

INTRODUCTION

The people of South Africa, black and white, rich and poor, the powerful and the vulnerable, are engaged in a bitter struggle. It is a struggle which involves us all, a struggle whose outcome will shape the future life of all South Africans. This struggle is daily punctuated by violence and is always increasing the divisions in an already divided society. In the midst of this struggle the Church is called to be in ministry. It is a difficult assignment in very difficult times. But for its work God's people are given the gracious Word of God, which is our Lord Jesus, and gracious words to guide and direct us, to heal and strengthen us in our ministry. This study focuses on a few of those gracious words for our difficult times and finally upon that Word, even our Lord Jesus, in whom God's grace is most clearly revealed.

The Church of Jesus Christ is the Body of Christ, the reconciling presence of Christ in the world. God's people are called to be reconciling agents in society (II Corinthians 5:18-21), Christ's ambassadors entrusted with the message of reconciliation. Since God's reconciling action in Jesus is for all people without regard for race or status, the Church is committed to justice and liberation for all those whom God has reconciled. If God's people intend to take seriously their calling as reconciling agents, then they must also seriously consider their calling as agents of justice and liberation.

In its attempt to be faithful to its calling the Church always looks to God's Word to inform the daily life of all who are part of it. God's people take the Word as foundational for their life and health. But for God's people to take that Word as life for them and to share it as life for the world, then they must also be clear about their situation, for which the Word is good news. The Church needs to understand as best it can the context of its own people and of the people to whom it ministers in the world. To be most faithful in its calling and most effective in its ministry the Church must take seriously its vital task of social analysis.

This Bible study series tries to take seriously the Church's calling as agent of justice, liberation, and reconciliation. It also attempts to help God's people think clearly and carefully about their context and about the shape God's Word takes in communicating good news to that context. Finally the series assumes that once God's people have made connections between God's Word and their context, they will commit themselves to faithful and concrete actions which put their faith into practice, and they will pray for the guidance and power of God from whom comes every good gift and every gracious word.

OBJECTIVES

1. That the participants explore the Biblical understanding of certain words within the context of the participant's situation and of the current socio-politico-economic situation in South Africa.

2. That the participants come to a shared Biblical understanding of these words that is also relevant to their South African context.

3. That the participants discover and evaluate ways in which their understanding of these words may be lived out daily in the South African situation.

4. That the participants commit themselves to those ways which are possible and appropriate for them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY LEADERS

1. Each lesson contains material for from two to five hours of study and discussion; they could be lengthened even further if very careful Biblical work is done. It is assumed, however, that the lessons will be used in local settings which provide only one to two hours at any one time. Thus normally each lesson may be completed in one two-hour session, or in two or three one-hour sessions. The study leader is encouraged to look over the material carefully before the session so as to select those portions of the study which will provide most benefit for the participants within the time available. All four sections in each lesson should be covered, but some questions and/or some of the Bible references may be omitted for the sake of time savings.

2. All four sections of the studies are important. Take them seriously. There may be a temptation to rush through section I. "Context". That would be a mistake. Without proper attention to the context it will be difficult and somewhat haphazard doing section III. "Making Connections". The Bible work in section II should be done carefully, especially when the passage is either very brief or very familiar. There may be rich meanings that have been previously overlooked, or new meanings which are suggested by the context (section I) within which they are being studied. Finally, we are never finished with our responsibilities as God's people considering God's Word until we have translated the Word into concrete commitments for our daily lives and then sought God's guidance and blessing for them.

3. In doing section II. "Bible Study" it would be helpful if the group used a variety of Bible translations. The original Hebrew or Greek words of Scripture may be rendered in other languages with a variety of words. Or a variety of Hebrew and Greek concepts may be conveyed by the same word in another language. For example, the Hebrew word translated peace may also be translated "security," "welfare," "happiness," or even "justice." The same is true for the Hebrew and Greek words which we usually translate "justice" or "righteousness." On the other hand, there may be many different Hebrew and Greek ways of speaking about what we uniformly refer to as "repentance" or about "forgiveness."

