

***The Naked Anabaptist***  
**by Stuart Murray**

Bible study guide written and edited by Paul Lederach, originally for use at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church as part of a worship and sermon series.

**Theme Verse:** 1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.”

**Our upside down world: The end of Christendom**

**Chapter 2: pages 43-50; Chapter 4: pages 71-83**

**Core Conviction 3 (Page 72)**

*Western culture is slowly emerging from the Christendom era when church and state jointly presided over a society in which almost all were assumed to be Christian. Whatever its positive contributions on values and institutions, Christendom seriously distorted the gospel, marginalized Jesus, and has left churches ill equipped for mission in a post-Christendom culture. As we reflect on this, we are committed to learning from the experience and perspectives of movements such as Anabaptism that rejected standard Christendom assumptions and pursued alternative ways of thinking and behaving.*

**Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount

Jeremiah 29:1-9, Israel in captivity

Luke 10:1-12, Mission of 70

Luke 20:20-25, Taxes to the emperor?

Luke 22:24-27, Greatness in the kingdom

1. How much evidence can you find that your community is in post-Christendom?
2. Are Anabaptists too hung up on Christendom—unable to appreciate its huge benefits and locked into an unhelpful Christendom/post-Christendom framework?
3. What “alternative ways of thinking and behaving” does the Anabaptist tradition offer? How might you learn from these?
4. How might you access the insights of other marginalized movements and check out whether they share Anabaptist perspectives?
5. How helpful do you find the analogy of exile in describing the situation of the church in the West? Are there other helpful motifs we could use?

**Jesus is the center of our faith**

**Chapter 3: Pages 51-62**

**Core Conviction 1 (page 51)**

*Jesus is our example, teacher, friend, redeemer, and Lord. He is the source of our life, the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle, for our understanding of church and our engagement with society. We are committed to following Jesus as well as worshipping him.*

### **Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount  
Mark 8:34-9:1, Follow Me  
John 1:35-37, 8:12, Follow Me  
John 13:12-17, Lord, Teacher, Example  
John 15:12-17, Love, Friend, Bear fruit  
Romans 3:23-25  
1 Corinthians 12:3, Lord  
Ephesians 1:7; 2: 4-10, Worship and lifestyle  
Colossians 1:13- 14, Redeemer  
Hebrews 9:12, Redeemer

1. “Example, teacher, friend, redeemer, Lord”—with which of these designations of Jesus do you *least* identify? How might you explore this further?
2. What examples can you give of Jesus being “the central reference point” for your life or your church? What examples can you give of him *not* being this?
3. Do you agree that in many places Jesus is worshipped but not followed? What are the implications of this?
4. Hans Denck wrote, “No one can know Christ unless he follows after him in life.” Do you agree? Or is this a return to “salvation by works”?
5. How do you respond to the proposal that we should drop the term *Christians* and call ourselves “followers of Jesus”?

### **We understand the Bible through Jesus**

#### **Chapter 3: pages 62-70**

#### **Core Conviction 2 (Page 62)**

*Jesus is the focal point of God’s revelation. We are committed to a Jesus-centered approach to the Bible and to the community of faith as the primary context in which we read the Bible and discern and apply its implications for discipleship.*

### **Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount  
John 5:39, Focal point  
Ephesians 1:17-22, Head over all things for the church  
Colossians 1:15-23  
Hebrews 1:1-4, Spoken to us by a Son . . .

1. Does a “Jesus-centered approach to the Bible” inevitably mean that parts of Scripture are downgraded?
2. Think about Bible studies in which you have participated. Have these avoided “the pooling of ignorance”? How can Christians be resourced to discern and apply the implications of the Bible?
3. How can churches resist the default dominance of monologue sermons? Or should they even try?
4. What practical strategies can you suggest to ensure that biblical interpretation does not get stuck but leads on to application and discipleship?

5. Try out the practice of “dwelling in the Word.” Choose a biblical passage and give each person a copy of it. Read the passage aloud, and then allow a period of quiet reflection. Share with another person what struck you, and listen to that person’s reflection. Then tell the rest of the group what your reflection partner noticed (not what you noticed).

