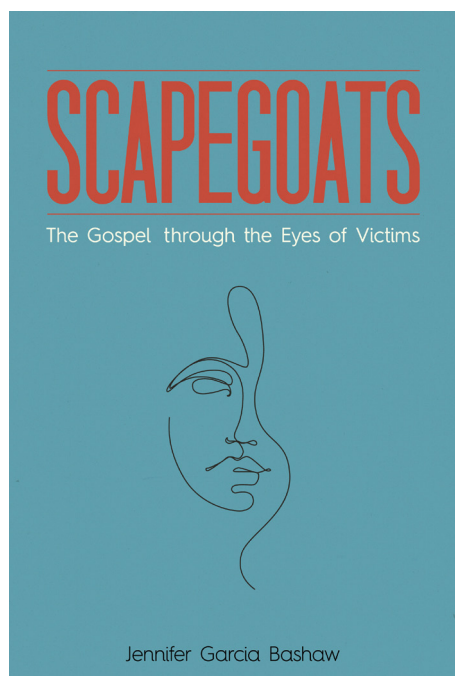


Small Group Study Guide



Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims

by Jennifer Garcia Bashaw



Buy *Scapegoats*

How to Use This Discussion Guide

Every group setting is different, so this discussion guide serves as a jumping-off point for conversations after reading *Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims* by Jennifer Garcia Bashaw.

This was developed for a six-week schedule, but if you are discussing the book over a shorter period – in one night, for example – then you might choose instead to pick a handful of questions from this guide instead of trying to go through the entire selection. The questions are divided by chapter to help you organize how you will discuss the book as a group.

Reading schedule:

- Week 1 – Read the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2
- Week 2 – Read Chapters 3 and 4
- Week 3 – Read Chapters 5 and 6
- Week 4 – Read Chapters 7, 8, and 9
- Week 5 – Read Chapters 10, 11, and 12
- Week 6 – Read Chapter 13 and the Conclusion

Introduction:

1) How would you describe yourself as a biblical interpreter? What parts of your background, biases, and experiences shape the way you read Scripture?

2) The author describes the book as a series of three unveilings: a) revealing the victims' stories at the heart of the gospel so that victors might read the Bible from a different perspective; b) exposing the scapegoating that has happened in Church history; and c) uncovering who we scapegoat today (and how) so that we might end scapegoating. Which of these three are you most interested in learning more about and why?

Chapter 2: Women in the Christian Past

- 1) What examples of the scapegoating of women in the past were most surprising to you and why?

- 2) What do you think has been the long-term effect of the scapegoating of women in history?

Chapter 3: Mary the Mother, Mary the Prophet

- 1) What struck you most when we looked through Mary's eyes at her pregnancy and birth?

- 2) How might we emphasize her importance in the salvation story more?

Chapter 5: The Woman Saved from Stoning

- 1) How have you heard the story of the woman saved from stoning preached or taught?
- 2) How does seeing the episode as a scapegoat story change the way we read it?
- 3) What would you name the story (instead of “The woman caught in adultery”) and why?

Chapter 6: Women in the Christian Present

1) How have you seen or experienced the kinds of scapegoating described in the chapter (the social, economic, and sexual scapegoating of women)?

2) Do you agree with the assessment that the complementarian movement in American Christianity has caused harm to women and put undue burden and blame on them? Why or why not?

3) What might we change in our churches today to empower women and move them out of positions of vulnerability in society?

Chapter 7: The Poor and Infirm in the Christian Past

1) What examples stood out to you from the Church's historical treatment of those with illness and disability?

2) What is your assessment of the history of Christianity's scapegoating of the poor? How do you see these teachings from the past affecting current teachings or attitudes about the poor in churches?

3) How have you seen or experienced the prosperity gospel (health and wealth gospel) in American Christianity? How might we counter such a distorted gospel?

Chapter 8: Jesus, Illness, and Disability

1) What have you been taught about Jesus's healing ministry and how does this compare to the explanation of Mark's Gospel in the chapter?

2) How might Mark's portrayal of Jesus's ministry (and the aims of disability studies) change the way we see people with illness and disability?

3) What can Jesus-followers do to counter the abuse and marginalization of people with illness and disability today, both in our churches and our lives?

Chapter 10: Outsiders in the Christian Past

1) How have you experienced or observed Christians scapegoating “outsiders” in similar ways to the scapegoating of Jews? Who are those outsider groups we have created?

2) How would you explain the contradiction between the historical Christian animosity towards Jews and the more modern phenomenon of Christianity’s support of Israel (not mentioned in the chapter)?

Chapter 11: Revealing and Reversing the Scapegoat

1) How can Matthew's emphasis on welcoming the outsider inform our treatment of outsiders within our own communities?

2) How has your church responded to the treatment of immigrants and refugees in America?

Chapter 12: The Woman at the Well and Jesus

1) What new insights emerged for you from this chapter's discussion of the Woman at the Well?

2) How has your church addressed anti-Muslim sentiment in our country? What other social and religious "outsiders" has the church created and scapegoated in contemporary society?

3) What are some ways you might address the insider/outsider mentality common in Christian churches?

Chapter 13: Simon the Cyrene and the Black Scapegoat

1) What do you think about the theory that the Gospels have “hidden transcripts” that work to subvert the powerful and support the oppressed? Are these necessary in our society today? If so, what form might they take?

2) How have you worked to recount racist history, repent of the sins of the Church and our country, and raise Black voices in your congregation?

3) How can we help white Christians (including ourselves!) recognize that we are the insiders, whether we feel privileged or not? How might we use our position in society to welcome outsiders and make them into insiders?

Conclusion:

1) How does the scapegoat explanation of Jesus's death on the cross differ from the message that dominates Christianity? How does it overlap?

2) What obstacles would we face if we broadened (or altered) our theology of the cross and salvation? What could we gain from such a perspective change?