

**C O V E N A N T**

**FAITH IN ACTION**

REFLECTIONS ON COVENANT RESOLUTIONS

Resources, websites, and sources listed in this study series  
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## DEDICATION

This study series is dedicated with gratitude to the loving memory of the Rev. Dr. F. Burton Nelson, former Christian Action Commission member and longstanding Professor of Ethics at North Park Theological Seminary.

May Burton's vision to create this resource, his passion for ethical action, and his faithful witness within the church be honored in part by those who learn from and live into his example of discipleship.

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# FAITH IN ACTION

## REFLECTIONS ON COVENANT RESOLUTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a curriculum series designed for congregations interested in better understanding how to think through how faith connects to action in the social, public, and political sphere. We know that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26), because holistic, biblical discipleship requires each of us to continually practice our faith through action with the community of believers under the cross. Using the Bible as the primary text, and group reflections on the Evangelical Covenant Church’s Resolutions, this study series equips participants to understand the basic biblical, ethical, and personal issues that surround several social issues. This series is not meant to answer every question about a social issue or legislate beliefs for individuals – but it is an opportunity to create dialogue and awareness surrounding several important issues. Your group may be moved to action as a result of this study, become aware of issues that profoundly affect your congregation’s own health and witness, or get passionate and want to dive deeper into a specific social issue explored briefly here. Our faithful response to social issues as the ekklesia – the church, or “those who have been called out” – shapes how we witness to and serve with the world.

Because the Covenant values unity in diversity, some of the resolutions that a particular Annual Meeting have passed may or may not completely or accurately reflect your own beliefs on a social issue. While many of these issues are complex and have the capability of creating emotional or divisive responses within the church, we as the body of Christ have been given the Spirit of grace, humility, truth, and understanding to guide us as we reflect on what the gospel may be calling each of us to do in response to each of these issues. It is the intent of this series to encourage educational and biblically grounded discussion for the purpose of building up the church as we continue forward in the great commandment of loving God and loving others, and the great commission of spreading the good news of Christ throughout the world (Matt. 22:37-39, 28:19).

### SERIES OBJECTIVES

**After completing this series, participants will leave with:**

- a general **biblical framework** for how to understand faith in action, public stewardship, caring for the sacred, and being a minister of reconciliation and peace
- an introductory **knowledge of key concepts** within several social issues on which the Covenant has passed resolutions
- an understanding of **how and why the Covenant passes resolutions** and how **identity** is shaped through actions
- a **format for discussing and engaging in social issues** within the congregation
- **personal and communal action** steps to begin taking

## **SERIES OVERVIEW**

There are ten total lessons for group reflection in this series. Groups may go through the series in order, or pick and choose lessons that best fit their context.

*Lesson 1* is helpful to begin; it reviews the series, how the resolutions were written and passed, the importance of identity and actions as disciples of Christ, and our focus on unity and building up the church even as we discuss difficult topics. The remaining nine lessons are grouped in three sections with the first lesson introducing each section:

*Lesson 2* introduces the concept of being a steward of economics, *Lessons 3 and 4* explore that further by examining stewardship of the public sphere and with the environment;

*Lesson 5* introduces the concept of sacred care for the body, *Lessons 6 and 7* explore that further by examining the sacredness of those marginalized by disability or sexual sin and the sacredness of all life;

*Lesson 8* introduces the concept of biblical reconciliation as the ministry that disciples are called to, *Lessons 9 and 10* further explore this ministry as it relates to racial prejudices, love and peace.

## **LESSON FORMAT**

Each one-hour lesson in this series can be used in a Sunday school class, small group, or other appropriate setting. Since each lesson gives just an introductory and broad overview of a complex social topic, groups may decide to spend more than one week on an issue or lengthen their study time each week. Lessons are designed with adult learning styles in mind and incorporate reflection, discussion, mini-lectures, worship, an action challenge, and resources.

## **FACILITATING TIPS**

A trained leader or facilitator is not necessary for this study, a group member can fulfill this role. Facilitators should briefly review each lesson beforehand, arrange for any needed materials, and keep in mind the following tips for successful facilitating:

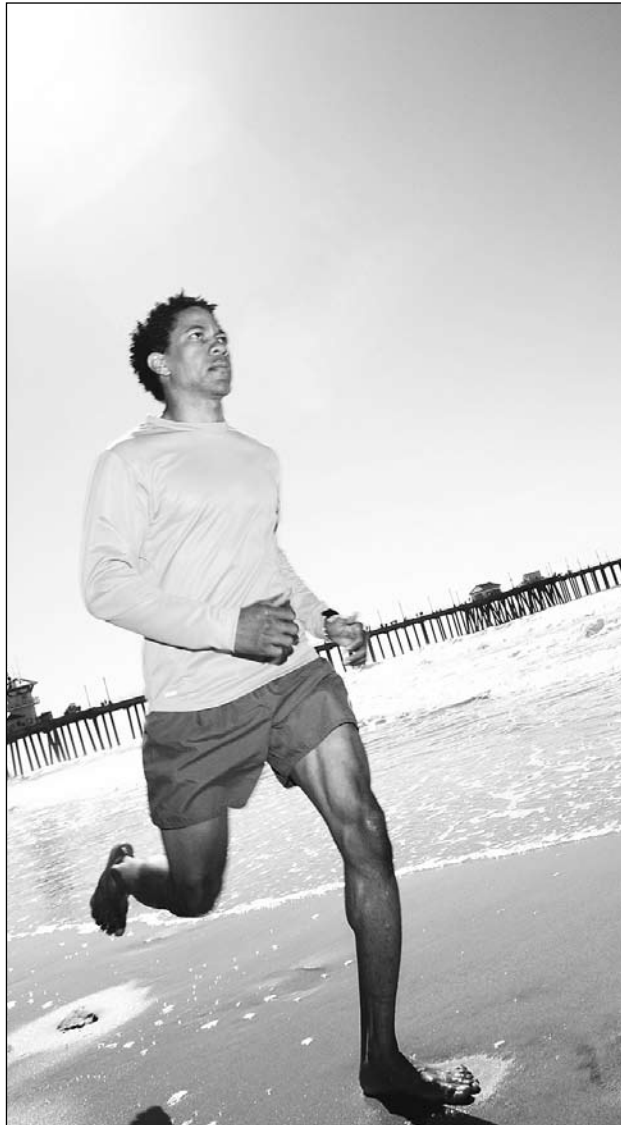
- Facilitators do not need to be experts; they serve the group by setting the tone and keeping the lesson on track and moving.
- Invite participation from various voices; if people are not answering, specific persons are dominating the conversation, or a certain table is not responsive, you may want to solicit responses from specific groups to encourage participation.
- Facilitators serve as timekeepers and help participants move from one activity to the next. Often it helps to tell people when they are half-way through a long activity and to give a two minute warning when an activity is almost over. Many people may complain that they need more time – remember that the goal of this series is to introduce concepts and to stimulate a variety of learning styles. Unless something very important comes up, keep the group on task.
- Encourage people to take part in each exercise. Partner exercises and personal reflection appeal more to

introverts and reflective persons; small group discussions and large group activities appeal to extroverts and more talkative persons. Having each person participate creates community and a safe learning space.

- If divisive issues or comments arise, try to listen politely and diffuse the situation by linking it to other concepts, or moving the discussion along. These lessons touch on issues that can be emotional or difficult for some people, so remain sensitive to that and return the focus to lesson one's concept of unity if you need to.
- The best configuration for the room is to have round tables with 4-6 chairs at each with materials at each table. You may want to think about how to best arrange the space you have available.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

- All those interested in moving further in their journey of Christian formation through understanding how **faith is holistic** and may influence **large and small actions**
- **Pastors, pastoral staff, small group or student ministry leaders**
- Those interested in politics, economics, racial reconciliation, peace, the environment, sanctity of life, & health care ethics
- People with influence who want to **live out biblical discipleship** to make a difference
- Anyone desiring to further **connect** their **faith** with **actions** that **witness** in the world



**Faith in Action: Lesson 1  
IDENTITY AND ACTION**

**An Introduction to  
Christian Action Resolutions**



## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the study series “Faith in Action” and provide a foundation for further study and reflection
- To review the core formational principles of Covenant identity: biblical, devotional, connectional, missional
- To explore the framework for the Commission on Christian Action and the purpose of the Resolutions
- To identify the biblical themes that motivate us toward faith in action

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Group Discussion
5 min	Introduction
5 min	Group Discussion
10 min	Partner Reflection
15 min	Bible Study
5 min	Group Discussion
3 min	Personal Prayer
1-5 min	Plan Ahead for the Series
2-5 min	Worship

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather pens for the whole group to use
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*(If you have not done so already, choose a facilitator to guide this lesson and help lead others through the materials. Read out loud material that is not italicized.) Welcome each other and introduce yourselves. Have someone open the lesson with prayer.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

As we begin this series, let’s pause to share what we want to get out of this study. Does anyone have a specific question or topic that they want to learn more about through this series? *Let people share brief statements as time allows. Have someone take notes on the responses and let them influence your study of the series.*

## INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Welcome to the study series, “Faith in Action”. The following reflections are for all those interested in better understanding how to think through connecting faith and action in the social, public, and political sphere. We know that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26), because holistic, biblical discipleship requires each of us to continually *practice our faith through action with the community of believers under the cross.*

Using the Bible as the primary text, and group reflections on Resolutions from the Commission on Christian Action of the Evangelical Covenant Church, this study series equips participants to understand the basic biblical, ethical, and personal issues that surround several social issues.

What this series will *not* do is answer every question about a social issue or legislate beliefs for individuals – but it is an opportunity to create dialogue and awareness surrounding several important issues. Your group may be moved to action as a result of this study, become aware of issues that profoundly affect your congregation’s own health and witness, or get passionate about a specific social issue explored briefly here and want to dive deeper in order to understand more details. However we choose to act out our faith, our response to social issues as the *ekklesia*—the church, or “those who have been called out” —shapes how we witness to and serve with the world.

Use this reflection series to guide your group in the way that suits you best—you may adjust activities

that don't fit your group, or spend longer on activities that become very meaningful. However, try to use the timeline to move through the topic so that you can fit in the learning for the lesson. You may also decide to spend longer than one week on certain issues or skip other topics altogether. *(Have the facilitator refer to the brief guidelines in introduction for more about how to lead the lessons.)*

## **SERIES OBJECTIVES**

**After completing this series, participants should walk away with:**

- a **general biblical framework** for how to understand faith in action, public stewardship, caring for the sacred, and being a minister of reconciliation and peace
- an introductory **knowledge of the key concepts** within several social issues on which the Covenant has passed resolutions
- an understanding of **how and why the Covenant passes resolutions** and how our church **identity** is shaped through our actions
- a **format for discussing and engaging in social issues** within the congregation
- **personal and communal action** steps to begin taking

## **GROUP DISCUSSION** (5 min)

*Answer as many of these questions as time allows.*

- A) What actions do you associate with the church—what activities should “church people” be involved in?
- B) Look at the list of series objectives—what actions or concepts sound interesting to you, or are ones you have already thought about or practiced in your own life? What actions or concepts sound less interesting, or foreign to you?

## **PARTNER REFLECTION** (10 min)

*Choose two people at your table to read the*

*following selections out loud for the group—the Intro Paragraph and the page in the resolution booklet. Then turn to a partner and discuss the questions at the end of this section for about five minutes, making time to hear each other's responses. Answer as many of the questions as time allows.*

**Intro Paragraph:** The gospel is like a bird. It needs two wings to fly. One is the wing of faith, the other of action. If either wing is missing a bird will never soar. Neither will Christians who attempt to live out only part of the gospel. To belong to Christ involves both faith and action. “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:26 TNIV).

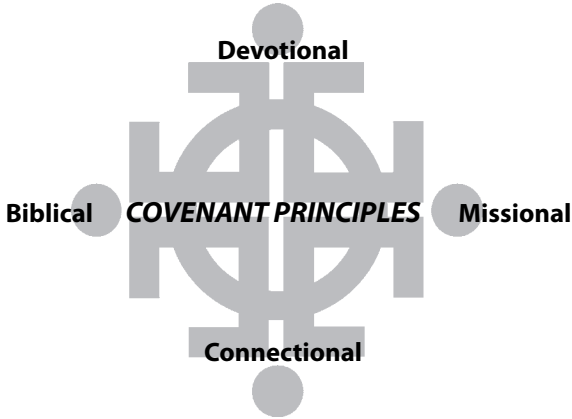
**Resolution Booklet Page 3:** “For our faith to be vibrant...”

## **Questions**

- A) Do you agree with, or question in any way, the idea that the gospel needs both faith and action to be sustained, or “to fly”? Explain.
- B) What is your experience with church speaking to culture—have you heard sermons or had classes on social issues? If not, what issues (if any) would you find particularly helpful for your church to speak to more often?
- C) Does it makes you feel more comfortable, or less secure, that the resolutions are not “binding” on individual churches? What benefits or drawbacks do you think accompany an emphasis on “freedom in Christ”?

## **BIBLE STUDY** (15 min)

Now we will explore the core formational principles of the Covenant—how they influence the way we view the Christian Action Commission (CAC) Resolutions, and the way we discuss social and sometimes divisive issues. Split into groups of 4-6 people and take turns reading the statements and verses under each principle out loud, and then discuss the accompanying questions.



### **1) BIBLICAL**

A foundational truth that our church bases authority on is the Bible, the Word of God. In order to understand someone's position on an issue, we often ask, "Where is it written?" meaning, what does God's Word tell us about this issue? The CAC Resolutions, as well as this study series, start with scripture and how it speaks to social issues and in our culture today.

#### **Verses**

Heb. 4:12; Rom. 8:6-8; James 1:25; Col. 3:15-17

#### **Questions**

A) What are some general guidelines for how the Word of God should inform our church life and this study?

B) Have you seen examples of the Bible being misused, misquoted, or applied in an incomplete way?

### **2) DEVOTIONAL**

Having a personal and committed relationship with God through Jesus Christ is another major tenant of our church. More than just a one-time decision, the biblical model of Christ asking his disciples to "follow me" means embarking on a journey of Christian formation, where your whole life is turned over to the abundant and obedient life in Christ. This is why in our church tradition, believers often ask each other, "How is your walk?"

#### **Verses**

John 8:31,32; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:15,16; Phil. 1:3-6

#### **Questions**

A) What are some general guidelines for how our walk with Christ should affect our church life and this study?

B) Name any examples where you have witnessed a focus on some aspect of the devotional life becoming unbalanced, unhealthy, judgmental, or pharisaic.

### 3) CONNECTIONAL

Our church is also founded on the belief that together we are better – that we need the different gifts and strengths that each individual, congregation, conference, and branch of ministry and administration bring to each other. In this way we intentionally welcome and learn from different theological backgrounds, various ethnic/racial backgrounds, and a wide range of spiritual gifts, so that each member may contribute his/her part toward our strength of unity within diversity.

#### Verses

Phil. 2:1-4; Eph. 4:1-6, 11-13; John 13:34,35; Rom. 12:4-6; Gal. 5:13,14

#### Questions

A) How would being “connectional” apply to our church or how our group approaches this study series?

B) Name any examples you have witnessed where being connectional becomes unbalanced or cliquish, or an incomplete expression of the church.

### 4) MISSIONAL

We also know that the church has been called for a purpose, through the Great Commandment (to love God and to love our neighbor) and the Great Commission (to make disciples of all nations). We are not brought into a relationship with Christ to remain unchanged—we are sent forth to proclaim a new kingdom with a new set of rules, and are called to love and serve others in the name of Christ’s

kingdom.

#### Verses

Matt. 5:14-16; Matt. 22:36-40; Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 2:10

#### Questions

A) How does this aspect of being missional rely on the other three aspects – biblical, devotional, and connectional?

B) Name any examples you have witnessed where the focus on being missional is incomplete or unbalanced.

### GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

*Gather together as a large group to discuss these questions:*

A) Which, if any, of these principles can stand alone without the other three?

B) When I reflect on the budget and time that our church directs towards different activities, which of these four principles are lived out strongly through our actions? Which are not as obviously practiced?

C) How can we connect what we discuss in this series about social issues and acting on our faith to the rest of the church life?

### PERSONAL PRAYER (3 min)

*Take a break now and on your own spend a few minutes in prayer, journaling, or drawing about how*

*you feel* God might be calling you to link faith and action. If it is helpful, use the space below to write notes or create a visual representation of what made the largest impression on you during this reflection.

*What words stand out to me? Images? Bible verses?*

*What actions do I feel called to?*

### **Reflection**

*“Abstractions cannot empower acts of compassion and self-sacrifice, or sustain the courage to speak against the day.” —Charles Marsh, The Beloved Community*

### **RESOLUTION PLAN AHEAD TIME** (1-5 min)

*If you need to, take time now to look back at the introduction and the table of contents for this reflection series. Talk through any calendar or planning issues that may help your group as you begin these reflections together. Make sure you know who will facilitate the study and who can gather materials beforehand.*

### **WORSHIP** (2-5 min)

*To conclude, have someone briefly close with prayer and end with the song listed below (or choose another worship song).*

*We are One in the Spirit we are One in the Lord,  
We are One in the Spirit we are One in the Lord,  
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored,  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our  
love,  
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

## **IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE—COVENANT AND ACTION RESOURCES**

### **www.covchurch.org**

The church's website has a wide variety of information, connections to make to others in ministry, and information about our policies, affirmations, and resolutions. On the site, click on “resources” and then “who we are” to find more information about our mission and affirmations.

### **Christian Action Commission**

[www.covchurch.org/cov/resources/resolutions](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/resources/resolutions)

The Christian Action Commission prepares resolutions on ethical and political issues and recommends particular actions informed by biblical perspective. For more information about resolutions, you can request the brochure “The Commission on Christian Action: Resources for Social Responsibility” (Occasional Paper #4), published by Covenant Publications through the Covenant Bookstore at 1-800-621-1290.

