

Bible Study Sampler

By The Rev Gail Rodger



The attached is a sampling of what to expect in the St Peter and St Paul Bible Study. The Bible Study is a discussion-based group (rather than a biblical teaching based group) based on commonly read essays produced by Comment magazine. The first page of the sampler provides principles in brief of Comment magazine and you are encouraged to go to their webpage if you would like to know more. Each month a different topic is explored through a variety of opinions and viewpoints.

In addition to the principles, the sampler contains the summary page providing an overview of the dates, September essay sampler, and scripture readings for the study. The first page of each essay is provided to offer an idea of what to expect. The essays may be from 4-10 pages long. I have chosen three essays on each topic. The magazine has about 10 – 14 essays in each edition.

Once you sign up you will receive a package that contains the completed summary content page, a copy of the complete essays we will be discussing, and the discussion questions. The discussion will be facilitated by me.

For the first month we will meet on Tuesday Evenings at 7 pm at the Tim Hortons at 880 Esquimalt Road. Please support the business with a small purchase.

The cost of the program is \$35 which covers supplies and copyright. You will receive an annual subscription to Comments magazine for one year. (I sign you up). The magazine is produced quarterly so you will receive four magazines. I have no idea what the future topics will be.

If you are interested in joining, please cut the bottom and complete the information below. Give the form along with the fee to myself or call me at 250-507-9941 to make other arrangements.



Name
Mailing Address
Email Address
Telephone Number

COMMENT is published by Cardus, a North American public policy think tank equipping change agents with strategic public theology. Cardus's thought, research, and policy weave through the integrity of the biblical story. This story is not a private story reserved for the private delights of Sunday worshippers—it is a public story that touches the whole world. It is public truth—and it changes everything it touches. These six principles, from our manifesto, flow from this story and guide our work:

1. **WE ARE CHRISTIAN HUMANISTS**, those who believe that Jesus Christ—God become man—is the ultimate measure of what it means to be human.

2. **WE BELIEVE IT'S A TIME TO BUILD**, that the creative imagination and the Christian imagination are mysteriously linked.

3. **WE BELIEVE IN INSTITUTIONS**: government, guilds, families, schools, universities, the church.

4. **WE BELIEVE IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ENCOUNTER**—encountering reality, encountering those unlike us.

5. **WE BELIEVE CHRISTIANITY IS PERPETUALLY ON THE MOVE**. There is no sacred capital; Christianity is an intercultural, polyglot religion.

6. **WE BELIEVE THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING**, and that there is a need for those who inhabit these myriad ways to share space and learn how to pursue understanding—perhaps even revelation—together.

WELCOME TO COMMENT.

To read these six principles in full, visit COMMENT.ORG/MANIFESTO.



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Bible Study

Comments over Drinks

Summary Content

Please read the scripture and the essay listed each week prior to the meeting and come with ideas, comments, and questions.

September

Topic: Privacy

Meeting at Tim Hortons 880 Esquimalt Road Tuesdays 7:00 – 8:30

Scripture for the month; Matthew 5:14-16 and 6:1-6

September 9 *Keep it Private* by Anton Barba-Kay

September 16 *Rethinking the Public-Private Divide* by Michael Wear

September 23 – WEEK OFF NO MEETING

September 30 *Can We Go to the Neighbourhood?* By Amber Lapp

Comment discussion Questions

October

Topic: Discernment

Meeting Place: Determined by the Group 7:00 – 8:30

Scripture for the month

October 7

October 14

October 21 – WEEK OFF NO MEETING

October 28

November and December

Topic: To be Determined by Rev Gail (new magazine expected in Sept)

Meeting Place: Determined by the Group 7:00 – 8:30

Scripture for the Month

November 4

November 11

November 18 WEEK OFF NO MEETING

November 25 WEEK OFF NO MEETING

December 2

Resumes after Christmas

September Scripture

Mathew 5:14-16 and 6:1-6

NRSV Version

Chapter 5:14-16

‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Chapter 6:1-6

Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

‘So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The Message Version

Chapter 5:14-16

“Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

Chapter 6:1-6

Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding.

²⁻⁴“When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure—‘playactors’ I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

New International Version

Chapter 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Chapter 6:1-6

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Keep It Private

THE SECRET OF OUR CELLS

BY ANTÓN BARBA-KAY

PART 1: A POCKET HISTORY OF PRIVACY

Abbott Anthony said: just as the fish should go back to the sea, so we must return to our cells, lest remaining outside we forget to watch over ourselves interiorly.

—Thomas Merton,
Wisdom of the Desert

And then wasn't an immediate exposure of everything just what the public wanted?

