



## LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLER/EDUCATOR TRAINING

### MODULE 2: GOD AND THE BIBLE

#### OVERVIEW OF TOPICS FOR SELF- OR GROUP STUDY

The self-study and related group activities select from among these topics. As you continue your own professional development, you may wish to dig deeper in these areas.

#### CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

- Brief highlights of Christian history/important eras; councils, questions debated; Reformation; what contribution do they make to the faith story
- Key dates [in timeline format]
- Key leaders (Luther, Calvin, Wesley, etc)
- Three ways of understanding God and God's activity in the world (Father/Creator; Son/Savior; Holy Spirit/God with us)
- "Theology" is something you can do
- Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task

#### OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

- How is Bible organized /How was canon developed / literature types
- Major saving stories
- Key people and eras
- What is exegesis and how to do it
- Doctrine of Scripture (how what I believe about the Bible and how I use the Bible as a filter for belief and interpretation affects the way I believe, teach, and lead)

#### BIBLE RESOURCES/HELPS

- What are Bible reference materials/how to use concordance, dictionary, atlas, commentary, study Bibles
- What online helps are compatible with UM theology

#### VERSIONS

- What versions are there/difference between translation, paraphrase
- Value of each; what works best in what settings
- What translations are compatible with UM theology

#### Information Goals: I will

1. Learn about the general sweep of biblical history—to see the flow of God's activity
2. Know about some of the key religious leaders and how they shaped the faith
3. Gain a working knowledge of the types of biblical literature and how to find things in the Bible
4. Understand the impact on the faith tradition of major events and people
5. Learn basic theological concepts and how to use them to "do theology"
6. Become familiar with different Bible research materials

#### Action Goals: I will

7. "Do" theology—engage in theological conversation and reflection
8. Use biblical research materials and teach others to use them
9. Answer questions that arise about theology/Bible/ curriculum content and/or look up answers and point others to the appropriate resource
10. Compare Bible translations and recognize points of similarity and difference
11. Tell the two major Salvation stories of the Bible (and know why they are important)
12. Sort through different understandings of the Bible to recognize my "default" position(s) and how that affects interpretation and teaching/leading

#### Key Result:

I am familiar enough with the Biblical story, construction, and theology to be able to answer questions posed to me as a leader in Christian education and formation or to know where and how to find out. I am confident that I can think and speak theologically without feeling as if I first have to have a seminary education. I know where in the *Book of Discipline* I can find our denomination's theological beliefs. I have the tools and reference materials to remind me of key events and people in the faith story over time, so that as I engage with God in disciple making, I will recognize the transforming work of God through our history. I am able to help teachers and students to craft and use Bible study.

## LEARNING PLANS

### CORE ACTIVITIES for SELF-STUDY OPTION

#### 1. Select an Accountability Partner

This is someone who will help you to keep on track and with whom you can talk honestly as you reflect on your learnings and experiences. **For all the solitary activities, discuss what you are thinking and learning with your accountability partner. Your partner should have no supervisory role with you.**

Read the suggested materials. Schedule them to be interspersed among the other activities. As you read, consider what the texts have to say about the Module 2 topics mentioned above

#### 2. Assemble a Basic Library of Bible Research References

Gather a concordance, atlas, dictionary, and commentary). *You must have a good study Bible.* Download “A Short Glossary of Faith and Church Language.”

#### 3. Use the Bible Time Line

Get the general sweep of biblical history. (If there is not one in your study Bible, you can search Cokesbury.com for one.) Find the reference(s) to the events in the Scriptures. Use your Bible dictionary and/or commentary to identify the significance of the event in its own context, then in light of the Christian faith, then for its application now. How is the experience of the Old or New Testament (OT/NT) community/person instructive in your own faith journey?

#### 4. Use an Atlas

Track important journeys, such as the Exodus and the missionary travels of Paul. (Your study Bible maps will probably have some of this.) Locate the Scriptures that support those journeys. Think about what it would take to make such a trip at that time. What nuance does that add to the story? To your story?

Think about how God is revealed in all of these stories. In what ways have you had the same experiences as the biblical characters, and what difference has that made in your life?

### ADDITIONS for GROUP STUDY (Can be peer led or instructor led)

#### 1. Suggested Readings

Divide the main texts among group members. Each person will take responsibility for developing a list of discussion points on that text and will lead the discussion at group times. Intersperse these group reading/discussion activities among the other activities. Develop a calendar with the reading list.

Establish a way to keep in touch (social media, email, etc.)

#### 2. Basic Library

**Prepare a scavenger hunt** with dates, places, people, concepts, and so on for group members to explore their references.

#### 3. Bible Time Line

Over the course of two or more gatherings, divide major NT events from OT events and then among accountability partners. In the teams, research the event(s) and report back on the significance. Pay particular attention to the events and Scriptures that align with the seasons of the church year (Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Pentecost, Transfiguration, etc) as well as foundational OT stories (Creation, Flood, Patriarchs and Matriarchs). Refer to the text on Christian history.

#### 4. Use an Atlas

In four smaller groups, track the travels of Jesus in each of the Gospels. How do the differences among the gospel reports affect your understanding of Jesus' ministry (and the historical accuracy of the biblical accounts)?

Choose a detailed story (such as 2 Kings 5) and using an atlas and dictionary, figure out the logistics of travel, the worth of objects mentioned, the needed size of the retinue, and so on. How does determining the fine points affect understanding of the story and its application?

