

Jan 18/26 – Leader's Guide - Hebrews 3:1-14 “Come into His Story”

1. Our culture is deeply suspicious of meta narratives - those big all-encompassing stories that tell us who we are, where meaning is to be found, what is wrong with the world and how to fix it. Why is that? What are some of the common meta narratives that have been used to shape western culture?

They were seen as “power plays” – stories that privileged some and silenced others.

The belief however that there can be no meta narratives becomes a meta narrative in itself. It tells us that meaning is self-made, identity self-constructed, and fulfillment is to be found in unbridled self-expression.

Here are some others – in very bare bones summary that may come up or will help stir conversation.

There is the evolutionary meta narrative. Survival of the fittest. Every human behavior is brought about by evolutionary pressures.

There is a religious meta narrative. If you are “good” you are in – go to heaven when you die - “bad” you are out,. This is how the Christian meta narrative has often been presented.

2. The biblical meta narrative is one of exodus. Humanity created as God's vice regents, stewarding God's good creation by reflecting his goodness and glory to bring life and flourishing. Humanity however turns to worship other things (sex, money, status, ethnicity, self etc) and reflecting those realities brings death and becomes enslaved to those things. God comes to rescue us from slavery to sin and false worship that he might live in our midst shaping us to reflect his goodness and glory, so that we might come to anticipate his coming again to make everything new.
Discuss

Here I just wanted your group to have a free-flowing conversation about the biblical meta narrative. A narrative of exodus.

It might help to draw the connection of Jesus at the last supper (Passover meal) saying your recalling of the story of Exodus is all about me. It was his desire that we would view who he is and what he has come to do through the story of Exodus.

The original listeners to Hebrews had entered into this story in Jesus but in the face of persecution were thinking to return to living into the story with Moses as guide. And the writer is imploring them – don't do it, you will lose so much.

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

3. What similarities does the author want us to see between Moses and Jesus? Differences?

Similarities: They were both faithful in their role in the exodus story.

Differences: Moses was servant in the house (people of God), Jesus was builder of the house. Moses reflected the glory of God, Jesus is the glory of God. Moses was servant in the house, Jesus was son over the house.

Read Hebrews 3:7-14

4. In light of how the author presents Jesus, what do they desire to communicate by quoting from Psalm 95 here?

Your ancestors in the desert desired to return to Egypt rejecting Moses. As a result they were barred from the promised land.

If that was the result of rejecting Moses, how much more concerning if you reject the one who is greater than Moses.

It also invites us to see ourselves in that same place in the story. We are wandering the desert – rescued from sin and slavery but not yet living into the fullness of that reality. They were learning what it is to trust and worship the living God alone.

We are in the same place in the biblical metanarrative as the people of Israel, and the original hearers of this letter. We are in the desert learning what it is the trust and worship God alone. So the authors primary concern is that we would hold fast, that is persevere in our calling. Toward that end he gives us two practices, an individual and a communal practice.

5. The individual practice is that we would consider Jesus. ‘Consider’ is a Greek word that means to look at something, contemplate it, with a desire to learn something from it. How can considering Jesus enable us to persevere in our calling?

Here is an unedited portion of the sermon that references this question that could possibly help. I would encourage you to linger here exploring other ways considering Jesus undergirds perseverance – for by this discussion you will likely learn how to exhort one another (see question below)

Jesus uses the word in the sermon on the mount - where he's speaking into our anxiety don't worry about what you will eat - drink - wear - consider - consider the birds - how they don't sow or reap or gather into barns - but God cares for them - are you not of more value than they?

How will you navigate your anxiety - asks Jesus - consider - look at the birds - see how God cares for them and then contemplate how much more value you have than them in God's eyes - see how much he loves you - cares for you in Jesus - and you will find a way through anxiety

About 25 years ago I began to listen to Tim Keller's preaching - so appreciated it - and he has this phrase he would often use that really captured me - all of your personal problems are a failure to believe the gospel - meaning all of your personal problems are a failure to consider Jesus - a failure to contemplate who he is and what he's done for you

Now - there are some caveats to that I would want to give if we had more time - but regardless I began to apply this truth to my life - at the time my biggest personal issue was that I had been misrepresented - gossiped about - pretty damaging stuff - and it was flying around the church I was serving like wildfire - and as you can well imagine it left me deeply anxious - hard to navigate relationships - without thinking - whose heard what - who believes what - wrestling with the impulse to try and correct things - no I can't turn pastoral relationships to those ends.

So applied the principle - consider Jesus - Jesus was misrepresented at his trial right - and what did he do - try and correct it - no he was silent before his accusers

Why - because he was convinced that his father knew the truth - that the verdict over his life had already been given - you are loved - cherished - delighted in.

So in that consideration of Jesus - I came to the conviction - Jesus knows what happened there - his verdict is all that matters at the end of the day - I rested in that truth - the anxiety subsided - and in time so did the gossip - for there were no sticky places - people found a disconnect between who they saw me to be and what the gossip was portraying me to be.

6. The communal practice is that we would exhort one another. To exhort is the Greek word parakaleo – it is made up of a soft word (para) and a hard word (kaleo). It means to come alongside another to listen, understand, empathize and then call the other to see, behold, consider Jesus. How might this help us persevere in the calling and what might it look like?

It would require a fair bit of trust with one another to facilitate this kind of exhortation. This requires us to open our lives up to one another and move beyond surface level relating. Press for deeper relationships...

It would require a fair bit of humility both in the speaking and in the receiving. It requires a clear understanding and living out of the heart of the gospel on both sides. In Jesus I see that I am far worse than I can imagine but far more loved than I would dare dream.

It might help here to ask: how can we foster more of this mutual exhortation in our group?

Pray for one another that you might together persevere in the calling that comes of receiving the invitation to enter into the biblical meta narrative, enter into His story.