

“Love is the Way”

Session 5

Chapter Summaries:

Chapter 11 - The Still More Excellent Way

Bishop Curry begins the chapter by describing his work with progressive evangelist Jim Wallis and others in launching the Reclaiming Jesus movement and concludes with an account of its famous prayer vigil in Washington in May 2018 (see link to E. J. Dionne column below). He poses this challenge: "How do we follow the way of love when it comes to politics?"

Challenged by his staff to say something about the 2016 election without being partisan, he returned to first principles: The golden rule and *All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum. He offers these steps for constructive political dialogue: Identify shared values, describe how your personal narrative led you to them, apply them to current challenges, and craft a way forward.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/christian-leaders-call-out-the-heresy-of-trumpism/2018/05/23/00f026c2-5eb5-11e8-9ee3-49d6d4814c4c_story.html

Story #1

As bishop of North Carolina, Michael and other church leaders lobbied against state legislation that would have scaled back protections for migrant workers. “The results weren’t perfect, but they were an improvement over what might have been....There was one delegate in particular who had, over time, moderated some of his views on immigration.”

Discussion questions:

1. If you were part of a group of five people who believed the 2020 election was honest, how would you apply Bishop Curry’s principles to a conversation with five people who believed the election was rigged?

2. Have you experienced what family systems experts call emotional cutoff because of politics? Has anyone cut you off? Have you cut someone off? Looking back, would Bishop Curry's principles and practices have helped, especially deep listening to others' personal narratives?
3. How would the story of the drug dealer whom Michael baptized, which we read about in chapter seven, fit in chapter 11?
4. When is incremental change not enough? When is love not enough?

Chapter 12 - Hope, Help, and Healing

Bishop Curry closes by taking us to the mountaintop – literally at first, as he describes a glimpse of Mount Kilimanjaro from an airplane. He describes several other mountaintop experiences, including a Kanuga retreat with folks suffering from HIV-AIDS and an encounter with a man who was shepherded away from a toxic expression of Christianity by a welcoming Episcopal parish.

Story #2

“Sickness and suffering had occasioned our gathering at Kanuga. But it was love that lifted us up and brought us together. At the healing service where I gave [my] sermon, the warmth radiated from and to every person there. We could feel an energy not our own, the very spirit of God filling the place. For a moment, our egos fell away, and with them, our differences. We experienced ourselves as friendly souls, free and whole and beloved. We were on the mountaintop.”

Discussion questions:

1. If you like, share a mountaintop moment. How would you describe the source of power and peace that you experienced?
2. Our mountaintop moments are so precious, the warmth of fellowship and mutually supportive community so enjoyable, that we may wonder why people often work so hard to not to experience them. What stumbling blocks does the world put in our way? What stumbling blocks may we be putting in others' way?

3. Bishop Curry writes, "I believe that most of us are capable of kindness and inclined toward altruism if given a chance." Do you agree?