

AMMPARO

Southeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA
Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly.



The God Who Sees

Facilitator Guide

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Thank you for bringing The God Who Sees book study to your congregation! This facilitator guide is a compilation of questions gathered by Kathy Chatelaine, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Ministry, for use in Southeastern Minnesota Synod's February 2022 synod wide Zoom book study and, subsequently, within congregations.

The synod's book study is divided into four 1 hour, 15-minute sections:

Week One – Chapters 1-4 (pp. 21-72)

Week Two – Chapters 5-8 (pp. 73-122)

Week Three – Chapters 9-11 + 'Ideas for Action and Reflection' (pp. 123-171)

Week Four – Recorded interview with author Karen Gonzalez (Large group)
(<https://www.lirs.org/virtual-book-series-karen-gonzalez>)

To ensure that all participants have an opportunity to share, the first three sessions begin in a large group with the bulk of our conversation happening in small group breakout rooms. Estimated time for each week's small group conversation is 50 minutes.

Open each session in prayer. Please name that the book study is provided by the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA. (At the end of session four, there is information on additional immigration ministries provided by the SEMN Synod.)

Here are a few thoughts that may assist small group leaders in facilitating the break-out discussions:

- Welcome people within your small group and begin with brief introductions (name/what are you wondering on this topic)
- Begin the evening's conversation by choosing from the week's questions. Feel free to paraphrase/reword the question, as needed.
- Remind your group to share the page number of the text they reference as this is helpful to others in the group.
- Allow 'thinking time' after asking a question as some folk need silent space in order to formulate a response.
- If individuals dominate the conversation, ask a question directly of 'silent' group members.
- Redirect conversation that becomes partisan. All are welcome.
- As a leader, share your thoughts on a question, *if time allows*.
- Gather the small groups together towards the end of each session, making space for each group to share a conversation highlight. After the leader reminds of next week's reading assignment, close in prayer.

In response to utilizing the book study, please consider a financial gift to the AMMPARO ministry of the SEMN Synod.

With great hope,

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Week One Questions for The God Who Sees – Choose from the following!

Chapters 1-4; pp. 21-72. Most questions taken from pp. 173-177

- Have you ever thought of Ruth, Abraham, or Sarah as immigrants? In reading about Ruth and Abraham, did anything about the story surprise you?
- Have you ever experienced being the foreigner or outsider of a group? How did you feel in that situation? What would have helped you feel welcomed?
- Ruth worked hard in the fields, doing work that many others did in her day. Immigrants in North America often do work that nobody else wants to do. Where do the immigrants in your community work? If you are not sure, consider researching this information.
- Were you surprised that Gonzalez and her family loved living in their native Guatemala and had never dreamed of emigrating? Why do you think this type of information is often left out of conversations on immigration?
- Think of the immigrants you know. What do you know about their lives before migration? Besides the factors that forced them to leave their country, what were the joys of their lives in their native lands? What memories do they cherish? If you don't have close relationships with immigrants, consider why this might be.
- As women entering foreign lands, Sarah and Ruth were uniquely vulnerable. In what ways are immigrant women more vulnerable than immigrant men?
- As an immigrant, Abraham committed fraud and trafficked his wife. How do we reconcile the fact that immigrants who cross into the U.S. apart from designated border crossings with the rest of their story? How do you weigh this question of law against the question of what drove them to such measures?
- Conversations around immigration often have to do with what draws immigrants to the United States and do not focus on the policies of nations that created the conditions which force people to leave their homelands. Why is it important for North Americans to understand these realities? How do we engage in meaningful conversations around these topics?

Week Two Questions for The God Who Sees – Choose from the following!

Chapters 5-8; pp. 73-122. Most questions were taken from pp. 178-182

Begin with introductions:

- Each person shares their name and, if they are aware, what they know about their name and why it was given to them.

