

# Not Only For Peers:

**Bible Study Resources from Lutheran Campus Ministry**

**Albert R. Ahlstrom  
Lutheran Campus Pastor  
Columbia University, New York City**

Recent years have found Lutheran campus ministers developing a series of biblical study materials directed to student leaders. With a bit of coaching and continuing support from professional staff, student peer ministers should develop self-confidence and scholarly background for those dormitory and student center small groups.

Campus ministers will also find these guides helpful, with discussion-starters, handouts, and bibliographies — not to mention the inexpensive rates. (Guide and ten student handouts cost \$5.00.) All of the following peer studies are available from Campus Ministry Communications, 35 E. Wacker Drive #1847, Chicago IL 60601, which would also provide an updated list of additional resources:

1. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John: God's Awesome, Confounding Word," by Carl Mangold of Marquette, Michigan, with illustrations from Gustave Doré's Bible Illustrations reminding us of William Blake. Mangold offers six sessions: (1) "No Middle of the Road" speaks of an active, personal, and exciting God moving among churches in contrast to a deistic culture and a history without meaning; (2) "Hollow Shells" concentrates on the message to Sardis; (3) "Hanging Together" portrays the Lamb as a vision of *shalom*: humility and compassion in victory; (4) "Rooted in Freedom" sets Romans 13 against Revelation 13 to stir a discussion on the tensions of Christian freedom; (5) "Called Out" presents the analogy of prostitution to speak of politics among the nations and fuels thinking with references to Bonhoeffer and the nuclear arms race; (6) "The End" reveals the New Jerusalem and guides a conversation about heaven using a cogent story by Mark Twain. The Leader's Guide is full of background facts, definitions, help on the use of numbers in the Apocalypse, and a list of readings from such diverse sources as

Richard Wurmbrand, Vine Deloria, and the Diaries of Anne Frank and Malcolm X.

2. One of the earlier sets — and still the most popular — is by Jessuca Crist (formerly at Cambridge), “I Thank God for You,” a five-part study on Philippians and partnership. The connectedness of the Christian life — with other people and other ages — is underscored by the use of letters, using quotations of letters from Alice Walker, Bonhoeffer, Emily Dickinson, and Martin Luther King Jr. This is a gem, even for student leaders who have to initiate a study “cold.”

3. “The Truth of God’s Love: The Richness of Hosea” by Ruth Manusa (formerly of Las Vegas) is in four parts, plus a helpful handout glossary organized according to chapters and verses of the minor prophet. Although the image of Gomer is still a sordid portrayal of unfaithfulness, the sexual connotations of that unfaithfulness are tempered by the cultic character of Israel’s nearby neighbors. Comparing that world with today’s culture of titillation will generate heat in discussion and light on the scriptural text: there may be safe sex, but no safe religion.

4. My own favorite set is “A Pair of Bulls: Luke’s Parables of Jesus” by Susan Wendorf, now of Cross Plains, Wisconsin. The wit, humor, and humanity of five stories in six sessions opens the possibility of participants writing their own parables for the sixth session. The fact that the ancient symbol of Luke’s gospel is the head of an ox is a neat opening for this play on words, not unlike the texts themselves. The sessions are entitled: (1) “Seeds and Soils 101,” (2) “Good Sam in a Jam,” (3) “Win, Place or Show,” (4) “All is Not Lost,” and (5) “Bench Press.” We will let you identify the Likian texts with those sub-heads.

5. There are more: “Not Servants but Friends” on the Gospel of John by Andrea Diegel of Baltimore; “Challenging Themes for Contemporary Christians” on Malachi by Curt Gast (Columbus, Ohio); “Reaching Through Loneliness,” more topical but not less biblical, by Jim Olson, recently of Vermillion, South Dakota.

Other study guides — not geared to peer leaders but for the campus ministers themselves — are also recommended. The

most recent of these is "Introducing the Apocrypha" by David Burke, formerly of Rutgers, who has a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins based on his work in Baruch. It is especially valuable for campus ministers motivated by Tom Lee's article in this journal to go somewhat afield from the normal course of Bible studies to let students experience the rich variety of texts. Burke offers a rich thumb-nail introduction and sketch of each book in the inter-testamental period (there are 15, no less). The fact that this literature was largely preserved by Christians rather than the rabbis, through Jerome, Wyclif, the Reformation and Trent was new to this reviewer. This material is especially useful for theological resources, e.g. angelology in Tobit, God's remoteness in Baruch, the after-life in II Maccabees, and personal ethics and prayer in Judith and Sirach. In terms of method, reference to Apocrypha in conjunction with both Old and New Testament studies or in discussions on the relation between men and women (Judith, Susanna) stimulate leadership preparation.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122; Attn: Department of Campus Ministry) also provides study guides. We can especially recommend "The Mysterious Members of the Trinity" (on the Holy Spirit) by David Benson of Madison, and "On the Witness of the Church" by Hubert Beck of Durham. These are enclosed in a resource packet called "Connections." The Beck study guide is the clearest and most sensitive guide to the conundrum of "verbal witnessing" I have seen. It challenges students to speak the gospel, as each can, in both "churchy" and "non-churchy" terms, and invites an attitude of listening as well as speaking.