

Imaginative Biblical Interpretation

The following approach is outlined in Thomas Hoyt, Jr.'s article in *Stony the Road We Trod, African American Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Cain Hope Felder. It was first recorded by Joseph Johnson, Jr., a biblical scholar and bishop in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, who received it from his father. Hoyt points out that in black congregations the Scriptures “come to life through images used by the preacher.” This approach to the Scriptures easily can be adapted for use in small group Bible study.

- Step 1. Prepare yourself with devotion and prayer prior to your encounter with the Scriptures.
- Step 2. Read the entire chapter in which the text is located.
- Step 3. Become acquainted with all of the stories which lead up to the text and those that follow.
- Step 4. What were the problems, the situation, of the participants in the story?
- Step 5. Read the biblical passages aloud so as to hear the Scriptures and permit them to speak to you.
- Step 6. Discover the human element and the divine element in the situation.
- Step 7. See what the writer saw, feel what the participants in the story felt, and hear what they heard.
- Step 8. Use your imagination and put yourself in the place of the writer and participants of the story.
- Step 9. Assume the different roles of the principal characters in the story and act as if you were present when the story was first told.
- Step 10. Ask yourself this question: “What special message does this passage of Scripture bring to your people for their healing and renewal?”
- Step 11. Then wait for God to speak.

*One of the Bible or lectionary study guides contributed by the members
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