### **Covenant Resource Center**

This center has a wealth of knowledge about the denomination, ministries, curriculum and educational helps for ministry, and can point to the right person to find what you need. Contact them at 1-800-338-IDEA or [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org).

### **Department of Christian Formation**

This department has events, educational materials, and consultants to help individual disciples and local church congregations go forward in their formational journey. Check out their department. Call 1-773-583-0220 or visit [www.covchurch.org/cov/formation](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/formation).



**Faith in Action: Lesson 2**  
**STEWARDS OF ECONOMICS**

**Resolutions 1999, 2003**  
(‘99 Call For Bringing Economic Hope, ‘03  
Our Relationship With the Poor)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for care of the poor and powerless as an integral part of discipleship
- To define the principles of stewardship, compassion, justice, and righteousness
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to move toward caring for the poor
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to move toward caring for the poor

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Partner Reflection
3 min	Resolution Awareness
17 min	Biblical Study
5 min	Group Discussion
5 min	Social Landscape
5 min	Partner Reflection
3 min	Personal Prayer
5 min	Resolution Awareness
8 min	Action Steps
2 min	Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather pens and blank paper for the whole group to use
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own
- Have the Covenant Hymnal available for participants for reading at the end of lesson

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Get into partner groups of two people to discuss the following questions. Make time for each person to share their responses. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) Name some of the stereotypes that you have heard as reasons why people are poor.
- B) Does your church discuss economics as a congregation? If so, how often does it relate to tithing? managing personal finances? giving to the poor?

## RESOLUTION AWARENESS (3 min)

*To begin understanding this topic, review the 2003 Resolution "Our Relationship With the Poor" (page 49). Read through the first two sections, "Biblical Basis" and "The Call," on your own, and then form into groups for the next exercise.*

## BIBLE STUDY (17 min)

To review the biblical themes found in the resolution, we are going to split into at least four groups of people and assign a theme (Stewardship, Compassion, Justice, Righteousness) to each group. *(If you have more than 5 people per group, form more groups and assign themes to more than one group.)* In each small group, take turns reading the Bible verses assigned to each other, noting as you read/listen how each verse may answer the questions in your section. After this exercise, each small group will share their answer to the "definition question," (letter D in each section), with the larger group.

## Biblical Themes and Verses: Stewardship, Compassion, Justice, Righteousness

### 1) HOW TO VIEW ECONOMIC RESOURCES: STEWARDSHIP

#### Verses

Ex. 16:16-18; Ex. 35:21,29; Deut. 8:18; Deut. 15:10,11; 1 Cor. 4:1,2; 2 Cor. 9:6-12; Matt. 6:19-21

## Questions

A) What is the **source** of our wealth, riches, and resources?

B) Share any **fears** or hesitancy that you have witnessed within the body of Christ when it comes to issues of wealth, security, having 'enough', and giving to others.

C) How does **God** answer our fears about resources, about scarcity?

D) Using the previous three answers to inform this answer, write down a **definition for biblical stewardship**:

## 2) HOW GOD VIEWS THE POOR: COMPASSION

### Verses

Ex. 22:21,22; Prov. 19:17; Psalm 113:5-9; Matt. 22:36-40; Matt. 23:23; Matt. 25:35-40; Acts 20:35; 1John 3:17,18

## Questions

A) Who are defined as "**the poor**"? What do they have in **common**?

B) What is our **motivation** for showing compassion? (How do we know whether or not the poor deserve compassion?)

C) Share any **hesitancy** or questions that you have heard about showing compassion to the poor —do these verses speak to those concerns at all?

D) Using the previous three answers to inform this answer, write down a **definition for biblical compassion**: (you may also want to review the language used in the resolution for 'compassion')

## 3) GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR: JUSTICE

### Verses

Deut. 15:7-10; Jer. 22:13; Ezek. 16:49; Amos 2:6-8; Amos 5:11-24; Micah 6:6-8; Luke 1:50-55; Luke 4:18-21



## Questions

A) Who usually **perpetrates** injustice on the poor? Who, conversely, usually are the **recipients** of injustice?

B) Discuss how justice is **different** than compassion. Does justice seem to address systemic or personal issues? Does justice look for more short-term or long-term results?

C) Share any barriers that you have heard in the church about being involved in justice for the poor.

D) Using the previous three answers to inform this answer, write down a **definition for biblical justice**: (you may also want to review the language used in the resolution for 'justice')

## 4) OUR ROLE AS DISCIPLES: RIGHTEOUSNESS

### Verses

Psalms 37:26; Prov. 22:9; Jer. 22:15,16; Isa. 58:6,7; Amos 5:22-24; James 1:27; James 2:14-17; Matt. 22:36-40; Matt. 25:35-40

## Questions:

A) What **actions** or attributes are linked with righteousness in these verses?

B) What is our **reward** for practicing justice and righteousness? How does the **absence** of justice affect our relationship with God?

C) Share any **questions** or barriers you may have heard about connecting a disciple's righteousness to showing compassion and justice to the poor —do these verses speak to those questions at all?

D) Using the previous three answers to inform this answer, write down a **definition for biblical righteousness**: (you may be interested to know that the Hebrew term "sedaq" is often translated to mean both 'justice' and 'righteousness')

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

*Gather as a large group to discuss what you have learned. Ask someone from each group to share your definition. (Definitions from groups may be different; which is fine.)*

## SOCIAL LANDSCAPE (5 min)

Now that we've explored the biblical basis

for stewardship, compassion, justice, and righteousness, let's look at the state of the world in which we find ourselves. Look over the following statements and figures; match the numbers on the left with the statements on the right. *For each set of statements, pause and have the facilitator read the answers out loud (answers are at the end of the lesson).*

### POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES

- 25 \_\_\_\_\_% of people living below the poverty level
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ % of U.S. persons living in poverty who are children
- 40 \_\_\_\_\_ % of homeless people who are employed
- 12.4 \_\_\_\_\_ % of U.S. households hungry or at risk of hunger

### POVERTY AROUND THE GLOBE

- 2.5 \_\_\_\_\_ million people are hungry in the world.
- 1.2 \_\_\_\_\_ million children die each year in developing countries due to hunger.
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ billion people are below the international poverty line (earning less than \$1 a day).
- 852 \_\_\_\_\_ million children in Southern Africa orphaned in 2001 due to the epidemic of HIV/AIDS.

### PUTTING POVERTY IN PERSPECTIVE

- 89 \_\_\_\_\_ kilocalories per person, per day, for the entire planet; what World Agriculture currently produces
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week; what a minimum-wage worker would have to put in to afford a 2 bedroom apartment in a 'median' U.S. state at federal affordable housing rates
- 2,720 \_\_\_\_\_ billion; what animal lovers in the U.S. and Europe spend on pet food per yr

- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ billion; what is estimated would meet the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people

### DID YOU KNOW?

- 209 \_\_\_\_\_ the country with the greatest income inequality of all the developed nations
- 44 \_\_\_\_\_ times; in 1965, the spread between what the average CEO of a company made compared to a factory worker
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ times; in 1998, the spread between what the average CEO of a company made compared to what a factory worker was paid
- USA \_\_\_\_\_ % gain; from 1978-1998, the wealthiest 5% of the U.S. population in terms of income gained this percent, while at the same time the poorest 5% in the U.S. saw their wealth decline by 10%

### PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following questions. Make time to hear each other's answers. Answer as many questions as you have time for.*

- A) What was most surprising to you about the poverty facts?
- B) Look back at the definitions for stewardship, compassion, justice, and righteousness you wrote down earlier. How do these biblical concepts relate to the poverty figures?

### PERSONAL PRAYER (3 min)

*Take a break now and on your own spend a few minutes in prayer, meditating, or journaling about how you feel God might be calling you to be a steward of your economic resources. If it is helpful, make notes or read the reflection below.*

Dear God, You promise Good News to the poor...

## Reflection

*"You cannot abandon your possessions, but at least you can change your attitude to them. All getting separates you from others; all giving unites you to others."*

—St. Francis of Assisi

## RESOLUTION AWARENESS (5 min)

Silently read the resolution on "A Call for Bringing Economic Hope" from 1999 (page 39). Read the first two sections, "Biblical Basis" and "The Call". Then turn to the 2003 resolution (page 50). Have one person read out loud for the whole group the section titled "Some Suggestions for Ministry With the Poor".

## ACTION STEPS (8 min)

Now it is time to connect our biblical and social education with some potential action steps that we can take.

## BRAINSTORM WITH A PARTNER: (6 min)

With a partner, brainstorm potential action steps—both for you as an individual and for your church. Use the questions and ideas that follow if they are helpful.

## ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES

*Things to think about:*

- Do any issues stand out to me as ones that I already care about? Are there people that God has already placed in my life who struggle with these economic hardships? (i.e. hunger, health, AIDS orphans, the homeless, the jobless, affordable housing, etc.)
- What local ministries or national groups that are already meeting those needs could I be a part of?

## SOME INDIVIDUAL ACTION IDEAS:

- Choose to be in a place where I will meet and encounter people of another economic background – by volunteering at a shelter, visiting other churches or schools, re-connecting

with struggling family or friends, tutoring students after school, or caring for the sick.

- Commit (or re-commit) to tithing as a form of worship/stewardship.
- Teach my kids/roommates about a biblical attitude toward tithing and stewardship.
- Research my own neighborhood's economic structure; find census data on my town and see where the pockets of poverty might exist that I do not even know about.
- Pick one international poverty issue to research more, on the web or in books, and eventually invest some of my finances toward a ministry that serves that issue.
- Take an international "perspective trip" or go on a mission trip where I'll encounter poverty in some form.
- Financially support one group that is working toward systemically fighting poverty and hunger; sit down with my household to discuss why we are supporting this group.
- Ask each of my kids/parents/spouse to pick an issue they want to know more about and assign one person per week to present their findings to the family after supper.
- Devote one week to specifically praying for wisdom as to how God is calling me to act with justice and compassion as part of my discipleship; ask Him how I can participate in that work in concrete ways.

## MY ACTION IDEAS

## ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

*Things to think about:*

- Is our church accessible to the poor? Do we invite and welcome people of different

economic and racial and ethnic backgrounds? How does our worship, dress, culture, and location affect that?

- Are there programs/ministries already in place that work with poor people in our community or elsewhere? What would help strengthen that ministry or encourage the people already involved with that work? Is there a church doing good ministry that we could learn from or partner with?
- Is there a way to better incorporate stewardship and justice into our corporate worship? How could we use hymns, liturgies, readings, or sermons that highlight the verses we have read and our role as stewards of economics for the poor? How could this affect our small groups, youth group, other activities, etc?

### **SOME CHURCH ACTION IDEAS**

- Include people from different economic backgrounds in decision-making processes and/or in leadership positions.
- Have a benevolent offering each month and build up a fund to support people with emergency economic need.
- Celebrate awareness events in church, such as World AIDS day or National Homelessness Awareness Day; provide education on the issue for church members to begin taking action on that issue.
- Make sure to have thoughtful ways to let economically struggling people participate in church events (i.e. if a youth event costs \$150 to attend, offer scholarships to help cover the cost if that is an issue).
- Make a corner of a table or bulletin board the "Justice and Compassion Corner" at the church. Rotate information about different issues affecting the poor, verses that speak to justice or stewardship, what local ministries are doing, facts about world hunger, etc.
- Become a partner church with Bread for the

World. Do an Offering of Letters as a church to write Congress about a domestic or international issue that affects hunger.

- Establish a new ministry that the church can do together as stewards with the poor – build Habitat for Humanity homes, host a soup kitchen meal once a month, open the church space in winter months, support a child in a developing nation, etc. Take time to design and set this program up properly.
- Make sure employees at church, including janitors, day care workers, secretarial help, etc. are paid a living wage (above the minimum wage, enough to meet local living expenses).
- Learn more about how the church could impact its community to care for the poor. Establish a class for business people to attend on fiscal responsibility as a Christian, partner with neighborhood schools to support single moms or high-risk youth, or get involved in city political issues that affect funding for affordable housing.

### **OTHER ACTION IDEAS**

#### **ACTION CHALLENGE** (2 min)

- 1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Your action challenge is one new action step that you will commit to starting this week. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Make it build on previous actions if you are already aware of this issue. Write your personal action challenge below.
- 2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to facilitate at least one concrete action step to advance stewardship of economics as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

## GROUP BENEDICTION (2 min)

Close this lesson by reading #900 in the *Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook*.

## QUIZ ANSWERS:

Poverty in the United States: in order = 12.4, 40, 25, 10

Poverty around the Globe: in order = 852, 6, 1.2, 2.5

Putting Poverty in Perspective: in order = 2720, 89, 13, 13

(All facts from World Hunger Facts 2002, World Hunger Education Service, [www.worldhunger.org](http://www.worldhunger.org); [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), or [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org))

Did You Know?: in order = USA, 44, 209, 6 (*Ron Sider in Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*)

### IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— POVERTY RESOURCES:

- Read the resources in the 2003 Resolution (p.51)
- [www.cdda.org](http://www.cdda.org): *Christian Community Development Association*
- [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org): *National Coalition for the Homeless*
- [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org): *Habitat for Humanity*
- [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org): *Bread for the World*
- [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org): *America's Second Harvest* —The Nation's Food Bank Network
- [www.calltorenewal.com](http://www.calltorenewal.com): *Call to Renewal*
- [www.covchurch.org/cov/worldrelief](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/worldrelief): *Covenant World Relief*
- [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org): *The Acton Institute*, led by Father Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest, has much theologically to say on matters economic. Among many ongoing projects, Acton publishes a semi-annual, peer-reviewed journal, *Markets and Morality* ([http://www.acton.org/publicat/m\\_and\\_m/](http://www.acton.org/publicat/m_and_m/)).
- [www.michaelnovak.net](http://www.michaelnovak.net) and [www.aei.org](http://www.aei.org): The work of Catholic theologian and think-tank scholar Michael Novak, whose writings (such as *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*) were influential in the Solidarity movement

in Poland and, so some have claimed, instrumental in certain places in bringing down the Iron Curtain.

- *Empowering the Poor*. Linthicum, Robert C. MARC/World Vision, 1999. Following the example of Jesus as he worked with the poor, the author takes his own personal experience with the poor of North America and defines a Christian strategy to empower the poor through faith-based community organizing.
- *Grace at the Table: Ending Hunger in God's World*. Beckmann, David and Arthur Simon. IVP, 1999. A hopeful message that widespread hunger is not necessary. We have the ideas, experience, financing, and technology to put nearly all hunger behind us. This book shows us how we can end hunger for millions of people in God's world.
- *The Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth*. Schneider, John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. A professor of religion and theology at Calvin College provides a counterpoint to Ron Sider.
- *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse*. Easterbrook, Gregg. New York: Random House, paperback 2004. Easterbrook, a senior editor at *New Republic* magazine, gives a broader, optimistic view on the state of the contemporary economy.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 3**  
**STEWARDS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

**Resolutions 1995, 1998**  
( '95 Public and Political Discourse, '98  
Religious Freedom...)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for being a steward of the political realm as the church
- To understand the principles of kingdom citizenship, allegiance and advocacy
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to move toward being stewards of public life
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to move toward being a steward of public life

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Group Discussion
3 min	Resolution Awareness
5 min	Partner Reflection
17 min	Bible Study
5 min	Group Discussion
5 min	Social Landscape
8 min	Partner Reflection
3 min	Personal Prayer
5 min	Action Steps
2 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

This lesson introduces a topic that sometimes creates division or discomfort in churches – the issue of faith and politics. We'll begin this topic by considering some of the objections or concerns that might be present. *Have volunteers take turns*

*reading out loud these 4 common objections; then discuss the questions that follow.*

### OBJECTION 1

"Politics are not the church's job. Why should our energy and resources as a congregation be diverted to partisan and petty debates, when our real job is saving people's souls?"

### OBJECTION 2

"It is obvious what political affiliation all Christians should have, so why discuss any issues beyond that? God founded our nation on biblical principles and gave us Godly men and women in political office to guide us, so we should obey them and not get involved beyond that."

### OBJECTION 3

"Things like figuring out where this nation spends its money and whether or not we go to war are 'worldly' issues that should not concern the church. It's dangerous for the church to stray too far from 'spiritual' issues."

### OBJECTION 4

"Politics are dangerous and involve corruption and scandal. The church is supposed to be an alternative to the political system of this world."

### Questions

- A) As a group, which (if any) of these objections have we heard in the church? What other objections or concerns have we heard about "mixing faith with politics"?
- B) What are the main concerns behind these objections? Do you agree with some concerns more than others?

## **RESOLUTION AWARENESS** (3 min)

*Choose several people from the group to help the facilitator read the bold-faced print in the following paragraphs out loud.*

Politics can sometimes be a complex and confusing topic, bringing up debates about specific policies, morality or political parties. This lesson will frame these issues and concerns within the context of being a 'kingdom citizen'—how our membership in the kingdom of God shapes our responsibility and involvement in the political systems of our country. The rest of this lesson will focus on the two equally important aspects of that citizenship—**allegiance** and **advocacy**.

The 1995 Resolution on Public and Political Discourse describes both of these functions of being a citizen of the kingdom:

### **ALLEGIANCE:**

**“The fundamental and eternal identity of all Christians derives from their being members of the one body of Christ and citizens of the one kingdom of God; this identity transcends and relativizes all differences arising from age, sex, ethnicity, culture, economic status, political orientation, and national allegiance.”**

In other words, being a kingdom citizen means that our membership in the church and our unity in the Spirit binds us tighter than for whom we vote or what national flag we may fly. When these two kingdoms are in conflict—the national kingdom of this world and the demands of the Body of Christ, our identity as Christians always comes first.