### **Jesus’ good news is for all**

#### **Chapter 4: pages 83-92**

##### **Core Conviction 4 (Page 83-84)**

*The frequent association of the church with status, wealth, and force is inappropriate for followers of Jesus and damages our witness. We are committed to vulnerability and to exploring ways of being good news to the poor, powerless, and persecuted, aware that such discipleship may attract opposition, resulting in suffering and sometimes ultimately martyrdom.*

##### **Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 12:48, Much has been given

Matthew 25:31-46, Hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked

Luke 4:16-30, Jesus at Nazareth

Luke 12:13-21, Rich fool

Luke 16:14-18, 19:31, Lovers of money, rich, Lazarus

John 15:18-21, Persecution

John 16:7-15, Work of Holy Spirit

1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19, Love of money

2 Timothy 3:12

James 5:1-6

1 John 3:17; 5: 8

1. How can Christians avoid becoming associated with status and wealth if the gospel is effective in a society and wins many adherents? Should they try to avoid this?
2. In what ways does “association with status, wealth, and force” damage the witness of followers of Jesus?
3. What examples can you give of ways in which you or others have been “good news to the poor”?
4. What opportunities are available to a church on the margins that were not possible for a dominant church?
5. How do western Christians engage with 2 Timothy 3:12?

### **The church: a life-giving community of discipleship and mission**

#### **Chapter 5: pages 93-115**

##### **Core Conviction 5 (Page 93)**

*Churches are called to be committed communities of discipleship and mission, places of friendship, mutual accountability, and multivoiced worship. As we eat together, sharing bread and wine, we sustain hope as we seek God’s kingdom together. We are committed to nurturing and developing such churches, in which young and old are valued,*

*leadership is consultative, roles are related to gifts rather than gender, and baptism is for believers.*

### **Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 18:15-18, Binding and loosing

Matthew 28:18-20, All authority

Luke 19:1-10, Zaccheus

2 Corinthians 4:7-10, Life of Jesus made visible

2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Ambassadors for Christ

Galatians 3:26-29, All one in Christ

Philippians 2:5, 12-15, Mind of Christ

Colossians 3:12-17, Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiving, love

1. Is it realistic in contemporary culture to practice mutual admonition? How would a church go about introducing this practice?
2. What role do eating and hospitality play in your Christian experience? How might you explore these practices in new ways?
3. How can your community find a healthy balance between consultation and leadership?
4. In your experience, what kinds of people are in the greatest danger of being excluded? How can their voices be heard?
5. What difference would it make to your church if Hubmaier's "pledge of love" was used regularly and thoughtfully when you share bread and wine?

### **Trusting God to live simply**

#### **Chapter 6: pages 117-124**

#### **Core Conviction 6 (Page 118)**

*Spirituality and economics are interconnected. In an individualist and consumerist culture and in a world where economic injustice is rife, we are committed to finding ways of living simply, sharing generously, caring for creation, and working for justice.*

### **Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount

Luke 16:10-13, Serve God and wealth

Luke 18:18-30, Rich ruler

Acts 11:26

2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Giving

1. What difference does it make whether we are motivated by charity or justice in our use of our resources?
2. Read Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37. Were those Anabaptists right who found here a biblical mandate for common-purse community?
3. How in practice do spirituality and economics interconnect? Which has the greater influence on the other?

4. What might you do to resist the influence of individualism and consumerism on your own life?
5. What are the problems with the contemporary practice of tithing in many churches?

### **This Ministry of Reconciliation**

#### **Chapter 6: pages 124-134**

#### **Core Conviction 7 (Page 124)**

*Peace is at the heart of the gospel. As followers of Jesus in a divided and violent world, we are committed to finding nonviolent alternatives and to learning how to make peace between individuals, within and among churches, in society, and between nations.*

#### **Biblical Background**

The Sermon on the Mount

Isaiah 1:11-17; 58:1-14, Old Testament visions

Isaiah 2:2-4, Old Testament visions

Micah 4:4-6, Old Testament visions

Matthew 26:51-56

Luke 17:1-4

John 14:27; 18:36, 37

Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

1. Do you agree that “peace is at the heart of the gospel”? If not, how important is peace in relation to the gospel?
2. Is the “just war” approach still applicable in the context of modern warfare? If it were applied, what difference would it make?
3. Is it important that advocates of nonviolence should be able to demonstrate that this approach is effective?
4. What peace initiatives are you involved in, or might you get involved in?
5. “Let the Christians of the world agree that they will not kill each other.” How do you respond to this “modest proposal for peace”?

And finally . . .

1. What aspects of the Anabaptist tradition do you find inspirational or challenging?
2. How might you respond to these?
3. What aspects of the Anabaptist tradition do you find least attractive? Why?
4. What topics in *The Naked Anabaptist* do you want to explore further? How will you do this?