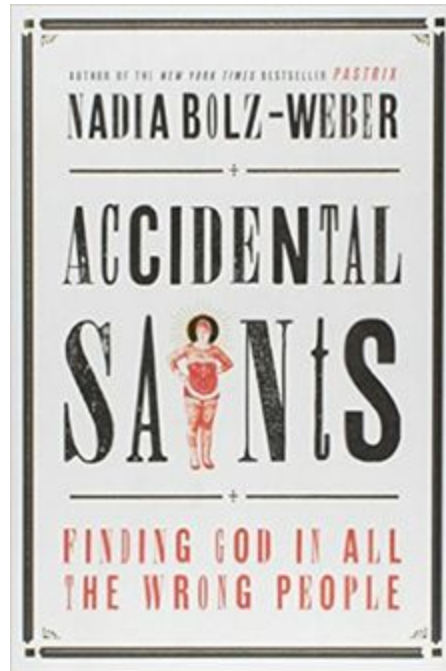


Lent 2016

Our Saviour's ELCA



Accidental Saints by Nadia Bolz-Weber

Lent Small Group/Individual Study Guide by Pastor Michael Stadtmueller and Pastor Leta Behrens for OSLC Ft. Collins, CO



Introduction: This study guide for Lent was written based on the book *Accidental Saints* by Nadia Bolz-Weber. This Lent we will be exploring in worship how to *Open our Lives* and in particular through our ears, hands, eyes, and hearts. We will hear from everyday saints--people from our community who are willing to share their stories and their experiences as Nadia has done in her book. We encourage you to come to worship Wednesdays at 7 to hear their stories!

This book and discussion/journal guide can be used by groups who have been meeting, new groups who just want to meet through Lent, individuals who want to journal or pray and meditate, etc. Use it in the way that works best for you! There are also questions in the back of the book that are great ones to use as well. Read the chapters indicated ahead of your group discussion and enjoy the questions together!

Lent 1: Open My Ears

Read Chapters 1-4 in *Accidental Saints*

As you read think about this question: Can you think of times where you said “No, I am not the one,” but still found that your gifts were used by God? What about in others?



Introductions—if this is a group getting to know one another, share your names and something about where you grew up.

Next or if you know each other well, share what part of the first four chapters resonated with you the most and why.



Read Jonah 2:1-9 or read all 4 chapters to get a better sense of this prophet's story. What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Do you relate to Jonah's experience of running away or being angry/annoyed with God? Why or Why Not?



There are questions/thoughts for discussion on each chapter. Do as many or as few as you like!

Chapter One: Saint Cookies:

- Can you share a saint in your past that it would take a little bit to explain to others on why they belong in this category for you?
- Alma White-racist female pastor reminds us of the difficulty of our belief system. Consider these two truths.
 - We all can name someone that we have trouble putting into the “saints” category (and often for valid reasons).
 - Saints: We celebrate not their piety and perfection, but the God who reaches them in spite of themselves.
- What brings us Closer to God?
 - What things might God be challenging you to do and be in the world.
 - What things does God need that would be too difficult for you?
 - What keeps you in the Jesus Business?
 - mercy?
 - forgiveness?
 - what else?
- Nadia on the image of their All Saints Candle... “We melt into something new, but the burned bits remain”

Chapter Two: Absolution for Assholes

- Do you have someone who you can confess to?
- When you disappoint others, how do you overcome that struggle?
- Nadia - “You’re only as sick as your secrets.”
- Nadia mentions Robin Williams character in “Good Will Hunting as a character who shares grace, What examples of grace from books or movies have touched you?
 - Who loves you in ways that you don’t deserve?
 - Is there anyone who might say that about the love you have demonstrated to them?

Chapter Three: My Lowest for His Highest

- Guns(Clayton), Mom, and George Zimmerman
 - What makes you feel alive and a little bit lethal?
 - How do you engage people with worldviews that are different than your own?
 - Can you think of sometimes when your values bump up against the window of reality?
 - How do we confront our own hypocrisy in our values of our head and how we live them out?

