

B I B L E S T U D Y • A L E N S O N S C R I P T U R E

Black Liberation Theology

*Reading the God of the Oppressed
with the eyes of the oppressed.*

*"The Spirit of the Lord
is upon Me..."*

L U K E 4 : 1 8

Z I O N C H R I S T I A N M I N I S T R I E S

A Lens, Not a Verdict

We're not putting Black Liberation Theology on trial. We're picking up the lens and looking through it.

HONOR

Honor the pain and the prophets who birthed this theology. Real people. Real suffering. Real Scripture.

HEAR

Hear it as a gift the Black church gave to global theology — a reminder that God is not neutral toward injustice.

HOLD

Hold it beside the whole counsel of Scripture. Every lens is partial. Christ is the full picture.

What Is Black Liberation Theology?

THE DEFINITION

A theological movement that reads the Bible from the vantage point of the Black experience of suffering and struggle — proclaiming that the God of Scripture is actively on the side of the oppressed, and that the gospel is, at its heart, liberating news.

Rooted in the Black Church, refined by Dr. James H. Cone (1938–2018), the father of the movement.

FOUR CORE CONVICTIONS

01 God Is Not Silent on Suffering

Scripture consistently reveals a God who sees, hears, and moves.

02 The Gospel Is Good News to the Poor

Jesus said it Himself in Luke 4 — this is not an add-on.

03 Theology Is Always Contextual

Every believer reads Scripture from somewhere. BLT is honest about it.

04 Salvation Includes the Whole Person

Soul, body, community, dignity — Jesus came for all of it.

Where This Theology Came From

BLT wasn't invented in a classroom. It was forged in fields, funerals, and freedom marches.

1600s – 1800s	1960s	1969	TODAY
The Slave Songs Enslaved Africans read themselves into Exodus. "Go Down, Moses" was theology set to melody — God delivers His people.	Civil Rights Era Dr. King's dream and Malcolm X's demand met in the pulpit. Black clergy asked: what does the gospel say to systemic sin?	James Cone Publishes 'Black Theology and Black Power.' Names the movement. Insists Christ stands with the crucified people of history.	The Global Table Womanist theology, Latin American liberation theology, and African theology all share this DNA — God on the side of the crushed.

THE ANCHOR TEXT

Jesus Reads the Scroll

Luke 4:18-19 • His first sermon. His mission statement.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

FIVE VERBS FROM THE MOUTH OF JESUS

PREACH

HEAL

PROCLAIM

LIBERATE

RESTORE

The Bible's Liberation Language

These are not "proof texts." They are the drumbeat of the whole story.

Exodus 3:7-8	God Sees	<i>"I have surely seen the oppression of My people... I have come down to deliver them."</i>
Isaiah 58:6	God Fasts for Justice	<i>"To loose the bonds of wickedness... to let the oppressed go free."</i>
Amos 5:24	God Wants a River	<i>"Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."</i>
Micah 6:8	God's Requirement	<i>"Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God."</i>
Luke 1:52-53	God Flips Tables	<i>Mary's song — He casts down the mighty, exalts the lowly, fills the hungry.</i>
James 5:1-6	God Warns the Rich	<i>The cries of the oppressed have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.</i>

Exodus: The Story Beneath the Songs

Enslaved Africans didn't need a seminary to see it — Egypt was the Big House, Pharaoh was the master, and God was still in the delivering business.

1

GROANING

Ex 2:23

"The children of Israel groaned because of the bondage." God begins the story by listening to a cry.

2

GAZING

Ex 3:7

"I have surely seen..." God is not far off. He inspects the wound personally.

3

GOING

Ex 3:8

"I have come down to deliver them." God does not send a memo. He shows up.

4

GIVING

Ex 6:7

"I will take you as My people." Liberation is not the end — belonging is.

GROUP ACTIVITY

01

"WHERE DO I READ FROM?"

The Location Exercise

TIME

20 MIN

GROUPS OF

3 - 4

NEEDED

Bible, paper

THE PREMISE

Every reader stands somewhere. A grandmother in the projects reads the Beatitudes differently than a CEO in a corner office. Neither is wrong. Both are partial.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Read Luke 4:16-21 aloud. Then in your group answer: 1) What do I notice first? 2) What would my grandmother notice? 3) What might a wealthy suburban reader miss? Write it down.

THE DEBRIEF

Share one thing your "location" helped you see — and one thing you might have missed. This is the gift and the limit of every lens.