As you begin discussion questions, introduce Hagar

- o name means 'foreign thing,' 'forsaken,' 'flight'
- o slave-girl of Sarai;
- o concubine (mistress) of Abram;
- o mother of Ishmael ('The God who hears;' seed of Islam religion);
- o name-giver of God (El Roi – 'The God who sees')
- In considering God's appearance to Hagar, what do we learn about God?
- On page 77, González describes *lo cotidiano*, the everyday, as the way her abuelita lived her faith in the ordinary tasks, including her work as a housekeeper. God, Creator of the universe, also engaged in work – and rest. Does this knowledge impact your perspective on domestic work? How do you work out your faith in the ordinary?
- On page 79, González writes, 'My abuelita contributed more than hard work to her new country; she brought the gift of her faith, her theology of survival'. We often focus on what immigrants take or the resources they receive, but we don't discuss the many things they bring. What do immigrants bring when they arrive at their adopted country? What do they have to offer? How do you think immigrants cope with not being valued for their intellectual or professional gifts? (p. 92: story of Gonzalez's father)
- How can you move from reading the Bible from the perspective of those in the dominant culture to that of those on the margins? (p. 82-83) Why is this an important shift?
- On page 108, we read the words of Professor Richard Beck: 'We don't show hospitality to be like Jesus. We show hospitality to welcome Jesus.' Beck goes on to describe the spiritual discipline of *hospitality*: one that will help us draw near to those we fear, those who make us uncomfortable, and those we've even learned to hate. How has Jesus come to you in disguise? How did you respond?
- Before reading Chapter 8 (Anointing the Sick), what did you know about family-based immigration? Were you surprised to learn that only certain relatives are eligible? Did that change your perspective on immigration sponsorship?
- What do you think about anointing being the last sacred rite people receive in their lives? Would such a sign bring you comfort?

Week Three – The God Who Sees – Choose from the following!

Chapters 9-11; pp. 123-164. Most questions were taken from pp. 182-185

Note: Feel free to facilitate the conversation with questions that stimulate discussion. Listed below are several questions that could assist you.

Begin with introductions:

- Each person shares their name and community.
- The story of Jesus' conversation with Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) makes many followers of Jesus uncomfortable. What do you think about Jesus' initial response to the woman's request (7:27), and why? What do you think about the woman's response (7:28), and why? What does Jesus' subsequent response to the woman (7:29) reveal about Jesus?
- Tens of thousands of Central Americans are terrorized by gangs each year. In response to personal violence and death threats, many flee their communities in search of safety and life. Were you surprised to learn that Central America's gang problem originated in the United States? What responsibility do Western nations have in addressing these forces that drive immigration?
- González writes that 'out of all the immigration solutions available, asylum is one of the most difficult to get' (p. 130). If that is so, why do you suppose so many North American politicians and their supporters fear allowing immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border to apply for asylum?
- In Chapter 10, González names many challenges facing immigrants.
 - How would you feel if you had to rely on your child - or someone else's child - to navigate the world? What impact do you think this work has on immigrant children?
 - González explains the conflict and confusion of living with her parents' values at home and with other values at school which ended up creating a divide between her and the adults in her family (pp. 141-46). Had you ever considered the losses that immigrant parents face in raising their children in another country and culture?
- González discusses the challenge of not feeling fully Guatemalan and not being fully North American, of not belonging fully in either place. She then describes having found belonging in the family of God. How have you found a sense of belonging in God's family?

- In Chapter 11, González writes of the history of borders.
 - How does this chapter affect your view of your nation's borders?
 - Does having porous rather than militarized borders frighten you in any way? Why or why not? If yes, how can you as a Christian deal with this fear?
- How is your identity as a U.S. citizen separate from your identity as a follower of Jesus? Which identity shapes you most fundamentally?
- Is there anything else from this week's reading that you would like to share conversation?

Week Four – The God Who Sees – Recorded conversation with the author, Karen Gonzalez.

Welcome the group and introduce the video, naming Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services (LIRS) as the source of this conversation. Remain in the large group to view the video.

To access Gonzalez's video interview: <https://www.lirs.org/virtual-book-series-karen-gonzalez>

After the video, as time allows, ask for thoughts and questions.

Before closing in prayer, remind the group that the book study was provided by the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA through the AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Accompaniment, Representation, and Opportunities) ministry. Share that the SEMN Synod provides additional ministry resources including,

- *A Migrant Journey* interactive experience
- Discernment and Accompaniment of congregations/communities on accompaniment of people within their community
- Guide to local community resources for immigrants (health, education, legal, food)
- Creation of cards to send to children in partner border shelters
- Welcoming Congregation Network
- Border immersion visits
- Speakers for adult forums, confirmation classes, community events
- Financial gifts (to purchase essential supplies for children in partner border shelters or to welcome refugees within local communities) can be given to the SEMN Synod (www.semsynod.org/giving writing 'AMMPARO' in the box). 100% of your gift is used for the designated ministry.

For additional information, contact Kathy Chatelaine, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Ministry at chatelaine@semsynod.org

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