



# Summer 2021 Small Group Session

- 8 weeks (June 6 – July 31)
- 4 topics; 2 weeks per topic
- Each topic has a self-study component (week 1) and a group discussion component (week 2)
- Choose from a widely varied, long list of self-study resources on each topic
- Groups gather based on preferred mode (in-person or online) + day/time availability
- Each group uses same resources, session outline & questions

Midrash (a.k.a Turning the Gem)		Jesus Was a Refugee		Doubt: An Essential Part of Faith?		Social Witness	
Week of 6/6 Week 1	Week of 6/13 Week 2	Week of 6/20 Week 3	Week of 6/27 Week 4	Week of 7/4 Week 5	Week of 7/11 Week 6	Week of 7/18 Week 7	Week of 7/25 Week 8
	<b>Group meetings</b>		<b>Group meetings</b>		<b>Group meetings</b>		<b>Group meetings</b>
	<u>Monday</u> @ 7pm via Zoom* Meeting ID: 894 6749 9089 Passcode: 297084		<u>Monday</u> @ 7pm via Zoom* Meeting ID: 894 6749 9089 Passcode: 297084		<u>Monday</u> @ 7pm via Zoom* Meeting ID: 894 6749 9089 Passcode: 297084		<u>Monday</u> @ 7pm via Zoom* Meeting ID: 894 6749 9089 Passcode: 297084
<b>Self-study</b>	<u>Wednesday</u> @ 7pm in FHPC Calvin Center	<b>Self-study</b>	<u>Wednesday</u> @ 7pm in FHPC Calvin Center	<b>Self-study</b>	<u>Wednesday</u> @ 7pm in FHPC Calvin Center	<b>Self-study</b>	<u>Wednesday</u> @ 7pm in FHPC Calvin Center
	<u>Saturday</u> @3pm Starbuck's Fletcher Hills Town & Country Shopping Center		<u>Saturday</u> @3pm Starbuck's Fletcher Hills Town & Country Shopping Center		<u>Saturday</u> @3pm Starbuck's Fletcher Hills Town & Country Shopping Center		<u>Saturday</u> @3pm Starbuck's Fletcher Hills Town & Country Shopping Center

**NOTE:** Don't miss the discussion if you're out of town for your own group meeting. Feel free to drop into another group that meets on a different day and join the discussion. Every group is using the same study resources and question prompts!

\*Zoom link (no account needed, but use the password above if prompted):  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89467499089?pwd=T01tUjZlZmNpOGY1UjRmOGJHLOJ0Zz09>

## Topic #1: Midrash (a.k.a Turning the Gem) – Self-Study Resources - Week 1

Definition: Midrash is an interpretive act, seeking the answers to religious questions (both practical and theological) by plumbing the meaning of the words of the Torah. Midrash responds to contemporary problems and crafts new stories, making connections between new Jewish realities and the unchanging biblical text. Midrash falls into two categories. When the subject is law and religious practice, it is called *midrash halacha*. *Midrash aggadah*, on the other hand, interprets biblical narrative, exploring questions of ethics or theology, or creating homilies and parables based on the text. (Aggadah means "telling"; any midrash which is not halakhic falls into this category.)

**BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH YOUR SELF-STUDY**, please complete Row 1 of Question 1 on the Group Study questions (next page)

