

Week Four

YEAR ONE

Read

Genesis chapters 1-11

Collins, Chapter 3, "The Primeval History," pages 36-43

Focus

Terms to know: primeval; two creation stories; ' *adam*, Atrahsis myth; Epic of Gilgamesh; Sons of God (Genesis 6); Enuma Elish

Stories delight and entertain. They come in various forms and styles. Myths, epics, legends, novellas, and fables each tell some tale that entertains as they instill values, guidance, and meaning. Often the values live implicitly within the hearers of the stories only to surface in moments of crisis that call for decisive action. Some myths come into being to explain why things are as they are; others prescribe "right" behavior; while others venture into offering explanations along with establishing meaning.

All people, to some degree or another, seek answers to fundamental questions. What is truth and can I know it? What endures? What is real? Is there purpose to my life? Where did we come from and where are we going? Stories in all their forms, one way or another, offer answers to basic concerns.

YEAR TWO

Read

Powell, Chapter 3, "Jesus" and Chapter 4, "The Gospels," pages 63-101

Focus

Points to define: The two doctrines of Jesus; kingdom of God; themes in Jesus' teaching; the historical Jesus

Terms to become familiar with: gospel as a literary genre; parables; miracle stories; pronouncement stories; passion and resurrection narratives; sayings of Jesus; the synoptic puzzle (*aka* problem); the Q source; Griesbach hypothesis; *Diatessaron*

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 2, "Israel," pages 47-73

Focus

Terms to recognize: Maccabees; Tanakh; Apocrypha; the first and second exiles; Samaritans; the first and second temple; Septuagint; Hellenized Jews; creation out of nothingness; development of the notion of afterlife and individual soul; Hasmonean dynasty; Sadducees; Pharisees; Essenes; Zealots

Chapter 2 concludes Part I "A Millennium of Beginnings" in which MacCulloch traces the social and intellectual "seeds" of Christianity. The two histories (Greco-Roman and Israel) continually influence Christian life and thought.

The following quote appears near the bottom of page 50 of MacCulloch's *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*: ". . . even through their hardest and most wretched experiences of fighting with those they love most deeply, [Israel is] being given some glimpse of how they relate to God."

MacCulloch connects this struggle with Jacob's formational struggle with the angel of the Lord, with God, at the River Jabok. This way of drawing meaning from experience allowed Israel to view history through the eyes of faith. History became the arena in which they could see God at work, bringing them into being as a people bound to God. Some consider this a re-writing of history only, merely a means of self-justification. There is plenty of room for that view. However, this is also a way of interpreting history, of seeing God at work in the life and experience of an individual and a group; this is salvation history—history that tells the story of God's work of redemption.

YEAR FOUR

Read

Allen, Chapter 1, "The Holy One of Israel," pages 3-18

Focus

Identify the following terms and concepts: henotheist; monotheist; transcendence; immanence; *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*; Otto; Anselm; intellectual repentance; holiness
Allen wrote that we know about God "because God makes Godself known or reveals Godself *in what God does*." (17) Identify what God has done that reveals something about God.

Respond

Trust, confidence, and faith often mean the same thing.

How have issues of trust been present in your life?

In your assigned reading this week, what issues of trust do you find?

What implication does trust have in your daily life?

Practice

LISTENING SKILLS

Review of Effective Listening

Listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give one another and a key component of ministry and of a functioning group. Often we focus on what we plan to say next rather than really listening to what others say.

Two Important Points

Make eye contact without staring at the other person.

When you listen to another person, listen to four things:

- What the person describes (what facts, events, situations, or information the person is trying to convey)
- How the person feels (what emotions accompany the information)
- Where the person places emphasis and shows energy
- What the person’s body is saying (sometimes one is unaware of the mixture of reactions and important information the body gives).

Ways Not to Listen

Following are some exercises for developing effective listening skills and some dos and don’ts for framing questions when you listen to another person. Included are different types of listening and the purpose each type serves. Non-listening practices in a group reduce the sense of individual participation, detract from group cohesiveness, and contribute to conflict. The same styles detract from person-to-person engagement and limit ministry effectiveness.

1. Passive listening: not concentrating on what the person is saying.
2. Happy hooking: constantly changing the subject to center the conversation on you and not on the speaker. Many times people become very competitive and try to devise a topic that is similar but more exciting than the speaker’s.
3. Mind reading: completing the other person’s sentences, acting as if you understand what they are saying, giving advice before you have heard them through.
4. Inappropriate body language: jiggling your foot, clicking a pen, staring at the person, touching them without being sensitive to whether they want to be touched, saying you are interested while showing the opposite with your body, showing aggression and impatience with your body while saying you are concerned.

Ways to Sidetrack the Conversation

1. Answering emotions with logic. When someone is excited about something, he or she does not want the first response to be a critical analysis. The speaker wants the other person to share some of his or her excitement.
2. Bringing in old issues. When people want to discuss a problem, they do not want to be told that they always have similar problems or that they failed to do something about the problem three months ago.
3. Using sarcasm or cynicism, or not taking the other person’s issues seriously.

An Exercise to Improve Listening Skills

PURPOSE: To provide an opportunity to practice listening skills.

1. During the week, give yourself a chance to carefully listen to something that someone tells you; a co-worker, family member, neighbor, store employee, and so forth. As soon as possible after the listening opportunity has ended, write about the experience, including the following:
 - a. A synopsis of the sharing
 - b. What he or she heard as the speaker’s feelings about the event and about sharing the event
 - c. Words, images, and metaphors that stood out
 - d. What you thought the speaker was saying with his or her body.</LL>

2. During the week, when someone has listened to you in a way that caused you to feel really “heard,” tell the listener the following:
 - a. How the listener asked questions;
 - b. How the listener’s body posture encouraged sharing;
 - c. What other responses helped the you feel understood and helped you clarify what you were saying.¹⁰

What image conveys your sense of how it feels to really listen?

What image conveys your sense of how it feels for someone to really listen to you?

An additional resource on Storytelling and Holy Listening from the VocationCare program can be found on pages 41-42.

How might listening be a holy act?

¹⁰ Adapted from *Education for Ministry Common Lessons and Supportive Materials (2005)*, Section 6, pages 6-8-1 to 6-8-3.