

Resource materials for the keynote paper

I was a
stranger

and you
welcomed me

A journey of discovery through the Bible

The Bible: from start to finish a book full of migration experiences

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The issue and why it is worth exploring

According to the keynote paper, the Bible is, from start to finish, a book full of migration experiences. That is a pretty provocative proposition!

Is it easy or difficult to put on our 'migration spectacles' and read the Bible from the angle of migration and its protagonists? That is related to how positive or negative our own experiences of migration are – and to the biblical stories of migration.

We encounter the issue of migration from Adam and Eve to Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Esther and Ruth, from Israel's exodus from Egypt to the Babylonian captivity, from Jesus to the journeys of Paul.

Talking about it together enables a deeper awareness of the way we perceive life stories, personal faith and sociopolitical attitudes.

And if our own experience touches on that of the biblical story, then reading the Bible becomes really exciting!

Propositions and text modules from the keynote paper

- "In the stranger, Christ as Lord of the church gives himself to the church as a gift. This slight presentiment, this strong provocation, this profound promise has also been understood in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia" (Foreword).
- In the "Bible as a witness to migration and wandering" lies the question of the situation "in our well established and deeply rooted mainline churches" with respect to movement and change (1.1).
- In the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) Israel tells its own story as a story of migration. "The heart of biblical ethics regarding strangers therefore beats the rhythm of memory" (1.2).
- "The gospels describe the earthly Jesus as a person who is normally moving around" and with Lydia "the dawn of Christian Europe was marked by the hospitality of a migrant". The New Testament letters stress that being a stranger, or even having no home, "is part of the life of faith" (1.3).
- "The church, and faith, look with the eyes of spiritual migrants ... as in a mirror that reflects their true identity before God. The question to us is: where we are still strangers and where have we long become sedentary? In what direction to we want to set out and what do we want to look out for?" (1.3, last para).

Questions for group discussion

- How do I react to hearing the Bible called migration literature? Ulrich Müller thinks: "This whole migration and refugee issue is glorified if it is directly linked with the time of Jesus" (a quotation from the Introduction). What do I think about that?
- Has my faith "become sedentary" or is it still "moving"? What life events have changed my faith? With what changes does it become important to me?
- What does my faith mean to me if I travel to a foreign country to settle down there?
- Faith and the Bible have migrated to many countries and cultures through mission. Today Christians are migrating from these countries and cultures to Germany. They worship in congregations with different languages and cultures. Are we sisters and brothers in faith? Why are we then not in one church, like the first Christian congregations?
- Judaism has to this day told its story as one of migration. Why have we in the church stopped doing that?
- Is it true, according to your own faith experience, that Christians are 'spiritual migrants'? What exactly does that mean for you? What would it mean for our church as an institution?

Materials and media

- Dr. Jan-Dirk Döhling "Menschen und Texte in Bewegung. Die Bibel als Migrationsliteratur" (People and texts in motion. The Bible as migration literature) (1.1, article saved under "Buch der Wanderschaft")
- Advent meditation "The people that walked in darkness" on the picture by Francesco Piobbichi (1.3)
- Picture "Emmaus" (website, 1.3, picture saved under „Wegbilder und Wegwirklichkeiten“)
- What does the Bible say about migration? Explained by Prof. Dr. Christoph Marksches in two minutes, youtu.be/FKUjtVIFUoU
- Film on "Pastoral care for Persian-speaking Christians", kircheundmigration.ekvw.de
- "Will leben – Willkommen" (Want to live – welcome), an interactive exhibition with learning stopovers (from age 14) by Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), available from MÖWe; a companion booklet can be downloaded from the Bread for the World website.

- Lecture "Flucht und Migration in der Bibel" (Fleeing and migrating in the Bible) by Prof. Dr. em. Jürgen Ebach, jugend.ekir.de/Bilderintern/20160310_Flucht_VortragEbach.pdf
- Visual materials from rpi-virtuell, material.rpi-virtuell.de/themenseite/fluechtlinge
- Article on migration by Prof. Dr. em. Hans Günther Heimbrock at www.bibelwissenschaften.de

Practical ideas

- Produce role cards with biblical migrants who read and tell their stories.
- Use maps to retrace migration stories in the Bible.
- Bring together an intergenerational group from the congregation to talk about experiences of migration, e.g. let them draw the routes taken by their own families on a map of the world and tell their stories.
- Contribute stories of migration to: #Meinwanderungsland
- Prepare and hold an evening on biblical migration stories with refugees and volunteers who support them.

Contacts

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