lutheran theological reading: How can these Lutheran insights illuminate the text?

- Law and gospel
- What shows forth Christ
- Scripture interprets Scripture
- The plain meaning of the text
- Public interpretation

Useful resource links

- Women and Justice Task Force website: www.ELCA.org/womenandjustice
- ELCA Book of Faith Initiative website: www.bookoffaith.org

Communication guidelines:

1. We will acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit and be attentive to what is being stirred up in our midst.
2. We agree to listen to each other respectfully without making assumptions or judgments.
3. We recognize that each person has different experiences and has different styles of communicating.
4. We will each own our own thoughts and feelings and speak in “I” statements rather than “you” statements that define others.
5. We will approach our conversation from a stance of being curious and ask questions of each other to draw out the intended meaning of the speaker.
6. We will keep confidentiality, which means not sharing the stories of others outside of the group unless specifically told otherwise.

About the social statement process within the ELCA

The ELCA takes seriously its faithful witness and participation in society. Social statements are teaching and policy documents that guide the engagement and advocacy work of the ELCA within society. The development of a social statement on women and justice in church and society was authorized by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in response to memorials from four synods and the recommendation of the ELCA Church Council. The work toward the creation of a task force was delayed until 2012.

The development of any social statement is based on an extensive process of study, prayer and discernment. Since 2012 the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has engaged in a great deal of each of these, as well as a great deal of listening. The task force has authorized the preparation of various study materials and hosted more than 50 listening events in many synods and at various churchwide gatherings. (The next major step will be an in-depth study with an expected release date of June 2016.) For more about the work of the task force, visit www.ELCA.org/womenandjustice.

Groups, like yours, throughout the ELCA are encouraged to use the various study materials for conversation and their own discernment. They are also urged to share the central points of their conversation with the task force. Responses to this study resource may be shared with the task force via email: womenandjustice@elca.org.

In fall of 2017 the task force expects to release a draft social statement to be discussed and shared widely throughout the ELCA, once again encouraging that comments and reflections be sent to the task force. It is anticipated that a social statement on women and justice will be brought to 2019 Churchwide Assembly for adoption.

Additional information on how social statements come will be found at:

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Policies_and_Procedures.pdf.