

Discussion Questions

Lesson One: Episcopal Origins

Since we are a part of a faith tradition that begins with the story of Abraham, we are tied to other faith traditions that also begin with the story of Abraham, such as Judaism and Islam. How does this tie strengthen your faith? How might it challenge your faith? Our host, Frank Wade said, “religion begins with the capacity to wonder.” What do you wonder about God?

Lesson Two: What Episcopalians Believe

In the Episcopal Church, we do not tell you what to believe, but give you a foundation to guide and inform your faith and decisions. How might that be life-giving? How might that be difficult? Reflect on how you might have used Scripture, Tradition, and Reason to inform a decision you have made or need to make. Each Sunday in the Episcopal Church, we say the Nicene Creed as a gathered community. The Creed invites us to say what we believe as a community. What part of the Creed is important to you? What part is challenging?

Lesson Three: Episcopal Diversity

In what ways has the Episcopal Church created or found harmony within discord? How do scripture, tradition, and reason both cause and remedy this? Dr. Wade says that church is merely an instrument through which we know and serve God. How is this true in your experience? Dr. Wade argues that if you are going to value diversity, you are also going to experience discord. How is this true in the secular world, and how is it different or the same within the Church?

Lesson Four: Why I'm an Episcopalian

Is your church a place where wonder and revelation meet? How so? How do you feel when someone claims that she does not need to go to church to worship God? Consider this quote: “You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary. But the stars neither require nor demand it.” What does it mean to you?

The Takeaway

Religion begins with the capacity to wonder and we are the only creatures who wonder. We are the only ones who can raise questions of meaning. When we wonder, what we find is something reaching back.

The first moment of our history is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. When the Protestant Reformation took place in England, the Church of England was born out of that movement. Henry the VIII did not start the church but was the political umbrella under which it was formed. He was not interested in the Protestant Reformation, but he needed the support of the church. The Episcopal Church in the United States began when the United States broke from England and the Church of England. We are still connected with the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

What Episcopalians Believe - Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the revelation of God. We are a mainline Christian church; therefore on a basic level, what Christians believe, we believe. The Creeds give us shape and formation. We are a sacramental church: Eucharist and Baptism are moments where we find great power and connectivity with God and experience God in a new way.

One of the things that makes us unique is the use of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason as a baseline for our belief.

Because the Episcopal Church encourages people to make responsible decisions inside the Christian framework, we have a lot of diversity.

The Episcopal Church continues to work as a place where wonder and revelation come together because it uses scripture, tradition, and challenges our reason. We are a community of faith and we believe that the community holds us together. By ourselves, we begin to worship ourselves and God begins to become our highest creation instead of the other way around. In community, we hear things that are formative and challenging that we don't find anywhere else. God doesn't need the church; we need the church – a place where wonder can be brought into God's revelation and grace.

Notes

Share Your Learning

We believe the Holy Spirit joined you in this class and would not be surprised if you learned a couple of things that inspired you and may inspire others.

So here's the assignment: Simply write down something that touched you in a sentence or two. Here are some examples: Clare from Texas took the course "Introducing Christian Stewardship with Kristine Miller" and writes, "*God doesn't want our money, God just wants us to want it less.*" Robert from North Carolina took "Introducing the Book of Common Prayer with Roger Ferlo" and writes, "*I learned that 70% of the Book of Common Prayer is directly quoted or paraphrased from the Bible, no wonder I like it so much!*"

If you want to add an image, that works too. Now simply post it to your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, or Google+ account with the hashtag: #churchnext

Not only will you inspire your friends, but your post will show up on the **churchnext.tv** home page for the whole community to see. Thanks for sharing your learning!

The Episcopal Tradition

with

Frank Wade

Participant's Guide

Welcome!

After the Revolutionary War it would seem that anything English would have been banned from the fledgling United States of America. But the Episcopal Church, through its dedication to Jesus, and its unique perspective of Scripture, Tradition and Reason, survived.

It's because God has plans for the Episcopal Church, including its role in the formation of many movers and shakers that helped make America what it is today.

In this course, respected cleric and teacher Frank Wade introduces us to the unique distinctions, theology, and convictions of the Episcopal Church. Thanks for learning with us.

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