

Velvet Elvis

Repainting the Christian Faith

Chapter Summary and Verse recommendations for Velvet Elvis Lenten Book Study

Intro: Welcome to my Velvet Elvis

Summary: *Reformation sola est:* The church is always reforming. The Velvet Elvis painting is introduced as a metaphor from the art world about the changing/growing pursuit of art. Bell asks what if, after R. painted his "Velvet Elvis," he announced there was no more need for painting. What if art had come to its epitome in the Velvet Elvis? That would be absurd. Art must keep going, keep exploring, keep forming and bringing new perspectives. So too must theology. For this reason Christians today must remain as open as Luther and the reformers were willing to be in their day. God doesn't change but times do- for this reason we must continue to be God's people in changing times- it requires- imagination, creativity and above all open interaction with God, the church and the world.

A Biblical example of this is Paul's preaching on Mars Hill- in Acts 17: 10- 12.

Chapter 1: Jump:

Summary: The metaphor of the Trampoline. Life is about jumping. Jesus' way is about jumping. Doctrine is not life- Doctrines are the springs that hold the trampoline. The idea of the metaphor is that faith itself is dynamic, has an element of mystery, awe and wonder and can't necessarily be completely pinned down. The opposing metaphor here is the brick wall. We have to be careful about thinking of theology as a brick wall because if you pull one brick out of the wall and it all falls down. Instead, we should be about asking questions, engaging in reverent, communal conversation and continuing to seek the truth together. Anselm's "faith seeking understanding" comes to mind here. Beautiful image of Exodus 3:14- of "seeing where God was."

Scripture: Exodus 3- "I am that I am." John 14: "I am the way and the truth and the Life."

Chapter 2: Yoke:

Summary: The concept of a Rabbinical Yoke- a particular rabbi's method of interpreting scripture. All perspectives of the Bible are interpretation. God spoke the rest is commentary. The Bible is, as God intended it, open-ended and therefore requires interpretation. This is contrary to the idea that some denominations "just preach the Bible." We have to be wary of isogeses and agenda-driven and irreverent interpretations of the scripture but God calls his church to engage in the diligent study and reverent interpretation of scriptures.

Scripture: Matthew 11:30- take my yoke upon you. Genesis 32- Jacob wrestles an angel.

Chapter 3: True

Summary: All truth is God's truth. A mature Christian is one who is secure in knowing that Jesus is the truth even as non Christians experience him. We don't have to be afraid when we discover truth

outside of the bounds of the Christian faith- in fact we can claim the truth. Therefore, for example religious truth and scientific truth do not have to be in conflict- they can fit together. All truth is God's truth. There are beautiful possibilities about music, vocation, etc. in this conversation.

Scripture: Exodus 3- burning bush/holy ground/ Jacob's dream "surely the Lord was in this place and I did not see it." Romans 1:18-20.

Chapter 4: Tassels *obedience + trust*

Summary: The tassels on the prayer shall serve as a reminder to the Jew to remember the Lord's command and not to follow the lusts of the heart. This chapter is about hitting the bottom of human sin, realizing that we can't live without God. Bell uses his own example and lifts up the need for keeping room in life (Sabbath) for the ruling presence of God.

Scripture: Psalm 46, Exodus 20 (remember the Sabbath), Gal. 2:20, Psalm 51.

Chapter 5: Dust

Summary: Dust- "to be covered in the dust of the rabbi's feet" is to follow and imitate the rabbi everywhere.

The talmudim were the learners of the Rabbi. Jesus chose his students in a unique way and told these men (who would not have been seen as the ideal students) that they could be like him. "I chose you" Jesus says to his disciples because he has faith in us.

Scripture: Matthew 14: 22-32 Peter walks on Water, John 15:16 Jesus says, "I chose you."

Chapter 6: New

Summary: The transforming power of forgiveness. When Jesus forgives us we are made new. We don't have to carry around our old identity- if we accept his grace we carry his identity. So often people get bogged down in self-condemnation but that is not what Jesus wants for us- he wants us to be set free through the power of his forgiveness.

Scripture: The prodigal Son- Luke 15. (So many others)

Chapter 7: Good

Summary: If the gospel isn't good news for everybody, it isn't good news for anybody. This means God calls Christians to benefit all people as they live out the gospel. We are to care for the earth, aid suffering, be agents of peace because this becomes our DNA.