### **ADVOCACY:**

The 1995 Resolution goes on to state: **“The people of God are called to seek the peace and welfare of the city in which they reside as pilgrims (Jeremiah 29:5-7); they are not to withdraw, escape, ignore, or despise the common life, the needs and the challenges of their neighbors, or the communities in which they reside; but rather they are to speak**

**and act as ambassadors of the kingdom of Christ.”**

**In other words, the second aspect of kingdom citizenship is to be an ambassador from that kingdom to our neighborhoods, cities, and nations. Part of what makes us citizens of God’s kingdom is that we value and speak for what God values – which includes being salt and light as an advocate on behalf of what the kingdom of God teaches us to value.** *(More information on the biblical basis for our political actions can be found in the 1998 resolution as well.)*

## **PARTNER REFLECTION** (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following questions. Make time to hear each other’s answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) What are things that you feel compete for your **allegiance**?
- B) Are there examples you have witnessed of the church centering its citizenship as Christians in the kingdom of God? Or examples of the church being made servant to the nation-state and its allegiance?
- C) For whom or what do you presently **advocate**? Are there people in your life or causes upon which you take as your own and speak on behalf?

## **BIBLE STUDY** (17 min)

*To review these themes, split into groups of 4-6 people. In each small group, take turns reading the Bible verses assigned to each other, noting as you read/ listen how each verse may answer the questions in your section.*

### **1) ALLEGIANCE TO MEMBERSHIP IN ONE BODY, ONE KINGDOM**

*As each verse is read, note the **name(s)** given for the church or for disciples, and the **actions** that the church is to do.*



## Verses

Ex. 20:2,3; Jer. 29:6,7; Matt. 5:13-16; Matt. 9:37, 38; Mark 12:13-17; Rom. 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; 1 Peter 2:4-10; John 18:36

## Questions

A) What names or metaphors for the church did you hear?

B) In what ways is the church told to be separate or different from the world?

C) In what ways is the church told to be involved or active in the world?

## 2) ADVOCATING THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM AS AMBASSADORS

*As each verse is read, note **whom** the **advocate**/ambassador is and the **persons/value** that he/she is advocating **on behalf of**.*

## Verses

Ex. 3:7,8; Prov. 31:8,9; 2 Sam 12:7-10; Mark 10:13-16; Mark 10:42-45; Mark 12:32-34; Luke 4:18-21; Luke 6:20-31; 2 Cor. 2:14,15; 2 Cor. 5:20; James 1:27

## Questions

A) What actions or metaphors describe how people are ambassadors—representatives—of God?

B) Why, or on behalf of whom, do these biblical examples advocate? When do they speak to political authorities?

C) What are the values upon which God calls kingdom citizens to act?

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

*As a large group, briefly discuss these two questions:*

A) What connections do you see between this study and the previous study on the “connectional” nature of the church?

B) What connections do you see between this study and the previous study to the “**missional**” nature of the church?

## SOCIAL LANDSCAPE (5 min)

*Have the facilitator read the questions to the large group and pause for the group to respond “true” or “false”. (Answers to the questionnaire are at the end of the lesson.)*

- T/F 1. The United States Government’s annual budget is over \$2.5 trillion dollars.
- T/F 2. The U.S. annually gives 6% of its budget to foreign aid.
- T/F 3. Many charitable and faith-based groups receive and/or rely on federal money for their *ministry*.
- T/F 5. About half of Americans vote in national elections.

- T/F 6. Apartheid ended in the Republic of South Africa in 1964.
- T/F 7. Over 70% of South Africans voted in their first democratic election.
- T/F 8. Until about 1920, American Christians were known as being very involved in political movements – including workers rights, the suffragettes, and abolitionists.
- T/F 9. Schools, hospitals, orphanages, and soup kitchens founded in America have always been secular.
- T/F 10. A Covenant pastor was featured in TIME magazine for marching his congregation through a segregated neighborhood to welcome an African-American family in the 1960's.
- T/F 11. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an ordained Baptist minister, held a PhD in Theology, preached regularly, won the Nobel Peace Prize, gave most of his worldly possessions away (including the Peace Prize cash), and led a Civil Rights movement that appealed to faith and politics.
- T/F 12. Congress passes about 100 bills a year.
- T/F 13. Eight handwritten letters or one in-person visit as a constituent to your elected Representative can make a particular issue have more weight.

### **PARTNER REFLECTION** (8 min)

*Each person may read the below passage; then turn to your partner for the question.*

Arthur Simon, an ordained Lutheran pastor and founder of Bread for the World (a national, non-partisan Christian advocacy group) says there are two issues at stake for the church and politics: the separation of church and state, and the separation of religion from life. He writes,

“The separation of church and state, properly understood, is a principle of fundamental importance to the nation...It is a vital principle

which guarantees the free exercise of religion and protects citizens from the imposition of religious beliefs or practices by state...The separation of religion from life is pure heresy. It is false because it contradicts the biblical witness and therefore the Christian understanding of faith. To take major areas of life, those having to do with social and economic decisions that vitally affect all of us, and put them into a compartment carefully separated from faith is to turn much of life over to the devil. It is another way of making Christianity into a one-hour-on-Sunday religion, or perhaps a faith that has to do with one's personal moral values, but not, say, with one's business career or professional career and certainly—God forbid—with politics. It is the opposite of confessing Jesus as Lord.

Let me be clear. The church relates to society primarily through the conversion of people and their nurture in faith. Changed lives make a lasting impact on society, and this is by far the most important way in which the church contributes to the wholeness of the world. My thinking is in harmony with this reality, not in competition with it. Service to Christ through citizenship falls within the mission of the church to help people grow in discipleship...A congregation that avoids engagement with public policy matters, [leads] Christians to believe that a vast region of life, though it vitally affects the well being of others, is of no particular concern to God. The love and lordship of Christ are viewed in a way that fails to encompass the whole of life. By choosing to 'not get involved' in public policy issues, a congregation short-changes its members regarding their ministry and stewardship.” (p.71, Christian Faith and Public Policy, 1987)

### **PARTNER QUESTION**

- A) Do you agree that the church can fulfill both of these roles with society – nurturing people to faith in Christ and engaging faithful Christians in public policy? Why or why not?

## PERSONAL PRAYER (3 min)

*On your own, spend a few minutes in prayer or reflecting on **how God might be calling you to be a steward of the public sphere.** If it is helpful, use the questions or the reflection below.*

**Dear God, Lord of Lords, the only true King...**

### Reflection

*“Our public life reflects our moral values, one way or the other. We have all seen how politics can reflect our worst values, of selfishness, greed, divisiveness, fear, and power. Yet we long to see how politics could reflect our best values of compassion, community, diversity, hope, and service... The alternative to the passive politics of the status quo is a prophetic politics of personal and social transformation.” —Jim Wallis, [The Soul of Politics](#)*

## ACTION STEPS (5 min)

Now it is time to connect this study about our political stewardship into action. However, moving from the concepts of allegiance and advocacy as kingdom citizens to specific ways to engage the political process can be a difficult one. Our goal is to start with at least one small action step that we each can take. Below are some questions to review, action ideas to get us thinking about tangible action steps to take, and an ACTION CHALLENGE. *Split into partners to discuss the following questions/ideas.*

1) What activities might individuals and families participate in to advocate for kingdom values?

2) What activities might our church participate in to advocate for kingdom values?

## ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES

- Learn more about national, state, and community elections and then share with your family or church what you found.
- Check out a resource listed at the end of this study and find at least one topic or area to which you feel called to get more involved.
- Pray for our country’s lawmakers and for their pastors.
- Sign up to get email updates from Call to Renewal.
- Commit to prayer and discussion with a believing friend who is of a different political persuasion than you are. Regularly meet and be open to seeing how faith informs his/her perspective.

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

## ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

- Have a small group or the leadership team read a nonpartisan book together about faith and politics; study it, along with the Bible, and pray about how God is asking this church to steward the public sphere (i.e. [God’s Politics](#) by Jim Wallis).
- Reflect on signs/symbols of allegiance in the church sanctuary and rooms; what symbols represent allegiance to the kingdom of God? Are there symbols that show allegiance to this world?
- Hold an appreciation event for those who work in government-related jobs at your church. Organize a way for them to share with the congregation what they know about government and faith and discuss together.
- Pray for veterans and their families.
- Prepare your church to be an educator and advocate for those who are usually disenfranchised from the voting process and letting their voice be heard through elections

– the disabled, poor, the elderly, people of color, etc. Help register people to vote for national and state elections and advocate for the values of the kingdom in your own voting.

- Join Bread for the World to advocate the nation's decision makers on behalf of the poor and hungry.

## MORE CHURCH ACTION IDEAS

## ACTION CHALLENGE

1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Your action challenge is one new action step that you will commit to starting this week. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Make it build on previous actions if you are already somewhat aware of this issue. Write your personal action challenge below.

2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to facilitate at least one concrete action step to advance stewardship of the public sphere as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

## GROUP BENEDICTION (2 min)

*Close this lesson by reading the Lord's Prayer together.*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.  
Amen.

## QUIZ ANSWERS

**1. True; 2. False**, it gives less than 1%; **3. True**, including World Relief, World Vision, and Habitat for Humanity; **4. True; 5. True; 6. False**, it didn't end until 1994; **7. True**, and many walked for days and stood in lines miles long to do it; **8. True; 9. False**, most were started by churches; **10. True**, Rev. Douglas Cedarleaf; **11. True; 12. False**, it is closer to 3,000; **13. True** (facts are from Bread for the World Institute, [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org), or from Covenant history)

## **IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE - POLITICAL RESOURCES**

- [www.ekklesia.com](http://www.ekklesia.com): *The Ekklesia Project* is a group of theologians and laity who discuss how to be citizens of the kingdom and not succumb to nation state demands.
- [www.sojournal.net](http://www.sojournal.net): *Sojourners* is an evangelical magazine and website that discusses politics and religion. They are not single issue people and discuss being pro-life, pro-peace, anti-poverty, and pro-creation care.
- [www.esa-online.org](http://www.esa-online.org): *Evangelicals for Social Action* promotes service to poor, reverence for life, care for creation, and witness to Jesus Christ.
- [Christian Faith and Public Policy: No Grounds for Divorce](#). Simon, Arthur. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987. A short book that describes Simon's experience as a pastor and in D.C., and his thoughts on why faith must be active in public policy, to fight for the well-being of the hungry and poor.
- [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org): *Bread for the World* is a 30 year old Christian, nonpartisan advocacy group, with tips on faith and advocacy, practical tools for writing to Congress, and education on domestic/international hunger.
- [www.gamaliel.org](http://www.gamaliel.org): Faith-based community organizers who work at the grassroots level to make changes in policy and communities.

- [www.cc.org](http://www.cc.org) *The Christian Coalition's* national website.
- [God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get it](#). Wallis, Jim. Harper SanFrancisco, 2005. New York Time Best-Seller reflecting on faith and moral values after the 2004 Presidential election. Wallis is the founder of Sojourners.
- [The Politics of Jesus](#). Yoder, John Howard. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994 (second edition). One of the first readable and thorough theological explanations (from a respected Mennonite) on why the Gospel is always political, social, and economic—if it is to be Good News.
- [www.ird.org](http://www.ird.org): *The Institute on Religion and Democracy*
- [www.eppc.org](http://www.eppc.org): *The Ethics and Public Policy Center*
- The Institute on Religion and Public Life. Found on the web at the site of its journal, [www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com), this organization is also headed by a Catholic priest, Richard John Neuhaus (Catholic though he is, recently deemed by *Time* magazine as one of the 25 most influential Evangelicals in the US). The journal draws on an imposing pool of Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant theologians and thinkers.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 4**  
**STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Resolution on the Environment, 1992

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for caring for the environment
- To define the principles of creation, earthkeeping, Sabbath, and fruitfulness
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to move toward caring for the environment
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to move toward caring for the environment

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Partner Reflection
12 min	Social Landscape
5 min	Partner Reflection
15 min	Biblical Study
10 min	Group Discussion
3 min	Personal Prayer
3 min	Resolution Awareness
10 min	Action Steps
2 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Decide which reading to use for the benediction
- Have hymnals for participants (for the benediction)
- Gather pens and blank paper for the whole group to use
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following questions.*

*Make time to hear each other's answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) How would you describe your relationship to creation or nature?
- B) Is there a time when you remember being moved or feeling closer to God because of observing or experiencing something in creation?

## SOCIAL LANDSCAPE (12 min)

*Look over the following quiz and circle your answers. After each question, have the facilitator read the answer and explanation.*

1. How many school days each year do children miss nationally due to asthma-related illness?  
A. 5 million                      B. 10 million  
C. 14 million                     D. what's asthma?
2. The Great Lakes contain what percent of the nation's and world's freshwater supply, respectively?  
A. 10, 10                         B. 50, 10  
C. 90, 20                         D. 70, 20
3. Which creates more pollution?  
A. the average car              B. the average home
4. How did old New York City subway cars land in the Atlantic Ocean?  
A. accidents                      B. budget cuts  
C. artificial reefs                 D. tourism
5. What country is the largest single emitter of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels?  
A. North America               B. China  
C. North Korean                D. UK
6. Worldwide, what group of people suffer the most from the changes in our natural

environment such as ozone depletion, raiding flood waters, and deforestation?

- A. business owners
- B. poor people
- C. consumers
- D. clowns

7. What percent of the earth's ozone layer, the protective atmosphere that shields the earth from the ultra-violet radiation of the sun, has been depleted since the 1970's?

- A. 70%
- B. 50%
- C. 30%
- D. I don't believe in Ozone depletion

8. Each year, how many square kilometers of primary forest are removed around the world?

- A. 1
- B. 1,000
- C. 10,000
- D. 100,000

9. At what rate are unique animal or plant species becoming extinct on the planet, so that they no longer exist anywhere?

- A. 1/3 weeks
- B. 3/1 week
- C. 1/3 days
- D. 3/1 day

10. Degradation of forests, plant and animal life, and environmental conditions necessary to sustain natural habitat results in human and cultural degradation around the world.

- True
- False
- I don't get true/false questions

### **PARTNER REFLECTION** (5 min)

*Turn to your partner to discuss these questions. Take turns hearing each other's responses and answer as many questions as you have time for.*

- A) What was most **surprising** to you about the facts in the quiz?
- B) Which, if any, of the types of environmental concerns mentioned have **you witnessed**, been concerned about, or already tried to address in your life of discipleship?
- C) Do you see any **theological** connections to how these forms of pollution and natural degradation

affect the created world?

### **BIBLE STUDY** (15 min)

Here we will consider four biblical principles for caring for creation. Get into groups of 4-6 people. Read through the principles together and then go through the list of Bible verses and write which principle number (1, 2, 3 or 4) that verse best represents next to the verse. *Verses may be connected to more than one principle, and more verses/principles may be written in by your group if they come to mind.*

### **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

(Adapted from Calvin DeWitt, President of Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies)

- 1. Creation Principle:** God is the creator and owner of all the earth, a creation that reflects and worships God
- 2. Earthkeeping Principle:** As the Lord keeps and sustains us, so must we keep and sustain our Lord's creation
- 3. Sabbath Principle:** We must provide for creation's Sabbath rests
- 4. Fruitfulness Principle:** We should enjoy, but must not destroy, creation's fruitfulness

### **Verses:**

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Psalm 19:1-4 NIV

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may



eat; and what they leave the wild beasts may eat.  
Exodus 23:10-11a NRSV

I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. Leviticus 25:21 NIV

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." Genesis 1:20-22 NIV

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 1 Chronicles 29:11 NIV

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Genesis 2:15 NRSV

If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. Leviticus 26:3, 4 NIV

To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Deuteronomy 10:14 NIV

Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land. Isaiah 5:8 NIV

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Romans 1:20 TNIV

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their

being. Revelation 4:11 TNIV

Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet? Ezekiel 34:18-19 NIV

From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth. Psalm 104:13, 14 NSRV

The Lord said, "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." Leviticus 25:23 NIV

For the Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. Romans 8:19 NRSV

You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. Genesis 6:19-20 NIV

But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. Deuteronomy 11:11-12 TNIV

## **GROUP DISCUSSION** (10 min)

*Now gather together again as a large group and discuss what you have learned.*

- A) What are your reflections on the four principles?
- B) How would you describe the role, responsibility, or right that God gives **humanity** in relation to the rest of Creation?
- C) What **term** would you use to define that

relationship—role, responsibility, or right? Why?

D) Which of these four biblical principles do you think your church already is aware of or practices in some way?

### **PERSONAL PRAYER** (5 min)

*Take a break now and on your own spend a few minutes in prayer, meditating, or journaling about **how you feel God might be calling you to be a steward of the environment.** If it is helpful, you can write below or read the following reflection.*

#### **Creator God...**

#### **Reflection**

*“At first stewardship may mean use of Creation; perhaps our appreciation for a flower will lead us to put it into a vase to decorate our table. But stewardship will bring us well beyond appropriate use, to keeping what remains, and to restoring what has been abused in the past. The widespread lack of awareness and ignorance of Creation and Creation’s integrity means that we and many others have abused and degraded the environment unknowingly, and stewardship means that we will work to set things right again – to reconcile and redeem. We might even buy back something degraded to make it right again. Stewardship means serving creation.” —Calvin DeWitt*

### **RESOLUTION AWARENESS** (3 min)

*Have one person in the group read the “Resolution on the Environment” from 1992 (page 12) out loud. Listen for specific references to options for environmental action.*

### **ACTION STEPS** (15 min)

Let’s link this biblical and social education with potential action steps that we can take.

### **BRAINSTORM WITH A PARTNER** (8 min)

With a partner, brainstorm potential action steps for you as an individual and for your church. Use the questions and ideas below if they are helpful.

### **ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES**

Things to think about:

- What stage of environmental awareness do I want to work on? Do I need more **education** about the issues, **appreciation** and exposure to the natural world, or am I ready to take small or large steps toward **action based on what I know?**
- What specific environmental concerns could I address in my daily routine relating to water use, garbage and recycling, composting, electricity and energy use, car and gas emission use? Which would be easiest to address with my household?
- What could I do to encourage my family to be aware of the biblical principles of creation, like the idea of creation, earthkeeping, Sabbath, and fruitfulness?