4. It would be helpful if the study leader could look over all of the suggested Bible passages before the session begins. It is not necessary to study all of the passages, though the more passages which are considered the better will be the group's understanding of the concept being studied. Time constraints will no doubt be the deciding factor.

5. If a lesson is divided into two or three sessions it is important for the group to briefly review past work at the beginning of each succeeding session. The study leader may want to write a brief overview for her/himself at the end of each session.

6. Don't forget prayer: for the leader in making preparations, for the group before beginning their work and certainly for the participants after they have made commitments. We are God's people who confess that it is only with God's help that we are able to be faithful in our calling and commitments.

INTRODUCTION

We live in difficult and trying times in South Africa. For the black majority in our land that has been the situation for many years, but never more so than now. For the white community it is a relatively new and entirely shattering reality. The division which is at the heart of apartheid has left our minds and hearts and spirits as separated as our homes. We are a scattered people, ignorant of one another and so fearful of one another. Security is our passion, and we try to attain it through greater separation and through enforcement of division and the inequalities which that separation spawns. We seek security through the manipulation of economic resources and through the naked coercion of police and military, which are called "security forces." We experience a dis-ease which saps our vitality and casts a shadow over our future. And still we are vulnerable, regardless of the amount of security we try to purchase or arrange for ourselves. Where in South Africa shall we find the kind of well-being and safety we seek? Where is there a wholeness that gives meaning to our lives in the face of our present scatteredness?

Scripture provides a vision of such peace and security, but we must search out what that vision has to offer us in the context of our South African situation. In what directions does the Biblical vision of peace point us? In this study we shall try to discover the Biblical meaning of "peace" and in it the answers to the questions we have raised about security in a divided South Africa.

CONTEXT (Discuss the following . . .)

- A. Do you agree or disagree with the description of life in South Africa contained in the "Introduction" above? Explain/elaborate.
- B. How does concern about security express itself in your life?
- C. When do you feel most secure/safe? Why?
What is it that allows you to feel safe/secure/at peace?
- D. What do you think "peace" would look/be like in South Africa?

BIBLE STUDY: Peace

(There are a variety of concepts conveyed by the Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible translated "peace." Consequently there are also a variety of English words which may be used to convey the meaning of those words. It would be helpful when referring to the Bible passages below if the participants would consult several different English translations. It will also be necessary for participants to pay special attention to the contexts within which the word "peace" is used in order to understand the

appropriate shade of meaning the word has in a particular passage.)

A. Study the following passages and note what all is included in the Biblical concept of "peace." (The passages marked with an asterisk (*) are particularly important. Others may be omitted if time demands, but it would be most helpful if all passages would be considered.)

Genesis 15:15	* Matthew 10:34 (28-39)
Numbers 6:26	Mark 4:37-39
* Leviticus 26:4-6	Mark 5:34
Judges 4:17	* Luke 1:79 (76-79)
* Judges 6:22-24	* Luke 2:14
I Kings 5:12	Luke 10:5-6
* Job 5:24 (19-26)	* Luke 19:38, 41-42 (32-44)
Psalms 34:12-14	* John 14:27
Psalms 37:10-11	* John 16:33
* Isaiah 32:16-18	* John 20:19,21,26 (19-29)
Isaiah 54:11-15	Acts 24:2
* Jeremiah 29:10-14	Romans 8:6
* Ezekiel 34:25-29a	* I Corinthians 14:33
Zechariah 8:10-12	* Ephesians 2:14 (12-22)
Zechariah 9:1-10	Romans 5:1 & Colossians 1:20
	Ephesians 4:3

B. The following passages deal with a false peace against which God's true prophets spoke. Note the contexts.

Why did the prophets condemn those who prophesied "peace" here?

