Follow Me
Biblical Practices for Faithful Living

CAFÉ DISCUSSION GUIDE 2

Cross the Divide

EXODUS 14:10–31

1 As you gather, read the other side of this page. Pray together using these words or your own:

O God, thank you for all the ways you call us to live as baptized people. Help us wade into and through all that separates us from you and one another. Amen.

2 Spend a few minutes and read "Summary of Crossing the Divide" on the other side of this page. Discuss each person's understanding of how baptism changes or transforms the person.

3 Have someone read aloud "Finding the Practice in the Bible" on the other side of this page. Next, have one person read Exodus 14:10–31. For a little fun, watch the YouTube video "The Prince of Egypt (1998)— 'Red Sea' Scene" (bit.ly/FMPrinceOfEgypt, 4:32).

Discuss how passing through the waters of the Red Sea is like passing through the waters of baptism.

4 The apostle Paul described the community of the baptized in these ways: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

If Paul were to write a letter to churches today about being one in Christ, what sorts of divisions might he highlight that we need to overcome? How does remembering the baptismal aspect of crossing the divide help overcome these divisions?

a.

b.

c.

5 As baptized people, we commit to breaking down dividing walls in the world today. Brainstorm and list people or groups in your community who are doing this work.

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Circle or name one group you wish to know more about and perhaps join.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.

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SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICE

One aspect to consider is that baptism represents a crossing-over experience. Crossing through the waters of baptism changes things. The most remarkable biblical story to consider here is the story of the exodus from Egypt. Enslaved people escaped the pharaoh's army by passing through the parted waters to freedom. God's power to accompany and change people through water also happens during baptism. It is a story of liberation, one that takes place literally "through the water." God repeatedly calls people to cross over or through water as they make their way into the future promised for them. The baptism of a believer is one such threshold—a transition through water into a life of discipleship and a journey with God.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

The book of Exodus tells the story of the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years. Moses, their eventual leader, followed God's instructions and repeatedly asked the oppressor pharaoh to let the people go. God tried to convince the pharaoh through many signs and wonders, including plagues. Finally, the night of the Passover, when every Israelite household was passed over and saved from death, the pharoah let them go free. Moses led them into the desert right up to the shore of the Red Sea (also called the Reed Sea). But the pharaoh changed his mind and sent his chariots after the fleeing Israelites, trapping them between the sea and certain death.

The climax of the story is found in today's text, Exodus 14:10–31, where God parted the sea and the Israelites escaped. It was a key event for the people of God to never forget—an experience of the redeeming work of God. In subsequent seasons of struggle and distress, generations would turn to this story to remember who God is and what God does for those whom God has created, claimed, and called by name (see also Isaiah 43:1–21). It is often used in baptismal litanies and prayers.

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

On the other side of the Red Sea, the people of God moved toward the Promised Land. Likewise, our movement as baptized people is through the water into life as a community of faith, a new creation, where all divisions are dissolved and boundaries are broken down. Jesus repeatedly showed people what a boundary-crossing life is like for those who follow him. He challenged the conventions of social class and gender roles, and intentionally crossed cultural and geographical barriers as he invited people to follow him.

We practice our baptism by sharing in the reconciling mission of God, reaching across racial biases, cultural traditions, political parties, economic status, and gender identity. We cross boundaries by following Jesus in service. We transcend divisions by trusting in the transforming power of the Spirit, poured out upon all.

6

CLOSING PRAYER

Close by reading this adapted prayer said during baptism:

Send your Spirit to move over this water
that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth.
Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it.
Raise them to new life,
and graft them into the body of Christ.
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us,
that we may have power to do your will
and continue forever in the risen life of Christ.[1]

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS GUIDE

If possible, distribute this sheet to participants before gathering. Be prepared to summarize the information on this page. Bring extra copies, some pens, and a Bible.

1. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018), 411.

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