

**B231 Frameworks for
Applied Theology**

Friday

Dr Paul Coulter

Today's timetable

Morning – Theological and Personal Reflection

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------|
| 1. | Experiential and reflective learning | 09.55 – 10.45 |
| 2. | Authority in theological & personal reflection | 11.00 – 11.50 |
| 3. | Practising reflection | 12.00 – 12.50 |

Afternoon – A matter of life and death

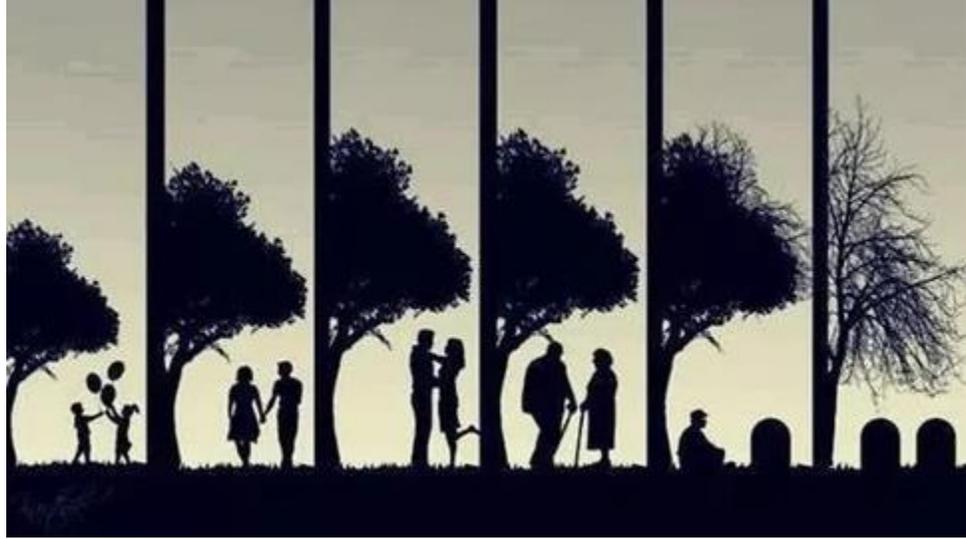
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| 4. | The sanctity of life and certainty of death | 13.40 – 14.30 |
| 5. | Group work – questions from experience | 14.40 – 15.30 |
| 6. | Feedback on reflection | 15.40 – 16.15 |

B231 Frameworks for Applied Theology

The Sanctity of Life and Certainty of Death

Outline

- a. Death is certain – life is uncertain
- b. A gospel perspective on life
- c. A gospel perspective on death



**Death is certain – life
is uncertain**

A QUESTION

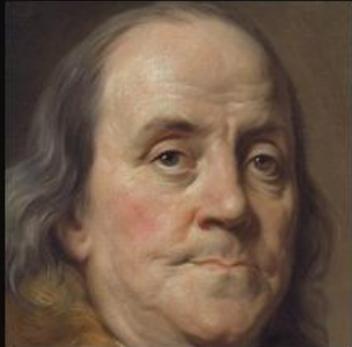
Is it ever right intentionally to end a human life (one's own or another's)?



What about?

- Suicide
- Assisted dying
- Abortion
- War
- Capital punishment
- Withdrawing or refusing treatment

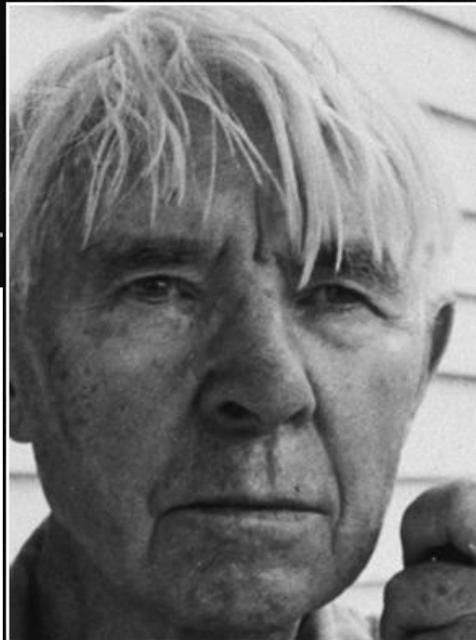
The Certainty of Death!



In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.