Jeremiah 6:13-14 (10-15)

Ezekiel 13:10,16 (1-16)

Amos 6:1-6 (This is another description of the situation against which the true prophets warned. This passage doesn't use the word for "peace"--shalom--as do the other two, but it does describe the false peace. Describe the false peace/security noted here.)

C. Read the following and then discuss:

"Shalom" is the Old Testament Hebrew word for "peace, well-being, security." Although the New Testament Greek word for peace was much narrower in the scope of its meaning in secular usage, in Scripture it takes on most of the extensive meaning of shalom. Shalom is the state of wholeness possessed by persons or groups, which may be health, prosperity, security, or the spiritual completeness of covenant. It is not only individual but also communal. It includes physical well-being, e.g. food, shelter, clothing, health, protection, as well as the spiritual and psychological. If there are any in the community who do not have shalom then the community itself does not have it, because shalom means wholeness for the entire community, not only for part of it. Finally God gives shalom, but it is the responsibility of every individual in the community to do what she/he is able to do in order to provide for everybody those things which will make for shalom. Community members are therefore agents of shalom: being such an agent is part of the gift of shalom.

The following is from LIVING TOWARD A VISION by Walter Brueggemann. United Church Press: Philadelphia (1983), Pages 15,16.

"The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature. In the community of faith in Israel, this vision is expressed in the affirmation that Abraham is father of all Israel and every person is his child (see Genesis 15:5; Isaiah 41:8; 51:2). Israel has a vision of all people drawn into community around the will of its God (Isaiah 2:2-4). In the New Testament, the church has a parallel vision of all persons being drawn under the lordship and fellowship of Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20; John 12:32) and therefore into a single community (Acts 2:1-11).

As if those visions were not sweeping enough, the most staggering expression of the vision is that all persons are children of a single family, members of a single tribe, heirs of a single hope, and bearers of a single destiny, namely, the care and management of all of God's creation.

"That persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony, and prosperity is not captured in any single word or idea in the Bible, and a cluster of words is required to express its many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness. But the term that in recent discussions has been used to summarize that controlling vision is shalom. Both in current discussion and in the Bible itself, it bears tremendous freight--the freight of a dream of God that resists all our tendencies to division, hostility, fear, drivenness, and misery.

"Shalom is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation. It refers to all those resources and factors which make communal harmony joyous and effective. . . ."

D. It has been proposed that this Biblical notion of "peace" is a matter of "freedom and unity, ordering and eating." What does that suggest to you about "peace"?

MAKING CONNECTIONS (Discuss the following . . .)

A. Are there any signs of this Biblical notion of peace which already exist in South Africa? Explain.

Given the Biblical vision of peace, how would South Africa be different if such peace were to become a concrete reality here?

B. What is your vision of security for South Africa?

How does that vision relate to the Biblical vision of peace (security)?

C. Walter Brueggemann suggests that peace is "a gift and a task." In light of your study of the Scripture references above what do you think he means?

What do you think that suggests about the coming of peace to South Africa?

D. What do you think is the Church's role(s) in the realization of

peace in South Africa?

What role(s) can individual and families of Christians play in the realization of peace in South Africa?

COMMITMENTS AND PRAYERS

A. Individually, take a few minutes now to list "peace-ways" to which you are willing to commit yourself in the context of the present turbulent situation in our country.

Share your lists with the whole group, as each is comfortable in doing that.

B. Pray for God's grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your peacemaking.

Evaluate your peacemaking regularly.

Support one another in your peacemaking.

INTRODUCTION

The terms "justice" and "reconciliation" are an important part of the South African political, social, ecclesiastical and theological conversation in the 1980's. We all have a rough idea of what "justice" and "reconciliation" suggest/mean for us. However, approximate meanings in times of crisis and confrontation usually lead to misunderstanding. There will be little debate as to the positive nature of these concepts. However, clear, shared understandings are necessary if we want to build upon the concepts the reality toward which they point. In this study we hope that concerned Christians will be able to work together not only toward a common understanding of "justice" and "reconciliation," but also toward a common commitment to ways of living them out in the context of both church and society.

