

Background reading material is available for some of the subjects.

The information on the New Age is drawn from “The New Age Movement” by Philip Lochhaas



Six
Discussions

Matters of Importance

DEALING WITH GUILT

The real, the experienced and the imagined.

MAKING & BREAKING PEOPLE

Brave New World. Genetics. Abortion & Euthanasia.

MAKING & BREAKING RELATIONSHIPS

Marriage, De Facto and Divorce

COPING WITH STRESS

Setting Boundaries & finding Peace

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

The healthy & the unhealthy

SEARCHING FOR A NEW DIMENSION

New Age and a search for meaning

Dealing with GUILT

Sunday Readings:

Psalm 51

Luke 18:9-14

1 Corinthians 10:14-31



TO BEGIN WITH

What is guilt?
Is it a feeling, a fact?
What brings guilt about?
What are other feelings
associated with it?

Have you heard people say they felt
guilty when you felt they had no
cause to feel that way?
Where might false feelings of
guilt come from and what can be
done about them?

4. Humanity's only need is not the removal or forgiveness of sin,
but transformation - the awareness of divinity. We are responsible
for everything that happens to us, including our future.

5. Transformation can be produced by a wide variety of techniques,
to achieve altered consciousness including. almost anything that
can trigger a mystic or psychic experience...

sensory overload sensory isolation chanting
hypnosis/self hypnosis meditations (esp yoga)
feverish dancing magical rites
human potential seminars dream journals
rebirthing body disciplines (martial arts)
self-healing endurance tests sleep deprivation
fire walking pyramidology use of crystals
astrology channeling spirits guided imagery
visualisation deep massage therapeutic touch
acupuncture

(Please note that the fact that they can be used as such does not
necessarily make *all* these wrong.)

IN CONCLUSION

Pray for those who are seeking something beyond this life.

Pray for wisdom to answer.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill your own life with the presence
of God

- Has the church failed them in that search?
- How can Christ answer the search?

The Five Principles...

1. All is one. Therefore all is God. God is an impersonal force. Good, evil, life, death and all living things are one.

2. Humanity, like all creation, is divine and has unlimited potential.

3. Humanity's basic flaw is its ignorance of its divinity and oneness with all things. Humanity will arrive at perfection through an evolutionary or awakening process. (When a sufficient number of people realise, a critical mass is reached and all humanity will believe and be transformed.

David's adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, Uriah are the foundation to Psalm 51.

From the account from 2 Samuel 11-12 and Psalm 51.

Do you think David felt guilty?

Do you think he was guilty?

How did God react to David's actions?
What were the consequences?
Was David forgiven?

How did David react?

How did he deal with his guilt?

Compare Luke 18:9-14
with John 9:39-41
and 1 John 1:5-10

What are the different attitudes reflected here?

What is the appropriate attitude in God's sight?

What does guilt do to people when it is not
confessed?

1 Corinthians 10:14-31

Paul was concerned that some people who were exercising their freedom of conscience in some of the peripheral matters of food, were leading others to do the same acts but contrary to *their* consciences.

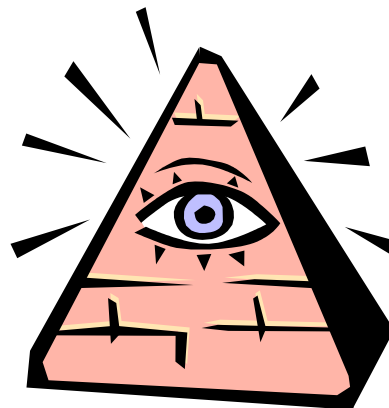
What sort of relationship has conscience to guilt?

When do we need to curtail our own freedom to save others from a guilty conscience?

TO FINISH...

Have a time of quiet confession, after which the leader could read 1 John 1:9

searching for a NEW DIMENSION



See also

Sunday Readings

1 Corinthians 2
Psalm 19
John 16:5-15

TO BEGIN WITH...

The New Age Movement is a rather confusing collection of ideas which tend to infiltrate a number of areas of life and include a mixture of truth and error.

Five basic principles stand out. Discuss each one with these questions in mind:-

- What examples have you seen in film, other entertainment, education, and in day to day attitudes of people which reflect these principles?
- What does the Bible say about them (see the readings)?
- With the object of *not* alienating him or her, How would you reply to someone who said, "This is what I believe."?
- What do you think people are looking for in these principles?

In Matthew 18:15-20 what are some stages suggested for dealing with conflict?

In what sort of cases might you use such a strategy?

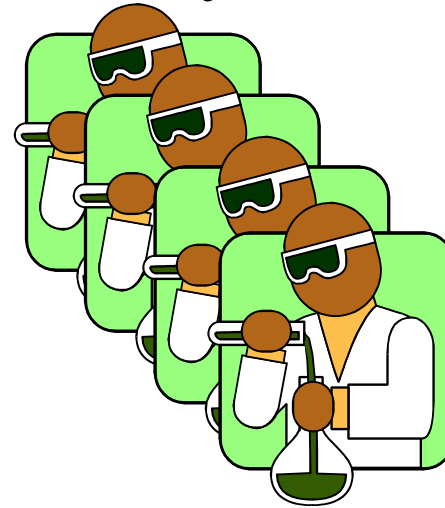
Can you think of times when Jesus refused to be drawn into conflict...