—Henry James,
The Death of the Lion

As I try to put my finger on privacy in its purest form, I'm transported to a moment several months ago, when—away from my family and after hours of academic gab—I said goodnight to my hosts, went to my hotel room, and locked the door behind me. In total silence, solitude, security, and ease—unencumbered and uncompromised—I yielded to the underlying “Yes, *still I am*.” Here I found myself alone. There was something choice and

wanton in the pleasure of it, like that of a miser clinking his gold coins for sheer pleasure: the treasure of my life in secret.

The monastic cloister, the privy, the opera box, the train car, the automobile, the voting booth, the bedroom, the study of one's own—at the root of all privacies, there is a cell.

This cell is at once completely material and figurative (as when we ask someone to “give me some space” or criticize someone for being “too distant”). The cell is the infrastructure of the private self's metaphors. We tend to think of privacy in negative terms, as an absence. Yet it is an inner space that is at once sustained and accomplished by external architecture.

The inner space self-enclosed is what is individual. Privacy is the point of coincidence between our sense of self and our form of ownership. Our form of privacy is our form of self-possession.

Privacy is, therefore, also the way we possess ourselves in body and carry ourselves in person. If one travels abroad,



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Rethinking the Public-Private Divide

BECAUSE OUR HEARTS ARE SHAPED BY
—AND ARE SHAPING—BOTH.

BY MICHAEL WEAR

There is much effort to distinguish between the private and public aspects of human life. Which is trustworthy? Which is meaningful? Which is suspect?

While nuanced accounts exist, notice how often the public and the private are pitted against each other:

What is public is performative; what is private is earnest.

What is public is truly meaningful; what is private is mere sentiment.

What is public is compromised; what is private is pure.

These judgments become especially pronounced in the realm of religion. What is the fashion company that puts a Bible verse on its product *doing*? What about the politician who divulges that they prayed prior to announcing their run for elected office? What authority does the person referencing his faith believe it gives him? What

does his God think about me and people like me?

These are rational questions. Religion's misuses often play out publicly—as a shield to avoid accountability, as a tool for exclusion, as a cover to impose one's own will. While the US Constitution doesn't ensure “freedom *from* religion,” calls for such a freedom reflect an understanding of religion that modern liberalism at least gestures toward: that some things, especially public things, can be (or should be made to appear to be) free from religious influence.

Yet private faith generates its own discomfort. Consider the revelation that a close colleague practices their faith devoutly. “Did I ever really know that person at all?” If religion is to speak to what is real and vital (and if it is to be taken seriously, it must), how could it be confined to the private alone?



MICHAEL WEAR is the president and CEO of the Center for Christianity and Public Life and the author of *The Spirit of Our Politics: Spiritual Formation and the Renovation of Public Life* (Zondervan, 2024).

Can We Go to the Neighbourhood?

A CHILD'S VISION OF PLACE AND PRIVACY

BY AMBER LAPP

It is morning and I am sitting in frigid air with quickly cooling coffee on the front steps of our house on East McKinley Street, a one-way that runs parallel to the river and the old railroad track turned bike path in our small town in southwestern Ohio. "It's like Mayberry," people remark when first visiting from the newer suburban subdivisions built just minutes away.

The houses that line our streets are relics of bygone eras, some built two centuries ago by settlers who came westward after the Revolution, others developed in the middle of the last century by Appalachian migrants in search of factory jobs.

This place feels familiar and comforting. But I can remember when it felt foreign, even though I grew up just fifteen minutes from here. In middle school, the stigma of this neighbourhood was

gossiped about in whispers. We didn't use the word "working-class" then, but we did use the word "grits," and the grits lived here.

How I ended up in this town is a story for another day. But since 2010, when my husband David and I moved to South Lebanon from New York City, we have lived in three homes on East McKinley Street. Our children know this place as their neighbourhood.

It has been fascinating to watch them find their place here, especially Elizabeth, who is the most social of the bunch, our fifth-born of six and our only daughter. When she was two years old, just learning to talk, she started to ask, "Mommy, can we go to the neighbourhood?" Her frequent request charmed me. She had no self-consciousness about knocking on a door. Her phrase "go to the neighbourhood," as opposed to naming



AMBER LAPP is a research fellow at the Institute for Family Studies, an adviser at American Compass, and co-investigator of the Love and Marriage in Middle America Project. She and her husband David live in southwestern Ohio with their six children, where she volunteers as a catechist at their parish and at Lydia's House, a Catholic Worker house of hospitality for women and children. She is also a member of Braver Angels. Her writing has appeared in *National Review*, *First Things*, *USA Today*, *The Federalist*, *The American Conservative*, and *The Atlantic*.

Comment Questions for Discussion on Privacy

1. Are private acts more genuine and authentic than public acts? Why or why not?
2. What elements of privacy do you take for granted in your daily life that might need to be questioned or rethought in order for you to know your neighbours better?
3. What items that are your own “private property” could, if you didn’t own them, free you up to live a better life?
4. What leads many people today to assume biotechnology issues like health care, MAID, or gene editing are inherently private issues?

NOTES

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.