

DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

MODULE 1

LOOKING AT THE LAND

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

View the video *Voices of the People: Land*.

This short documentary was one of two videos featured at the 2018 RMS Synod Assembly. The video introduces us to three individuals' stories: A. Paul Ortega and Katrina Ortega (Mescalero Apache), Dr. Lee Francis (Pueblo of Laguna). We hear their thoughts on the way Native Americans view and understand land.

After you have watched the video, discuss these five sets of questions in succession. A group leader can steer this discussion by framing each set of questions. There is no need for participants to have a hand-out. Also, there's no need to go back and review parts of the video to check out your answers. You're exploring how people in your group experienced the video—you're not looking for "right answers." As you deepen your discussion, encourage participants to respect and honor each other's responses. Each different perspective from each person in your group gives everyone another part of the deeper truths this video can reveal.

1. What scenes do you remember from the video? Who were the characters you met? Are there visual images you found curious, striking, or memorable? What phrases do you recall? Are there other sounds from the video you remember?
2. What do you think **the characters** in the video were experiencing emotionally as they were speaking? What clues in their words, tone of voice, facial expressions, or body language helped you create an image of what they were feeling?
3. What were **your** thoughts and feelings as you watched the video? Are there specific words, images, or sounds from the video that you associate with your feelings and thoughts?
4. Have you ever experienced anything similar to what the video characters describe? Have you ever had feelings similar to what they

felt? Can you share in your group a personal story that describes your similar experience?

5. What are you learning as this discussion unfolds—about yourself? About the Doctrine of Discovery? How is the discussion taking you on a journey into deeper understanding? What will you do with your new insights?

Listed below are four additional resources in this section of the toolkit. These could serve as additional sessions for this part of your study. Your group can decide which of the sessions they want to explore, and what order they want to consider these topics.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ABRAHAM?

By surveying several passages from Genesis 12–25, we will compare and contrast the Abrahamic epic as a radical alternative to the convictions that created and shaped the Doctrine of Discovery. We will discuss how this different style of relationship to the land might open contemporary Christians to think in new ways about their stewardship of land and their relationship to Native Americans who were violated by the Doctrine of Discovery.

A MAP OF MY LIFE

This is an exercise for converting your personal biography into a “map.” With this life map you will be invited to explore and consider your relationship to the geography—lands and places—where your story has taken place. How has the land shaped your life story?

HOLY PLACES IN MY PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

In this project, you will be invited to explore places and landscapes that have had special meaning in your life. You will be asked to consider what makes a place “different,” “special,” or “holy”; discussion in the group may help you see how people differ in their understanding and relationship to land. Your group will be invited to discuss quotes from a variety of Native Americans expressing their understanding of land. Finally, you will be asked to think about how your experiences are similar to and different from those of Native Americans.

THE KINGDOM WITHIN

Much of Jesus' ministry centered on his proclamation of "the kingdom of God." We will explore the concept of a kingdom, how it shaped Israel's history, and how it relates both to the Doctrine of Discovery and our modern understandings about property. Then, we will reflect on Jesus' insistence that "the kingdom of God is within/among you," and consider how Jesus' teaching stands in deep contrast with the kingdom politics that led to Jesus' crucifixion. What does it mean to "internalize" concepts of "territory"? We will use the Sermon on the Mount as an example of what this "interior kingdom" might look like. And finally, we will consider how these biblical insights might offer Christians a new and better place from which we can discuss matters of justice with Native American sisters and brothers.