### **SOME INDIVIDUAL ACTION IDEAS**

- Replace light bulbs at home with energy efficient ones.
- Bike, walk or carpool at least one day a week to decrease gasoline emissions.
- Put a brick or weighted plastic liter bottle inside the toilet tank to reduce water used when flushing.
- Teach kids to turn off the water while brushing their teeth.
- Research my city’s recycling rules for paper, plastic, glass, etc. and make up a simple summary for others to learn from. Share the rules with the church.
- Pick one environmental issue to research more in the next week and share what I find with my family.
- Visit one website that has more information

about environmental concerns and learn more about where I fit.

- Financially support one group that is working toward caring for creation; sit down with my household to discuss why we are supporting this group.
- Ask each of my kids/parents/spouse to pick an issue they want to know more about and assign one person per week to present their findings to the family after supper.
- Devote one week to specifically praying for wisdom as to how God is working to redeem and find enjoyment from His creation; ask Him how I can participate in that work.

## MY ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

Things to think about:

- What specific environmental concerns could our church act on due to its size, location, geography, and building structure?
- Are there people in our congregation who already have knowledge or a commitment to the issue of environmental stewardship already that we could learn from?
- Are there programs/practices already in place for recycling or conservation that we could strengthen or encourage?
- Is there a way to better incorporate environmental stewardship into our corporate worship? How could we use hymns, liturgies, readings, or sermons that highlight God's good creation and our role as stewards Sunday mornings, in small groups, youth group, etc?

### SOME CHURCH ACTION IDEAS

- Use email or paper-less advertisements for church events.
- Use recycled paper for church bulletins or other

printed materials.

- Celebrate Earth Day as a church and plan a range of awareness and educational events, as well as sharing verses and worship that highlight creation.
- Change light bulbs at church to energy efficient ones.
- Put a brick or liter bottle in the toilets at church.
- Set up recycling bins in offices, the kitchen, youth room, etc. and make sure that people know how to separate waste and that the janitors knows how to collect them for the city.
- Make a corner or a table or bulletin board the "Environmental Awareness Corner" at the church. Rotate what you put up there – easy informational tidbits about how activities at church affect creation, ideas for how to conserve, newsletters from "The New American Dream", or theological reflections from people like Wendall Berry or St. Francis of Assisi.
- Make your church a creation awareness center —get help from Au Sable's website (see info under "If You Want to Know More...").
- Serve drinks – coffee, tea – that are grown in fair-trade, organic contexts so that globally our consumption is not reducing rain forests or hurting poor workers who live off the land.
- Talk to the leadership of the church about how to develop a long-range plan to make future decisions at the church with the environment in mind; like get the services of a "green" builder when the church adds on, or buy products in bulk that are environmentally friendly (like toilet paper, paper, food/drinks, furniture, etc.).
- Learn more about how the church could impact its community or city to be environmentally friendly. Read up on requirements for environmental issue, or host an environmental fair at your church, or work alongside other groups already trying to be stewards of the environment in your area.

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION CHALLENGE (2 min)

- 1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Your action challenge is one new action step that you will commit to starting this week. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Make it build on previous actions if you are already somewhat aware of this issue. Write your personal action challenge below.
- 2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to work on at least one concrete action step to advance stewardship of the environment as a church. Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:

### GROUP BENEDICTION (2 min)

*Close this lesson by having someone read out loud the following reflection (or read # 909 from the Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook )*

### STEWARDSHIP MEANS SERVING.

As we understand that God, through Creation, is in so many ways serving our own lives, we will return this service with our own.

Our service will include a loving and caring keeping of what we hold in trust, providing the creatures their time of Sabbath rests, and preserving Creation's fruitfulness.

Ultimately our service in Creation will even involve entrusting others with what we have served, kept, and restored.

Christian environmental stewardship (our loving care and keeping of Creation that mirror's God's love) is a central, joyful part of the human task.

As communities of God's stewards, as the Body of the One who made, sustains, and reconciles the world, our churches and our lives can and must be convicting publications and vibrant testimonies that glorify and honor our Redeemer and Creator.

### PRAYER

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. *Amen (Rev. 4:11 TNIV)*

*(reading adapted from online reflection by Calvin DeWitt, President of Au Sable Institute)*

### QUIZ ANSWERS

**1. C - 14 million.** The number of children with asthma in the U.S. more than doubled between 1980 and 1995. (<http://www.epa.gov/> and <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>)

**2. C - 90,20.** The five Great Lakes are the largest surface freshwater source on the Earth. They contain more than 90 percent of the nation's freshwater supply and more than 20 percent of the world's. These vast, inland seas provide water for consumption, transportation, power, recreation, and a host of other uses. Despite their considerable size, the Great Lakes are sensitive to the effects of a wide range of pollutants. (<http://www.epa.gov/> and <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>)

**3. B -** One inexpensive and energy efficient way you can cut your home-related pollution is to replace old light bulbs and fixtures with Energy Star qualified lighting. Changing just five bulbs will save an estimated \$60 per year. If every American household did this, together we'd keep more than one trillion pounds of greenhouse gases out of our air. That's a \$6 billion energy savings for Americans and an energy savings equivalent to the annual output of more than 21 power plants! (<http://www.epa.gov/> and <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>)

**4. C** - Reefs provide a home for fish and other ocean wildlife. The cars are still intact, well covered by growth, and surrounded by fish such as flounder, tog, and shark. Years ago the natural bottom near shore had crevices in which fish could breed and hide. Today, however, widespread development has increased runoff from the land. This has resulted in large quantities of silt and sand being deposited into the water, making the near-shore bottom flat. (<http://www.epa.gov/> and <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>)

**5. A** - heavy air pollution results in acid rain in both the US and Canada. Acid rain is characterized as containing harmful levels of sulfur dioxide or nitrogen oxide and so is damaging and potentially deadly to the earth's fragile ecosystems. Acidity is measured using the pH scale where 7 is neutral, values greater than 7 are considered alkaline, and values below 5.6 are considered acid precipitation. A pH of 2.4 (the acidity of vinegar) has been measured in rainfall in New England. (CIA's country fact book site: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html>)

**6. B** - The poor have to subsist and suffer the most from a variety of pollutions and environmental problems. In Bangladesh, for example, where two major rivers cascade over the Himalayas, when the Delta water is raised just by an inch or two, the whole country floods and is under water thigh deep. People are unable to plant or harvest crops for about a fourth of the year. In 1998 the plains were flooded and about two-thirds of the country of 130 million poor people were food insufficient for that year. All estimates say that due to global warming, the sea water levels will rise by one foot by the year 2050. (Sermon by Bill McKibben, found at: <http://www.protectingcreation.org/about/documents/Cry%20of%20Creation.pdf>)

**7. A - 70%**. Ozone loss each spring over Antarctica, based upon 25 years of nearly continuous measurements by the British Antarctic Survey station at Halley Bay, detected slight ozone decline in the late 1970s, greater declines the 1980s, with 30% depletion by 1984 and 70% the total column ozone content in 1989. [Anderson, J., D. Toohey and W. Brune. 1991. "Free Radicals Within the Antarctic Vortex: The Role of CFCs in Antarctic Ozone Loss." *Science*. 251: 39-46.]

**8. D - 100,000**. Each year removes 100,000 square kilometers of primary forest and degrades an equal amount by over-use. In Thailand, forest cover declined from 29 to 19 percent of the land area between 1985 and 1988. In the Philippines undisturbed forests have

been reduced from 16 million hectares in 1960 to less than a million hectares left at present. [Repetto, R. 1990. "Deforestation in the Tropics." *Scientific American*. April 1990:36-42.]

**9. D - 3/1 day**. More than 3 species of plants and animals are eliminated from Earth each day. In Ecuador since 1960 the original rainforest has been almost totally eliminated and converted to cash crops; a small remnant at Rio Palenque of less than one square kilometer is the only remaining site for 43 plant species. The adjacent Centinella Ridge that once supported 100 endemic plant species was cleared between 1980 and 1984. [Given, D. 1990. "Conserving Botanical Diversity on a Global Scale." *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Gardens* 77:48-62.]

**10. True**. Indigenous knowledge of native and some Christian communities living sustainably and cooperatively with creation has noted a dramatic loss of long-standing garden varieties of food plants. The number of plants and species that pollution is eradicating may not even be measurable in the scientific community, and may result in harmful losses to native populations who have subsisted on these species for centuries. [Awa, N. 1989, "Participation and Indigenous Knowledge in Rural Development," *Knowledge*. 10:304-316]

## IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

- [For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care](#). Bouma-Prediger. Read more about it at: [www.covenantbookstore.com/forbeofeabys.html](http://www.covenantbookstore.com/forbeofeabys.html)
- [www.creationcare.org](http://www.creationcare.org): *Evangelical Environmental Network*. This biblically based site explains how to host Creation Sunday, discuss What Would Jesus Drive, and offers scripture resources and an annual conference for evangelicals.
- [www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org): *The New American Dream*. This group addresses environmental concerns, the problems with over-consumerism, ideas for simplifying lifestyles, and political advocacy. Their online newsletter and website offer practical tips, inspiration, book reviews and information on various national programs.
- [www.ausble.org](http://www.ausble.org): *Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies*. Au Sable's mission is to integrate Christian principles and biblical faith with awareness and appreciation for creation and earthkeeping. They offer a wide

range resources, including trips, retreats, and outreach opportunities in the US and around the globe specifically for *Christians* concerned with environmental issues. They also offer courses for college credit through several Christian colleges (including North Park University). Their substantial online resource page has a bibliography, periodical listing, newsletter information, and biblical statements linking faith and creation. Their mail-order resources include pamphlets, land use papers for churches, and information on how to make your church a creation awareness center.

- [www.protectingcreation.org](http://www.protectingcreation.org): *Interfaith Climate Change Network*. This advocacy group, sponsored by the National Council of Churches, has practical energy-saving ideas for how to take action at home, church and in the community.
- [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov): *Environmental Protection Agency*. Visit this massive site for information on any environmental topic in the US, resources for kids, awareness quizzes, and lots of links.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 5**  
**SACRED HEALTH**

**Resolutions 1992, 1993**

('92 Securing Access to Health Care, '93  
Health Care)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for caring for our health and the health of others as a sacred part of discipleship
- To understand the principles of wholeness and health, and our history as a church in health care
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to move toward caring for health as sacred
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to move toward caring for health as sacred

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Partner Reflection
10 min	Group Discussion
5 min	Resolution Awareness
13 min	Bible Study
7 min	Social Landscape
3 min	Resolution Awareness – Part 2
5 min	Personal Prayer
8 min	Action Steps
5 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own
- Have hymnals available for participants and a piano or someone to lead the song at the end

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following. Make*

*time to hear each other's answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) What feelings do you associate with the term health? health care?
- B) Have you seen connections between faith and health in your life, or in the life of others close to you?

## GROUP DISCUSSION (10 min)

*The next three lessons deal with the sacredness of life. As people of faith, we ought to value our own health and the health of others. Let's take a few minutes to define these two terms, "sacred" and "health". Ask someone to read the definitions in bold out loud, and then discuss the questions that follow.*

### A) SACRED

Dedicated to or set apart for worship; Made or declared holy; Worthy of respect

#### Questions

- How would we treat our bodies if we truly saw them as sacred? How would we treat the health of others?
- Are there any examples you can think of where focusing on our health can hinder us from being used as one who is "set apart"?

### B) HEALTH

Soundness, especially of body or mind; freedom from disease or abnormality; The overall condition of an organism; A condition of optimal well-being

#### Questions

- What are indicators of holistic health for an individual? A church? A community?
- How do brokenness, illness, pain, or death affect our ability to do ministry?



- How might these same suffering experiences equip us for better ministry?

## **RESOLUTION AWARENESS** (5 min)

The Covenant church has been involved in ministries of health care since our denomination's inception in 1886. This lesson will begin with understanding the concepts presented in the 1993 resolution; from this statement, we will look at how our church's biblical and missional foundations should keep us actively caring for the health of others as part of our faith in action. *Turn to page 16 in the resolution booklet and ask one or two people to read the statements out loud for the whole group.*

## **BIBLE STUDY** (12 min)

*Split into groups of 4-6 people. In each small group, take turns reading the paragraph for each theme and the Bible verses assigned, noting as you read/listen how each verse may answer the questions that follow.*

### **1) BIBLICAL: JESUS/GOD HEALS US AND CARES FOR THE SICK**

God promises healing to all who believe in Him. Jesus and his disciples also healed people with the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ likened his own ministry to that of a physician. "One fifth of the material in the Gospels is concerned with the healing work of Jesus. These works were not only interpreted as pointers to his messiahship and the kingdom of God but were a part of a developing situation that brought about the very thing of which they were signs."

(ELCA Social Statement on Health, [www.elca.org/socialstatements/health](http://www.elca.org/socialstatements/health))

#### **Verses**

Ex. 15:26; Matt. 4:23, 24; Luke 5:17-26; Rev. 7:13-17

#### **Questions**

- A) What are some other stories or actions of healing that you know are associated with Jesus' ministry?

- B) Is the healing aspect of Christ's ministry something that our church talks/preaches about very often? Why or why not?

### **2) MISSIONAL: HEALING AS OUTREACH**

"The church was the founder of organized health care in the fourth century. Historically, the church has always used health care as a major public witness and cutting-edge strategy as it penetrated other cultures and shared, in a compelling and contemporary way, the people's need for the good news of Jesus Christ." (ELCA, *Ibid.*) The promise of the kingdom of God also carries with it the promise of wholeness and healing. The church can witness that eternal health to a broken world.

#### **Verses**

Matt. 9:35,36; Matt. 25:34-40; Mark 1:15; Mark 2:9-12; John 9:1-11

#### **Questions**

- A) What are other stories or example you know of where healing the sick is a witness or an outreach for faith?
- B) Much of the care for the sick has been moved from its original base in the church to institutions that do not necessarily ground their work in faith. How do you think this affects the church's missional call today to care for the sick?

## **SOCIAL LANDSCAPE** (5 min)

Have the facilitator read the questions to the large group, and pause for the group to respond “true” or “false” before reading the answers out loud. (Answers are at the end of the lesson.)

- T/F 1. People with incomes at or below the poverty line are about 4 times as likely not to have insurance as those making twice the poverty limit or more.
- T/F 2. Women are more likely to die of breast cancer than from any other medical condition.
- T/F 3. Lack of healthcare and health insurance affects the elderly more than the young.
- T/F 4. Every day, 2,000 people die from AIDS around the world.
- T/F 5. The ECC’s health ministries include two hospital centers, sixteen retirement facilities, homes for disabled adults, low-income housing units, a resource and shelter addressing domestic violence, and a children’s home.
- T/F 6. 40% of Mexican-Americans have no health insurance, compared to 20% of African-Americans and 13% of whites.
- T/F 7. Men should eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- T/F 8. Adults over age 65 statistically do not have many health limitations to restrict their activity or productivity.
- T/F 9. Studies have shown that when the same person works 50 hrs a week, instead of 40, productivity is not increased.
- T/F 10. The Paul Carlson Partnership formed to carry on the work and passion of a Covenant medical doctor who became an international celebrity and martyr after his murder in 1964 in the Congo.

## **RESOLUTION AWARENESS** (3 min)

We have talked some about how healthcare issues especially affect the poor. Now we will read the other resolution that deals with this issue more fully. *Turn to page 14 in the resolution booklet; ask 1-2*

*people to read it out loud; only read through page 14.*

## **PERSONAL PRAYER** (5 min)

*On your own, spend some time asking God where you need fuller health and healing, or thanking God for your health. Reflect on how **God might be calling you to treat your body and the health of others as sacred.** If it is helpful, read the reflection below.*

### **Dear God, You are the Great Physician...**

#### **Reflection**

*“To heal the sick and to preach the Kingdom are neither complementary, nor supplementary, but both are manifestations of the same Word of God.”*

*—Leslie Newbigin*

## **ACTION STEPS** (5 min)

Now it is time to connect this study to action. Below are some questions to review, action ideas to get us thinking about tangible action steps to take, and an ACTION CHALLENGE. *Split into partners to discuss these questions/ideas.*

- A) How could we care for ourselves and our own physical health more holistically? How does our health relate to our discipleship?
- B) How could we care for the health of others—especially those who no one notices and cares for—as an act of discipleship?

## **ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES**

- Make a doctor’s appointment for yourself or a family member. Learn as much as you can about how your diet, exercise, physical conditions, etc. might be improved so that you can be a good

steward and care for your body's health.

- Consider your schedule and whether or not you have Sabbath time each week. Try to carve out at least part of one day where you rest, exercise, care for yourself, and can devote time to holistic health.
- Carve out Sabbath time each week for your family/children to rest and care for their holistic health.
- Are there people in your family, school, or community who do not have access to healthcare that you already have relationships with? Could you help them get healthcare?
- Choose one health issue that you will read about and share with your family.
- Pray for those who are suffering from disease around the world and have no access to medicine or basic health care.
- Support an organization that cares for the sick around the globe, donate financially, go on a mission trip, or raise awareness about the issues.

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

- Consider establishing a parish nurse program. Gather the medical professionals in your congregation and discuss how you could help give healthcare to your own members, to the community, and how to serve those in most need or without access or healthcare coverage.
- Focus on holistic health in worship through music, liturgy, or prayers valuing our own health and the health of others.
- Support a local church/non-profit ministry that serves local people without adequate healthcare by sending volunteers. Learn from them what gaps in their ministry our church might be able

to strengthen through our involvement.

- Sponsor a health fair for the community. Bring in people to check blood pressures, give diet analyses, hand out information, etc.
- Teach a Sunday School series on the Sabbath and how to live lives of holistic health in a busy world.
- Start a relationship with a ministry that serves the health needs of the poor and at risk around the world, like AIM or World Vision.
- Advocate on behalf of the sick through policy decisions with groups like DATA, Bread for the World, CARE, or World Vision.

## MORE CHURCH ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION CHALLENGE

1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Your action challenge is one new action step that you will commit to starting this week. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Make it build on previous actions if you are already somewhat aware of this issue. Write your personal action challenge below.

