



STUDY GUIDE 3

Module 3 **In the Name of Christ**

To accompany film from 14:28 – 20:21

Opening prayer or song

Key Terms: Genocide, Exodus/conquest narrative, Manifest Destiny

Activity: The Cross of Conquest

Materials: Paper, whiteboard/ chalkboard, image of Columbus landing (example provided), writing utensils

The early explorers and conquistadors planted crosses in “discovered” lands to claim Indigenous territories for European powers. See HANDOUT 5 for an example image of Columbus landing in the “New World.” These cross plantings were only the beginning of the ways Indigenous peoples would be subjected to the crosses of conquest, through genocide, forced removals, forced conversions to Christianity and other forms of violence. Under the Doctrine of Discovery, the cross of the non-violent Christ we proclaim as Anabaptists was severely distorted by the cross of conquest.

For this activity, draw a large outline of a cross on a big piece of paper or on the whiteboard/ chalkboard. Write “the Doctrine of Discovery” at the base of the cross. Ask participants to write words or phrases within the cross outline, representing the impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery on Indigenous peoples. You may choose to use the Oppression Tree (see HANDOUT 6) for ideas. This image was created by Indigenous activists in Canada to show the roots of ongoing suffering and oppression in First Nations communities. Note that we do not have the Indian Act in the U.S., but a series of acts. Leave time at the end for people to share what emotions or thoughts arise through this exercise.

Note: Save this cross drawing — we will be returning to it during the activity in Module 4.

Discussion Questions:

1. Talk about the ways in which the Bible and Christianity have been misused and distorted under the Doctrine of Discovery. How do these distortions continue in the name of Christ?
2. How have the distortions of the cross impacted you and your faith?
3. In the film, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary Bible Professor Safwat Marzouk talks about the problem of those who are powerful abusing the texts of the powerless. Under the Doctrine of Discovery, powerful European Christian rulers justified their claim to Indigenous lands using Biblical narratives like the conquest of Canaan, stories written by a relatively powerless people in Babylonian exile. How have U.S. citizens benefited from the abuse of the texts of the powerless? Reflect on why it

is important to recognize the historical context of texts like the conquest of the Promised Land, and the power differences then and now when we read these texts in our own contexts today.

4. Wes Howard-Brook, Seattle University Instructor, articulates the differences between what he calls the Religion of Empire and the Religion of Creation. What are some ways we might disentangle our faith from the Religion of Empire in order to follow Jesus under the Religion of Creation, in which people experience God in connection with the earth and not Empire?

Suggested Bible Reflections:

“Trail of Death, Trail of Life” Katerina Friesen

“Ancestral Narratives: An Alternative to Conquest,” Safwat Marzouk

Resources:

- Dube, Musa W. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2000.
- Howard-Brook, Wes. “Come Out, My People!”: *God’s Call Out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010.
- Newcomb, Steven T. *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Christian Doctrine of Discovery*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2008.
- Warrior, Robert. “A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians,” from *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Sugirtharajah, ed. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006.

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS:

- Show image of Columbus landing (HANDOUT 5): The Disembarkation of Christopher Columbus on the Island of Guanahani in 1492 by Jose Garnelo y Alda, 1890. Source: AFP/Getty Images
- Pass out [Oppression Tree](#) (HANDOUT 6), used with permission from Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement Ottawa (<https://ipsmo.wordpress.com/>).



Photo credit: MCC/Silas Crews

Acts of Contrition and Reparative Justice Case Study: *Triking for Dakota Land Return*

Just 12 years after the U.S.-Dakota war of 1862, John Stoesz's great-grandfather, a Mennonite immigrant farmer from the Ukraine, received land through the railroad like many other immigrants at that time. Stoesz's grandfather later owned 320 acres, also former Dakota land, near his father.

In 2012, John Stoesz's family decided to sell their grandfather's farm, forcing him to decide what to do with profit of land taken from the Dakota. Stoesz, former MCC Central States Executive Director, knew about the injustices through his work with MCC Central States' Indigenous Vision Center, which aims to address systemic injustices by building relationships between Indigenous people and others, and among Indigenous people.

As Stoesz considered what to do with his inheritance, he was drawn to the Biblical example of Zacchaeus, who gave half his money to the poor. "I think Zacchaeus recognized that he benefitted from an oppressive system, the tax collection system. He realized that to join the Jesus movement and to become part of the community modeling the kingdom of God, he needed to make a change," Stoesz said.

Through the counsel of the Indigenous Vision Center, Stoesz connected with Oyate Nipi Kte (The People Shall Live), a Minnesota-based organization focusing its work on the recovery of Dakota traditional knowledge and culture. Stoesz decided to give half of his profit for Indigenous land justice, including a contribution toward the purchase of land for Oyate Nipi Kte. Oyate Nipi Kte founder Waziyatawin said, "It has been extraordinarily important for me to see a beneficiary of Dakota land loss take this step because it helps restore my sense of hope in the possibility of justice for our people. He has modeled a way to help make amends because he has focused on the issue of land recovery. We hope that others will be inspired to contribute to reparative justice projects."

In 2013, Stoesz embarked on a 2,000 mile bicycle tour on his recumbent trike through former Dakota land. His tour called attention to the injustices perpetrated on the Dakota people and the subsequent advantages to white settlers and their descendants. Stoesz talked with newspapers and citizens of 40 counties along the way, calling others to reparative justice. He continues to do speaking and education for churches on the topic.

—Adapted from MCC article at <http://mcc.org/stories/triking-dakota-land-justice>, by Tina Schrag and Linda Espenshade