

STUDY GUIDE—Oct 18th, 2023
“Freeing Jesus” Brown Bag Bible Study
Chapter 5 – Jesus as the Way

Opening Prayer

Review (see the flip side of this sheet)

BRIEF REFLECTION EXERCISE -- -- *A nice tool to “free Jesus” in our own lives and congregations.*

Jesus of History Jesus of Faith Jesus of Experience

How has your understanding, faith, or experience with Jesus Christ changed over the course of your life? When have these changes visited the three columns of history, faith and experience with Jesus?

As siblings of Jesus, with different understandings... we all belong to one another and Jesus no matter what.

THIS WEEK’S CHAPTER: Chapter 5 -- Jesus as the Way

Lectio Divina Song of Songs 2:10-13 *My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away, for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one and come away.*

1. Word or phrase 2. Image or feeling 3. What is God saying to you/us in this passage?

Diana Butler Bass names several factors that shaped her understanding of Jesus (a Sunday school teacher; different churches; an abuser; mission work; prayer; education; therapy; social life; married life, etc.). In this chapter, she described a “Calvinist” approach to knowing Jesus which became increasingly unhealthy for her.

Have you been in churches or social circles like that?

Why did she need to “walk out of that cage”?

Why did that seem difficult to do?

“[Jesus] not only taught a way inviting the curious to follow him, but he said he was the way.” (p. 165). According to Bass, what does this mean?

SMALL GROUPS:

Do you think of Jesus as “the way”? Why or why not?

What parts of this chapter were most moving or impactful to you?

REVIEW: THUMBNAIL SUMMARIES OF CHAPTERS 1-4

Chapter 1, Jesus as Friend: Butler Bass considers friendship “one of the primary spiritual purposes of creation.” (p. 10). Adam, Eve, and God had a deep friendship in the garden. A friend is someone to play with and someone you can trust. We tend to hear emphasized SIN that got us thrown out of the garden, and we miss the harmony, the trust, the friendship, the mutual vulnerability, and the lack of shame. Human friendships can be like that or based on power plays and exclusivity. Congregations also have a friendship culture (harmony or power-based). Do you have a history with Jesus -- or, if you prefer, Christ – that is the kind of friendship Butler Bass describes? If not, can you understand how/why someone else might?

Chapter 2, Jesus as Teacher:

Out of 90 times Jesus is addressed in the Gospels, 60 times he is called Teacher, Rabbi, or Master. He taught in parables – open-ended, mysterious and challenging stories with a myriad of endings. They are ‘both-and’ stories, where Jesus comes alongside and turns our lives upside down. We want to have neat explanations of the parables, even the Gospel writers tried to explain the parables, but they bring more questions than answers! Butler Bass talks about the Bible – and our temptation to ‘worship’ the Bible as a literal document. Jesus is the Word, ‘Logos’ in Greek. If we worship the bible we can miss who Jesus is.

What kind of authority does Jesus Christ have in his teachings and in our lives and congregations? What kind of authority is the Bible?

Chapter 3, Jesus as Savior: Throughout the Scriptures, God is praised for saving the people in many ways. “The word ‘salvation’ comes from the Latin *salvus*, which originally referred to being made whole, uninjured, safe, or in good health. *Salvus* was not about being taken out of this life; it was about this life being healed” (p. 76). How does this understanding of “salvation” square with your understanding of Jesus as “savior”? Paul explores six different theological versions of Christ’s work on the cross. P. 93. And there are even more than that in the history of theology. Most Catholics and Protestants are not aware of the variety. (See the last 10 lines of page 93). What biblical language, stories, and themes resonate most with your relationship to Jesus Christ as Savior?

Chapter 4, Jesus as Lord: When Bass was in college, she learned through Bonhoeffer and others that following Jesus is not just about the afterlife, but also about dying to self in *this life*. Pg. 123. During mission trips to Mexico, where people live in tires and trash dumps, she had a revelation: “it dawned on me that Jesus’s lordship was **for more** than surrendering control of my own life to God. It had something to do with this place, bringing this under his lordship too.” Pg. 131. She learned about the **Kin-dom of God** from Ada Maria Isai-Diaz who argues that kingdom is a corrupted metaphor today, of oppression and violence, and ‘king-dom’ suggests a liberating family of God. Butler-Bass writes: “It was no longer enough that Jesus saved us from the world; we wanted Jesus to fix it. We did not want to go up to the kingdom of heaven after we died... Instead we wanted the kingdom to come down to us.” Pg. 156. In what ways are we ‘saved’ by those we serve? In what positive ways can we respond to the strange mix of politics and Christianity today?