2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to facilitate at least one concrete action step to advance sacred health as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

## **GROUP BENEDICTION** (3 min)

*Close this lesson by singing Hymn #205, "Jesus Heard with Deep Compassion", in the Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook.*

## **QUIZ ANSWERS**

**1. True**, (CDC, National Center for Health, 2002 U.S. Survey); **2. False**, women die from heart disease most often, and lung cancer kills 70,000 women per year, compared to breast cancer killing 40,000 yearly (American Cancer Society, [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)); **3. False**, in 2000, adults 18-24 were most likely to not have insurance, while adults over 65 were the most likely to have insurance (CDC source); **4. False**, 6,3000 people die from AIDS each day (UNAIDS); **5. True; 6. True**, (CDC source); **7. False**, men need 9 servings, which may reduce the risk of cancer, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and diabetes. Most men only get half their recommended servings; **8. True**, Older adults may have a higher risk of illness, but that doesn't limit their activities. Only about 35 percent of adults 65 or older in the United States report that their daily activities are limited by illness. And that number is steadily declining ([www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)); **9. True**, cited in Seattle Times, April 24, 2003. The study compared people working seven 40 hr weeks in a row, to working seven 50 hr weeks in a row; **10. True**.

## IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— HEALTH RESOURCES:

- 1990 Resolution on Substance Abuse and Addiction – page 6, Resolution booklet
- Healing, Health and Wholeness: Engaging Congregations in Ministries of Health. Chase-Ziolek, Mary. Pilgrim Press. For churches interested in promoting the health of individuals, families, and communities, this book walks through the process of developing effective ministries of health through discussing core concepts as well as providing questions for reflection and ideas for congregational engagement. The appendices provide practical health ministry tools, including a congregational assessment guide.
- [www.restministries.org](http://www.restministries.org): *Rest Ministries*. A Christian site that offers support for those with chronic illness. Helpful links to care providers, illness information site, encouragement tips, devotionals, and chat room are all available.
- Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest. Baab, Lynne M. IVP, 2005. An easy to read, but well thought-through primer on how to practically make space and room in busy lives for spiritual Sabbath time. Includes Jewish prayers to use and a reading list.
- [www.ipnrc.parishnurses.org](http://www.ipnrc.parishnurses.org): *International Parish Nurse Resource Center*. For supporting and starting parish nurse programs. Includes resources for pastors and coordinators of a new program, training events and education, and FAQ's.
- The Parish Nurse: Providing a Minister of Health for Your Congregation. Westberg, Granger. Augsburg, 1990. Written by the “father of parish nursing”, this author presents a creative way for congregations to provide holistic ministry to its members. Focuses on church health more than community or outreach issues.
- [www.covchurch.org/cov/pcp](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/pcp): *Paul Carlson Partnership*. Learn more about the Covenant's medical mission work in central Africa. You can find resources to use with children, ways to support financially, mission team updates, and photos of medical and development work being done.
- [www.careusa.org](http://www.careusa.org): *CARE* ministers to the poor around the world through sustainable healthcare and economic projects. Their site has information about various countries and ways to support their ministries or advocate.
- [www.dukespiritualityandhealth.org](http://www.dukespiritualityandhealth.org): *Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health* at Duke. This site is co-directed by two psychiatrists—Harold Koenig, who is one of the world's leading authorities on the verification through academic/medical research of how religious practice correlates with physical well-being; and Keith Meador, who holds both an M.D. and Th.M. and besides being a psychiatrist also teaches at Duke Divinity School as Professor of the Practice of Pastoral Theology and Medicine.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 6**  
**SACRED WORTH**

**Resolutions 1996, 1997**  
( '96 Human Sexuality, '97 People with  
Disabilities)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore the biblical implications of I Corinthians for how to view our bodies and the bodies of others as the church
- To explore the principles of giving and receiving, wholeness and brokenness, grace, and responsibility
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to receive those who are sexually or physically marginalized as having sacred worth
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to receive those who are sexually and physically marginalized as having sacred worth

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
3 min	Partner Reflection
20 min	Bible Study
10 min	Small Group Discussion
5 min	Resolution Awareness
5 min	Social Landscape
3 min	Personal Prayer
10 min	Action Steps
2 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own
- Have the Covenant Hymnal available for participants for reading at the end of lesson

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (3 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following questions. Make time to hear each other's answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) Do you ever think of your body as a temple of God? How would that make you view your body?
- B) What are ways that we do not respect other's bodies as temples?

## BIBLE STUDY (20 min)

To begin examining how we are to treat our own bodies and the bodies of others, we will take a look at some relevant verses in the book of I Corinthians. This letter was written by Paul to a newly-formed church at Corinth in roughly 55 A.D. to explain how converts were to see themselves and behave as the body of Christ. This church was comprised largely of Gentiles, people who had not grown up with the Jewish culture and rabbinic teachings. Corinth was also known as a wild and immoral city. The following study is only an overview of the book, and there are other verses about the body in scripture. This will simply provide a biblical foundation to beginning to understand the sacred worth of the body. As you study this book, keep in mind what you hear in terms of giving, receiving, wholeness, brokenness, grace, and responsibility.

*For this study, split into groups of 4-6 people. In each small group, take turns reading the Bible verses assigned to each other, noting as you read/listen how each verse answers the related question(s). You will need to keep moving through the verses in order to get to all the questions. Most questions will only take a moment to answer, so do not dwell on them longer than you need to.*

## I CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

- 1) What actions earn us eternal life?

- 2) In this passage, who does the **giving** action?  
Who the does the **receiving**?

### I CORINTHIANS 5:9-13

- 8) What does this passage teach about **responsibility** and **grace**?

### I CORINTHIANS 2:10-12, 4:5, 8:9

- 3) What do these verses tell us about **grace** and **responsibility** for sin?

### I CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

- 9) What **gift** is mentioned here? What choice about **receiving**?

### I CORINTHIANS 3:2-4,11-17

- 4) As fellow disciples, how should our differences of opinion be handled?

- 10) What forms of **brokenness** are mentioned here?

- 11) What adjectives are used to describe the body?

- 5) In vs. 16 and 17, what adjectives are used to describe the members of the church?

### I CORINTHIANS 7:1-9

- 12) What expressions of **wholeness** that affect the body are explained here?

### I CORINTHIANS 5:1,2, 6:7-11

- 6) What forms of **brokenness**, or sin, are named here? What **responsibility** is connected to witnessing sin?

### I CORINTHIANS 11:17-22, 33, 34

- 13) What expressions of **brokenness** are named here? What **responsibility** accompanies it?

- 7) How does our local church teach **responsibility** about these various sins? How does it teach **grace** about these sins?

### I CORINTHIANS 12:12-26

- 14) What does this tell us about what **gifts** we have **received**? What aspect of **receiving** does Paul say we may need to work on?



15) What might block or harm members of the body of Christ with physical disabilities, sexual brokenness, or survivors of sexual sin from fully participating and **giving** their gifts to the body?

receiving —both the gift of our bodies and receiving the gift of others?

B) After the I Corinthians study, do you have any questions about materials relating to the concepts of responsibility and grace?

C) If time allows, go back to any questions in the Bible study section on which you might to spend more time.

### I CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

16) In light of what this tells us about how a healthy, **whole**, Christ-like relationship operates, what are signs of an abusive relationship or of **brokenness**?

17) How does this affect the **grace** and **responsibility** that we use in response to those who may be mistreating the gift of their own bodies through gluttony, idolatry, sexual sin, or immorality?

### I CORINTHIANS 15:35-44

18) Since we have the promise of an embodied spiritual resurrection, how does that affect how we treat our earthly bodies?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (10 min)

*In your small group, discuss these three questions:*

A) In the I Corinthians study, what was new or surprising to you concerning giving and

### RESOLUTION AWARENESS (3 min)

*Turn to page 26 in the resolution booklet and ask one person to read the "Biblical Basis" Section. Then turn to page 28 in the booklet and ask someone to read only the first paragraph of the resolution. (The rest of the text of these resolutions will be addressed in the Action Challenge Section.)*

### SOCIAL LANDSCAPE (5 min)

*Match the numbers on the left to the statements on the right in each section. Then have the facilitator read the answer out loud. (Answers are at the end of the lesson.)*

### OUR BODIES AND BROKENNESS

- 85 \_\_\_\_\_ seconds, how often an act of domestic violence occurs to a woman in the United States
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_ % of batterers watched or were victims of domestic violence as a child
- 75 \_\_\_\_\_ % of U.S. adults who are overweight (2002)
- 61 \_\_\_\_\_ % of married adults who think that adultery is acceptable behavior
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_ % difference between church attendance for persons with disabilities versus those without, due to church barriers
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_ % of people with severe disabilities who say that their faith is very important to them

## THE BODY OF CHRIST

- 23 \_\_\_\_ % of professed born-again Christians who filed a lawsuit against someone in 1997
- 27 \_\_\_\_ % of non-Christians who filed a lawsuit against someone in 1997
- 25 \_\_\_\_ % of professed born-again Christians who got a divorce (of those who were married)
- 4 \_\_\_\_ % of non-Christians who got a divorce (of those who were married)
- 3 \_\_\_\_ % of Christian couples who will experience at least one incidence of physical abuse in their relationship

## PERSONAL PRAYER (3 min)

*On your own, spend a few minutes in prayer or reflecting on how God might be calling you to receive the gift of life from Him, and to receive those who have disabilities, are survivors of sexual sin, or are marginalized as gifts from God.*

**Dear God, You are the Giver of Life...**

*"To love is to embody God's infinite love in a faithful communion with another human being."*

*- Henri Nouwen, Here and Now*

## ACTION STEPS (10 min)

Now it is time to connect this study to action. Our goal is to start with at least one small action step that we each can take. Below is another review of the resolutions, some questions to review, action ideas to get us thinking about tangible action steps to take, and an ACTION CHALLENGE.

## RESOLUTION IDEAS (8 min)

*Break into small groups of 4-6 and turn to page 26 in the resolution booklet. Have someone read the "Response" and "Conclusion" out loud for your group. Then turn to page 28 in the booklet and have someone read from the second paragraph to the end, starting with, "We affirm and commend..." Then go through the questions/ideas.*

1) Review the list of actions suggested in each resolution and spend time thinking about what actions your church already does, could do better, or might be called to start doing.

2) Are there members of the congregation who already struggle with some of these issues who could help provide a new ministry, or who may need special attention and care to make sure that they feel fully received and welcomed as sacred in the church?

## ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES

- Do a study of I Corinthians on your own and reflect on the aspects of giving, receiving, grace, responsibility, wholeness, and brokenness in your own life and community.
- Volunteer with a crisis abuse hotline or prevention center that ministers to women or children who are fighting domestic abuse.
- Sign up for AVA's newsletter, the Covenant's domestic abuse project through Women Ministries or research resources on Wellspring (on the website).
- Choose one of the many issues covered here—sexual sins, domestic abuse, a specific physical disability—and research it on a couple websites or in a book on that topic. Share with your family and church what you learned.
- Spend time each week with a disabled person and help them do homework, take care of themselves, etc. or befriend someone in your own life who has a disability and you may have overlooked before. Pay attention to what you

can give them, and what you can receive from them.

- Take care of your own sacred relationships, whether you are single or married, and take a course or read a book that will help you treat your body and others as sacred.
- Commit to pray for people who are currently not welcomed in our church and to have God open your eyes to see where He might be trying to invite and welcome certain people or populations.

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

- Have Women Ministries or another group support and get connected to AVA, a new Covenant domestic abuse project. Plan to research something for October, Domestic Violence awareness month.
- Take an inventory of how accessible the physical church is for persons with disabilities. Are there easy changes that could be made to make people more welcome and to receive their gifts in the congregation? Are there larger changes that may need to be planned for to fully welcome persons with disabilities?
- Consider starting classes at church for different groups who may need to affirm their sacredness —marriage seminars, single’s Bible study, group for disabled older members, support group for parents of children who are suffering from sexual sin, advocacy group for survivors of sexual sin, etc

## MORE CHURCH ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION CHALLENGE (2 min)

1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Your action challenge is one new action step that you will commit to starting this week. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Make it build on previous actions if you are already somewhat aware of this issue. Write your personal action challenge below.

2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to facilitate at least one concrete action step to advance sacred worth as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

### GROUP BENEDICTION (2 min)

Close this lesson by reading #960 in the Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook.

### QUIZ ANSWERS

**Section One – Our Bodies and Brokenness: 15, 85, 61, 33, 18, 75** (sources on abuse from AVA website; weight from “U.S. News and World Report”, Aug.19, 02; adultery statistic from Barna, “The Second Coming of the Church,” disability from NOD/Harris Survey 2000, www.nod.org).

**Section Two – The Body of Christ: 3, 4, 27, 23, 25** (sources on first four from Barna, last statistic from “The Silent Epidemic”, Today’s Christian Woman, Sept. 04)

## **IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— SACRED WORTH RESOURCES:**

### **DISABILITY ISSUES**

- Adam: God's Beloved. Nouwen, Henri. Orbis, 1997. A book about a disabled man Nouwen was very close to and learned from. A moving story of giving and receiving as spiritual practice.
- [www.thearcink.org](http://www.thearcink.org): *The Arc Link*. The website by and for people with mental retardation and their families
- *The Equal Access Guide for Meetings, Conferences, Large Assemblies and Worship*, produced by the NCC Committee on Disabilities, is now online and can be downloaded at: <http://www.nccusa.org/elmc/disabilitiesmanual.html> or call 212-870-2267 for more information. Inventory and theological reflection.
- [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org): *Friendship Ministries*. Helps churches organize programs to include and learn alongside persons with various disabilities. They provide a template and resource for this. Extensive website list on "links" page.

### **SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL SINS, DOMESTIC ABUSE**

- [www.covchurch.org/cov/cwm](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/cwm): *Department of Women Ministries*. Visit the new AVA website for a newsletter and education, theology, and project information.

- "God's Reconciling Love: A Pastor's Handbook on Domestic Violence." Murphy, Nancy A. 2003. This helpful small booklet weaves personal stories of pastors, abusers, and survivors in a powerful way with information and education, all grounded biblically.
- [www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org): *Faith Trust Institute*. Their mission is working together to end sexual and domestic violence, and they have a wide variety of resources and help for survivors.
- [www.wellspringcenterforhope.org](http://www.wellspringcenterforhope.org): *Wellspring Center for Hope*. Information from the domestic violence organization that is connected to the Covenant.

### **SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIP ISSUES**

- [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney): *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. A thoughtful study of issues surrounding a biblical interpretation of homosexuality in the church produced by the Lutheran church.
- Phelan, John E. Jr. "All God's People Are Priests" a curriculum.
- [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org): *Christians for Biblical Equality*. Christians for Biblical Equality help teach and inform churches on sexuality, gender, and racial issues. They produce a wide range of literature, occasional theological papers, conferences, and other church resources for discussing these issues in a constructive manner.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 7**  
**SACRED LIFE**

**Resolutions 1994, 1997**  
(’94 Abortion, ’97 Life and Death in Relation to  
God and Others—Assisted Suicide)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore the biblical evidence for our ability to choose life and death in relationship to God and to others
- To understand how this biblical evidence informs the principles of life, suffering, grace, and choice
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to move toward treating all life as sacred
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to move toward treating all life as sacred

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Partner Reflection
5 min	Group Discussion
15 min	Bible Study
5 min	Resolution Awareness
7 min	Small Group Discussion
2 min	Partner Reflection
5 min	Social Landscape
3 min	Personal Prayer
8 min	Action Steps
3 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Turn to another person to discuss the following questions. Make time for each person to share their*

*responses. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) Have you ever had a situation where you were affected by the death of a family member or someone close to you?
- B) If you're comfortable sharing the details, explain how any relationships with survivors were affected.

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

In this lesson, we are dealing—literally—with life and death, so it is crucial that we follow the '94 resolution guidelines to rely on “scripture, prayerful dependence on the grace of God, and the support of the community of believers.” May we remember the truth of our “connectional” identity in the church and be sensitive to each other as we discuss issues that may have very personal and deep connections to people in our own community. *Ask someone to turn to page 30 in the resolution booklet and read the “Declaration” out loud for the group. Have another person turn to page 20 in the booklet and read the first two paragraphs.*

As a large group, let's discuss some of the general themes present in these two resolutions. From what we read in both resolutions, throw out a few adjectives or phrases to describe:

- how life and death are related to God
- how the life and death of one person affects others

## BIBLE STUDY (15 min)

To review these biblical themes, divide up into partners. Each pair will choose one resolution issue that they want to study more in depth. Within each small group of 4-6 people, make sure that at least one partner group is studying each of the two issues – study I and study II below.

## **PARTNER STUDY I**

### **Resolution '97, Life and Death...**

*With your partner, take turns reading the verses out loud and note how they help answer the questions below.*

#### **1) LIFE: WHO GIVES AND TAKES LIFE**

##### **Verses**

Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:18; Deut. 32:39; Psalm 139:16; Rom. 14:7-9; John 1:1-5; John 3:16; John 10:27-29; I Cor. 15:54

##### **Questions**

- A) What/who is the source of physical life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B) Who has the ability, the right, or the stewardship of choosing death?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C) How does the promise of eternal life affect our physical life?

#### **2) SUFFERING: GOD CARES ABOUT OUR SUFFERING**

##### **Verses**

Ex. 3:7-10; Isaiah 46:3-4; Psalm 91:1,2; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 5:3-5

##### **Questions**

- A) How does God respond to our suffering?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B) How are we to respond to suffering?

- C) How does suffering sometimes affect choices about life and death?

#### **3) GRACE: GRACE AND FORGIVENESS ARE AVAILABLE**

##### **Verses**

Isaiah 43:25; 1 Cor. 10:12,13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 2:13,14

##### **Questions**

- A) How does being in the community of believers affect our present decisions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B) Who is able to give judgment? Forgiveness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C) Does the church follow God's example of not remembering past sin? Why or why not?

#### **4) CHOICES: CHOICES ARE MADE WITHIN COMMUNITY**

##### **Verses**

Prov. 3:5,6; I Cor. 10:23; Phil. 1:6; Eph. 4:1-3; I Peter 1:13-15; I Peter 4:7-10

##### **Questions**

- A) Do we live like our choices affect others? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B) What are other factors that may limit the choices or the resources of those who are dealing with life and death questions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C) How should the church receive those struggling with end of life or death issues?