Scripture: Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis 12, Rev 21: 1-5

Epilogue

A beautiful little ending piece.

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Group Study Covenant

Our Group's Purpose

- This group seeks to know God better through Biblical Equipping, prayer, and living out Christ's love for one another
- This group seeks to know one another better by listening, and accepting one another unconditionally.
- This group seeks to invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers.
- Other

Promises We Make to One Another

In order to meet these goals, we will:

- Remain a distinctively Christian group, looking to God in Scripture and through prayer for guidance and spiritual growth, and seeking to share Jesus' love with one another and with others outside our group.
- Care for one another by accepting one another unconditionally.
- Keep confidential whatever group members share, both during meetings and outside of meetings.
- Attend group meetings faithfully, missing only when it is unavoidable.
- Begin and end meeting on time.
- Welcome visitors and new members at any meeting.
- Complete reading assignments.
- Other

Decisions about Group Meetings

In order to work together most effectively as a group, we agree to the following:

- Our meeting time will be
- Our meeting place will be
- When we must be absent or late we will
- Concerning refreshments, we will
- We will continue to meet together as a group until

Other decisions:

With God's help, we will abide by this covenant.

Date

Signatures

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Introduction and Jump

Study Guide for Small Groups

Suggested for meeting dates before or after February 3

Welcome and Introductions/Community Building

Introduce yourself and tell about the last time you were on a trampoline.

OR

How does God look different to you today, than 15 - 20 years ago?

Opening Prayer

Heavenly, Lord Jesus, Thank you for bringing us together. We gather with hesitation and with questions. But mostly we gather to worship you and learn your truth. The "...truth about God is why study and discussion and doctrines are so necessary. They help us put words to realities beyond words. They give us insight and understanding into the experience of God we're having....Truth always leads to more....truth. Because truth is insight into God and God is infinite and God has no boundaries or edges." And, Lord, that is why we are gathered here now. To seek the truth...and more truth. Be with us.

Amen.

Covenant

Distribute copies of the covenant for all to review and indicate any changes. All participants must sign the covenant to proceed.

Biblical Equipping

Share

None this week

Hear

John 14:5-14

Explore

- What is the question of Thomas?
- And Jesus' response?
- What did Jesus say that those who had faith in Him would do?

Connect

- In what ways can Christianity be narrow or exclusive?
- "Perhaps a better question than who's right, is who's living rightly?" (O21) Are Bell's comments out of line, or are they truthful?
- Why do you think some Christians are afraid of questions?
- What can questions do for us?
- What kinds of questions would be wrong to ask?

Hear Again
Isaiah 55: 8-9

Explore Again

- How are God's ways compared to the writer's ways?

Connect Again

- What lesson is there for you in this passage?

Prepare for Biblical Equipping Apart

Meditate on: "...The peace of God, which transcends all understanding..."
Phillipians 4:7

Worship

Psalm 37

Have each participant read a stanza of this Psalm. "The Message" has a particularly illustrative version of this Psalm if you wish to copy it ahead of time for your group!

Closing Prayer

Have each group member repeat this prayer out loud:
"God, I can't believe I get to live this life!" Amen

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Repainting the Christian Faith #2

Yoke

Study Guide for Small Groups

Suggested for meeting dates before or after February 10

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Lord, it is "Community, community, community. Together, with others, wrestling and searching and engaging the Bible as a group of people hungry to know..." You better and to follow You in Your ways. That is why we are here Lord. To understand and know you better. Be with us, we pray. Amen.

Community Building

Share the name a favorite teacher and what grade or subject he/she taught.

Covenant

Review the covenant again, including anyone who might be new this week.

Biblical Equipping

Share

"...The peace of God, which transcends all understanding..." Phillipians 4:7. Have members share what this passage meant to them the past week.

Hear

Matthew 18:18-19

Explore

- What is meant by binding and loosing?
- What *shmikah* is given to the disciples?

Connect

- In the yoke you follow, what are some traditions/disciplines/interpretations that have been bound or loosed?
- How does this compel you to become more diligent in the study of scripture?

Hear Again

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Explore Again

- V14...where have the listener's of this letter "learned" the scriptures?
- V15...why do we have scriptures?
- V16...and useful for what?

- V17...so that we may do what?