- “I’m not running after Jesus, Jesus is running my ass down!”
 - How does Jesus confront the burden of Sin in our lives?
 - Not in book but is almost there, “God doesn’t call the qualified, God qualifies the called.” In other words it is God’s actions not our own that make us worthy. Does this ring true in your experience?

Chapter Four: Whale Spit in the Superdome:

- Name some segment of the population of whom you have no gifts to talk to. What would it take to change that? How would it feel to be surprised like Jonah, or Nadia with the Sr. High youth?
- Who is your Chloe? The girl who doesn’t fit in that Nadia met on the airplane. Who helps you to speak out when you feel overwhelmed like Nadia at the National Youth Gathering.
- Consider for a moment the offensive things about our gospel? What are they? What parts do you struggle with? What parts appeal to you?
- Nadia speaks of becoming a generous giver of Grace - when you don’t deserve it. Does this speak to you?



Talk about the importance of confession but the reality that this group is not necessarily at a place where authentic confessions can occur. Still we can share. Try this: Hold hands and share your brokenness in single words either going around the circle or at random and in a way that allow you to share without sharing too much. At the end of the prayer you could end with words from Nadia “My crap for Jesus mercy Amen’ (or you can just say Lord in your mercy, Amen)



Offer this blessing to one another by marking the sign of the cross on each other’s foreheads or hands. +May you know God is with you always+

Lent 2: Open My Hands

Read Chapters 5-8 in Accidental Saints

As you read think about this question: Do you ever feel that church becomes an opportunity to pretend that everything is fine? How can we better escape that problem as the church?



Introductions--if you need to be reminded of names then go around the circle and share names

Share a hobby that you have or had when you were child and what you enjoy about it. Also Share what part of chapters 5-8 resonated with you the most and why.



Read John 6:1-15.

What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Jesus declares blessing for the people gathered and uses what they have, specifically what the boy has, in this feeding and blessing. Where can you see this in your life or around you in others in a way that lifts up how God's blessing moves through, in, around and in spite of us?



There are questions/Thoughts for discussion on each chapter. Do as many or as few as you like!

Chapter Five: You are Not "The Blessing":

- Bishop Bruce
 - Can you think of times when you or someone you know has, "sung for someone else?"
- "Seeing myself as the blessing... can hide the ways that I am poor in need and in care."
 - What do you think outsiders struggle with most about Christians?
- Nadia - "We are the needy and the ones who meet needs." and "We meet the needs of others and have our needs met."
 - As you ponder these thoughts what is your own reaction to Nadia's statement push back against the idea that we are and can be a blessing?

Chapter Six: A Thief in the Night:

- When someone says “I’m not so much into church right now,” what could you say to leave room for a conversation? What is the wrong thing to say?
- “When it comes down to it folks can take a few verses from the Bible and run with them.”
 - What has been your experience with this?
 - Why does fear in faith appeal to so many people?
- Rapture PTSD
 - apocalyptic texts are not meant to be crystal balls.
 - Nadia lists a number of ways Matthew 24 could be read
 - end times.
 - field guide for Jesus return.
 - Learning to live with the state of unknowing.
 - Do you see how the first two play to our fears and the third accepts our fears?
- Advent lists - What do you want Christ to break in and take from us?
 - What do you think others need to lose?

Chapter Seven: Mary, Mother of Our Lord:

- When the Christian speaks of really believing we soon realize we will never be able to believe enough to “really believe”
 - Do you ever feel like some churches idea of Grace is “an unconditional maybe?”
- Are you aware of the church year? What is your favorite season of the year? What parts are difficult?
- What should we do with Mary?
 - Virgin, revolutionary, fairy tale. In what other ways is Mary seen in our world?
 - Nadia - “If an angel came to me and said ‘greetings favored’ one i’d be like ‘you’ve got the wrong girl’”
 - Mary’s worthiness (or lack of)
 - We already are who God says we are.
- “It is God’s nature to look at peasant girls with favor.”

