

Chapter One – Examining the Characteristics of American Christianity

1. Revivalism teaches that the Christian life begins with a personal decision to accept Christ (p.14). Why is this appealing? What is the danger?
2. Pietism teaches that the Christian life is chiefly marked by growth in good works (p.15). Why is that appealing? What is the danger?
3. Mysticism teaches that we can have direct, unmediated access to God (p.18). Why is that appealing? What is the danger?
4. Enthusiasm teaches that the spiritual life happens inside of us (p.21). Why is that appealing? What is the danger?
5. Legalism puts the Law above the Gospel by establishing requirements for salvation beyond repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (p.22). Why is that appealing? What is the danger?
6. Moralism teaches that the Gospel can be reduced to improvements in behavior (p.28). Why is that appealing? What is the danger?
7. The parable of the Prodigal Son has “three slaveries”: Slavery to passion and sin, slavery to despair of God’s mercy, and slavery obedience to God’s commandments (p.33). Why do we tend towards slavery instead of sonship?

Chapter Two – God Speaks

1. The three attributes that American Christianity gives the Bible are inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility (p.42). Why isn’t this enough?
2. The clarity of the Bible is something we believe in as Lutherans that many other Christians simply don’t believe. Is Scripture clear?
3. The Bible is sufficient, it is enough for our life and our faith. Why do some argue that it isn’t? Does the Bible answer the question “what is God’s will for my life?”?
4. We believe the Bible is efficacious, it has power and authority. If one loses sight of this truth, what happens?
5. Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. The Bible as instruction manual is horrible. What are the shortcomings with this approach?
6. Our doctrine IS our salvation (p.51). Reaction?
7. Why are these two questions important when reading Scripture? 1) What is God teaching about Himself? 2) Where is the Comfort?
8. The Bible is awesome? Why and how??

Chapter Three – How Bad a Boy Are You?

1. American Christianity softens the Bible's teaching on sin (p.58). How does revivalism, pietism and/or mysticism feed into that?
2. Original sin is the sin we have through Adam. Why is that an important doctrine?
3. Sin, death and the devil are always together. What does that mean?
4. Our sinful nature comes first, then our sinful actions. What difference does that make?
5. Which of the three functions of the law (curb, mirror, guide) is most compelling to you?
6. The discussion of free will (p.66ff) is critical to our understanding of our relationship to God. Do we have free will or not?
7. When we see Jesus on the cross, we see what we deserve (p.70). What does Jesus suffering and death say about our sin?

Chapter Four - The One who is Always and Only for You

1. Much of American Christianity is focused in the Christian and not on Christ (p.73). Have you seen this? Fallen for it?
2. The Old Testament is all about Jesus. Which of the three texts made the most profound impact on you?
3. In Genesis 3:15, we hear a pronouncement against the devil, and his offspring sin and death. Had you heard it unpacked that way before?
4. The OT sacrificial system points us to Jesus. What does American Christianity do with the OT in general and sacrifices in particular?
5. The cross is our theology; our preaching and teaching centers on it. Is the cross absent in American Christianity? More than just the sanctuary?
6. Jesus suffering and death on the cross centers on physical pain, shame and spiritual agony. Why does modern theology tend to not preach or teach on this or the wrath of God?

Chapter Five – Your Name: Righteous

1. What is the Great Exchange?
2. The Gospel is not the fact of the cross or the event of the cross. It is the word of the cross, the promise of the cross. What does this mean?
3. Repentance is the requirement and the result of God's Word coming to mankind. How do the parables of Luke 15 demonstrate this?
4. The two parts of repentance include 1) contrition that affirms we are sinners deserving of God's wrath and 2) faith. American Christianity thinks this happens once or a handful of times. Why is that so wrong?
5. Conversion is God's work. Why isn't it our work, our decision?
6. The righteousness of the Gospel belongs to Jesus but is graciously given to us. What is "passive" righteousness?
7. What does the Office of the Keys have to do with absolution? Forgiveness?
8. A good conscience is not a conscience without sin...A good conscience is a forgiven conscience (p.116). Did the court room analogy help this concept for you?

Chapter Six – Go Play Outside

1. Why does American Christianity seem to keep the spiritual life on the "inside"? What is lost by this?
2. The kingdom of God comes by promise and by faith, and Jesus connects this promise to water. How do you find the Spirit? Feel the Spirit?
3. American Christianity distrusts anything that is "outside" of us. Why? What is being missed out on?
4. Baptism is Gospel: the gift of God for the salvation of sinners. Why does American Christianity deny this truth?
5. Infant baptism is so anathema to American Christianity. Why should infants be baptized?
6. The Lord's Supper IS the body and blood, it IS the bread and wine. It brings life and salvation! Why would American Christianity minimize it by saying it is just symbolic?

Chapter Seven – The How of Good Works

1. American Christianity is confused about the how, what and the why of good works. What is the proper view of these?
2. How is baptism the battleground of the Christian life?
3. The four states of man's will (and charts on p.149) is a compelling topic. Did it clear anything up?
4. The four parts of the Christian good work includes what (p.154)? Why does that matter?
5. All good works are completely impossible without faith. True or false? Why?
6. Of the three danger consciences (p.158ff) which is the one you battle most?
7. How does suffering fit into the Christian life?

Chapter Eight – The Gift of a Neighbor and the Beginning of Love

1. Christian love is sacrifice, it is selfless, it is death (p.169). What is wrong with loving yourself?
2. Scriptures locate good works first in our homes and then with the folks we live and work with (p. 172). Why is vocation essential to understanding good works?
3. Worship is being served by Jesus (p.176). It's about God's work and Word, His speaking and giving. How does that challenge us? American Christianity?
4. What's wrong with "Relationship theology"?
5. Piety is the way our doctrine looks when lived (p.184). Piety flows from baptism, not a decision to follow Christ. How does baptism connect to daily life?
6. Of the three theological truths on page 187, which one stands out to you? Why?

Chapter Nine – Wrestling with God: Why Prayer is Suffering

1. The Command of Prayer is an invitation. How is this comforting?
2. The Promise of Prayer includes that He hears and answers! Have you thought that all along?
3. Jesus teaches us what we really need in this life. What is that?
4. The words we pray from scripture have an advantage over our “heart felt” prayers. What?
5. Prayer is taught! What have you learned about prayer from this chapter?
6. Prayer is warfare. Have you heard the term prayer warrior? How is that accurate?
7. Evangelism and mission are not to be motivated by worry or anxiety. Is Hope guilty of this?

Chapter Ten – The End of the World as We Know It

1. Why is American Christianity obsessed with the End Times?
2. American Christianity tends to premillennialism which teaches Jesus will come again to establish His Kingdom on Earth. How does that reflect in other parts of their theology?
3. Why do dispensationalists make a distinction between Israel and the Church? What danger does that pose?
4. What is the danger of the so-called “consistent, literal interpretation”?
5. Is history about the glory of God or the salvation of mankind?
6. The author gave five rules to reading the Book of Revelation (p.227ff). Which of those jumps out at you?

Chapter Eleven - Surprised by the Gospel

1. The Gospel is always a surprise. Is that true? Why?
2. Sin forgiven for you, sin destroyed for you, death swallowed up for you; how is this Gospel surprising?
3. Jesus undoes so much with a word; how does He have that power?
4. How is the Lutheran Church an alternative to American Christianity? What can we do to proclaim the treasure that is the Gospel?

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