Connect Again

- Is everything you know of scripture from the Bible? Explain.
- What is your take on “the Bible as an Owner’s Manual”?
- How does this scripture convince you that the Bible is “living and active”?

Prepare for Biblical Equipping Apart

Meditate on: “...He stinketh...” John 11:39 (KJV)

Worship

Sing together “The B-I-B-L-E”.

OR

Sign together or listen to “Thy Word”.

(google **song lyrics** for the words!)

Closing Prayer

Close with a “One Word” circle prayer (individuals may mention a name, an issue, etc). Leader or someone predesignated will close the prayer.

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Repainting the Christian Faith #3

True

Study Guide for Small Groups

Suggested for meeting dates before or after February 17

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Leader opens with prayer.

Community Building

Share one of those profound moments when you were speechless with awe. Good, bad or otherwise.

Biblical Equipping

Share

“...He stinketh...” John 11:39 (KJV)

Hear

Genesis 28:16

Explore

- What basic truth about God do you find in this verse?

Connect

- Where is God present (and not present) in your life?
- Do you find yourself “showing up” someplace and finding God there?

Hear Again

John 14:5-7

Explore Again

- What did Jesus tell Thomas he was?
- Whom did Jesus say that His disciples would know if they really knew Him?

Connect Again

- How is Jesus the way, the truth, and the life in your life?
- How can this verse be useful in discerning the “truth” in your life?
- Why would it be helpful to do so?
- Can there be “non-Christian” truth?
- “Christian” is a great noun and poor adjective”(084). What do you think about his statement?

Hear Yet Again

Colossians 3:17

Explore Yet Again

- What truth can we take from this verse?

Connect Yet Again

- How could you make your “job” sacred?

Prepare for Biblical Equipping Apart

Memorize and meditate on Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Worship

Sing (or hear) together...

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

or

“Surely, the Presence of the Lord is in this Place”

Closing Prayer

Close with The Lord’s Prayer.

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Repainting the Christian Faith #4

Tassels

Study Guide for Small Groups

Suggested for meeting dates before or after February 24

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Lord, whatever we do, whether in word or deed, we do it in Your Name, giving thanks to You always. Thank you for the privilege of gathering to study Your Word! Amen.

Community Building

Highs and Low's...Each person shares the high point of their day and the low point of their day.

Biblical Equipping

Share

Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Hear

John 5:24-27

Explore

- How did Jesus say a person can gain eternal life?
- What time did Jesus say had already come?
- What did Jesus say the Father has in Himself that He has granted to the Son?

Connect

- How do we live knowing that our eternity is now?
- What is the problem of salvation if our only goal is to not sin?
- How do we become "more and more the kind of people God had in mind when we were first created."?

Hear Again

Genesis 2:2-3

Explore Again

- Why did God rest?

Connect Again

- What does your *Sabbath* look like?
- How can you improve your *Sabbath* to make it a day of rest and a time of renewal?

- How serious are you about taking *Sabbath*?

Prepare for Biblical Equipping Apart

Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

Worship

Sing together "I Love You Lord"

Closing Prayer

Taken from "Simple Gifts", Luci Swindoll

Lord, We know we need times set apart from the press of demands, to refresh our spirit. Help us find those resting places to catch our breath each day and refocus our attention on you. Amen

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#5

Dust

Study Guide for Small Groups

Suggested for meeting dates before or after **March 3**

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Leader Opens with prayer (or delegate to a group member).

Community Building

What kind of grades did you get in school?

Biblical Equipping

Share

Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

Hear

Matthew 4:18-22

Explore

- What do we know of the disciples training?
- Did Jesus call the best students of the Torah?
- Why them?

Connect

- How do you rate your religious training?
- And God has called you - why?
- Why would you feel ill-equipped to disciple others?

Hear Again

Matthew 14:22-32

Explore Again

- Who does Peter doubt?
- Why?

Connect Again

- What events or experiences have led you to trust in Jesus?
- What does this passage teach you?
- Does Jesus believe in you?
- Does God have faith in you?
- The Rabbi thinks you are good enough...are you?

Prepare for Biblical Equipping Apart

Memorize the Torah! Ha Ha
OK...Memorize Genesis! No?
OK...Meditate on
John 15:16a, "You did not choose me, but I chose you..."

Worship

Sing together "You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore" WOV 784

Closing Prayer

Circle Prayer