## **PARTNER STUDY II**

### **Resolution '94, Abortion**

*With your partner, take turns reading the verses out loud and note how they help answer the questions below.*

#### **1) LIFE: WHO GIVES AND TAKES LIFE**

##### **Verses**

Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:18; Deut. 6:6-8; Deut. 32:39; Psalm 139:16; Rom. 14:7-9; John 1:1-5; John 3:16

##### **Questions**

- A) What/who is the source of physical life?
  
- B) Who has the ability, the right, or the stewardship of choosing death?
  
- C) What choices may or may not be involved in bringing the new life of a child into the world?

#### **2) SUFFERING: GOD CARES ABOUT OUR SUFFERING**

##### **Verses**

Ex. 3:7, 9-12; Isaiah 46:3-4; Psalm 91:1,2; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 5:1-5; Gal. 5:14; James 2:14-16

##### **Questions**

- A) How does God respond to our suffering?
  
- B) How are we to respond to others who are suffering from a lack of resources, support, or encouragement?
  
- C) How does suffering sometimes affect choices about life and death?

#### **3) GRACE: GRACE AND FORGIVENESS ARE AVAILABLE**

##### **Verses**

Isaiah 43:25; 1 Cor. 10:12,13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 2:13,14

##### **Questions**

- A) How does being in the community of believers affect our present decisions?
  
- B) Who is able to give judgment? Forgiveness?
  
- C) Does the church follow God's example of not remembering past sin? Why or why not?

#### **4) CHOICES: CHOICES ARE MADE WITHIN COMMUNITY**

##### **Verses**

Prov. 3:5,6; 1 Cor. 10:23; Phil. 1:6; Eph. 4:1-3; 1 Peter 1:14,15; 1 Peter 4:8-10

##### **Questions**

- A) How do choices about parenting and family affect the larger community? How do men's and women's choices differ here, specifically?
  
- B) What are other factors that may limit the choices or the resources of those who are struggling with the issue of bringing a child into the world?
  
- C) How should the church receive those who in the past, or in the present, struggle with conceiving, parenting, or abortion issues?

#### **RESOLUTION AWARENESS (5 min)**

Now, each person should silently read the resolution that they studied in their partner groups. For people in study group I, read all but the "Response" in resolution '97 (page 29); for people



in study group II, read all but the last paragraph in resolution '94 (page 20).

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** (7 min)

Gather together as a small group of 4-6 to share what you learned. Alternate between groups I and II and share your answers to the “C” questions in each of the four sections (LIFE, SUFFERING, GRACE, CHOICES). Have everyone else write down a few reflections from the other group’s “C” response in their booklets. (*Definitions from groups with the same study may be different, which is fine.*)

### **SOCIAL LANDSCAPE** (5 min)

Now that we’ve explored the biblical basis for choices involving life and death in the church, let us look at the social reality that these choices are being made in and influenced by. Look over the following statements and figures; match the numbers on the left with the statements on the right. For each set of statements, pause and have the facilitator read the answers out loud (*answers are at the end of the lesson*).

#### **LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES**

- 966 \_\_\_\_ % of elderly Americans who die are in hospitals or institutional settings
- 112 \_\_\_\_ % of elderly U.S. patients experience unnecessary pain in the last twenty-four hours of life
- 80 \_\_\_\_ people have been executed through the death penalty in the U.S. since 1976
- 3.9 \_\_\_\_ people have been exonerated from the death penalty in the past 30 years
- 33 \_\_\_\_ times as likely that a black defendant will get sentenced to the death penalty than a white defendant (who did the same crime, similar case)

#### **CHOOSING LIFE**

- 21.3 \_\_\_\_ million abortions occurred in the U.S. in 2001
- 1.3 \_\_\_\_ million international abortions are

performed illegally per year

- 55 \_\_\_\_ % of Americans believe abortion should be illegal except in cases to save the mother or for rape or incest (according to USA Today, CNN Gallup Poll, May 1999)
- 14.3 \_\_\_\_ % of women who decide to have an abortion attribute it to not being able to afford a child
- 20 \_\_\_\_ % of women who decide to have an abortion attribute it to a relationship issue or their partner does not want a baby

### **PARTNER REFLECTION** (2 min)

*Turn to another person and discuss the following:*

- What was most surprising to you about the social facts?

### **PERSONAL PRAYER** (3 min)

*Take a few minutes on your own in prayer, meditating, or journaling about **how you feel God might be calling you to see all life as sacred**. If it is helpful, make notes or read the reflection below.*

**Dear God, You are the Author of Life...**

#### **Reflection**

*“Everyone has inside of them a piece of good news! The good news is that you really don’t know how great you can be, how much you can love, what you can accomplish, and what your potential is.” —Anne Frank*

### **ACTION STEPS** (8 min)

Now it is time to connect this study to action. Our

goal is to start with at least **one small action step** that we each can take. *Get in your small groups of 4-6 and read the following resolution actions, questions, and ideas together.*

## RESOLUTION ACTIONS (2 min)

*Turn to page 30 in the booklet and have one person read the "Response". Then turn to page 21 and have someone read the last paragraph for the small group.*

1) What ideas here may fit with our church population or the community?

2) Are any of these life and death issues ones that members or staff of our church are already gifted at responding to? (medical professionals, counselors, etc.)

## ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES

### *Some Individual Action Ideas:*

- Walk alongside someone you know is going through a difficult time with a parent or family member who is near the end of life. Give your support, rides to the hospital, prayer, etc.
- Get in a support group with others if you are the one supporting others dealing with sickness, end of life issues, family planning issues, grief, etc. Get resources for all of you to know how to support these major decisions and to not burn out.
- Pray for the sick and suffering in your church regularly.
- Choose an issue discussed here today and give just one hour to doing more research on it. Read a book or check out websites and share what you learned with your family/friends.
- Talk to family members about end of life issues and decide on both a practical plan and the theology for how to view this transition in life.

- Talk to family members about suicide, especially young adults and elderly members. Create a safe place to talk about these issues and provide accessible resources to anyone you think may struggle with this issue.

## MY ACTION IDEAS

## ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

### *Some Church Action Ideas:*

- Celebrate life in the service by honoring elderly, sick, disabled, or newborn members. Involve these populations up front, or keep their names in prayer.
- Think of creative ways that your church can support choosing life for new families or single parents while showing grace and forgiveness for those who have struggled with this in their past. Advertise support, counseling, and economic resources you would be willing to use to support a young mother who is in need of options. Train some adults in the congregation to be counselors with a reputable ministry or medical ministry.
- Start a benevolent fund to help support struggling mothers with medical, transportation, day care, or nutrition needs. Pair the women with friends from the church so that relationships also develop.
- Set up an educational corner on a bulletin board or in the library (preferably in a private place) with information about these issues that people can borrow or take to keep.
- Research more how your church could contribute to putting a moratorium on the death penalty. Check the resources below and then share the information with the church.

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

### **ACTION CHALLENGE:** (2 minutes)

1. Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Your action challenge is one new action step that you will commit to starting this week. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Make it build on previous actions if you are already somewhat aware of this issue. *Write your personal action challenge below.*

2. As a large group, ask if anyone wants to work on at least one concrete action step to advance caring for all life as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

### **GROUP BENEDICTION** (3 min)

We will close this lesson by reading the following liturgy. *Have one person read the regular font; the whole group responds & reads the bold font.*

O God, Giver of Life, we know that our very being and all of our abilities originate from you.

**We find our purpose and our life in you, Lord.**

O God, Compassionate Parent, we see you involved in the lives and suffering of many of your children who are precious to you.

**We find our comfort and our refuge in you, Lord.**

**O God, All-knowing and Great, we often do not understand the pain, abuse, and death that are allowed in our lifetime.**

**We cling to your promises and to each other, Lord.**

**O God, gracious and good Giver of Life, Thank you for being our companion in suffering and in death.**

**ALL: We ask for forgiveness for mistakenly thinking that as humanity, we can choose death for ourselves or for others.**

**We lament our sometimes complicit involvement as the Body of Christ in the death of the innocent, the unborn, the sick, the old, the young, the suffering, the incarcerated, the hungry, the sick, the alone, and those killed in warfare.**

**We ask for grace and truth for those who are making choices about life and death in solitude, without economic or spiritual resources, outside of the embrace of relationship and the wisdom of Christ.**

**We ask for grace and truth for those who are making choices about life and death in the midst of physical and emotional suffering, without strength or comfort, outside the support of family and friends and the community of the church.**

**We ask for grace and truth for those who are making choices about life and death based on national or personal gain, whose concern for the sacredness of all life may be compromised by retribution or fear, outside of an awareness that only You, Lord, may give and take life.**

**We ask for guidance, Author of Life, as we continue into the promise of eternal life as a community together, as we learn that lives are woven around and through each other, and as we remember the victims of violence and death along with their families in our prayers, our communal worship, our actions, and our own choices.**

**Amen.**

*(Written by Liz Mosbo VerHage)*

## QUIZ ANSWERS:

**Life and Death:** in order = 80, 33, 966, 112, 3.9

(APA End of Life Issues Fact Sheet –[www.apa.org/pi](http://www.apa.org/pi);  
[www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org))

**Choosing Life:** in order = 1.3, 20, 55, 21.3, 14.3

(The Alan Guttmacher Institute, and the CNN poll)

### IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE —SACRED LIFE RESOURCES:

- [www.covenantbenevolence.org](http://www.covenantbenevolence.org): *Covenant Ministries of Benevolence*. This arm of the ECC offers hospitals, retirement homes, homes for the disabled, and some low-income housing.
- [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org): *The Hospice Foundation of America*. This website has information on all the medical, legal, personal, and ethical decisions that are part of end of life decisions. They also provide connections to local hospice providers and ways to get care to loved ones.
- [www.abortionfacts.com](http://www.abortionfacts.com): An in-depth list of resources are here, including statistics, photos, definitions of common terms, explanations for both sides of the debate (although they are pro-life), legislation, biblical connections, and links to other resources.
- [Abortion and Divorce in Western Law](#): Glendon, Mary Ann. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987. Glendon, a devout Catholic, is the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. Her book, though, is not simply for lawyers but for any serious thinkers on the topics in the

book's title, especially the first of those.

- More recently, see Glendon's essay, "The Women of Roe v. Wade," in the June 2003 issue of the journal *First Things*, online at [www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0306/articles/glendon.html](http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0306/articles/glendon.html)
- [Think a Second Time](#): Prager, Dennis. Regan Books, 1996. See chapter 25, "Capital Punishment: A Rorschach Test." Prager is more widely known as a nationally syndicated radio talk-show host and columnist. More to the point here, though, he is an observant Jew and theologian grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, with powerful insights on religion and public life.
- [www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org): *Death Penalty Information Center*. This non-profit has exhaustive resources (including in-depth studies, curriculum for college students, facts) and links to every other office/state/reporting agency in the field.
- [www.moratoriumcampaign.org](http://www.moratoriumcampaign.org): Sisten Helen Prejean, author of [Dead Man Walking](#), hosts this effort to put a moratorium on the death penalty; facts and stories.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 8**  
**MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**

**Resolutions 1993, 1995, & 2000**  
(’93 Korean Families, ’95 Racial Reconciliation,  
’00 Anti-Semitism)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for being ministers of the gift of reconciliation with God and with others as a primary role for Christ's church
- To understand the principles of reconciliation, racism, worship, and multiculturalism as they relate to the ministry of the church
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to be ministers of racial reconciliation
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to be ministers of racial reconciliation

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
3 min	Partner Reflection
5 min	Group Discussion
7 min	Social Landscape
2 min	Partner Reflection
17 min	Bible Study
6 min	Group Discussion
5 min	Resolution Awareness
3 min	Personal Prayer
7 min	Action Steps
3 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own
- Have hymnals available for

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (3 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following. If the group is mixed in race, partner with someone from another background. Make time to hear each other's answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) What racial term do you use to identify yourself? Why? (i.e., African-American, black, Korean, Asian, Mexican, Latina, Cuban, white, Caucasian, First Nation, Norwegian, etc.)
- B) Do you have contact with people from another racial/ethnic background in your family, community, church, workplace, school, etc.? If so, do you talk about issues of race at all?

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

*Have the facilitator or a volunteer read the following out loud.*

This lesson will help us reflect on a vital component of being the church of Christ—reconciliation. The church's purpose is to mirror and usher in the kingdom of God, so our beliefs and actions regarding how we gather and worship with other believers dramatically affects our witness of the gospel.

Racial and ethnic differences, issues of power and oppression, and racial stereotypes or beliefs (like anti-semitism) continue to weaken the church and our ability to faithfully carry out the ministry of reconciliation. Not only is the church given the charge to be reconciled to each other within our own walls, but we are also given the ministry of ringing reconciliation to our communities, nations, and world in the name of Jesus. This study will primarily examine how the church itself may understand the biblical perspective of reconciliation and start the task of bringing racial justice within the body of Christ. The next study, Lesson 9, will extend these concepts to examine how the church can bring reconciliation and love to communities already torn apart by hatred, violence, oppression, and racism.

There is one important note to reflect on as we start discussing the concept of reconciliation—the very term “reconciliation” can be problematic when discussing racial inequality. The term “reconcile” connotes that in the past there once was a healthy and whole relationship between races that we can work toward getting back to. Our reality is that throughout history (in our country and internationally), people with privilege and power have consistently used race and oppression to conquer, kill, rule, and rob others. There is no example of a “reconciled” time that we can appeal to and this still drastically affects communities of color. Therefore, this study looks at the action of “reconciliation” as first, an act of God toward the world, and then an act of God’s people with each other and the world. This is not harkening back to a time that never existed, but is instead pointing toward a reality that is only possible through the power and healing of God. The term “reconcile” can still have power in its use as the redeeming and healing action of the cross, and to connote repairing brokenness and sin, but it should not be used to recreate or minimize history.

*Spend 2-3 minutes sharing reflections as a large group on the following question:*

- What are other terms or ways of understanding God’s reconciliation for the future kingdom that you can think of, either from the Bible or your own reflections?

## **SOCIAL LANDSCAPE** (7 min)

*Have the facilitator read the questions to the large group and pause for the group to respond “true” or “false”. (Answers to the questionnaire are at the end of the lesson.)*

- T/F 1. Only 7.5% of over 300,000 congregations taking part in a U.S. study in 2002 made the definition of “multiracial” (no one ethnic group 80% or more).
- T/F 2. 7% of all ECC churches are now considered multiethnic or churches of

color.

- T/F 3. The population of Native Americans in the U.S. decreased from 12 million to 237,000 in just four decades of occupation after the first Europeans arrived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
- T/F 4. The Covenant has members in churches in ten countries outside of the U.S./ Canada.
- T/F 5. 23% of the U.S. is African-American (2000 census).
- T/F 6. In 1954 the Supreme Court struck down the separate but equal doctrine that created segregated schools in the U.S.
- T/F 7. 20% of U.S. students are people of color, while white teachers make up 70% of the educational system.
- T/F 8. In 1993, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission had a backlog of over 70,000 discrimination cases and that number has steadily increase.
- T/F 9. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington helped provide funds to construct the first separate black Methodist church in 1787.
- T/F 10. Attendance in ECC churches of color around the country has grown 162% over the past decade, compared to 51% in white church attendance.
- T/F 11. Over 600 pieces of anti-Asian legislation were passed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in the U.S. , barring naturalized and native-born Asians from citizenship, testifying, and owning land. The last ban wasn’t lifted until 1954.
- T/F 12. In L.A., 1906, a multi-racial Pentecostal church rose up that had a black senior pastor, female preachers, wealthy Catholic Mexican ranchers, white and bi-racial members, and Spanish was spoken.

T/F 13. In the L.A. riots of 1992, the ethnic group that suffered greatest loss of life and property were African-Americans.

T/F 14. There are more Congolese Covenant church members then in the United States.

## **PARTNER REFLECTION** (2 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss*

- What were the most surprising or disturbing facts explored in the social landscape section?

## **BIBLE STUDY** (17 min)

*To review these themes, split into groups of 4-6 people. In each small group, take turns reading the Bible verses assigned to each other, noting as you read/listen how each verse answers the questions that follow. After this exercise, each small group will share their definitions for "biblical reconciliation" and "biblical worship" with the large group, so make sure to prepare those.*

### **1) RECONCILIATION – AND UNDERSTANDING RACISM**

*(You may notice some similarities between this concept and the "connectional" nature of the church we studied)*

#### **Verses**

Rom. 5:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Gal. 3:26b-28; Eph. 2:15-16; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Col. 1:20,21; Col 3:1, 5-17

#### **Questions**

A) What terms or actions are used to describe God's reconciling work, especially in the church?

B) What actions are believers NOT to engage in?

What actions or virtues ARE Christians to engage in?

C) What is the motivation and the power for reconciling in the church? What is the source or cause of brokenness and racism in the world/ church?

D) Who is reconciled with whom through the cross?

E) What does the reconciled church – the Body of Christ after the cross – look like? What does it do, what are its virtues?

### **Definitions**

**Racism** is often defined as "prejudice + power," = having judgments/negative stereotypes of someone based on their racial or ethnic group and being able to enforce or harm those persons by virtue of power and systemic, structural influence (source from various anti-racism training, including the ECC "Invitation to Racial Righteousness).

In light of the verses read above, and the problem of racism defined here, write a definition of "biblical reconciliation."

**Biblical Reconciliation is:**

### **2) WORSHIP—AND UNDERSTANDING MULTICULTURALISM**

*(You may notice some similarities between this*



concept and the “devotional” and “missional” nature of the church we studied.)

### Verses

Amos 5:12-15, 21-24; Psalm 95:6,7; Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 11:17; John 4:23,24; John 17:20,21; 2 Cor. 5:16-20; Gal. 6:9,10; Rev. 5:9,10; Rev. 21:22-26

### Questions

A) How does injustice based on race, class, or other differences affect our worship?