~ Benjamin Franklin

AZ QUOTES

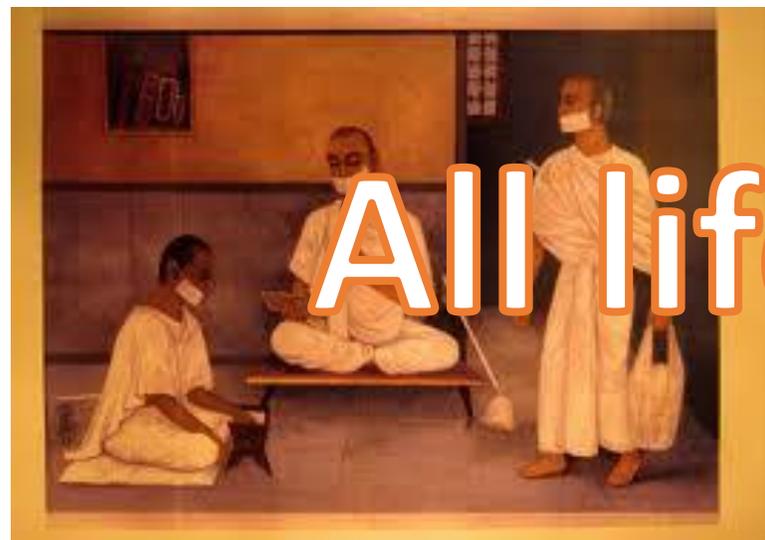


The greatest certainty in life is death. The greatest uncertainty is the time.

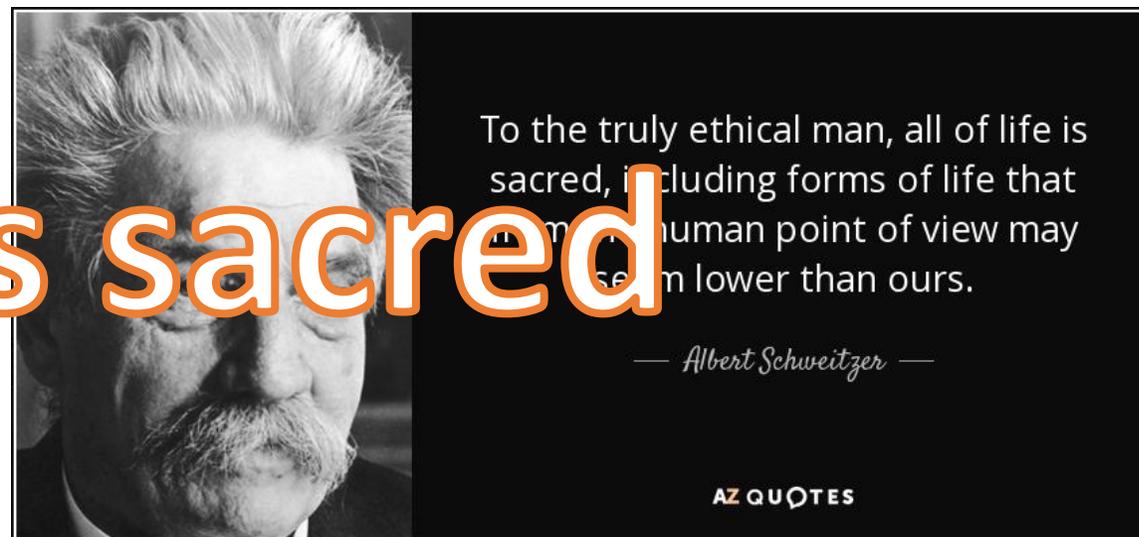
— *Carl Sandburg* —

AZ QUOTES

The Sanctity of Life?



All life is sacred



Home | Guga | News | GAP Project | Affiliated Sanctuaries | Great Primates | Support | Contact us

Some lives are sacred

GAP is an international movement to defend the rights of the non-human great primates – chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and bonobos, our closest relatives in the animal kingdom.

28 SEPTEMBER

Abortion is healthcare

My right to decide!

International Safe Abortion Day

What foundation?