CONTEXT (Discuss the following . . .)

A. How would you describe the present socio-politico-economic situation in South Africa?

B. What is the biggest problem in your life?
What is the biggest problem in the life of the church in South Africa?
What is the biggest problem in the life of South Africa as a nation?

C. What do you think of when you hear the word "justice"? . . .
"reconciliation"? Why?
What is justice? . . . reconciliation? (Brief definition.)

D. In you thinking/feeling how do the ideas of "justice" and "reconciliation" relate to the problems you noted in "B" above?

BIBLE STUDY: Justice and Reconciliation

(The various translations of the Hebrew and Greek words which are regularly translated "justice/righteousness" or "reconciliation" may be rendered with a variety of terms in order to convey the fullness of their meaning or their special meaning in specific contexts. Therefore, it would be helpful when referring to Bible passages below if the participants would consult several different translations.)

A. Read the following:

It is noteworthy that the word "justice" is not found in the New Testament, and rarely in the Old Testament. Where it is found it is almost always the translation for one of the two words usually translated

"righteousness." Originally those words signified "that which conforms to the norm," and for Israel the norm was the character of God. The idea is ethical, but there is a steady tendency as the Old Testament proceeds toward the idea of "salvation." Righteousness (justice) was a term used in the context of relationships; there was righteoueness (justice) when the parties in a relationship lived up to the obligations of the relationship. Righteousness (justice) indicated right action and fair dealing between the two parties in a relationship. As time passed it came to indicate in particular proper action and care for the poor and the needy. Righteousness (justice) came to mean the establishment of equal rights for all, not unlike our definition for justice today. But the idea was not only that of equality, for sometimes the clear meaning is "mercy" or "compassion." The original Hebrew words, therefore, include the idea of God's vindication of the helpless, and stress generosity and benevolence. In Rabbinic writings the word "righteousness" (justice) means primarily "almsgiving," or "benevolence"; it is in this sense that the word is used even by Jesus in Matthew 6:1. In Paul the word is used in three main senses: 1. the ethical conduct demanded by the law; 2. salvation that comes as a gift from God through Christ; 3. ethical conduct which is demanded of a Christian.

Discuss the following questions:

How is our use of the term "justice" today different from the Biblical use as explained above?

How can our use of "justice" be informed by the Biblical use?

If you have the time study the following passages which use the Hebrew or Greek for "justice/righteousness."

Psalms 7:8-17	Romans 1:17,18
33:5	3:9-26
Isaiah 45:8,23	4:6-8,13
46:13	6:15-23
51:5,6	10:10
Ezekiel 18:19,21	
Daniel 4:27	

B. Study the passages listed below keeping these questions in mind. Then discuss.

What is reconciliation?

Who reconciles? Who is reconciled?

What is the result of reconciliation in the daily life of those reconciled?

Romans 5:10-11; 11:13-15
II Corinthians 5:16-21
Ephesians 2:15-18
Colossians 1:19-22

How does the Biblical use of the term "reconciliation" help us to understand reconciliation between human beings?

MAKING CONNECTIONS (Discuss the following . . .)

A. What would "justice" and "reconciliation" look like in the South African situation? . . . in the context of the problems you noted in "Context B" above?

B. What can Christians do to participate in justice and reconciliation in our context? List concrete possibilities.

COMMITMENTS AND PRAYERS

A. To which of the possibilities (Making Connections B above) are you ready to commit yourself?

How will you begin? (If you are not ready to answer that question right now, wrestle with it for a week. Agree to meet again in one week for further discussion and to make commitments as individuals and perhaps also as a group.)

B. Pray for the Spirit's guidance as well as for the wisdom and strength to live out your commitments.

Provide for on-going support and encouragement for one another. Evaluate your progress regularly.

INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of Christians in South Africa, black and white alike, readily acknowledge that people of color have been oppressed by the white community in the history of South Africa. They are prepared to affirm that injustice has been the rule rather than the exception in relationships between the races. However, for all that agreement, there is a great deal of heated debate as to what that history and our faith demand for today and for the future. Most seem to seek peace and reconciliation of some sort between alienated groups, but there is serious disagreement about exactly what those terms mean and about the road to that destination. In the context of that discussion/debate the Biblical terms "repentance" and "forgiveness" are frequently heard. In this study we shall try to understand the Biblical meaning of these words in our South African context, and to discern the road on which they direct us toward the peace and reconciliation we all desire.

CONTEXT (Discuss the following . . .)

A. Describe the nature of the tension between racial groups in South Africa today. What factors are involved?

B. What must happen for there to be peace and reconciliation between the victims of apartheid and those who have supported and/or benefitted from apartheid?

Who are the victims, and who are the beneficiaries?

C. What do you understand to be the relationship between repentance and forgiveness?

Does that understanding suggest anything for dealing with the current tension and conflict in South Africa? If so, explain. If it does not, why not?

BIBLE STUDY: Repentance and Forgiveness

(There may be a variety of English words/expressions which different translations use in order to convey the ideas "repentance" and "forgiveness." Therefore, it would be helpful when referring to the Bible passages below if the participants would consult several different translations.)

A. What does "repentance" involve in the following passages?

Of God (select three from the list below) . . .

Genesis 6:6	Psalms 106:45 (44-46)
Exodus 32:12	Jonah 3:10
Numbers 23:19	Romans 11:29
I Samuel 15:23,35	

Of human beings (select three from the list below) . . .

Exodus 13:17 Ezekiel 14:6
Jeremiah 8:6 (4-7) Ezekiel 18:30-31
Jeremiah 18:8,10 Matthew 27:3

Repentance liturgies (select two from the list below) . . .

Psalm 51
Isaiah 63:7 - 64:12
Daniel 9:4-19
Hosea 6 and/or 14

Can you detect a change in emphasis in these New Testament passages?

What does repentance involve here?

(Select six of the passages to study.)

Matthew 3:1-2,8 (1-9) Acts 2:38 (13:24;19:4)
Mark 1:14-15 (Mt.4:17) Acts 3:19,26
Mark 6:12,14 Acts 17:30
Luke 13:1-5 Acts 26:20
Luke 17:3,4 II Corinthians 7:9-10
Luke 24:47 II Peter 3:9

Examples of repentance (read both):

Luke 15:11-27; 19:1-10

God's role in repenance (optional):

Acts 5:31; 11:18
Romans 2:4
II Timothy 2:25

From your study of these passages what is repentance? What does repentance involve?

B. In the following passages what is forgiveness? What does it involve? What are some of the words/actions used to express the idea of forgiveness in Scripture?

Also consider . . .

Are there any conditions for receiving forgiveness noted in Scripture?

What is the relationship of God's offer of forgiveness to our receiving forgiveness?

(Select five passages from the Old Testament and six passages from the New Testament.)

Joshua 24:19	Matthew 6:12,24
II Chronicles 7:14	Matthew 9:2
Psalm 32:3-5	Matthew 18:21-35
Psalm 51	Mark 2:5,9,10 (1-12)
Psalm 86:5	Mark 11:25
Isaiah 33:24 (10-24)	Luke 5:20,23
Isaiah 38:17	Luke 6:37
Jeremiah 31:34	Luke 7:47-50
Jeremiah 36:34	Luke 17:3,4
Micah 7:18-20	Acts 8:22
	Acts 5:31
	I John 1:9

MAKING CONNECTIONS (Discuss the following . . .)

A. What is the relationship between "repentance" and "forgiveness" in matters between God and humanity? . . . in matters between human beings and/or groups of human beings?