- Week 1 – self-study resources, choose from below; study as many as you like
  - Read 4 different sermons/reflections on Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup>'s text, observing the differences and similarities among the highlighted themes (Genesis 3: 8-15)
    - "The Saddest Moment in History" from Rev. Ken Sauer, Red Bank United Methodist Church in Tennessee <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/quot-the-saddest-moment-in-history-quot-kenneth-sauer-sermon-on-afraid-237338?page=1&wc=800>
    - Commentary on Genesis 3:8-15 <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-10-2/commentary-on-genesis-38-15>
    - "Who Told You?" from Concordia Lutheran Church in Cerritos, CA <https://asimplechristian.org/2018/06/10/who-told-you-a-sermon-on-genesis-38-15/>
    - "On the Fall of Man" Sermon 57 by John Wesley [https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN\\_John\\_Wesley\\_057\\_on\\_fall\\_of\\_man.htm](https://www.whdl.org/sites/default/files/publications/EN_John_Wesley_057_on_fall_of_man.htm)
  - Podcasts - <https://thebiblefornormalpeople.podbean.com/e/episode-46-wil-gafney-womanist-midrash/> (The Bible for Normal People podcast, *Episode # 46: Womanist Midrash*); <https://peteenns.com/episode-100-genesis-for-normal-people/> (The Bible for Normal People podcast, *Episode # 100: Genesis for Normal People*); <https://www.nomadpodcast.co.uk/danielle-shroyer-original-blessing-n170/> (Nomad podcast (N170), *Original Blessing* starting at about 11:00 minutes in)
  - Articles - Jewish midrash on 10 commandments from Exodus comparing them to those in Deuteronomy [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/4455092/jewish/Why-Two-Versions-of-the-Ten-Commandments.htm?gclid=CjwKCAjwu5CDBhB9EiwA0w6sLQRUps0G2E4B6G\\_GlfIWVRYoZl5-Tz40KjEdGwajsYWL-JotlwlgSBoCvecQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4455092/jewish/Why-Two-Versions-of-the-Ten-Commandments.htm?gclid=CjwKCAjwu5CDBhB9EiwA0w6sLQRUps0G2E4B6G_GlfIWVRYoZl5-Tz40KjEdGwajsYWL-JotlwlgSBoCvecQAvD_BwE); a long and deep examination of Eve <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eve-midrash-and-aggadah>; Midrashic monologues written by a male and female rabbi, covering well-known characters in the Old Testament <https://www.midrashicmonologues.com/>
  - A scholarly examination (yet very readable) of various interpretations of the story of the Fall (predominantly the first 14 pages of this chapter – Sections 2.1 through 2.2.3. Take some time to read the footnotes – they are very interesting as they refer to other interpretations – and read on if you like): [https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w76vnm.6?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae6f9e849a830b516142c5e5889302e6e&socuid=e788f0a9-b557-44b8-8c3a-27d9d1408328&socplat=email&seq=6#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w76vnm.6?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae6f9e849a830b516142c5e5889302e6e&socuid=e788f0a9-b557-44b8-8c3a-27d9d1408328&socplat=email&seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents)
  - Dig deeper books – *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* by Rev. Wil Gafney; *What Is the Bible?* by Rob Bell; *God Was In This Place and I, I Did Not Know* by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner (his exploration of Genesis 28:10-17)
- **PREPARING FOR WEEK 2's Group Discussion** – Please complete Row 2 of Question 1 on the next page and make any notes on the other questions that you would like

## Topic #1: Midrash (a.k.a Turning the Gem) - Group Discussion Questions – Week 2

1. Considering the definition of “midrash”, what pros and cons come to mind? Do this exercise THREE times.

	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
BEFORE self-study		
AFTER self-study		
AFTER group discussion		

2. Which of the resources did you choose to examine? Why did you choose those resources (over other options)? If you chose more than one resource, which one spoke most directly (or poignantly or emotionally...) to you and why?
3. What parallels do you see between the Jewish practice of midrash and the (possibly) more familiar practice of Biblical commentary by Christian writers? Where do you see these practices diverge?
4. Did you find something mind-blowing or perspective-altering or completely unbelievable in the resources you examined about the Genesis 3 scripture (that you’d like to share and/or discuss)?
5. When you consider your default approach to reading or studying a Biblical text, how might the resources you chose to engage or this discussion change or challenge your typical practice?
6. What might be the next step that could help you grow in loving God and loving neighbor, using this idea of midrash?