United Nations

Peace, dignity and equality
on a healthy planet

About Us »

Our Work »

Events and News

Get Involved

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Foundation of International Human Rights Law

Human dignity

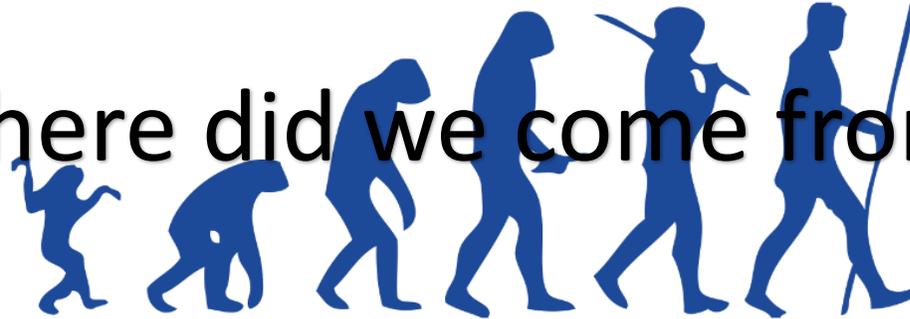
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is generally agreed to be the foundation of international human rights law. Adopted in 1948, the UDHR has inspired a rich body of legally binding international human rights treaties. It continues to be an inspiration to us all whether in addressing injustices, in times of conflicts, in societies suffering repression, and in our efforts towards achieving universal enjoyment of human rights.

It represents the universal recognition that basic rights and fundamental freedoms are inherent to all human beings, inalienable and equally applicable to everyone, and that every one of us is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

What is a human being?

Origins

Where did we come from?



Purpose

What are we here for?