May biblical notions of repentance and forgiveness be applied to relationships between structures and other structures and/or people in a society?

B. What do you think about the following statement in the KAIROS DOCUMENT? Approve/disapprove? Why?

"No reconciliation is possible in South Africa without justice.

"What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible without repentance. The Biblical teaching on reconciliation and forgiveness makes it quite clear that nobody can be forgiven and reconciled with God unless he or she repents of their sins. Nor are we expected to forgive the unrepentant sinner. When he or she repents we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven times, but before that we are expected to preach repentance to those who sin against us or against anyone. Reconciliation, forgiveness and negotiations will become our Christian duty in South Africa only when the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance." (p.9)

Do you think the statement is rooted in a proper understanding of "repentance" and "forgiveness" in Scripture? If "yes," how can we best encourage repentance and forgiveness among the South African people? If "no," how shall we proceed in dealing with the current crisis situation in South Africa on the basis of Scripture and our Christian faith? (Cite Scriptural support as you are aware of it.)

C. How does your understanding of repentance and forgiveness affect your personal relationships? . . . your response to South Africa's current crisis?

COMMITMENTS AND PRAYERS

A. Take a few minutes now--each, personally and privately--to decide upon two concrete acts of repentance and/or forgiveness to which you will commit yourself.

Share your commitments with the group, if it is comfortable for you to do so (not for discussion or comment but for encouragement to others).

B. Pray for an understanding of yourself, of the situation in South Africa and of your responsibilities in the present circumstances.

Pray for courage and strength to exercise repentance and forgiveness in your daily life as a means for renewal and peace.

Provide on-going support and encouragement for one another.

Evaluate your progress regularly.

INTRODUCTION

The cry for freedom is a universal one, and today we hear it coming from many oppressed peoples: Russian Jews, Latin American peasants, Palestinians under Israeli occupation, Afghanistan resistance fighters, Sikhs in India, Tamils in Sri Lanka. Neither is South Africa a stranger to that cry for freedom. Here it comes from the black majority in our land; it comes from Namibians whose country according to international law is illegally occupied by South Africa. Of course, freedom is a vital concern not only in relation to things national and political. Freedom is the longing of those enslaved by alcohol or drugs, of those trapped in strained and destructive relationships, of those imprisoned by their own psychological needs or by commitments beyond their capacity for honoring them. We all seek freedom, but usually we seek it in the wrong places. In this lesson we shall try to find the way to freedom for ourselves and for all the people in our land by looking at our troubled context and at the Word God speaks to us in that context.

CONTEXT (Discuss the following . . .)

A. Is there anything right now in your life from which you seek liberation? If so, what is it? If not, do you consider yourself completely free?

B. What do you think it means to be "free"?

C. What do you understand political freedom to be?
Are people "free" in South Africa? Explain.

D. What is your understanding of the "struggle for freedom" of the various "liberation movements" in Southern Africa (ANC, PAC, SWAPO)?

E. Methodists, together with a large portion of the Christian family, believe that justification is the work of God in Christ and comes through faith alone (sola fide). What do you understand to be the meaning of "faith"?

Do you think there is any connection between faith and freedom? Explain.

BIBLE STUDY: Faith and Freedom

A. In the Old Testament "faith" is primarily viewed as a response to God's prior and foundational action. It is most often seen as a collective response of God's people Israel, or as that which they refuse to have (Exodus 4:1; 14:31; Numbers 14:11; Deuteronomy 1:32; Psalm 78:22; Isaiah 28:16 in contrast to 28:15; 43:10; 53:1). It is also used with reference to individuals (Genesis 15:6; Isaiah 7:9 in contrast to 7:4).