Chapter Eight: The Slaughter of the Holy Innocents of Sandy Hook Elementary:

- Can you think of a time where you really needed to hear something when you entered into church because of what was happening to you or the world?
- Images such as the drummer boy at the birth of Jesus are clearly our creation. Do you find these images crazy or helpful? What makes the difference?
- Why do we turn Magi's into Kings
- When is our idealizing of stories and making them our own helpful? How is it not?
- How does Jesus and the stories of God help us in the world that actually exists?
- Have you been in church to hear the slaughtering of the holy innocence?
- Should we ring a bell for the murderer? Light a candle for the killer after tragedies? Why? Why not?
 - When do we go beyond our comfortability for the sake of the gospel?



Light a candle and spend 1 minute in silence together. Consider the tragedies of the world today. At the end of the minute hold hands and share prayers from your hearts lifting up those who need to be lifted up. End your petition with “Lord have Mercy” and have the rest of the group respond “hear our prayer.” When it is appropriate to end the prayer time say, “Lord, hear not only these prayers, but the prayers left unspoken in our hearts. In Christ, Jesus we rest. Amen.



Offer this blessing to one another by marking the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads or hands. +May you know that even as you are not the blessing, God's love, mercy and forgiveness flow through and to you+

Lent 3: Open My Heart

Read Chapters 9-13 in *Accidental Saints*

As you read think about this question: How do we meet the needs of others? Are you ever surprised by who and how you can help?



Introductions--if you need to be reminded of names then go around the circle and share names

Share an event you have been to or one that you are looking forward to and why it had meaning for you. Also Share what part of chapters 9-13 resonated with you the most and why.



Read Luke 10:25-37

What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Sometimes I wonder about those who did not stop and what they felt afterwards. I wonder about the times I have not stopped and what led me to keep going. Nadia writes, "We aren't punished as much for our sins as we are by our sins" Talk about this statement. What does it mean? How might we be like those who do not stop and help? How might we be like the one who does?



There are questions/Thoughts for discussion on each chapter. Do as many or as few as you like!

Chapter Nine: Frances:

- "Our demons want nothing to do with the love of Christ Jesus."
 - What are the demons that you have experienced in yourself or others? How is this language helpful? not helpful?
 - How can healing through Jesus equal restoration in community?
 - How can community be part of healing even though the community isn't perfect?
- Nadia needed to be prayed for... How do we pray for one another? How does it help?
 - "Break her heart with our love for her."
- What does it look like to embrace the hope of the gospel without becoming escapist?

Chapter Ten: Panic Attack in Jericho:

- Nadia helping the fearful Kenyan after being so afraid.
 - Can you think of a time where you rose above your own fears to help others?
 - Can you think of a time where you related to the Kenyan woman who was just reaching out to whoever was close by because of her fear?
 - How can our weaknesses become gifts?
- Nadia - "My knees were soaked in my own tears"
 - Sharon to Nadia, "You're ok, I'm here."
 - Can you think of everyday images of Grace like this?
- Nadia describes this chapter as a "spiritual exfoliation by humiliation."
 - How does our want for independence clash with our need for Grace?
 - Has a humbling experience ever scraped that independence away and left you softer toward others?

Chapter Eleven: Parlors:

- Billy's Funeral - Have you been to a funeral where the group gathered was different from what you are used to? How did that feel?
 - Nadia - "As much as we move through our lives alongside each other none of us know the isolation each experience."
 - When walking through skeptical crowds not sure about Christianity... When is it appropriate to share your faith?
 - Who would Jesus hang out with in your life?
- New Birth
 - How has taking the messiness out of life and death filtered away a part of our life?
 - What can we do to change that?
 - Our promises are God are wrapped up together in Baptism.
 - "Baptism is where our death and life meet."

