

**Bible Study Series**  
**DREAMTHINK.**  
**BE.DO.**

**Session Four – Jesus**

“Different Jesuses” - practically as many versions of him as there are followers!

We have various denominations, we have multiple gospel accounts

Jesus is:

*Yvette Flunder*

- son of a teenage girl
- adopted son of a labourer
- not upper-class
- lived among the marginalized
- religious and political subversive
- killed for mobilizing people on the hillside and away from the synagogue [not in power]
- he liberated women
- he was an example of what the table of the Lord really looks like

Jesus:

*Bernard Brandon Scott*

- Galilean
- Jewish
- peasant
- came from low social class
- if Jesus were to come today, he might come from a village in Guatemala

Jesus was among the outcasts, the “unclean”

*Helen Prejean*

The story of Jesus is all about crossing borders

*Rick Ufford-Chase*

- Jesus challenged the border and stepped into the other world
- Jesus defies religious and political convention, and is killed for it
- we’ve sanitized Jesus almost to the point where there’s nothing left
- we forget that the gospel is about sacrifice, so we end up in churches of privilege
- we may be unwilling to ask questions about the implications of what our belief in Jesus is for our time

Literary genre of gospel

- each gospel was a record of the developing traditions about Jesus from different communities
- layered stories

-subjective representations of Jesus aimed at a community of believers in a particular time and place

*Amy-Jill Levine*

- instead of taking gospel accounts as ‘transcripts,’ it might be better to take them as remembrances like ‘this is something they might’ve said/done’
- we get an “overall picture” of Jesus from the gospels - person dedicated to healing, to teaching, whose force of personality drives a movement, provocative enough that people might be inclined to listen

*Marcus Borg*

- basically, our only source for knowing about Jesus are the Christian gospels
- so, not a lot
- he was a wisdom teacher; had an enlightenment experience
- he was a healer
- he was a Jewish mystic

-Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God

*John Dominic Crossan*

- kingdom of God - a divine, instead of imperial, agenda
- Jesus is alternative - threatened empire

“Parable of Lincoln High School”

-language of metaphor and parable - express truths

The post-Easter Jesus

-much of what we know are images and metaphors - not historical, but still powerfully true

-pre-Easter and post-Easter Jesus

*Borg*

- post-Easter is about Christian experience and tradition
- the truth of the stories [of scripture] is in their ancient, archetypal symbolism

*Rita Nakashima Brock*

-there are lots of different understandings of salvation

-we’ve put a lot of layers on Jesus

*Flunder*

-there comes a point where we have to get back to the person who stood in the water with Jesus

-one gospel: not Caesar, but God who runs the world

*Crossan*

-we have four “according to’s”

Conclusion

- one reality: someone beyond all description, but fully human
- complex and radical message of Jesus - points to how we might live a Christian life today

## Bible Study Series

# DREAM. THINK. BE. DO.

## Session Five – Risk

In no other area of life, or discipline - except religion - is the denial of progress held up as a virtue!

-somehow, “the way it was in days gone by” holds a mysterious authority over people

Today, a reformation is going on - a re-visioning of the Christian life as a whole

-ideas of faith and spirituality are reforming to reflect the 21st Century

-struggle to articulate what we believe *Ron Buford*  
-people want to know what you believe, and you should believe something  
-it's important to have a clear message

*Nancy Ammerman*  
-“we have something distinctive and something good, and we're willing to talk about it” - makes for a thriving community

*Rick Ufford-Chase*  
-the challenge: to recover our relationship with Jesus, and be evangelical in our spirit

So, what are we going to do about:

-care for creation?  
-violence?  
-massive migrations of people [refugees]?  
-human rights issues, in general?

-the fundamental challenge: being authentic Christian community  
-are we willing to take genuine risks?

-if you're defensive about your faith, let it go *Mel White*  
-let the Holy Spirit do the converting  
-we can work with multi-faith groups

*Marcus Borg*  
-a vision of the Christian life centred in wisdom and in the Spirit of God  
-centred in compassion and justice

-corresponds to deep yearnings in most people, for:

-a fuller connection to God, a deeper connection to what is  
-the world to be a better place  
-the Christian task is to raise consciousness on this - about God, and how society is put together

Micah 6:8  
-justice, kindness, humility

Blind obedience to rules gets in the way of faith

*Walter Brueggemann*

-Romans 12 - an ethic that is counter to Caesar; a counter-obedience  
\*\*\*primary marks of the Christian life: hospitality, generosity, no vengeance, sabbath, no coveting

-true faith - a great leap towards the margins *Yvette Flunder*  
-it would be liberating for the church to practice extravagant grace and radical inclusivity

Amy-Jill Levine

-faithful reading of scripture, and also that God is about inclusivity and grace  
-We need to seek agreement that will lead towards wholeness

-call to be in solidarity with the poor *Stephen Patterson*  
-There is a great wide world that does not live with the privilege we have

*Minerva Carcaño*  
-we need to reclaim as vital ministry living among the poor

“Being Good” - legalism (set of rules)  
Instead: relationship and action  
-putting people before the rules

-we must address violence, today *John Dominic Crossan*  
-God is not violent (we know this from the revelation in Jesus)  
-we're called to union with God  
-Jesus - stunningly radical

-our outrage should be on behalf of those who suffer *Rita Nakashima Brock*  
-the church should be a safe place  
-people should be able to come to the church to receive solidarity and support

-living our faith is hard work *Emilie Townes*  
-blending our spirituality with our social witness  
-humility and mercy

“Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that” (Thurman)

In the 21st Century, we can claim a distinctive voice, as Christians by:  
-being in solidarity with the poor  
-Practicing non-violence  
-countering the idolatry of wealth  
-seeking justice and inclusivity