## Topic #2: Jesus Was a Refugee – Self-Study Resources - Week 3

- **BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR SELF-STUDY**, please complete Question 1.a of the Group Study questions on the next page.
- Week 1 – self-study resource, choose from below; study as many as you like
  - **Scripture** – Matthew 2:13-23 and an interesting narrative built from ancient writings and traditional stories chronicling the journey of the family in Egypt: <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/f/flight-into-egypt.php>
  - **Podcasts** - <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/877090415/resettled> (NPR *ReSettlement* podcast series – 6 topical segments plus a few extras as refugees speak for themselves about resettlement in America. Start with *Episode 6: Resettled* and work backwards through [other episodes](#) as you'd like a deeper dive on topics);  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/if-i-bend-that-far-ill-break/id1189833635?i=1000397648091> (Beginner Podcast, Season 1: *If I Bend That Far, I'll Break*);  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hyphenated-identity/id1440233951?i=1000506613239> (Immigrantly Podcast, Season 9: *Hyphenated Identity*)
  - **Articles** – Mission Crossroads PC(USA) publication *Migration: Faith, not fear* (<https://lsc-pagepro.mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?m=60707&i=618333&p=1> ); long read by Dina Nayeri from the Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/04/dina-nayeri-ungrateful-refugee>)
  - **Knowledge booster reports** – read up on current United States policy (which continues to evolve and change) <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/22/key-facts-about-u-s-immigration-policies-and-bidens-proposed-changes/> ; Take an international view with a report from the UN High Commission on Refugees - *Global Compact on Refugees* report [https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR\\_English.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf)
  - **Video series** - University of San Diego professors take on the subject of *Radical Hospitality* in this introductory session of a 6-part series on how radical hospitality relates in the context of homelessness, race and ethnicity, national origin, health and ability, and gender and sexuality. The reference point is the college campus, but the ideas apply to all cultural contexts  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTwR6NQO44U>
  - **Movie** – Genesis of Exodus <https://vimeo.com/222008830> (about Central American migration north by the PC(USA))
  - **Dig deeper books** – *After the Last Border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America* by Jessica Goudeau; *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* by Roger Daniels; *Sooley* by John Grisham (fiction)
- **PREPARING FOR WEEK 2's Group Discussion** – Please complete Question 1.b of the Group Study questions on the next page and make any notes on the other questions that you would like

## Topic #2: Jesus Was a Refugee - Group Discussion Questions – Week 4

1. List, in order of importance, the top 3 reasons you believe refugees leave their home country. Do this exercise THREE times.
  - a. BEFORE I studied: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. AFTER my self-study: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. AFTER our group discussion: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflect on the differences in these 3 lists (content and order).

2. Which of the resources did you choose to examine? Why did you choose those resources (over other options)? If you chose more than one resource, which would you recommend to others in your group? Why?
3. How has your definition of “refugee” changed as you studied the resources – or has it changed? Was there a particular resource that you found most impactful? Why?
4. Do you think refugees should be treated differently based on where they come from, the reasons they left, their skills, or any other criteria? What advantages (for the refugee) do you see in offering different treatment? What disadvantages might this approach have?
5. What does it mean to offer a Christian (or Christ-like) welcome to a refugee?
6. When you consider where you live, where you work, where you shop/socialize and the organizations you’re involved with, are there actions you could take that would give you an opportunity to build a relationship with a refugee or a displaced family? What are those actions (specifically)? Share your ideas with your group. Consider doing something together as a group.

## Topic #3: Doubt: An Essential Part of Faith? – Self-Study Resources – Week 5

- Week 1 – self-study resources, choose from below; study as many as you like
  - Scripture:
    - John 20:19-31
    - Exodus 4: 1-17
    - Psalm 4
    - Job (a long and illuminating read)
    - 1 Peter 3:13-17
  - Podcasts - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-eternal-current-podcast/id1476002283?i=1000504603829> (The Eternal Current Podcast, Season 1 *Faith After Doubt* with Brian McLaren);  
<https://cac.org/podcasts/6-seeing-doubt-action-and-contemplation/> (Center for Action and Contemplation's *Learning How to See* series, Episode 6: *Seeing, Doubt, Contemplation and Action*);  
<https://anchor.fm/lettherebelightpodcast/episodes/a-survivors-guide-to-deconstruction-erdtct> (Let There Be Light podcast, March 9, 2021, *A Survivors Guide to Deconstruction* hosted by 2 women, one a Millennial and the other Gen Z)
  - Articles - <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/opinion/julia-baird-doubt-as-a-sign-of-faith.html> (Opinion piece from NYT);  
collection of articles by Jeffery Curtis Poor (enter "doubt" in the search box)  
<https://www.rethinknow.org/>
  - TED talk videos – The Doubt Essential to Faith by Lesley Hazleton  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/lesley\\_hazleton\\_the\\_doubt\\_essential\\_to\\_faith](https://www.ted.com/talks/lesley_hazleton_the_doubt_essential_to_faith);  
Faith and Doubt by Greg Tonkinson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALafX-xH11c>;  
Strong Enough To Be Wrong by Joshua Harris <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2kV4ngi7J4>
  - Dig deeper books – *Faith After Doubt: Why Your Beliefs Stopped Working and What to Do About It* by Brian McLaren; *Faith in the Shadows: Finding Christ in the Midst of Doubt* by Austin Fischer
- **PREPARING FOR WEEK 2's Group Discussion** – Please review the Group Study questions and make notes as you like

