



Proclaiming the Good News
of the Episcopal Church

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STUDY GUIDE

Office of Christian Formation

★ **The Episcopal Diocese of Texas**



Unabashedly
Episcopalian

The Diocese of Texas has always been a leader in the areas of Christian formation and Christian education, which will continue as we build the Kingdom of God together. Please join us in our mission, and let us know how we can assist you.

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CHAPTER ONE: WE ARE EPISCOPALIAN

COMMON THEMES

- ★ God's love is incarnational and as Episcopalians we are called to live our faith out in action.
- ★ We have promises to God and our fellow human beings.
- ★ Our calling is to devote our lives to the coming of the reign of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean "to make God's love incarnational?" (pg. 4) What are some practical ways that you, or your congregation, live out that summons?
2. Bishop Doyle writes, "In the Episcopal Church we understand that our promises are to God and our fellow human beings." (pg. 6) Why is it important to make promises? What is the essence of the promises we make?
3. Bishop Doyle says that in baptism we receive our call to devote our lives to the coming "reign of God." What is the reign of God? How do we devote our lives to it?

CHAPTER TWO: CHOOSING TO WALK THE PILGRIM'S WAY

COMMON THEMES

- ★ The Episcopal Church is a particular body with a unique perspective of the world around them.
- ★ Incarnation of the Kingdom of God in the world today
- ★ Baptism and confirmation are the Sacraments that symbolize the grace of God and these Sacraments are spoken with one voice as one body.
- ★ We are not alone in our faith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. As Episcopalians, what sets us apart from the moralistic therapeutic deism perspective given by Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton? List four beliefs that are particular to the Episcopal faith? (pg. 10)
2. Bishop Doyle writes about the kingdom of heaven. What are ways that you strive to make heaven real in your everyday world? (pg. 11)
3. What does it mean to be baptized and why are baptism and confirmation no longer included in the same service? (pg. 15)
4. As we recite together the words of the baptism and confirmation and considering the questions Bishop Doyle is reminded with weekly, consider for yourself, “How am I doing as a Christian and an Episcopalian?”

CHAPTER THREE: TELLING THE ONE, TRUE STORY

COMMON THEMES

★ Our story, our community's story and the Church's story is a part of the one, true story which is "The Lord is good and his mercy is everlasting."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is your community story and what is the story of your congregation?
2. Describe how your individual story intersects with your congregation, your community and God's one, true story.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GOSPEL FIRE

COMMON THEMES

- ★ We are transformed by following Christ into the fire.
- ★ Fire embodies transformation because it destroys, creates, regenerates and recycles.
- ★ We have a natural tendency to walk away from fires but we are called to believe that Jesus is
in the fire waiting for us and ready lead us through it.
- ★ At baptism we say that the fire of Christ will not burn you but will burn within you.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When is a time when you or your congregation has been engulfed by the fires of life (pg. 35)?
2. Looking back explore how you or your parish were destroyed, created, regenerated and recycled.
3. Bishop Doyle writes when we turn to follow Jesus it is a courageous and bold choice to be different. How are you experiencing this radical turn by saying yes to Jesus and following Him into the fire of transformation?
4. Why are the symbols of fire and water used together in the liturgy for baptism? (pg. 35)

CHAPTER FIVE: STEPS UP THE MOUNTAIN PATH

COMMON THEMES

★ Our spiritual formation is a lifelong journey shaped by stories heard and told.

★ Each of our stories is woven together even if we know it or not.

★ Jesus fulfills the prophecies in his call to humanity to drop their nets and follow him in his footsteps.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When have you had an experience when you had an immediate sense of being called?
2. As Bishop Doyle asks, “Who offered you a bit of mercy and changed your life?”
3. Jesus’ statement to the disciples to follow him is really translated to mean “Come with me now.
4. Don’t delay.” Why is there urgency in Jesus’ call to follow him?

CHAPTER SIX: BEGINNING AND CONTINUING

COMMON THEMES

- ★ If we are following Jesus, then prayer must be the origin of our work.
- ★ A disciplined prayer life aligns us with the Holy Spirit.
- ★ In the Episcopal Church, the Lord's Prayer is central to our common life of prayer.
- ★ Prayer is the way God's community comes alive on the earth.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What order does Jesus tell us to live out our lives (pg. 47)?
2. In the breakdown of the Lord's Prayer, which section did you hear differently as you read Bishop Doyle's description (pg. 49-51)?
3. How has praying for other affected your relationship with them?

CHAPTER SEVEN: TURN, TURN, TURN

Common Themes

- ★ We are called to find our true selves amidst a sinful world.
- ★ The word repent comes from the Greek word, metanoia, which means, “to change” and make a complete 180 degree turn towards Jesus.
- ★ The Episcopal Church practices metanoia by repenting of its sins and tries to live anew.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Describe your experience of repentance. For example: altar calls, confessional booths, etc. (pg. 58).
2. Why is metanoia necessary to recognize and follow Jesus? (pg. 58)
3. What is the connection between Elijah and John the Baptist? (pg. 57)

CHAPTER EIGHT: DON'T HOLD BACK

COMMON THEMES

★ Through Jesus the heavens are opened up to us and we are united with God and made into a new creation.

★ As Episcopalians our work is to baptize, make disciples and share the gospel in word and action.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why are we baptized into the Body of Christ? What is our purpose? (pg. 65)
2. What are the two main components of evangelism and why are they equally important to moving the Gospel forward? (pg. 67)

CHAPTER NINE: THE TABLE IS NOW MADE READY

COMMON THEMES

- ★ The Episcopal Church strives to be an inclusive and welcoming community that reflects the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22.
- ★ We are called to commit ourselves to the resurrection work of going out and gathering people to join the banquet feast.
- ★ We are vessels of grace, welcoming everyone to share at God's table.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. 1. How do you intentionally welcome those in your congregation who may be different than you?
2. How is the “resurrection work” that Bishop Doyle describes a partnership with Jesus?
3. In the early church, what was the meaning of the wedding robe and what its significance as we read it today? (pg. 75)

CHAPTER TEN: THE MAN AT THE GATE

COMMON THEMES

- ★ Our baptismal actions speak louder than our baptismal promises.
- ★ We are responsible for the people in our lives and in the world around us.
- ★ There is no theme, no hopeful message, no political agenda more transformative than the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to “care for those who have been abandoned, marginalized – for sheep without a shepherd?” (page 83)
2. John Milbank says that we are to “out-narrate” rather than persuade when it comes to sharing our faith. What does that mean? (pg. 86)
3. Name four of the outlined themes of our baptismal covenant. (pg. 87-88)
4. What does the world Episcopal mean and how can we live into that call? (pg. 89)

CHAPTER ELEVEN: YOU ARE THE ANSWER TO PRAYER

COMMON THEMES

- ★ The Episcopal Church is mission-minded.
- ★ Generous evangelism is about the contagious nature about grace and mercy.
- ★ If we are not sharing stories and helping God change lives, then we are not doing our gospel work.
- ★ The world needs a vital, living missionary organism that is in solidarity with the community in which God has planted it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. We should always we prayerfully discerning our calling within the church's mission. Discuss what steps are you taking in discerning your mission.
2. Bishop Doyle says, "We are an answer to someone's prayer." Share an experience when someone was an answer to your prayer. (pg. 99)
3. How does Bishop Doyle define generous evangelism? (pg. 101)?
4. How will we know when we are making a difference in God's kingdom? (pg. 107-108)
5. What does it mean to you to be unabashedly Episcopalian?





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