Chapter Twelve: The Lame:

- What sometimes stops socially awkward people like Amy and Bobby from coming to church?
- Consider the realities of the gifts that they can give to us if they walked amongst us.
 - Victims of the world's sin.
 - Emotional and physical cripple.
 - Maybe the fact that the people who show up are not busy, nor cool, nor important is exactly what God is up to.

- When has love that goes through death spoken to you.
 - Bobby's Eulogy to Amy
 - Think about those friends who see a deeper level of you. How did that happen?
- Nadia's realization of her imperfections.
 - Are there any facts about yourself that you are now comfortable with that for a long time you denied?
 - How does facebook (and other modes of sharing our selves with others) filter are real you?
 - How do you share the real you with others?
- "The only true currency we share with someone else in this bankrupt world comes from the moments when we are uncool."
 - How is this like God's relationship with us?

Chapter Thirteen: Dirty Feet:

- Nadia mentions an angry Mother blaming everyone else. Do you recall memories of your childhood (of of your children) where you/they tried to deflect blame from themselves. Share appropriate ones.
- Is there a person who you can share Confession and Forgiveness with outside of the church?
 - Words of grace to Nadia "It's over girl, and you are going to be OK."
- Maundy Thursday's truth. Nadia, "In the end, we aren't punished for our sins as much as we are punished by our sins."
 - Have you ever felt punished by a sin of your own?
 - Does Grace ever challenge you?
 - Why can it be so hard to receive forgiveness?



Pray for those who help us to see the world and the people in it better. Go around the room giving thanks for the "uncool" saints who have changed your life. After a time of naming these saints pray aloud, "Lord we give thanks for the opportunity to be a part of your blessed saints. Help us to see how are gifts can be used as an instrument of your grace. Amen."



Offer this blessing to one another by marking the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads or hands. +May you know that in your stopping and your starting, in your going and your leaving, in your life and your death you are held in God's mercy+

Lent 4: Open My Eyes

Read Chapters 14-16 in *Accidental Saints*

As you read think about this question: Good Friday is not about getting right with God... but feeling the unfiltered reality of our relationship with God. How are these two ideas distinct in your life and/or your thoughts.



Introductions--if you need to be reminded of names then go around the circle and share names

Share an activity that you enjoy on your own or with others, if you could spend a day doing anything you wanted, what would you do and why. Also

Share what part of chapters 14-16 resonated with you the most and why.



Read Genesis 28:10-22

What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Jacob struggles, wrestles with God and his name is changed in the process.

How has your identity been changed by your struggles with God/faitH/religion/spirituality?



There are questions/Thoughts for discussion on each chapter. Do as many or as few as you like!

Chapter Fourteen: The Dogs of Good Friday:

- Nadia's church confronts the violence of a Mother and Murderer. Have you ever been a part of a community journey to respond to a problem such as this? What would/did it look like?
 - How do respond to the world's violence?
 - Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Consider the parallels to "were you there when Myra killed her children?" Is this helpful? How so? How not?
 - The neighborhood noticed... It mattered. Do we have any idea when people are watching?

Chapter Fifteen: Vignettes from and Easter Vigil:

- What images of the Easter Vigil written about spoke to you?
- Have you ever attended an Easter Vigil?
 - Stories such as the valley of the Dry Bones from Ezekiel speak to the Easter promise - "God breathes into them and they breathe anew."
 - What other stories of scripture speak to you the Easter promise?
 - The image of moldy alleluias.

- What would you say if you could look at your own awful, tacky and moldy alleluias?
- Jim at Alleluia (still bruised broken and skeptical)
 - Jim continues to walk with the church but still considers himself an outsider. How do you relate to Jim? How can you speak to the Jim's in our congregation in the most helpful way?

Chapter Sixteen: Charcoal Fires and Jail Cells:

- Peter and Bishop Bruce's fall
 - Have you had a personal hero fall from Grace?
 - Share how you felt at the time?
- Lord Have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy - What do you think we mean when we share these words?
- Can you relate to the desire to rewrite the past? How so?
- Blunt Mercy - "What's done cannot be undone... but it can be redeemed!"