B) What are actions/purposes that God has designed the church to fulfill?

C) What will worship look like in the kingdom? Do race, class, culture, or reconciliation affect the kingdom?

D) What hinders the church of today from being a church that fully mirrors the racial reconciliation present in the kingdom of God?

### Definitions

**Multiculturalism** in the church may be defined as an authentically multi-racial congregation, where leadership/power is shared, multicultural expressions of faith are exercised, diverse social

networks flourish, and new faith expressions emerge without demanding that any cultural group lose their own distinct heritage (*United by Faith*, p.192).

In light of the verses read above, and the purpose that authentic multicultural churches attempt to fill, write a definition of “biblical worship.”

### Biblical Worship is:

### GROUP DISCUSSION (6 min)

*As a large group, take turns having each small group share their definitions for biblical reconciliation and biblical worship (they will likely be different). As time allows, discuss the following:*

A) Have you heard of or used the definitions presented for “racism” and “multiculturalism” before? How do these definitions compare to your previous understanding of the terms?

B) How does our church teach or embody biblical reconciliation and/or biblical worship?

### RESOLUTION AWARENESS (5 min)

The Covenant church has passed several resolutions that involve expressions supporting biblical reconciliation for the purpose of true community with God and with others. On your own, silently read excerpts from the resolution booklet that deal with racial reconciliation and action. *Start with reading at least part of resolution ‘95 (page 24), and as time permits, read from the resolutions on page 41 and/or page 17 to get a brief background on the specific racial/ethnic issues that resolutions have addressed.*

### PERSONAL PRAYER (3 min)

*On your own, spend a few minutes in prayer or*

reflecting on how God might be calling you to the ministry of biblical reconciliation in order to truly worship God. If it is helpful, read the reflection below.

**Christ, through Your cross there is no east or west...**

## Reflection

*“How heroic is your faith? Is it strong enough to pry open the doorway of your heart to let in those who are not your family, clan, or ethnic group? Or is it only strong enough to do what comes naturally and accommodate those who are enough like you?”*  
—Spencer Perkins

## ACTION STEPS (7 min)

Now it is time to connect this study to action. Our goal is to start with at least one small action step that we each can take. Below are some questions to review, action ideas to get us thinking about tangible action steps to take, and an ACTION CHALLENGE. Turn to a partner to discuss these questions/ideas.

- 1) What racial/ethnic groups are already present in our church? In our local community? Are there natural ways to encourage relationships between these racial groups? Are there racial groups that are not being included or welcomed fully into the life of the church because of tradition, fear, or unconscious racism?
- 2) How complete is the mission statement of our church if we are not working toward biblical reconciliation and biblical worship?

## ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES

- Choose one of the many books on multicultural church issues and read it with someone else at your church.
- Take your family to a restaurant, bookstore, or

other public place that practices a different ethnic background than yours.

- Have a family/friend night where you talk about race and how your children/spouse/roommates have experienced race in relation to their faith. Talk together about how to take action and be more faithful in this aspect of your discipleship.
- Watch a movie with your family or this discussion group that addresses race, like “Remember the Titans” (PG), “Hotel Rwanda” (PG-13), or the classic “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” (not rated).
- Pray for those who may feel unwelcome or excluded from your church, or for wisdom if you are that person. Ask that God would show you how to advocate for these persons or to be an advocate for yourself and those in your cultural group.
- Attend the Christian Community Development Association’s national training. Learn about race, justice, multicultural issues, and meet people wrestling with this issue —[www.cdda.org](http://www.cdda.org)
- Commit to prayer and discussion with a believing friend who is of a different ethnic/racial background than you are. Regularly meet and be open to seeing how race, power, language, culture, etc. informs his/her faith and perspective of the church.

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

## ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

- Have a small group or the leadership team read “Divided by Faith” and/or its companion volume, “United by Faith.”
- Analyze how your worship style and representations of culture on Sunday mornings reflects your church body. If you have different

racism in the congregation, are they equally represented through music, worship styles, languages spoken, customs for baptism and other sacraments, and who serves as ushers, readers, singers, etc.?

- Analyze the decision-making structure of your church and if it represents the culture of your congregation. If you have different races in your congregation, are they equally represented on church staff, on boards/committees, and in places of influence?
- If your church is primarily mono-racial, prayerfully consider forming a relationship with a church of another racial background. Ask God if there are any potential congregations that you are already naturally associated with, and prepare for this relationship by learning more about power issues and intentional cross-racial relationships with a resource listed below.
- Invite a Christian Formation facilitator to lead your church through an "Invitation to Racial Righteousness" – a weekend experience that digs deeper into race issues and the church. Contact them at 1-773-583-0220.
- Send a group of church members on the Sankofa trip, a weekend bus ride with cross-racial partners and education, visits, personal reflection about the history of racism in North America.
- Sponsor a youth/adult mission trip to another country. Study the culture beforehand, and reflect afterward on what you learned.

## MORE CHURCH ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION CHALLENGE

- 1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in.

Make it build on previous actions if you are already somewhat aware of this issue. *Write your personal action challenge below.*

- 2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to work on at least one concrete action step to advance biblical racial reconciliation as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

### GROUP BENEDICTION (2 min)

*Close this lesson by singing #593, "In Christ There is No East or West", from the Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook.*

### QUIZ ANSWERS

**1. True**, (*United by Faith*); **2. False**, 20.4% in 2005 (CGE); **3. True**, missionaries were among the chief enforcers of slave labor, violence, and hunts aimed at the Native American people. (*Uprooting Racism*); **4. False**, we have members in 25 countries (CGE); **5. False**, 12.3%; **6. True**; **7. False**, students of color are reaching 40%, while white teachers make up 90% (as of 2002, *Uprooting Racism*); **8. True**, (*Uprooting Racism*); **9. True**, (*United by Faith*); **10. True**, (CGE); **11. True** (*Uprooting Racism*); **12. True**, the Azusa Street Revival only lasted 3 years, but through the Holy Spirit mixed populations that had never before been in racial relationships like these (*Uprooting Racism*); **13. False**, it was Latino/as, but this ethnic group often is invisible to white America (yet is the fastest growing group in the U.S. (*Uprooting Racism*)); **14. True**, there are 180,000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (CGE).

## **IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— RACIAL RECONCILIATION RESOURCES:**

- [www.covchurch.org/cov/formation](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/formation): *Department of Christian Formation*. Visit their website for information on the “Sankofa” journey or the Invitation to Racial Righteousness. They would also be able to recommend reading/other resources for this journey. Visit the “directory” link online and find out what churches of various ethnic backgrounds are in your area so that you can visit.

- United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race, Emerson/DeYoung/Yancey/Kim, 2003. A comprehensive and easy-to-read book that summarizes the history of race and congregations in the U.S., shares stories of churches who are pursuing multiracial, biblical worship, and gives practical advice and theological content for how to do this well. Information helpful for multiple racial backgrounds. (Companion book is “Divided by Faith”)

- Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice, Kivel, Paul. New Society Publishers, 2002 (revised edition). An award-winning book that explains “whiteness”, privilege, the costs of racism, summaries of how different racial groups have been oppressed, and how white people can be empowered to respond. Graceful & straightforward; especially helpful for white people.

- [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org): *Tolerance.org Project*. Professional website from the Southern Poverty Law Center that highlights the disturbing presence of hate and white supremacist groups still thriving in the USA. You can visit this site to learn about the roots

of racism and “dig deeper” into your own history, take action or protest hate groups, get specific resources for kids/teens/adults/teachers, or read about race issues in the news.

- [www.intervarsity.org](http://www.intervarsity.org): *Inter-Varsity Multi-Ethnic Resources*. On their home page look on the right under “campus resources” where you will find “multi-ethnic ministries”. Pamphlets, journal articles, books, and videos (like “Face to Face: Seeking Racial Reconciliation”) are all available. Focused on youth-young adult.

- [www.ethnicharvest.org](http://www.ethnicharvest.org): *Ethnic Harvest*. A site dedicated to helping spread the gospel to many language and people groups, here you can find Bible translations, demographic info, and links to evangelism tools.

- [www.justicefellowship.org](http://www.justicefellowship.org): *Justice Fellowship*. This organization, founded in 1983 under the auspices of Prison Fellowship, has made significant progress in the ongoing work of restorative justice, bringing biblical principles to bear on the effort of reforming the criminal justice system.

- The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church. Ortiz, Manuel. IVP, 1993. Hispanic theologian Ortiz explains the specific issues confronting Latino culture and churches, including discussion on justice, Catholicism, missiology, and racial reconciliation. Focused on leadership training and teaching ministry with interviews of Hispanic ministry leaders.

- Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Guide for Multi-Asian Ministry. Fong, Ken Uyeda. Judson Press, 1999. Fong examines recent trends and cultural realities in Asian-American churches and brings scholarly expertise and knowledge of this culture to facilitate effective ministry in Asian-American churches.

- A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multi-Cultural World. Lane, Patty. IVP, 2002. This basic, introduction-level book reviews our demographically-changing world, God's desire for us to have relationships with those different than us, and gives stories of diverse relationships that work.

- Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together and Doing it Right. Perkins, John M. Ed. Baker Books. Grand Rapids. 1995. This text, dubbed "the official handbook of the Christian Community Development Association", explains the foundation of CCD: relocation, redistribution, and reconciliation. This book offers upfront advice for real ministry based on the African-American pastor/leader/organizer's experience and a theology of mutual ministry.

- Race and Culture: A World View. Sowell, Thomas. Basic Books, 1995. Part of Sowell's

trilogy which also includes Migrations and Cultures and also Conquests and Cultures. Sowell, a well-known economist now with the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, writes with a remarkably expansive perspective on history, economics, and culture. These are not religious resources per se, but Sowell, himself African American, broadens the thinking of readers in a way that will inform one's religious considerations of topics like race.

- Why the Jews? The Reason for Anti-Semitism. Prager, Dennis and Telushkin, Joseph. Touchstone, 2003 (revised edition). The book's title well expresses the text's content. Jewish theologian Prager and Rabbi Telushkin are a bestselling team of authors widely read in the Jewish community and beyond.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 9**  
**MINISTRY OF LOVE**

**Resolutions 1990, 1999, & 2001**

( '90 Political Disenfranchisement, '99 Ministries  
of Mercy, '01 Hate Crimes & the  
Spirit of Prejudice )

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for being ministers of the love of Christ as God’s beloved, both within the church community and as loving neighbors
- To understand the principles of “agape love” and “active mercy” as global neighbors, and to link those concepts to previous studies on compassion, justice, righteousness
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to be ministers of agape love
- To identify at least one step that each individual can make to be a minister of agape love

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Partner Reflection
5 min	Group Discussion
20 min	Bible Study
5 min	Social Landscape
5 min	Partner Reflection
3 min	Personal Prayer
5 min	Resolution Awareness
7 min	Action Steps
3 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own
- Have hymnals available for participants

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following questions. Make time to hear each other’s answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) What kind of a relationship do you have with your neighbors?
- B) What kind of relationship do you have with your “global neighbors” —have you ever been overseas or in relationship with someone from another country? Describe your experience.

## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

This lesson builds on our previous study of biblical racial reconciliation – rebuilding community between God and people and between different peoples in order to live into the promise of the kingdom. We have already examined how the church of Christ is to mirror the reconciling action of the cross as a congregation; now we will look at how the life of Jesus and the reconciling work of the cross impacts how far we extend that love and mercy outside of the church walls.

*As we begin, let’s reflect on how some important concepts are usually defined. Spend a few minutes getting short response from the large group.*

How is **love** usually defined in our culture?  
What does it look like?

How is **mercy** usually defined in our culture?  
What does it look like?

## BIBLE STUDY (20 min)

*To ground this study on love and mercy, we will start by studying the biblical witness, especially focusing on the life of Jesus. There is a fairly detailed list of helpful verses in resolution '01 (page 43), so we will start our study there, and then move to study another biblical passage.*

*To do this study, split into groups of 4-6 people. After the resolution readings, each small group will share their definitions for love and mercy, so make sure to prepare those.*

## **RESOLUTION READINGS** (10 min)

### **RESOLUTION READING I**

*Turn to page 43 in the resolution booklet and take turns reading the paragraphs out loud to each other. Read the resolution through page 44, everything but the "Response" section. Answer the questions below as you go along.*

#### **Questions**

- A) Describe God’s love for us.
- B) Describe what love in the community of the church is – what is it supposed to look like? Where does it come from?
- C) What is our response to evil or violence supposed to be?
- D) Reflect together on what you remember of the terms studied in lesson 2 of this series – compassion and justice – and how these concepts relate to this discussion of love.

#### **Definition**

Define God’s love for us, and how we are to love others.

**Agape Love is:**

### **RESOLUTION READING II**

*Turn to page 37 in the resolution booklet and have someone read the first section, "The Biblical Basis for Our Call," out loud. Answer the questions below as you go along.*

#### **Questions**

- A) What is our motivation for doing works of mercy?
- B) What actions are associated with mercy? What other virtues are often linked with mercy in the biblical texts?
- C) Reflect together on any differences that you see between mercy and love.

#### **Definition**

Define our biblical call to being merciful to others.

**Active Mercy is:**

## **SHARING DEFINITIONS** (3 min)

*When your small group has done the resolution*



readings, turn to another small group and share your definitions for love and mercy with each other. Spend just a few minutes briefly sharing some of the discussion your group had around these issues. Then turn back to your small group for the rest of the study.

### **BIBLE READING** (7 min)

In your small group of 4-6, look up the following passage and read it silently, then have someone read the background piece below out loud. Answer the questions below together.

### **Verses**

Luke 10:25-37

### **Background**

Samaria was located north of Judea, where Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho were, and south of Galilee where Nazareth was located. There is some debate over the actual ancient texts of the Samaritans, but it is known that Samaritans were looked down on by observant Jews and seen as a godless, foreign people. Samaritans are often used in the gospel accounts to contrast Jews with “the other,” or those considered “unclean.” Jews were known to travel considerable distances out of their way to circumvent going through Samaria on journeys; interestingly, it is recorded that Jesus traveled through Samaria several times.

The laws of cleanliness, mostly referring to holiness codes for faithful Jews, would have influenced both of the first two travelers (the Levite and the Rabbi). By associating with, or even touching someone who was bleeding, sick, or of an “unclean” ethnic background, Jews could be considered defiled and obstructed from worship due to their disobedience of the law. Often when Pharisees or scribes of the law asked Jesus questions or accused him of breaking laws, it was because of his disregard of these fundamental holiness codes. Jesus’ list of defiling actions included sharing table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, talking to and touching women who were bleeding, and touching and healing the sick on the Sabbath. (Dictionary of

Jesus and the Gospels, Green/McKnight/Marshall, IVP, 2002)

### **Questions**

- A) How does Jesus define love? How important is it?
- B) When defining love in more detail, how does Jesus define “neighbor”?
- C) How does the background information influence how we deal with “the other” – ethnic, cultural, class, or other differences that keep people separate today? How does this relate to prejudice, racism, or hate crimes?
- D) List those who you think may be avoided or seen as “other” in our context today:
- E) Reflect on any examples where you see the conflict between holiness (or morality, cleanliness, or a separation from the world), and loving our neighbors in our cultural context today in the church.

## **SOCIAL LANDSCAPE** (5 min)

Match the numbers on the left to the statements on the right in each section. *Have the facilitator read the correct figures out loud. (Answers are at the end of the lesson.)*

### **HATE CRIMES IN THE U.S.**

- 69 \_\_\_\_ # of hate crimes were reported in 2003 in the U.S.
- 17 \_\_\_\_ % of hate crimes that were racially motivated
- 66 \_\_\_\_ % of the racially motivated crimes were against blacks
- 7,289 \_\_\_\_ % of hate crimes were religiously motivated
- 52 \_\_\_\_ % of the religiously motivated crimes were anti-Jewish

### **DISTURBING INTERNATIONAL INJUSTICE**

- 1.2 \_\_\_\_ million people have been displaced as of April 2005 in Sudan and are living in refugee camps
- 80 \_\_\_\_ average # of women living in Sudanese refugee camps treated for rape over a four month period
- 2.5 \_\_\_\_ % of the world's millions of refugees and other displaced persons are women and children
- 500 \_\_\_\_ million women and girls under age eighteen are trafficked for prostitution each year around the world
- 150 \_\_\_\_ # of countries where torture is practiced, despite unequivocal international laws against its use

### **THE CHURCH AND "THE OTHER"**

- 0.81 \_\_\_\_ % of the entire income of all Christian organizations spent on, and primarily benefiting, other Christians at home or abroad in 2002 (equaling 261 billion)

- 136 \_\_\_\_ billion was spent on un-evangelized non-Christians
- 97 \_\_\_\_ percentage of giving of income, per-member, among Protestants in the U.S. and Canada in 2000
- 2.9 \_\_\_\_ billion; amount that would be raised if Christian churches in the U.S. raise their giving to the Old Testament minimum of 10% of income
- 139 \_\_\_\_ billion; amount necessary for universal basic health care for all developing countries

### **PARTNER REFLECTION** (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss as many questions as time allows.*

- A) What were the most surprising or disturbing facts explored in the social landscape section?
- B) How do these facts connect to our studies on love, mercy and who our neighbor is, according to Christ?

