

Biblical Interpretation Workshops & Conversations

30 April 2022 (Cohort 1)

Agenda

1. Introduction (5 min)
2. Topic for discussion: (15 min)
Expectations, hopes and disappointments: a perspective for autistic Christians
3. Discussion (30 min)
4. Community admin & close (10 min)

Expectations, hopes and disappointments: a perspective for autistic Christians

1. Prov. 13:12 says, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life”.
2. For autistic people especially, plans and consistency are important, whilst constant changes drive up anxiety and stress.
 “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Eccles. 3:1)
 I once read a statement by a change management guru to the effect that, in the modern world, if you move a dining chair you find the pictures on the wall have shifted too. This ‘explosion of possibilities’ in the context of change generates anxiety and stress.
3. The COVID pandemic has been a journey of several phases: lockdown was difficult, but structured, certain and clear. Now we have freedom, but there is much sickness (COVID is still active and there is reduced general immunity). Recent bad weather (storms) have added to the sense of chaos and now we read that the war in Ukraine is threatening our fuel and food supplies.
4. My experience of the past 3 months – practically everything planned gets cancelled – especially family events.
5. It is difficult to construct a ‘systematic theology’ to deal with this – the problem of ‘theodicy’ is probably unsolvable.
6. We can, however, take 2 steps to help in this situation – one emotional and the other psychological:
 1. express our confusion and pain in the context of prayer and our life ‘in God’:
 - Lam. 3, Psalms of lament: Ps. 6, 10, 38, 42, 43, 130.
 2. construct a narrative:
 - it is also important to keep in mind a sense of perspective: we are (by world and historical standards) rich and privileged;
 - it is not personal (e.g. Job 1);
 - it is not for ever – the story of the Bible is a story of promise (Ps. 43:5, Lam. 3:19-24, Ez. 11:17, Lk. 22:16, Rom. 15:4, 12).

Discussion

What approaches or Scriptures have you found helpful?

Community news and close

SR News:

1. R4 Daily Service – next broadcast 27 June
2. Some events that I have participated in are on YouTube:
Webinar at Aberdeen University Centre for Autism and Theology:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcBJWfnQD_g&t=168s
Trinity Forum Europe discussion with Dr Joanna Leidenhag from Leeds University
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAm1P5F1yzM>
3. Training approach: In discussion with Bristol, Manchester, Oxford Diocese, Manchester Methodists
4. Speaking at event 23 May: Autism and Theology: What can autistic thinking offer to the church? Hosted by the Anglican Chaplain to the University of Reading.
<https://www.facebook.com/events/671316970832879>
5. Looking at PhD: can Christian theology overcome the currently antagonistic perspectives and provide a context for constructive dialogue and discourse about autism?

Anyone else?

Next discussion: Doodle Poll – 21 May?

AOB