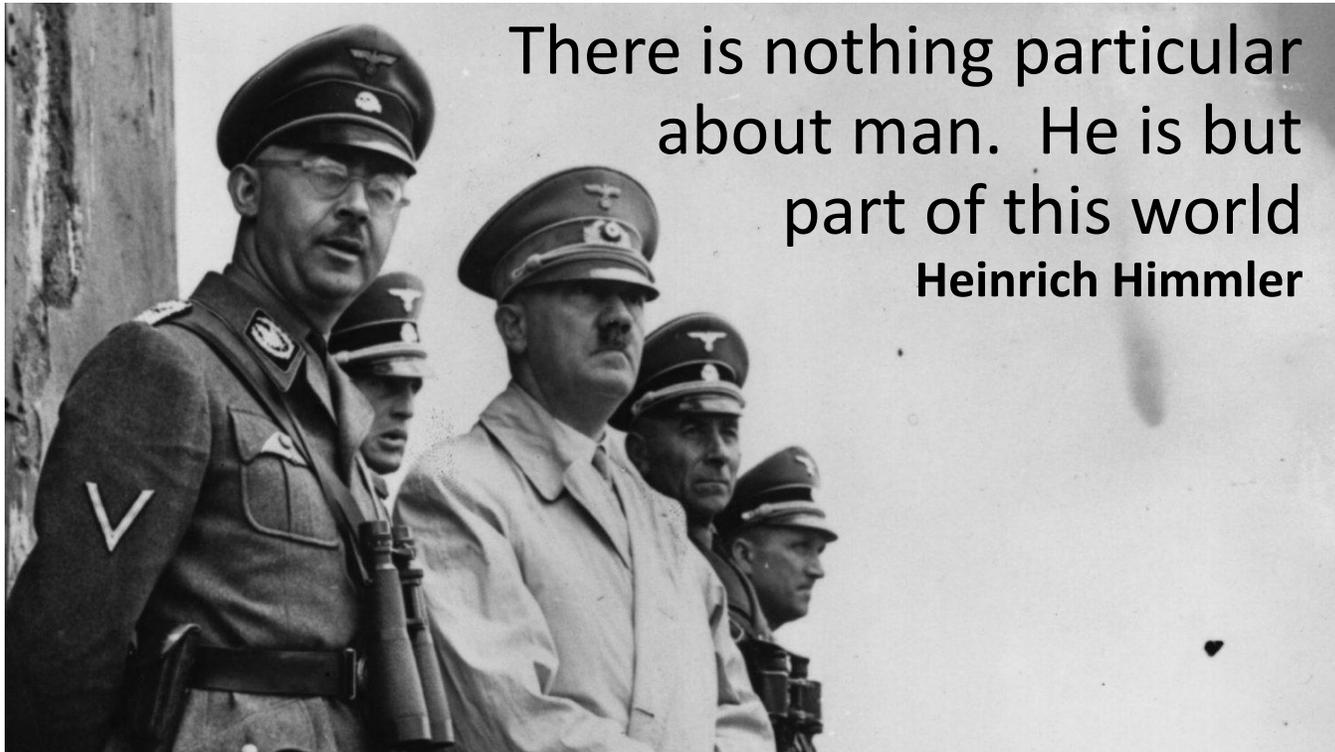


Destiny

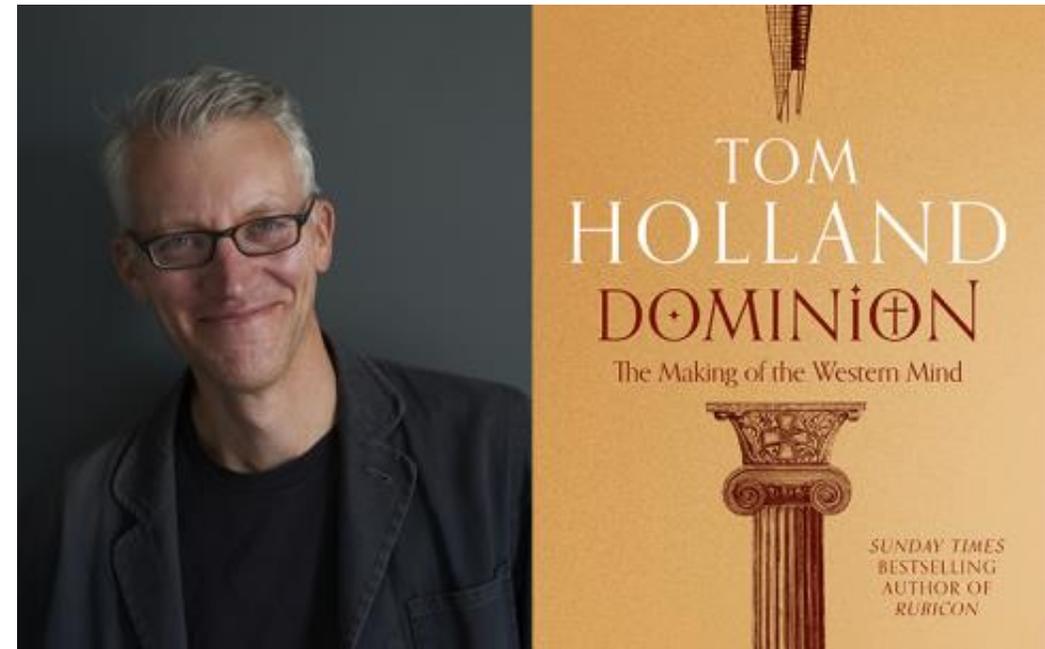
Where are we going?



What foundation?



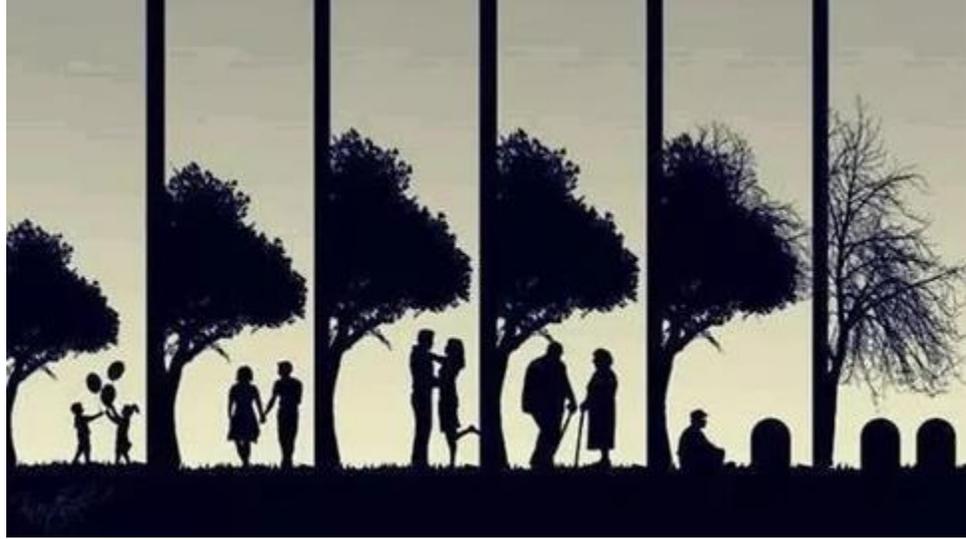
There is nothing particular
about man. He is but
part of this world
Heinrich Himmler



That human beings have rights; that they are born equal; that they are owed sustenance and shelter, and refuge from persecution: these were never self-evident truths. [...] ‘God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.’ This is the myth that we in the West still persist in clinging to.