## Topic #3: Doubt: An Essential Part of Faith? - Group Discussion Questions – Week 6

1. In what situations is doubt your first reflex (for example, information from certain people, news sources, subjects, etc.)? Be as specific as possible. What is it about these situations that make you reflexively doubt? Conversely, are there other situations where you inherently believe the accuracy of what you're being told? What is it about these situations that make them different and do not cause you to doubt?
2. How does your mind and your body react when you have doubts? For example, do you feel uncomfortable or afraid? Do you try to verify through research? Do you ponder? Do you pose questions to the source? Do you move on? Is your reaction different in different situations?
3. Does doubt stress you out in some situations but not in others? Why or why not?
4. Considering your beliefs about the Bible and Christianity – are there areas where you have struggled with what you have been taught or believed to be true, but now you have doubts? (Share some of these with your group if you are comfortable doing so.)
5. Have you ever had to de-construct or re-reconstruct some aspect of your faith? Was there an event or an experience that initiated that journey? Who shared that journey with you or did you go it alone? (Be as specific as possible and share as much as you feel comfortable sharing.)
6. What elements of your experience at FHPC have helped or hindered you when you have faced doubt?

## Topic #4: Social Witness – Self-Study Resources - Week 7

- **BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR SELF-STUDY**, please complete Question 1.a of the Group Study questions on the next page.
- Week 1 – self-study resources, choose from below; study as many as you like
  - Scripture:
    - Amos 5: 21-24
    - Romans 12
    - Psalm 146
    - Revelation 21:1-6
  - Podcasts - <https://www.markuswatson.com/2020/08/18/the-loss-of-evangelical-identity-with-michael-cooper-author-of-when-evangelicals-sneeze-079/> (Markus Watson’s conversation with Michael Cooper podcast #79);  
<https://www.markuswatson.com/2020/10/20/grace-filled-politics-with-aaron-schafer-author-of-the-politically-homeless-christian-084/> (Markus Watson’s conversation with Aaron Schafer podcast # 84)
  - Social Witness in the PC(USA) – Organized by topic, find overtures, objectives, and areas of involvement here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/acswp/topics/> , particularly notice the Social Creed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/1-connectingtothecreed-2008.pdf>
  - Bible study *The Church and Social Issues* by Jennifer R. Ayres (used in Winter FHPC small group session)
  - Articles – From a pastor of a Southern Baptist church in Alabama <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/4-ways-undermine-christian-witness-social-media/>; an interesting perspective from a worldwide group of evangelicals considering Christian witness in a multi-religious world [http://www.world-evangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World.pdf](http://www.world-evangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian%20Witness%20in%20a%20Multi-Religious%20World.pdf) ; from a debate held at Calvin Theological Seminary regarding Christians (individuals) and the Church (institutions) involvement in social issues <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcpi/fulltext/ctj/68491.pdf>
  - TED Talk – a thought-provoking message from a female rabbi calling us to a re-birthing of religious involvement in our society [https://www.ted.com/talks/sharon\\_brous\\_it\\_s\\_time\\_to\\_reclaim\\_religion?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/sharon_brous_it_s_time_to_reclaim_religion?language=en)
  - Dig deeper books – *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman; *Faith in Action: A Guide for Activists, Advocates and Allies* (from Fortress Press with 30+ quick dives into a wide range of justice issues from a dozen contributors who offer information, reflection questions and practical action); *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* by Tim Keller
- **PREPARING FOR WEEK 2’s Group Discussion** – Please answer Question 1.b and make notes on the other questions as you like



## Topic #4: Social Witness – Group Discussion Questions – Week 8

1. Define “social witness” in your own words
  - a. BEFORE my self-study
  - b. AFTER my self-study
2. Are Christians called to social witness? Why or why not?
3. Are there areas where we must witness? Are there areas (or practices) we should avoid?
4. Considering our cultural context (Americans, living in San Diego, in 2021...), what aspects of our cultural context make social witness easy? Hard?
5. What are the tools of social witness? Which ones have you used (or do you think would be most useful and in what circumstances)? If you have witnessed in a particular area, briefly explain why you engaged in that area and why you decided to engage in the way you did.
6. Do you view FHPC as a place that supports social witness? Should we – why or why not?