The core of the Hebrew concept is "firmness," "reliability," "steadfastness" (Isaiah 26:3f). A person who has faith is made firm and reliable (Habakuk 2:4; Psalm 15 is a description of this "righteous man" of Hab. 2:4); the faith by which one lives is "faithfulness" (obedience) to the covenant given by God. It is interesting to note that Israel's history as recorded in the Old Testament is seen almost entirely as determined by Israel's faithfulness. When Israel trusts in God (is faithful to the covenant), the nation is blessed. When Israel is faithless, the nation suffers and encounters great difficulties.

B. Study the following New Testament passages which refer to faith. (Note the Scriptural context.)

What do they say to you about faith?

Who/what is the object of faith?

Matthew 8:5-13; 14:22-32; 21:18-22

Mark 5:21-43; 9:21-24

Luke 1:45; 8:22-25; Acts 14:39

John 3:12; 4:41-42,48 (always a verb in John)

Romans 1:16-17; 3:3,22,25,30 (1-31)

4:1-5, 16-20; 5:1-5

I Corinthians 1:21

Galatians 3:22

Ephesians 1:18-20

Hebrews 10:32 - 12:2

C. Study the following passages which refer to freedom.

How would you describe freedom as noted here? From what does one become free?

Do the passages suggest anything to you about how a person becomes free? If so, what do they suggest?

Romans 6:15-23

7:3-4 (Galatians 2:3-5)

8:1-4, 18-21

Galatians 5:1,13

John 8:31-35

D. Note that in the following passages faith and freedom are related. What is the relationship between faith and freedom which is suggested to you?

Romans 8 (cf. "faith" in chs. 1-5)

Galatians 3:22-29; 5:1-13

Ephesians 3:12

E. Read the following passage:

"When the Christ is trusted, a threefold resource for liberation unfolds. First, there is liberation from the all-pervasive necessity to justify oneself. Second, there is liberation from the drive to carry out this justification at the expense of others, the iron-clad law that self-justifiers are compelled to follow. Third, there is liberation from anxiety about death, the grim nemesis that drives oppressors willy-nilly into inflicting unfreedom on others." ("A Time for Confessing" by Edward H. Schroeder. CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION, vol. 14: Number 2, April, 1987 (Chicago), p. 90.)

MAKING CONNECTIONS (Discuss the following . . .)

A. In South Africa who needs liberation?

From what things/persons/institutions do we need liberation?

B. Scriptures regularly uses faith (or believing) as the answer to fear (Matt. 14:32; Luke 8:25; Acts 9:26). In our context what are the fears from which "faith" relieves us? Explain.

C. Edward H Schroeder proposes the following outline of the movement from bondage to freedom through faith (trust in Christ):

. . . 1) Sinners (un-free under the law) trust the crucified Christ as God's last Word to them. 2) That Word is an offer of a "sweet swap": this crucified God-man in exchange for your sinner-self. 3) The swap works 'sola fide,' only if you trust the offer 4) When you trust him, the offered one, you have him and all his benefits, and he has you and all your deficits. 5) When you have made the swap, you are free from your deficits and possessor of, and possessed by, Christ's freedom. 6) When you are free, your public person puts freedom into [practice]." "A Time for Confessing." CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION, Vol. 14: Number 2, April, 1987 (Chicago), p.89.

Do you agree?

What does the passage suggest for your life under faith alone ("sola fide")?

D. What do you think is the connections and/or differences between personal and political liberation?

E. The Apostle Paul suggests that the freedom we have in Christ is not simply "freedom from" (sin, law, death), but also "freedom for" service (Gal. 5:13). What might this mean for South Africans?

COMMITMENTS AND PRAYERS

A. Consider individually your faith in Jesus Christ and the freedom it offers you. Then list concrete ways in which you can use your freedom in service to others (individually and societally/politically).

Commit yourself to one individual and one societal way of using your freedom in Christ for service.

B. Pray for a stronger faith in Christ and an appreciation of the freedom it gives you.

Pray for the Spirit's guidance and strength in exercising your freedom in service to others.