Normative Scripture – the Gospel

- **God rules** (creation) – what was God's intention?
- **We rebelled** (sin) – what sins of belief and behaviour?
- **God rescues** (Christ) – how is Christ Lord over this?
- **We respond** (faith) – what does obedience look like?
- **God restores** (Spirit) – what hope and help are there?



A Gospel perspective on life

A Gospel Perspective on Life

God rules – every individual created in God's image

Origins

Purpose

Destiny

You On Day 1

- Genetically unique – new in the history of the universe
- A single cell the size of a grain of sand (not microscopic)
- A complex living system
- Not a cell of your mother's (though dependent on her)

Image from www.digizyme.com/cst_landscapes.html
obtained using X-ray, NMR and cryoelectron microscopy



A Gospel Perspective on Life

God rules – every individual created in God's image

Origins

We rebelled – rejecting our own and others' dignity

Purpose

Destiny

The biggest problem

the greatest obstacle to believing in human dignity — an attribute of persons that makes them morally unique within the universe — is to be found in the actual history of human behavior from earliest times to the present. [...] How, one might ask, can we speak of the dignity of a species containing so many members who are murderers, rapists, torturers, or— if not themselves active agents of atrocity—at least quite willing to ignore or deceive themselves about the murders, rapes, and tortures committed by others in their name?

Jeffrie G. Murphy (2007) 'The Elusive Nature of Human Dignity', *Hedgehog Review*

Sins around matters of life and death

- Untruths about the unborn child (not human / just a 'clump of cells')
- Demanding autonomous choice over the timing of another's or our own death (independence from God)
- Treating children as possessions to be sacrificed
- Misguided compassion (killing can right wrongs or undo suffering)
- Judging some lives to be 'not worth living'

What kind of society?

- There are no 'defective' people?
- Some lives are judged not worth living?
- The value of lives are conditional on being wanted?
- Suffering people are removed rather than cared for
- 'Healthcare services' defined to include killing?
- Parental love selective, not unconditional?