Pray together invoking the God of redemption. Share aloud names of those we know who need to know that they are redeemed. End the conversation with, "Lord have Mercy on those whom you love. Christ have Mercy on those who don't know they are loved. Amen."



Offer this blessing to one another by marking the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads or hands. +Jesus is with you in the struggles and the triumphs always+

Lent 5: Open My Life

Read Chapters 17-19 in Accidental Saints

As you read think about this question: Who are the Saints that brought you to faith? Have you ever thought about who might think of you as a saint in your own faith?



Introductions--if you need to be reminded of names then go around the circle and share names

Share a place you have traveled and what you enjoyed or did not enjoy about it. Also Share what part of chapters 17-19 resonated with you the most and why.



Read Mark 8:27-30

What do you notice? What do you wonder?

Who do you say Jesus is?



There are questions/Thoughts for discussion on each chapter. Do as many or as few as you like!

Chapter Seventeen: Judas Will Now Take Your Confession:

- God is more powerful than our mess.
 - When do you believe it? When do you need to hear it?
 - Nadia - Suzanne felt what Judas never got to experience.
- What do think about forgiveness and Judas?
- Consider the differences between Peter and Judas.
 - Judas removed from community lost the experience to hear grace.
- How does God's Grace surprise us?
- "You are loved." Seems so simple... And is so important. Who has made that most clear in your faith? Do you believe it?
- Nadia- We need a frame of grace that overcomes our arrogant inconsistencies.
- What stops us from believing God's Grace?
- Do we owe God? How can living our lives repay our debt?

Chapter Eighteen: The Best Shitty Feeling in the World:

- Nadia speaks of “Failing at being it all” Have you had one of those moments?
- How/Why does overfunctioning eventually lead us to feeling inadequate? Even if we are good at it!
 - We have probably all felt this way. When we disappoint our friends it hurts in many different ways. What is your experience with this?
 - Nadia’s mess meant hurting people... no matter what. Who can you talk to in those situations to help you get through it?
 - Do you notice how this chapter fits in with our church logo and our understanding of brokenness, and how God uses that brokenness?
 - We are often our hardest critics. Yes!
- Nadia- “Real Grace stings because if it is real we don’t deserve it.”

Chapter Nineteen: Blessed are They:

- Return to the everyday Saints in the church. After speaking about this for 5 weeks. Can you think about anymore everyday Saints who you would like to lift up?
- We have talked all about Saints, but it is a divisive word in our world isn’t it? Why? How has this book changed your view of the word “Saint”?
- As a church who do we need to name as Blessed in our world today? Who needs to hear it most?
- Nadia continues to return to the image of their old candles coming together as one. What does this image mean to you?



Share aloud your prayers for the group as you complete your Lenten journey. What is your hope for others in the group? Share these aloud. Pray together, “Gracious God we give you thanks for the walk we have been on together.

Strengthen us for the journeys yet unknown, and helps us to both see our sainthood, and lift up the Godliness we see in others. Amen.



Offer this blessing to one another by marking the sign of the cross on each other’s foreheads or hands. +Jesus is with you in the struggles and the triumphs always+

Lent 6: Holy Week



HOLY WEEK

We invite you to join us for worship throughout the week.

Palm Saturday: March 19, 5:30pm

Palm Sunday: March 20, 8:30 & 11:00 with Palm Sunday Event at 9:45

Holy Maundy Thursday: March 24, 7:00pm

Good Friday: March 25, Noon and 7:00pm

Easter Vigil: March 26 5:30pm

Easter: March 27, 7:00, 9:00 and 10:30



You are invited to a celebration community meal

on

April 8th, 2016

6pm at OSLC

“A Foretaste of the Feast To Come”... which we are
pretty sure involves chocolate!

RSVP to Pastor Michael or online at

www.our-saviours.org