

Chapter 1 The Christian Life

Section 1 Beginning with Jesus

1. How do you understand the relationship between Jesus and the Gospels?
2. If your church has a Creed or a Confession, in what kinds of categories is God described? What is the relationship between this description and who you perceive Jesus to be, as he is portrayed in the Gospels?
3. List reasons why it might be important to reconsider the relation of Jesus to the Old Testament (the Jewish Scriptures).

Section 2 The Great Commandment

1. Has the time come when we can really believe that God need not be feared?
2. Is it important to suggest that Jesus had a method, a specific way of interpreting Scripture (a hermeneutic)?
3. If love, not fear, was the lens by which Jesus interpreted God, what might this mean for our theologies?

Section 3 Jesus' Abba

1. How is God "Janus-faced" in your church or tradition? Can you identify dualism(s) in your congregation or church theology?
2. How is God pictured as the Abba of Jesus in your congregation or church theology?
3. Why is it important to context the sayings and teaching of Jesus amid the diversity of thought in his time? What benefits does it bring to the way we understand Jesus?

Section 4 The Life of the Kingdom Of God

1. If your church has a catechism, does it begin with Christian formation or something else? What is that 'something else' and why do you think it begins there?
2. Does your catechism include nonviolence teaching (like the Sermon on the Mount and the Didache)?
3. What role has/will the Sermon on the Mount played/play in your theology?

Chapter 2 How Jesus Read His Bible

Section 1 Discovering the Beloved God

1. What if it were possible to read the Old Testament the way Jesus read it? Would you be interested? What if you found out that you were reading the same literature quite differently?
2. How do you think you would feel if someone came along and said that God is nonviolent, non-retributive, loving, merciful and forgiving of each and all?
3. Why do you think that Isaiah 40-55 (Second Isaiah) was Jesus' favorite section of Scripture?

Section 2 Messiah or Son of Man?

1. Why is it important to recognize the diversities of Judaisms in Jesus day? What difference does it make that there were lots of Jews who believed all kinds of different things?
2. What were some reasons given in the JDL for why Jesus either downplayed significantly or rejected the title 'Messiah' (Anointed)? What does it mean in our understanding of Jesus?
3. Michael translates the phrase 'son of man' as 'True Human.' What reasons does he give for this?

Section 3 The Mercy Code

1. Did you grow up with familial 'holiness codes' (household rules)? Where can holiness codes be found in the church today?
2. What is the relationship between holiness and violence?
3. How does the way we relate holiness to violence get played out in our communities, churches and families?

Section 4 Kingdom Ethics

1. What metaphors or terms does your church use for what is known as 'discipleship'?
2. Michael says that discipleship is experienced, not as a harsh teacher in a legal manner, but as apprenticeship? What difference might this make in the way you currently journey (or not) with Jesus?
3. What are some ways you can follow Jesus in your life now? If you let go of all your cares, troubles and worries, do you think your empty hands would allow you to take another's hands?