A Gospel Perspective on Life

God rules – every individual created in God's image

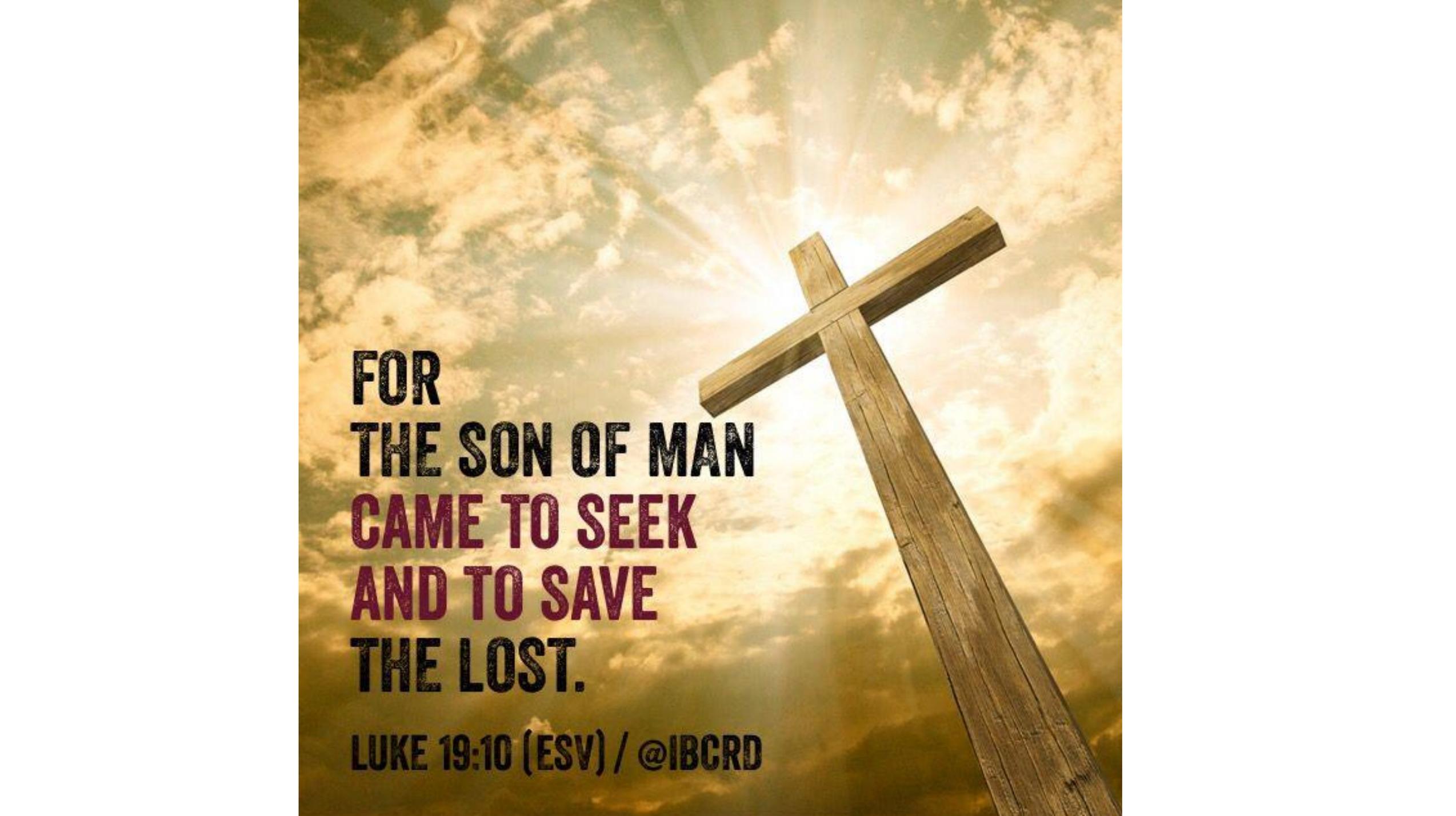
Origins

We rebelled – rejecting our own and others' dignity

God rescues – loved and died for by Jesus Christ

Purpose

Destiny



**FOR
THE SON OF MAN
CAME TO SEEK
AND TO SAVE
THE LOST.**

LUKE 19:10 (ESV) / @IBCRD

A Gospel Perspective on Life

God rules – every individual created in God's image **Origins**

We rebelled – rejecting our own and others' dignity

God rescues – loved and died for by Jesus Christ **Purpose**

We respond – we must repent, believe and obey

God restores – hope and help in this life and beyond **Destiny**

Human dignity's three FOUNDATIONS

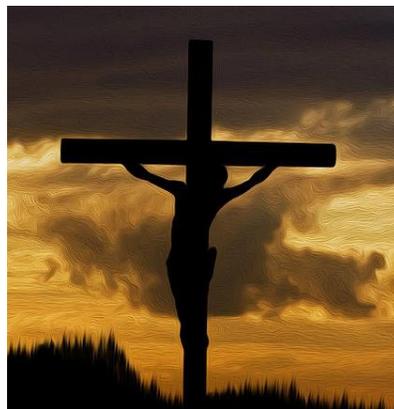
Past



Creation

Faith

Present



Christ

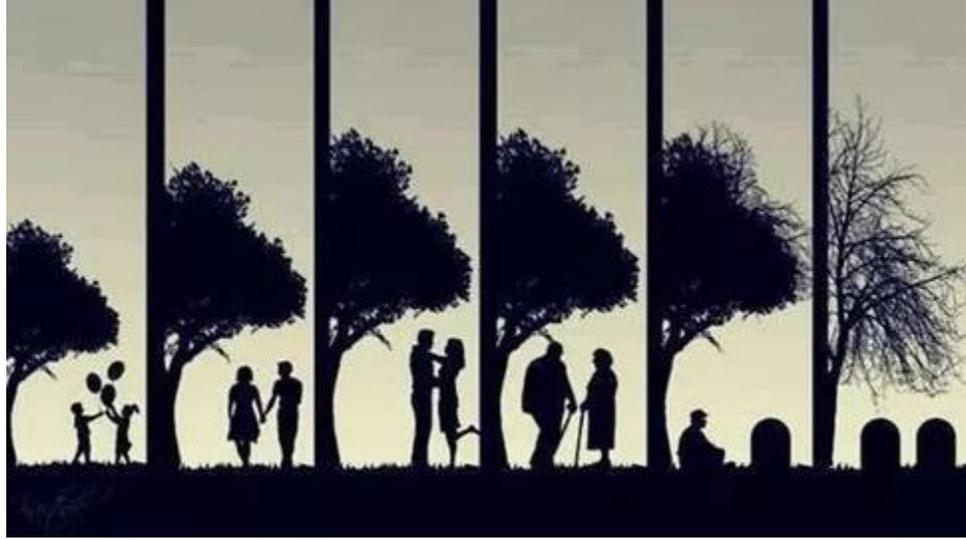
Love

Future



Consummation

Hope



A Gospel perspective on death

A Gospel Perspective on DEATH

God rules – every individual created in God's image

We rebelled – seeking autonomy; reaping suffering and death

WHY DEATH?

And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.' **Genesis 3 v22**

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement **Hebrews 9 v27**

A CONSISTENT COMMAND

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. **Genesis 9 v6**

You shall not murder. **Exodus 20 v13**

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgement.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement. **Matthew 5 v21-22**

the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient [...] for murderers **1 Timothy 1 v9**

But as for [...] murderers [...] their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.” **Revelation 21 v8**

LIMITS ON AUTONOMY

“See now that I, even I, am he,
and there is no god beside me;
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”

Deuteronomy 32 v39

They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. **1 Peter 4 v4-5**

IS SUICIDE A SIN?

Thomas Aquinas (13th century) *Summa Theologiae* 2A 2AE, Q. 64, A. 5

“to kill oneself is altogether unlawful for three reasons”:

1. “it stands against natural law and charity
2. It injures the community of which we are part
3. We are not our own (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Corinthians 6:20)

A sin (if chosen in one’s right mind), but NOT unpardonable (Romans 8:38-39)

A Gospel Perspective on DEATH

