

LEARNING TO INHABIT THE KINGDOM:

CREATIVE APPROACHES TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING FOR DISCIPLESHIP & MINISTRY

In what context did the learning taking place?

IME Phase 1, ordinands and trainee readers. Contact time for Biblical Studies modules in Lincoln. A full Saturday intensive, four sessions with the same group of students.

Is this something you used for teaching and learning or as a form of assessment?

Something to vary the approach in teaching and learning.

Describe the activity / approach that you used (in note form)

As students regather after each break, I play about 5 minutes of DVD clip or piece of music relevant to the topic of the session. This is followed by discussion of theological themes. Recent examples:

Film

- Russell Crowe's *Noah* (start at 55 minutes, 21 seconds). The tension in God's nature between justice and mercy is played out in the tension between Noah and his family, which threatens to tear them apart.
- Christian Bale's Moses in *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (start at 1 hour, 16 minutes, 35 seconds). Moses tries to use his previous (military) expertise to liberate his people; it doesn't work. God speaks to Moses in a most surprising and unexpected form!
- Joss Ackland's Noah in *Testament: The Bible in Animation – Creation and the Flood* (start at 7.00 minutes). Noah tells the Genesis 1 creation account. This makes the link observed by Brueggemann and others between creation, un-creation and re-creation after the flood. (Russell Crowe's *Noah* also does this, but less powerfully)
- *The Bible* recent Channel 5 TV mini-series (first five minutes of episode 3, 'Hope'). Impending disaster for Jerusalem; Jeremiah uses his wooden yoke as a visual teaching aid.
- *Nativity* BBC mini-series 2011 (first five minutes of episode 2). Interesting characterisation of Gabriel, the shepherds, and Joseph (feeling alienated from Mary by her pregnancy).

Music

- U2's '40', sung live as final encore on the 2011 tour. Words of assurance from the opening of Psalm 40 are unexpectedly juxtaposed with the repeated, anguished 'How long?' of Psalm 13. Holding together what may at first seem contradictory.
- Sinéad O'Connor's 2007 *Theology* album, where she sings a mixture of Old Testament texts. Eg 'Dark I am yet lovely', her version of Song of Songs, full of the breathless intoxication and anxiety of erotic love. Compare this to the biblical original, and to Martin Smith's recent 'Song of Solomon', where romantic yearning is directed to God by the worshipper, using a phrase from the biblical song.
- Handel's 'I know that my redeemer liveth' from *Messiah*. This appropriation of the text from Job 19 raises questions about how we interpret those verses, and whether the Old Testament offers anything that resonates with the New Testament hope of resurrection.

How was students' learning enhanced by using this approach?

Significant theological issues in the biblical texts were revealed and explored through the film clip or song and the few minutes of free-flowing discussion which followed. Differences between the biblical text and the film/song helped highlight interpretive choices made by the artists as readers of the biblical texts.

The approach provided variety in the teaching method, stimulating thought by using a different medium. In the discussions that followed we heard some of the voices which tended to be quieter during more conventional classes.

What further thoughts do you have about how this approach might be adapted, improved or developed further?

Keep looking out for more songs and films with biblical resonance.

The time spent on the activity could be enlarged on occasion, if a particularly significant topic was raised and the teacher judged that the discussion was developing in a particularly fruitful way.

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