### **PERSONAL PRAYER** (3 min)

*On your own, spend a few minutes in prayer or journaling about how God might be calling you to the ministry of agape love and active mercy. If it is helpful, read the reflection below.*

**Emmanuel, how wide your mercy, how deep your love...**

## Reflection

*"The first question that the Levite asked was, 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'... Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." —Martin Luther King, Jr., Testament of Hope*

## RESOLUTION AWARENESS (5 min)

We have already read much of two resolutions already, but now we will read a little more of the information about hate crimes, international political disenfranchisement, and how we may respond in mercy. As you read, be thinking about how as global neighbor, motivated by the love of God and through the church, we may respond to these issues. *Each person can the passages on his/her own. Turn to page 44 and read the 'Response.' Then turn to page 9 and read that resolution. Finally, turn to page 37 and read as much of "The Call" and "Response" as time permits.*

## ACTION STEPS (7 min)

Now it is time to connect this study to action. Our goal is to start with at least one small action step that we each can take. Below are some ideas to get us thinking about tangible action steps to take, and an ACTION CHALLENGE. *Turn to a partner to discuss these ideas.*

### ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES

- Choose one issue reviewed here and commit to spending at least one hour reading more about it next week. Share what you learn with a family member or friend.
- Find out the hate crimes statistics for your community and organize an awareness event in the neighborhood or church to educate people about the acts of hate and violence.
- Teach your child(ren) the song, "He's got the whole world in his hands," and talk about what it

means to love everyone as our neighbor. Create artwork to put up around the house to remind children and adults alike of the power of love over hate.

- Support an organization that works with international issues or advocates on behalf of victims of hate crimes and prejudice. Send financial contributions, pray for their ministry, or get involved by sponsoring legislation or other systemic goals they are pursuing.
- Spend a week on a mission trip in a culture that struggles with resources, injustice, or racism. Learn about the culture and share your experience with the congregation.
- Pray for those who may feel "unclean" or unwelcome in your church. Be open to what God may show you about how to proceed with showing agape love and mercy toward these unreached neighbors.
- Support a refugee family through World Vision or another settlement group. Show them love and mercy as they deal with many issues, including probably prejudice and racism.

### MORE ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION STEPS FOR OUR CHURCH

- Incorporate lament and confession into Sunday morning worship. Remember those who have been harmed by violence, hate, and prejudice, and confess our sometimes inaction in the church. Include the hope and promise of love triumphing over hate.
- Develop an advance plan for how to respond to hate crimes when they occur in your community/

nation, and continually support victims of church burnings and other hate crimes.

- Establish or strengthen a church ministry that shows active mercy, agape love, or global neighborly concern to those suffering from injustice, pain, or prejudice. Partner with another church doing this kind of ministry, or establish your own. Consult the list of options for ministry in the last two paragraphs on page 44 in the resolution booklet for ideas.
- Join with Bread for the World to raise awareness in your congregation about the crisis of global AIDS, extreme poverty, and hunger. Get resources from them, learn about their current international campaign, and start informing youth and adults how they can make a difference in the global systems.
- Increase your involvement and/or giving to Covenant World Relief, the Paul Carlson Partnership, and Covenant Mission Connection. Establish or strengthen international mission trips or experiences with these groups to teach your youth or adults more about global neighborliness and how we can show mercy and love around the world.
- Encourage the evangelism and/or outreach team at church to get training in how to make relationships with refugees and others fleeing from international abuse and violence, who often face prejudice and stigma when they arrive here in our country.

## MORE CHURCH ACTION IDEAS

### ACTION CHALLENGE

1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Build on previous actions if you are already aware of this issue. Write your personal action challenge

below.

2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to work on at least one concrete action step to advance the ministry of agape love and mercy to all our neighbors as a church. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

### GROUP BENEDICTION (2 min)

*Close this lesson by reading #928 in the Covenant Hymnal.*

### QUIZ ANSWERS

Hate Crimes in the U.S.: in order = 7, 489, 52, 66, 17, 69 ([www.fbi.org](http://www.fbi.org))

Disturbing International Injustice: in order = 2.5, 500, 80, 1.2, 150 ([www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org), U.N. *Human Development Report 2000*)

The Church and “the Other”: in order = 97, 0.81, 2.9, 139, 136 ([www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org), UN *Human Development Report 2000*)

## **IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— HATE CRIME, INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES**

- [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org): Find information here about Covenant World Relief, Paul Carlson Partnership, and Covenant Mission Connection.
- [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov): *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. Find various information here about hate crimes, how to protect yourself, how to report a crime, and national statistics.
- [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org): *International Justice Mission*. Provides quality casework to international victims of injustice and has extensive educational resources for churches and campuses to discuss justice, oppression, hate, and prejudice theologically. Their curriculum series for youth, *The Mission of Justice*, is artistic, uses multi-media, and is solidly biblical (co-produced with Youth Specialties).
- [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org): *Amnesty International*. Provides education, action, and international

partners on issues ranging from refugee services, to torture relief, to ending un-democratic diamond trades to fighting AIDS.

- [Exclusion and Embrace](#). Volf, Miroslav. Abingdon Press, 1996. A moving theological reflection about how we treat “the other” and how we choose love and mercy, even in response to violent enemies. Written by a Croatian scholar, reflecting on his faithful response to a Bosnian.
- [Making Room: Recovering the Ancient Art of Hospitality](#). Pohl, Christine. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999. A historical and current account of the many ministries of mercy and justice that practice table fellowship and hospitality in order to welcome those often considered outsiders.
- [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org): *Bread for the World*. Find information on international issues affecting the hungry, poor, and those with AIDS. Advocacy and congregation resources are available.



**Faith in Action: Lesson 10**  
**MINISTRY OF PEACE**

**Resolutions 1990 & 2002**  
(‘90 Peace Dividend,  
‘02 ‘Deny Them Their Victory’)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore biblical evidence for the church being ministers of peace, transformed by the promise of the coming kingdom of God in order to exhibit Christ to others
- To understand the principles of peace as shalom, witness as light to the world, and how the kingdom of God shapes these terms
- To identify at least one step that the church can make as a community to be ministers of peace
- To identify at least one step that individuals can make to be ministers of peace
- To provide a brief reflection and integration of the issues discussed throughout the “Faith in Action” study series

## LESSON OVERVIEW (1 hour total)

2 min	Prayer and Welcome
5 min	Partner Reflection
3 min	Group Discussion
20 min	Bible Study
5 min	Group Discussion
5 min	Resolution Awareness
2 min	Social Landscape
7 min	Partner Reflection
3 min	Personal Prayer
5 min	Action Steps
3 min	Group Benediction

## PREPARE BEFOREHAND

- Have hymnals available for participants
- Gather enough pens for the whole group
- Bring copies of the resolution booklet
- Have Bibles available for each group member, remind participants to bring their own

## PRAYER & WELCOME (2 min)

*Have someone open the lesson with prayer. Read the lesson objectives out loud.*

## PARTNER REFLECTION (5 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss the following questions. Make time to hear each other's answers. Answer as many questions as time allows.*

- A) What images come to mind when you think of the term “peace”?
- B) How would you describe how “peace” is felt or experienced in the life of an individual?

## GROUP DISCUSSION (3 min)

This lesson will look at the concept of biblical peace and the kingdom of God. These concepts also help us to briefly reflect on the other social issues and theological concepts that we have studied in the past nine lessons. Interestingly, many of these rich and divergent issues can be connected and integrated under the common hope of the kingdom and the peace of Christ.

Biblically, references to the idea of peace are based on the Hebrew concept of “shalom” – or shalom. Far more than just the absence of war, biblical peace/shalom means a fullness of life, well-being, wholeness, health, security, friendship, and salvation for all those who believe, especially for those often without access to fullness of life in this world (Num. 25:12, Psalm 38:3, 73:3; Jer. 14:13). Jesus was proclaimed as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), prophesied to proclaim peace (Zech. 9:9-12) and to bring peace through the kingdom of God. Many see an ethic of non-violence in the teachings and life of Christ, and the message that Christ gave His followers after the resurrection was, “Peace be with you; My peace I give unto you.” (Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Ed. Green/McKnight/Marshall, IVP, 1992)

*Spend a minute getting short response from the large group.*

- What concepts do we normally think of when we discuss peace?
- What actions do we think of as associated with peace?

## **BIBLE STUDY** (20 min)

*The pivotal text for understanding the peace of Christ is the Sermon on the Mount. The three Synoptic Gospels all have various accounts of the sermon – we will start with studying Matthew’s gospel and also use Luke’s gospel for comparison. As the following verses are read, make note of how they answer the questions below. Choose several people to read the following longer passages out loud for the whole group.*

### **Verses**

Matt. 4:23 – 5:24; Matt. 5: 27,28, 38-48; Matt. 6:1-4;  
Luke 6:20-36

### **Questions**

*Split into groups of 4-6 people. Answer the following questions and then read the additional verses and questions together.*

A) List all those who will be blessed in the kingdom of God:

B) List all those who are warned that they will not be blessed, or will be judged by the kingdom of God:

C) What actions do the metaphor of salt and light emphasize that the church be engaged in, in order to witness to the kingdom of God?

D) What various expressions of shalom are mentioned here in the actions and ministry of Jesus? (physical, economic, relational, etc.)

### **Verses**

Matt. 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-21; Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 8:16-18

### **Questions**

A) When Jesus begins His ministry, what does He teach about shalom and the kingdom as it informs our relationships with others?

B) When Jesus ends His Sermon on the Mount with the Lord’s Prayer, how does this teaching connect to the kingdom and peace/shalom?

C) What do these verses tell us about witnessing the kingdom?



## GROUP DISCUSSION (5 min)

Briefly discuss these questions together as time allows.

A) Do you think that these teachings from Jesus should be taken literally? Why or why not?

B) What is the source or motivation of our actions that witness the kingdom of God?

## RESOLUTION AWARENESS (5 min)

Now turn to read some of the resolutions that have been passed that relate to peace, violence and the church's priorities. Each person can read these excerpts silently.

*Turn to page 10 in the resolution booklet to read that statement. Then turn to page 47 and start by reading the regular (not italicized) font. If time allows, read the italicized background information as well.*

## SOCIAL LANDSCAPE (2 min)

Below is a very brief summary of some of the costs of violence and war, as examples of one specific way that peace/shalom may be lost. Match the numbers on the left to the statements on the right in each section. *Then have the facilitator read the correct figures out loud. (Answers are at the end of the lesson.)*

### COSTS OF WAR

- 400 \_\_\_\_ million people served in the U.S. armed forces in WWII
- 21 \_\_\_\_ thousand U.S. soldiers died in WWII
- 5 \_\_\_\_ billion; dollars spent on war in Iraq as of May 2005
- 16 \_\_\_\_ % of world military dollars the U.S. spend annually as of 2003
- 48 \_\_\_\_ % of world military spending Japan spends annually, the country with the

highest military spending after the U.S.

94,783 \_\_\_\_ # of U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam and Korean wars

170 \_\_\_\_ thousand; # of Iraqi civilians killed by war, as of May 2005

## PARTNER REFLECTION (7 min)

*Turn to a partner and discuss as many of these topics as you have time for. You can also refer to these ideas in the upcoming "Action Challenge" section.*

Think back over or look through the first nine lessons in this series. Which of these lessons do you see connecting most strongly to producing peace/shalom?

- How may stewarding economic resources with compassion and justice witness peace?
- How may stewarding the public sphere as kingdom citizens witness peace?
- How may stewarding the environment through earthkeeping and observing the Sabbath witness peace?
- How may caring for the sick and those without access to healthcare as sacred witness peace?
- How may caring for those marginalized by physical disability, sexuality, or as survivors of sexual sin witness peace?
- How may caring for all life as sacred, especially those suffering at the end of life, the unborn, and those incarcerated witness peace?
- How may ministering racial reconciliation and multiculturalism witness peace?
- How may ministering agape love and active mercy, especially to those oppressed through hate and international injustices, witness peace?
- How might ministering peace through nonviolence, re-allocating resources, and "denying" the violent their victory witness peace?

## PERSONAL PRAYER (3 min)

*On your own, spend a few minutes in prayer or*

*journaling about how God might be calling you to the ministry of peace/shalom. If it is helpful, read the reflection below.*

**O Prince of Peace, how may we be the light of the world...**

**Reflection:**

*“Stability and peace in our land will not come from the barrel of a gun, because peace without justice is an impossibility.” —Desmond TuTu*

**ACTION STEPS** (5 min)

*Read over these ideas with a partner, and then in a few minutes discuss your ideas for action with the larger group.*

*Now it is time to connect this study to action. Our goal is to start with at least one small action step that we can take as a church to witness peace and shalom after this study series is over. Below are a few ideas and an ACTION CHALLENGE.*

**ACTION STEPS FOR INDIVIDUALS OR THE CHURCH**

- Have a small group study the costs of war and violence, especially on children and other vulnerable populations. Share this information with the church.
- Consider doing a sermon series or another adult education series that looks at one of these various components of peace/shalom more in-depth, like just economics, racial reconciliation, or caring for the disabled.
- Ask for volunteers from this group who want

to continue meeting and talking about social concerns and the church. Establish a committee or reading group so that others may join them as they read resources, pray, or work to brainstorm and start new ministries together.

- Create a mural, artistic display, or multi-media presentation about faith in action; share some of the highlights that were learned in this series and share the art during worship and/or display it in the church.
- Start a youth education series on faith in action.
- Have members who are finishing this study series each teach the series to another group of people, multiplying its exposure in the church.
- Hold a candlelight service to motivate members to be the light of the world and to witness peace. Share confessions, laments, worship, and prayer about those people who the church is called to witness peace to and whose lives are broken, abused, hungry, empty, painful, oppressed, forgotten, and ignored.
- Compile a list of local ministries and resources that your church can use if they want to take action and serve various issues.
- Choose a few people from this study who will commit to working on a strategic plan for how to fold the issues of witnessing peace/shalom in these various areas into the life of the church. They can then work with staff and church leadership to analyze how and where this focus on acting on faith through discipleship can be increased and equipped at all levels of the congregation.
- Ask an support staff personnel, from your ECC conference or the national office, to spend some time with your church and help decide where you can go next with these ideas.

**MORE ACTION IDEAS**

## **ACTION CHALLENGE**

1) Turn to your partner and tell each other your personal action challenge. Make it small and measurable if this is a new area for you to act in. Build on previous actions if you are already aware of this issue. *Write your personal action challenge below.*

2) As a large group, ask if anyone wants to work on at least one concrete action step to advance the ministry of peace/shalom and to continue the conversations started in this study. *Write the name(s) of the person(s) in the group willing to follow up on this here:*

## **GROUP BENEDICTION** (2 min)

Thanks to everyone for participating in this study! May God continue to show us how to act out our faith as witnesses of the kingdom of God, and be with us as we embody our faith together as the church.

*Stand together (in a circle if possible), and close this lesson by reading #920 or #915 in the Covenant Hymnal: A WorshipBook.*

## **QUIZ ANSWERS**

**Costs of War: in order = 16, 400, 170, 48, 5, 94783, 21** (National Priorities Project, [www.costofwar.com](http://www.costofwar.com))

## IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE— PEACE RESOURCES

- [Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace](#). Stassen, Glen H. Westminster John Knox Press, 1992. Fuller Ethics professor reflects on the sermon on the mount and gives a thorough theology for peacemaking, just war, and how following Jesus' model of peace can transform our faith.
- [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org): *Veterans of Foreign Wars*
- [www.mennoniteusa.org](http://www.mennoniteusa.org): *Mennonite Church USA*. Includes extensive peace and justice resources, theological reflection, and links to other ministries.
- [www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org): *Christian Peacemaker Teams*. This ministry sends people with "the courage to be nonviolent" to witness and stand with the suffering for peace in violent places.
- [www.icujp.org](http://www.icujp.org): *Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace*. This broad coalition of people of faith have multiple resources, links, media guides, and action alerts.
- [pewforum.org/just-war](http://pewforum.org/just-war): *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*. Resource discussing just war theory, theology, history, facts, etc. from various viewpoints. Many books,

papers, and helpful links are listed.

- "Moral Clarity in a Time of War," in [First Things](#). Weigel, George. Institute on Religion and Public Life, 2003. pp. 20-27; online at [www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0301/articles/weigel](http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0301/articles/weigel). The broader public may know Weigel's name as he is the official biographer of Pope John Paul II. Among other things, he is also a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC, a practicing Catholic, and an intellectual of some note, not least on the topic of historical theology. In this piece he draws on centuries of Christian tradition to offer a view worth adding to the mix of curriculum resources.
- "Fog of War" is an academy award winning documentary about the former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the various difficult lessons he learned about the nature and conduct of modern war via the Vietnam conflict (found at [www.sonyclassics.com/fogofwar](http://www.sonyclassics.com/fogofwar)). Other video resources include the 2003 release "Gods and Generals" ([www.godsandgenerals.com](http://www.godsandgenerals.com)), and the 2005 film "Kingdom of Heaven" ([www.kingdomofheavenmovie.com](http://www.kingdomofheavenmovie.com)); study guides for small groups are available for both movies at [www.brehmcenter.com/ReelSpirituality/StudyGuides.shtml](http://www.brehmcenter.com/ReelSpirituality/StudyGuides.shtml).

## **ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN ACTION**

The Commission on Christian Action is an appointed standing commission of the Evangelical Covenant Church, whose purpose is to contemplate pertinent social issues and then encourage corporate and individual involvement throughout the denomination. Commission members help educate, develop awareness, and prompt action regarding certain ethical, political, and social issues primarily through preparing statements. Normally these statements take the form of resolutions, which are reviewed by the Covenant Executive Board and voted on at the Annual Meeting. Resolutions that are accepted join the long tradition of social issues that the church has decided are vital to speak about in light of our faith formation and discipleship. Accepted resolutions are not binding, but serve to bring important social concerns to the attention of the whole church body, stimulate discussion, and help explain the will of a particular gathering of Annual Meeting delegates

Churches are invited to send resolution drafts to the commission if they would like a particular ethical topic to be reviewed for submission to the Annual Meeting. Please send any resolutions before Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> to the Vice President for Administration, 5101 N Francisco Ave, Chicago, IL, 60625, Attn: CAC Chairperson.

For ongoing information on current resolutions and more information on the Christian Action Commission, visit the [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org) website and follow the Resources - Resolutions links (the direct URL is: [www.covchurch.org/cov/resources/resolutions](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/resources/resolutions)).

For more copies of this "Faith in Action" reflection study, contact the Covenant Resource Center at 1-800-338-IDEA or [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org). To request the brochure "The Commission on Christian Action: Resources for Social Responsibility (Occasional Paper #4)" please contact the Covenant Bookstore online or at 1-800-621-1290.

## NOTES

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