

House Group Notes

18th April 2017



Ichthus Values, Characteristics & Distinctives Session 9: Theology Part 1 of 3 - Radical

Opening Discussion Questions:

- What does the word radical make you think of?
- How would you define the word radical?

Which of these dictionary definitions of uses for the word “radical” do you think we mean when we talk about it in the context of Ichthus’ theology (answer is no.1)?

1. **Of or going to the root or origin; fundamental**
2. Thoroughgoing or extreme, especially as regards change from accepted or traditional forms
3. Favouring drastic political, economic, or social reforms

Introduction

Last time we looked at Ichthus’ “structure” consisting of three Cs. Can you name them? (Answer = Celebration, Congregation & Cell).

Briefly summarise the differences between Celebration, Congregation & Cell

This week we will be starting to look at Ichthus’ theological values, which form another group of three consisting of Radical, Christocentric & Eschatological. We will be breaking these three up and spending a house group session on each of these. This week we are focusing on “Radical”, hence the opening discussion questions, but before looking into why we are “radical” we will take a look at the statement about Ichthus’ theological values taken from our website.

Read the statement below taken from Ichthus’ website:

THEOLOGY: RADICAL, CHRISTOCENTRIC, ESCHATOLOGICAL.

We seek to make known the reasons behind what we do and experience in our lives in Christ. This is our theology or study of God. It is ‘radical’ in that it continuously resorts to our ‘roots’ in the Bible and the early church. Equally it is ‘Christocentric’ in that we look for Jesus in all of the Bible and in our experience of the Spirit of God (John 5:39-40; Luke 24:26-47). When we say our theology is ‘Eschatological’ we mean that while Jesus has brought in the Kingdom of God it is not yet manifest or operating in its fullness. This is why we pray ‘Your Kingdom come’. When Jesus returns we will see and experience the fullness of the kingdom of God which at present we see only in part.

Radical

The word radical seems to have many negative connotations in today’s society; it tends to conjure up images of people blowing themselves up for something they believe or some other very extreme image. However, as we saw in the original discussion, the word “radical” really means getting back to the roots/origins of something.

Discuss:

- Why do you think it is important to go back to the roots and origins of something?
- What form the roots and origins of Christianity?
 - a. The bible – Old and New Testament
 - b. The gospels written by eyewitnesses of Jesus or collated from eyewitnesses
 - c. Writings of the early church fathers (disciples of the disciples) from the first couple of centuries after Jesus' death. People like Polycarp, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origen, etc.
 - d. The cultural and historical context of all the writings (inc. the bible)
 - e. Non-Christian historical writers like Josephus

There are many Christian traditions and beliefs that have developed over the years. Some are helpful and biblically based, some are not, and some are somewhere in between. It makes sense that the traditions and beliefs developed in the bible and by those alive closer to Jesus' death are likely to be more accurate than ones developed 1,000 years later and without the earlier writings!!

Discussion:

- Can you think of any traditions or things that the church does out of historical habits?
- Are they good, bad, helpful, wrong, based on the bible etc.?

Due to fantastic archaeological and academic work, we are incredibly privileged today to have such a wealth of original historical documents that have been uncovered and studied over the last century. This means we have good and accurate sources for the bible and letters written by the early church leaders. Also, these documents are available to us, the "general public". Anyone and everyone who wants to look at them in books can do so. This has not always been the case. In the past centuries, many documents had been lost, and collections that did exist were spread out and not easily accessed by people. Those that did have access to the collections were the rich/academics/rulers. It's wonderful that we can all look into to the origins and roots of Christianity today if we want to and it keeps church leaders and theologians honest!!

Read Revelation 22:17-21

There is quite a strong warning to anyone changing, adding to, or taking away from the bible. The important thing is that theology (beliefs that help us understand God) and tradition should never change or take the place of the bible. There are some that have developed over the centuries and have been influenced by governments, people, etc. often seeking their own agenda. It has been how people justified the crusades or other atrocities in the name of Jesus, which is an awful thing. Other times it's simply that a habit is formed which seemed like a good idea at the time, but it wasn't based on anything and it's not good or bad, but perhaps not that helpful too. Ichthus seeks not to be influenced by such things, but to go back to the origins and roots of theology that is found in the bible and the writings of the early church leaders that lived soon after Jesus' death. This way we can live more closely to how Jesus wanted us to do live and not be confused by tradition or misguided views of who God is.

Suggested Prayer Points:

- Give thanks for documents that are available to us today – Bible, early church letters etc.
- That we may always seek to find God and not be confused by any tradition
- That we will know God for ourselves and develop an understanding of who He is through the bible and relationship with Him.