### 5. Use Different Bible Translations, Commentary, Dictionary

Study the Exodus and the Crucifixion/Resurrection stories—two key salvation stories. How would you describe the significance of these events to a new Christian?

### 6. Formation of the Canon and Translations

Read the introductory article in one of the study Bibles below or in the *New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* about the **formation of the canon and the history of different translations**. (KJV was neither first, nor last!)

### 7. Articles of Religion

Turn to the Articles of Religion (¶103 in the 2008 *Discipline*) and look only at the title of the Articles, not the content. Without studying the Articles first, write your own brief doctrinal statement for each of the Articles. Then review the Articles and the other *Disciplinary* information on United Methodist doctrine (selected sections of ¶¶101–103). How closely did your initial statement align with the denomination's historic statements? How would you explain UM doctrine to a new UM Christian or someone coming from a different faith tradition? How does the notion of grace in a Wesleyan tradition influence your teaching and approach to the people to whom you minister?

Knowing doctrine helps to shape your Christian identity, but the way that translates into how you live your life is what really matters. What difference do these doctrines make to you?

### 8. Doctrine of Scripture

Examine your own Doctrine of Scripture. (See [iTeach, August 2010](#)). Use the questions in *iTeach* for your own reflection.

### 9. Write a summary paper, at least 10 typed pages.

Writing this will push you to formulate your ideas clearly and to be sure they hold together consistently. Bring together your main insights on the topics of this module, including: your main theological beliefs, your doctrine of Scripture, how to “do” theology with others, and the significant biblical figures and events and their impact on faith today. Give it to your accountability partner and have a conversation about it.

### 5. Use Different Bible Tools

In pairs or small groups, take turns explaining these two salvation stories to each other. Ask each other questions that clarify your understanding. Plan how you would help your teachers teach these stories to their age group. Tell your own salvation stories.

### 6. Compare Translations

Do some comparative Bible study using several OT and NT passages. Use the *Common English Bible* as one of the options. How does the translation influence your understanding of the passage? (Compare across books of the same translation; i.e. stories that appear in more than one Gospel).

### 7. Articles of Religion

Some of the UM doctrine in the current *Discipline* is in language of the 1808 *Discipline*. Spend time unpacking those doctrinal statements. How do they differ from what you already believe (or think you believe)? How well do your beliefs hang together as a theological system?

This is the safe place to engage in theological discourse for the sake not only of understanding, but also just for the experience of holy conversation. Spend time practicing theological conversations that contain more “light” than “heat.”

### 8. Doctrine of Scripture

Develop together a list of at least 15 different brief statements about the Bible, as shown in the *iTeach* article, and circulate a copy to each person. Choose several passages from OT and NT and examine how they might shift in interpretation according to the different doctrines of Scripture. Plan a way to introduce this practice to your teachers so that they are aware of how this doctrine affects their teaching.

### 9. Summary Paper

Swap your summary papers so that two other people, if possible, read papers other than their own.

You might do the review in a retreat format. (Read papers in advance) Ask each other unbiased questions for clarity (no leading or implying what a response should be), so that your group partners can consider their positions on their own without judgment or interference.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

1. Study Bible (Bible with articles, maps, commentary, explanatory notes, footnotes). Two excellent *New Revised Standard Versions* are *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* and *The Wesley Study Bible*. Also use the Common English Version (Abingdon). The CEV is not a study Bible; it is fresh new translation that can augment your understanding of other translations.
2. Basic Bible reference texts: concordance, commentary, atlas, dictionary. (If you don't have these, check to see what you can borrow from the pastor.) You will need these sorts of reference materials in your own working library, but they are expensive to get all at once. Start with a good dictionary (such as *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* or HarperCollins) and then plan out how to acquire other references. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee should recommend continuing education funds for you that could be used for books.
3. Web article from [www.gbod.org/education](http://www.gbod.org/education) (in the tab [What Every Teacher Needs to Know](#)) "[A Short Glossary of Faith and Church Language.](#)"
4. *Bible Time Line: Genesis to Revelation at a Glance Time Line* (Rose Publishing) or other time line reference.
5. *Book of Discipline*: Section 3- Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules; Our Theological Task, ¶101 ff.
6. Basic Christian history text, such as *Christian History Made Easy* (Rose Publishing). If there is a United Methodist seminary or college nearby, you can check with their bookstore for an appropriate text.
7. *Doing Your Own Theology*, by Douglas Wingeier
8. *How Children Have Faith*, by Karen Yust
9. *Old Testament Themes*, by Victor Matthews
10. *New Testament Themes*, by David DeSilva
11. DISCIPLE: *Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* (individual study, Sunday School edition, or long-term study)

## WHAT'S NEXT?

To continue to explore this topic, consider these activities:

1. Create or find a schedule for "A Year Through the Bible" so that you have a reading/study plan that will take you through the Bible, including books that you might otherwise skim over (like Numbers!).
2. Attend a DISCIPLE Bible study (the first one, first) or if you have already, consider leading another group as both a refresher for you and as a reading discipline.
3. Select key biblical figures for more in-depth study, such as Paul and his letters or the Patriarchs and Matriarchs.
4. Select key concepts, such as the Trinity, for further study. Review in your study Bible or elsewhere how to do responsible exegesis.
5. Study a basic text on systematic theology **from a Wesleyan perspective**.
6. Read one or more basic texts on church history. Particularly pay attention to the key figures of the Reformation period and the influence of the Enlightenment on theological thought and practice.