

Claiming the Story Bible Study

The ELCA Mission Statement: “Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world.”

Vision Statement: “Sent by God’s grace for the sake of the world, we will proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. . .” As we live out that mission and vision we will “assist members, congregations, synods, and institutions and agencies of this church to grow in evangelical outreach.”

“...for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:20

Intent

Consider using this Bible study as a teacher orientation to this year’s theme, as a Rally Day offering for adult or youth Sunday school classes; or as a mid-week opportunity to set the stage for a year-long focus on study and witness.

Opening

Begin with a prayer offered by one or more of the participants and sing or speak a hymn or song together. You might use “I Love to Tell the Story” (LBW #390) or something similar.

Getting Started

- Write the words *Claim* and *Proclaim* on the board or newsprint. Ask participants to write a few words about what the two words mean to them. Talk about their responses.
- Write *Claim the Story* and *Proclaim the Story* on the board or newsprint. Allow time for participants to write some responses. Talk about them. How do the phrases describe the Christian life? What is the place of claiming/proclaiming in our relationships with others. What is the place of claiming/proclaiming in our life together in this community of faith?

Into the Word

1. Read Acts 2:1-36 aloud. Let someone take the part of Peter preaching to the crowd.
 - How would he “tell the story”?
 - Peter tells the story with conviction. Why?
 - What do you think the story meant to him?
 - How did Peter claim the story? In what way had the story that he told become his own story?
2. Read Luke 24:13-35 aloud.
 - Why was it important for the two disciples to tell their story first?
 - What story did Jesus tell?
 - Why did their “hearts burn” as they heard the story?
 - How did they react to the story?
 - How did they claim the story—how did the story become their story?

3. What does it mean to you to **claim** the story of God's love in Jesus Christ?
 - What does it mean to you to claim the story of God's love?
 - How does claiming the story equip us to proclaim the story?
 - How would you speak that story in a way that has meaning for you?
 - If someone asked you to tell "the story"—what would you say?
 - What does claiming have to do with teaching?

4. The Greek word for **proclaim** is *karusso*. The word is related to *kerygma*—often translated *gospel* or *good news*. *Karusso* means to announce, make known, proclaim aloud, mention publicly, spread the story.
 - In what way do you consider yourself a proclaimer?
 - What does proclaiming have to do with teaching?

5. Read this text aloud: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without **someone to proclaim him**? And **how are they to proclaim him** unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:14-17).
 - What does this text have to do with hearing, claiming, and proclaiming the story?
 - Why could we be described as people of the story?
 - The story is central to Christian living. True? Why? How is that true for you?
 - The story is central to Christian teaching. True? Why? How is that true for you?
 - In what way are you equipping others to claim and to proclaim the story?

The Word in Action

- Make it a point to share the good news with someone this week. In what way does that action make you one who claims the story? How are you a proclaimer?
- Form a small group of people who can meet together regularly...
 - to pray for those who have yet to hear the story
 - to plan ways to share the story with others in your community
 - to seek ways to help members of the congregation become more effective proclaimers of the story.
- Spend time in prayer this week. Seek the Spirit's guidance as you claim the story of God's love in Jesus Christ for yourself. Discover ways to become a claimer/proclaimer of the story in your household, your circle of friends, your neighborhood.
- Pray for those who proclaim the good news in your community.

Closing

Close with a prayer that all may claim and proclaim the story in all of their lives. You might join in singing a hymn like "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" ("Here I Am, Lord") (*This Far By Faith* #230) or a similar song or hymn.

Duplicate the Commitment and Affirmation of the Faith Community found on the next page. Use the reproduced copies (1/2 page, two-sided) as a bulletin insert in worship or as discussion tool for a teacher-orientation meeting.

