

FAITH on the MOVE

BIBLE STUDIES

Series Introduction

Bible, First and Foremost

Welcome to Faith on the Move Bible Studies. This series is first and foremost about exploring the biblical story. In their original context, the stories in the Bible were not read in monotone from a formal lectern; rather, they were vividly shared around the campfire and urgently passed on from one generation to another. Coming out of an oral culture, the stories were recorded in a way that invites the listener to get to know the characters—to see them as relatable, fully human beings, rather than distant “holy heroes.”

As Faith on the Move participants take on the roles of Moses, Miriam, Pharaoh and others, they will have a chance to bring these characters to life and engage directly with their stories. In an effort to emphasize the centrality of the text, participants need only a Bible to take part in the studies. Alternatively a Scripture handout is provided, which simply gives the text of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible divided into character parts.

Shared Discovery

Each section begins with reading a portion of text out loud. Then the facilitator invites participants to share what they hear or notice in the text. These questions help to keep the class focused on shared discovery and avoid the tendency to reduce the study to simply transferring information from teacher to student. Everyone in the session has something to offer and something to learn.

The facilitator’s main role is to create “space” for exploration, openness, and—taking cues from the Bible itself—a good deal of fun.

A World on the Move

The impetus for Faith on the Move Bible Studies came from David Vásquez’ experience of reading biblical stories with people on the move: students at Luther College, Central American and African refugees with whom he worked through the Lutheran Refugee Committee in Canada, and immigrant communities throughout the country. Reading the Bible with people who more easily fit the description of “immigrants” helped him realize how

How to Use the Facilitator Guides

Due to the level of preparation required and the interplay of meaning across the sessions, it is recommended that the same person(s) facilitate all six sessions of the study.

Each facilitator guide is organized in two columns:

The **left-hand column** contains the guiding questions and activities that make up the core of the curriculum. Feel free to reframe these questions to better suit your group. Your goal is to create “space” for participants to share insights and reflections on the text.

The **right-hand column** provides direction for approaching the guiding questions as well as optional materials and activities (“Tips” and “Extras”) to help you flesh out the study for your context. Inform yourself with the background information and select from the Tips and Extras to structure the session based on the time available for the study and your personal knowledge of the group.

Spend about 90–120 minutes preparing for each session following these simple steps:

- 1) Spend a moment in silence or prayer to collect your thoughts or ask for guidance.
- 2) Read through the Bible text assigned for the session. Jot down any details you note, images it evokes in you, or questions it raises.
- 3) Read through the guiding questions on the **left-hand column**. Imagine how they may work in your group and adjust the language as you see fit.
- 4) Read again through the guiding questions, this time reading also the material on the **right-hand column**. Highlight or underline parts you find particularly helpful or make additional notes that may enhance your ability to lead the session. Choose any extra activities you may want to include.
- 5) Gather enough Bibles or prepare enough copies of the Scripture handout for all participants.

much—in an increasingly mobile world—migration shapes all of our lives. These conversations also highlighted the role of migration in the stories of many biblical characters: Abraham and Sarah, who followed God’s promise; Ruth, who defied the stereotypes against immigrants by proving herself to be faithful and hardworking and a blessing; Jesus, who followed his ancestors as he sought refuge in Egypt and spent his ministry challenging us to go to “the other side.”

Unprecedented opportunity, as well as desperate need, mean more people are on the move today than at any other time in human history. People in our congregations are on the move because of increased mobility in the business world, opportunities to study abroad or take mission trips, or simply a choice to relocate to a warmer climate in retirement. At the same time, our communities and churches are being shaped by migration. For example, in both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, over half of the new mission starts in the past year were in ethnic ministries.

Like the millions who throughout history have responded to the pull and push of migration, people from around the world are coming to the United States. They come seeking new opportunities or because they are fleeing conflict or persecution in their home countries. As people of faith whose ancestors were called to go forth with nothing but a promise and whose God pitched a tent right alongside them, we have much to offer and to gain from joining the conversation about people on the move.

As we find our way in an increasingly global society, we discover the connections between our stories of migration and those of the biblical texts. Exploring these connections enriches our reading of the text, provides needed depth to our national conversation about immigration, and helps provide a guiding narrative for new immigrants and their communities.



About the Author

David Vásquez is a campus pastor at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. After a May 2008 immigration raid on a food processing plant in Postville, Iowa, David, who is ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, provided pastoral care in the community and witnessed the devastating effects on families, churches and neighbors. With support from a Louisville Institute Pastoral Study Project grant, he embarked on a year-long sabbatical from June 2009 to June 2010. For his study project, *People on the Move*, David traveled the country conducting interviews, community forums and small-group Bible studies, seeking to connect biblical narratives with contemporary stories of migration. He collaborated with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to share his sabbatical experiences through a social networking website and to produce this series of *Faith on the*

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