

Chapter 7 Paul

Session 1 Paul: Converted Persecutor

1. Do you read Paul's letters? Do you find them difficult? What are some difficulties?
2. Why is the Abraham/Phineas comparison important to know in order to understand the problem of zeal in Paul?
3. Has it ever occurred to you that law is not the solution but the problem?
4. Has Michael made the case that for Paul, love is more than ethics but also is the foundation for how to read the Bible?

Session 2 Paul's Hopeful Vision

1. Insanity is described as doing the same thing expecting different results.. How is it then important to consider that our interpretation of Scripture needs to change if we are going to be a people of hope and peace?
2. How does your tradition understand conversion? Are you more of the Augustinian model or the Pauline model and how?
3. In Ephesians 1:3-14 what 'doctrines' are to be understood christologically? For example in verse 1:4 election is 'in Christ.' What does this mean?

Session 3 The Significance of Jesus' Death

1. In your tradition does the work of Jesus affect only certain persons (those elect, those born again, etc), or does the work of Christ affect all of humanity?
2. How important is it to understand the subversive character of Jesus' death in Romans 3:23-26 as an end of the concept of propitiating an angry God?
3. In what ways has Jesus death conquered sin, death or the devil in your life?

Session 4 Life in the Spirit

1. How might you describe your experience of living 'between the times?' How do you have a sense of these two distinct parts of yourself?
2. Have you ever done a spiritual inventory? What are your gifts? How do you use them to edify the larger body of Christ?
3. In the book The Jesus Driven Life Michael explores the principle of surrender or trust as the key to the abundant life. How might you describe the way this has worked out in your life?

Chapter 8 The Gospel of John

Session 1 The Nonviolent Logos

1. Is it violence or nonviolence that structures the theology of your tradition? How might you demonstrate or explain this?
2. What do you think of Michael's assertion that all four Gospels begin with 'beginning' (*arke* in Greek) as an allusion to Genesis? What is it that is being begun in the Gospels?
3. Does it matter where you start your theology? Does your church have a confession of faith? Where does it begin? How far into your confession of faith before Jesus is mentioned? Are his life and teachings part of your confession? If not, why not?

Session 2 The Life-Giving Imitation of the Son

1. Did you find the concept of imitation helpful in understanding Jesus' relation to the Father? How so?
2. In your tradition is there a difference between imitating God and imitating Jesus? If Jesus is nonviolent and God is violent then how can we claim Jesus imitates God?

Session 3 The Spirit-Paraclete

1. What/Who is the Holy Spirit in your tradition? What is the Spirit's relationship to Jesus? To the Father?
2. Have you ever heard of the double-meaning words in the Fourth Gospel? How did Michael's interpretation of John 7:37-39 illumine the use of the word '*glory*'?
3. When visitors leave your church do you think they feel like they have met the Jesus of the Gospels? Why or why not?
4. What is the relation of the Spirit to Jesus in your tradition? Is the Spirit talked about in your church? Is the Spirit just a 'mystery?' Did Michael Make clear Jesus' relation of the Spirit to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel?
5. Rethinking the concept of the devil as an anthropological category is new for most people. How do you view the devil? What biblical texts does your tradition use to understand the origin and works of the devil? Is your church's view of the devil archaic, medieval or modern?

Session 4 The Beloved Community

1. Examine your personal theology and ask: Does my theology begin with a definition of God before I get to the Trinity or does the Trinity inform my understanding of God? How about your church tradition or Confession of Faith?
2. Does your church's view of God focus on power or humility? Requiring worship or self-giving? Holiness or compassion?
3. How important is a robust, authentic, orthodox understanding of Trinitarian life for understanding the Christian life? What points does Michael make about the community of the Trinity that you found helpful?