God rules – every individual created in God's image

We rebelled – seeking autonomy; reaping suffering and death

God rescues – Christ died and is risen; death is defeated

Never die?

- Jesus said to [Martha],
 - “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
- **John 11:25-26**

Death Defeated through death

- Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.
 - **Hebrews 2:14-15, NLT**

A Gospel Perspective on DEATH

God rules – every individual created in God's image

We rebelled – seeking autonomy; reaping suffering and death

God rescues – Christ died and is risen; death is defeated

We respond – we must repent, believe and obey

THE LIVING DEAD

having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised **him** from the dead. **Colossians 2 v12**

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **Romans 6 v4**

LIFE IS NOT THE HIGHEST GOOD

Forbidding suicide and honouring martyrs,
Christians recognized life as a real but not ultimate
good – a great good, but not the highest good

Gilbert Meilaender (1996) *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Carlisle: Paternoster, p.70

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **Philippians 1 v21**

OBEDIENCE: THE SPHERE OF FREEDOM

On the one hand, we ought not to choose death or aim at death. But on the other hand, neither should we act as if continued life is the only, or even the highest, good. It is not a god, but a gift of God. Thus we should neither aim at death nor continue the struggle against it when its time has come. 'Allowing to die' is permitted; killing is not. Within these limits lies the sphere of our freedom.

Gilbert Meilaender (1996) *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Carlisle: Paternoster, p.69.

A Gospel Perspective on DEATH

God rules – every individual created in God's image

We rebelled – seeking autonomy; reaping suffering and death

God rescues – death defeated by Christ's death & resurrection

We respond – we must repent, believe and obey

God restores – hope in this life and beyond

DEATH DEFEATED, NOW BUT NOT YET

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’

‘Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?’

1 Corinthians 15 v54-55

HELP: OUR DUTY TO OTHERS

whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. James 4 v17

- Palliative Care
- Elderly 'mission field'
- The wisdom of elders

A GOOD DEATH?

