

Finding Jesus, Discovering Self
Chapter 2, p. 8, “Beginning the Journey”

Shared by Dean Olson,
Grass Valley MM, Nevada CA

Mark 1:9-11

**In those days Jesus came from
Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized
by John in the Jordan. 9**

**And when he came up out of the water, 10
immediately he saw the heavens opened
and the Spirit descending upon him
like a dove; and a voice came down
from heaven, 11**

**“Thou art my beloved son; with
thee I am well pleased.”**

RSV translation

**During the same period Jesus came 9
from Nazareth, Galilee, and was
baptized in the Jordan by John.
And just as he got up out of the water, 10
he saw the skies torn open and the spirit
coming down toward him like a dove,
There was also a voice from the skies, 11**

**“You are my favored son son –
I fully approve of you.”**

Annotated Scholars Version

Entering the Story Through Questions:

He came from Nazareth to the Jordan River, was baptized by John, and came up out of the water and had an experience. (Bold print is what participants got a week ahead of time for preparing. This normal print, that I have now added, are additional questions I might use as we get into the study. Some questions are saying the same thing in a different way. The intent is not to get into a group discussion, but to totally be focused on the actual text. With no cross talk, energy is allowed to build on what is going on in the story. The intent is for the story to “come alive” (participants really feel inside of it), then to become aware of what this connection is triggering within them, second phase of questions below. Then third phase is very personal and moves into the activities suggested. These questions are tied with chapters in book, Finding Jesus, Discovering Self. The book is geared for individual work, so I beef up each chapter as we also use it for our weekly group study. Any questions you have with this process or material, please email me, deanolson44@gmail.com).

What brought these people to John, including Jesus? What did they seek?

Describe what took place, where it happened, who was involved. What do you see and hear going on? Whose involved?

When he came up out of the water, he saw and heard what? What might have been his experience? Besides Jesus, what else was happening (who else is having an experience)? What might have been happening to “heaven”?

Was there a distinction between these two experiences? Outer and inner?

Of what has Jesus become aware? How is he to make sense of such an experience?

What might the significance of this experience be for Jesus?

One translation says, “the heavens opened”, the other says they were “torn open.” What is either translation conveying to us? Do they convey different images or sense of what is happening?

What has changed within him? What has this changed outside for him?

What aspect of the story do you connect with, that speaks to you, touches you? (Or maybe you reacted or resisted something within the story? What?)

Exploring What This Story Reminds US of:

Has his experience triggered any awareness of something within your life or the world? What did you connect with in the story that brought up this experience? What triggered it?

Were there things you reacted to or resisted? Where does that come from?

Our Personal Experiences With This Story:

What has this touched within you?

Did you experience any emotion, sense something charged, feel an attraction or repulsion (resistance, reaction)?

Why has it come up and what it has to share with you? How do you feel about it coming into the light?

Are you aware of what within the story triggered this? Do you sense why it triggered this within you? What's the connection?

Activity – Finding Ways to Work and Relate With What Has Come Up:

How can you safely honor this and give it your time and attention? Do any of the activities in the activity section speak to this, or does something else?

Don't wait for class if this has come up during the week. Find a way to work on it. It's a window of opportunity right now, if you need help becoming aware of an acceptable way to work with it for you, call one of us.

Anything in the readings included in the chapter speak to you, touch you?

(Either at the beginning or here at the end, I will ask participants to choose pastel chalk, or crayons, or dry markers from the activities box and on a piece of paper to DRAW THE BAPTISM.)

The current place that produces weekly study, based on the liturgical year calendar, is The Education Center, www.educationcenter.org

It produces a study per week based on one of the three texts used for that liturgical Sunday. I know that does not fit within our experience of Meeting for Worship, but I recommend it as in addition to the questions for the specific text, it has a whole host of other resource material to help one interact with the text. You can go on line and download sample copies. They also provide for free on line a download for "Reading Between the Lines" Leader Guide, which explains more thoroughly the process. I highly recommend it as one of the significant keys in this process are the questions asked related to the text being engaged. How a question is asked affects how the participant is being asked to focus their attention on the text. Their experienced staff produce this resource. We are adapting it to our needs and style of weekly bible study.

This process, way of working with the biblical text, has a strong tradition. A Pendle Hill publication, Approaching the Gospels Together, 1986 by Mary Morrison, shares the material and questions she used at Pendle Hill. She experienced this process with many others who participated in H.B. Sharman's Records Seminars (in the early 1900s), which lasted for six weeks up at a retreat center in Canada.

Another use of this method was developed by others who also went as participants to Sharman's seminars. Three of them, including Elizabeth Boyden-Howes, started Four Springs in Northern California (outside of the Bay Area). Their in-depth development of this approach, which regularly went on for over 50 summers, is the tradition out of which the Educational Center material comes.

I experienced three of their retreats in the 1980s, as Walter Wink would say "if you want to go deeper in this process, go to Four Springs." (He did almost every summer.) Since the death of the three founders, Four Springs continues as a retreat center but no longer offers the sixteen-day Records Seminars. But their tradition continues in the material that the Education Center develops and makes available. "Awakening the fire within" continues on in this new form.