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

2 Timothy 4 v6-8

**A life well
lived**

AND

**a certain
hope**

B231 Frameworks for Applied Theology

**Group work: Questions
from Experience**

Practice – Step 1 [10 minutes alone]

Choose one of the issues mentioned in this class that you have personally experienced or been affected by

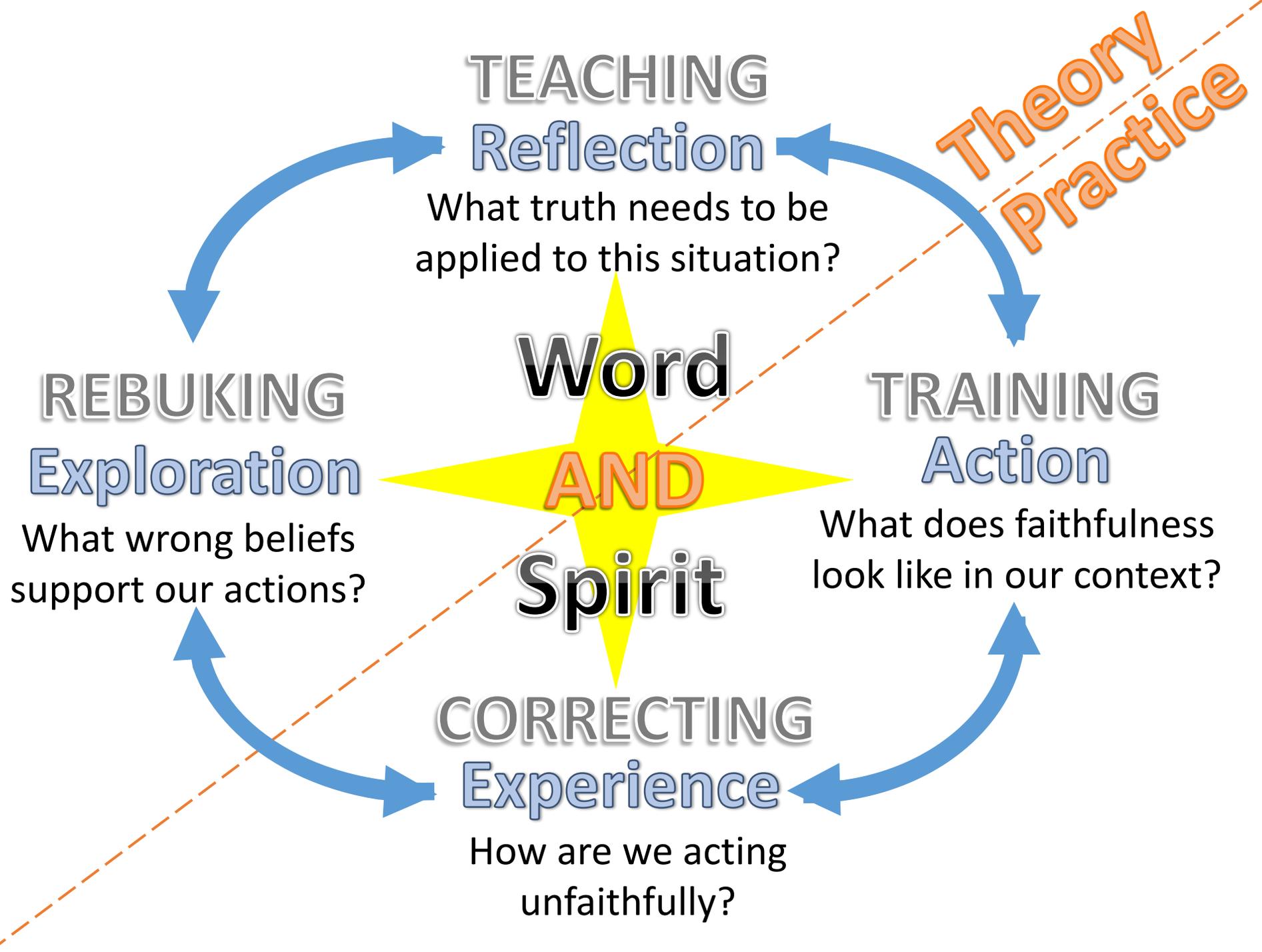
- A. Look Back** – how did you feel and react and why?
- B. Look In** – what is God saying about your reaction?
- C. Look forward** – how might you do better in future?

Practice – Step 2 [30 minutes in threes]

Describe your reflections to each other. Focus on the questions that the experience raised for you and what potential answers you can think of to those questions.

Help each other to frame your understanding of the issue in light of the gospel and Scripture.

What questions remain unanswered and how can you live well and faithfully despite them?



Practice – Step 3 [10 minutes together]

What did you learn through this process?

How does the gospel vision of life or death differ from the common attitude among the young people you are working with?