...and other times when he engaged in conflict quite fiercely?

IN CONCLUSION

Pray for churches suffering from conflict. For those going through

Making & Breaking PEOPLE



Readings

Genesis 1:24-31

Psalms 8

John 5:19-27

TO BEGIN WITH

Read the scenario paper "St Eugene's General Hospital"

What are the potential problems with genetic engineering?

What are the potential advantages?

Does the Bible have anything to say here when it portrays God as Creator and people being in God's image? (What does that mean?)

In the light of the biblical passages discuss...

ABORTION

What do you think of abortion?

Is it murder?

When does life start?

At conception?

When the brain develops?

At birth?

When a person becomes self-aware?

Some other time?

What is the significance of *potential*

life (ie If the foetus is allowed to develop
it will produce life. To abort it cuts off the
potential.

Is it a matter of choice?

Is it a matter of a woman's right to control her
own body?

Whose rights should take precedence?

Are there times when abortion is unjustified/ justified?

... mother's life in danger?

... rape cases?

... abnormalities detected in the foetus?

... extra child would bring abnormal

hardship to a family?

Women who have had abortions often feel

guilt (sometimes despite their stated convictions).

Given that the abortion has occurred, how can such
feelings be dealt with?

An early consideration in a conflict is to try to put ourselves in the
other person's shoes.

Ask - Could it be that I am wrong.

- Can I understand the viewpoint of the other
person?

If I still think I am right, then consider...

What is likely to happen if I insist I'm right?

(Is it worth it? What serves the gospel?

What would Jesus do?)

What steps can be taken to minimise damage and
maintain relationships?

At what point should I just walk away?

The Bible talks of us being in conflict with God.

In Romans 5:1-11 how does God react?

When we know we have been wronged, what can we learn from
God's attitude to us?

Is there something to be learned from our first four discussions?

In 1 Samuel 25 what good example did Abigail set.

Dealing with CONFLICT



Sunday Readings

1 Sam 25:14-25, 32-35

Psalm 120

Matthew 18:15-20

TO BEGIN WITH:-

Conflict occurs when two people find they disagree. Mild conflict is actually very healthy. without it we could not learn from others or be challenged in any way. The severity of the conflict will depend on what happens after the disagreement has been discovered...

What are some of the factors which cause conflict to escalate?

What is the experience of being in conflict like?

In the light of the biblical passages discuss...

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is the *deliberate* act of ending a life of someone who is in a terminal condition. This may include the withdrawal, *prematurely* of the normal things which sustain life. It is distinct from the withdrawal of *abnormal* life-sustaining treatment when there is no hope for the recovery of the patient. (A quick glance at the above may suggest some situations which will fall into a 'grey' area)

Discuss the reasons why people seek/ push for euthanasia to be legalised? What are the issues?

Issues of dignity

Issues of palliative care (pain management).

Distress to the family

The right to control one's life

The pressure to not be a burden on society

The "slippery slide"

ie The perceived tendency for public opinion to shift from mere approval of euthanasia towards seeing it as a duty of the terminally ill, and for health professionals and family to terminate life without the patient's express approval.

Issues of caring, and the sharing of suffering, the grieving process, and the opportunities through suffering of making one's peace with God.

AT THE CONCLUSION

Pray for governments, hospitals, and ethicists for wisdom in these matters. Pray for those who have had abortions, and for the terminally ill, and their families.

Making & Breaking RELATIONSHIPS



Sunday Readings

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Psalms 128

Matthew 19:3-12

TO BEGIN WITH...

What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of marriage and de facto relationships in society today?

Marriage has the blessing of Scripture, but are de facto relationships so different? Is "the piece of paper" significant?

What is your reaction to Bettina Arndt's article...
"Double or Nothing"
SMH Dec. 2, 1999

From Mark 1:32-45

Comment on...

Jesus' priorities.

His attitude to pressure from people

What happens when people do not respect our wishes.

Who or what sets the agenda for your life?

"Prevention is better than Cure"

In summary, When people are facing stressful situations, or are beginning to feel stressed. What steps can be taken to alleviate the situation?

IN CONCLUSION:

Read Exodus 18:13-27

What reasons could be given for Moses' workaholicism? (ie. Why do people generally overwork?)

How did Moses' father-in-law suggest that Moses should deal with his stresses?

Suggest some ways in which people can set boundaries in their work and involvements.

What attitude of mind is suggested by Matthew 6:25-34.

In the light of the Sunday Readings, Genesis 2:18-25 and Ephesians 5:21-33...

What do you see as the purpose of marriage?
(See also the Prayer Book marriage ceremony)

What is the difference between marriage, and any other close friendship (ie what defines a marriage as exclusive?)

Why is divorce so much contrary to what God wants? What are the possible consequences?
When is it permissible? Is re-marriage permissible?

Where do single (never married) people and those single through death or divorce fit into all this?

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH SHOULD BE DOING ABOUT MARRIAGE, DIVORCE & DE FACTO RELATIONSHIPS?

What preventative measures can be taken?

Providing teaching?

Taking a stand?

with those who are non-church people?

with church attenders generally?

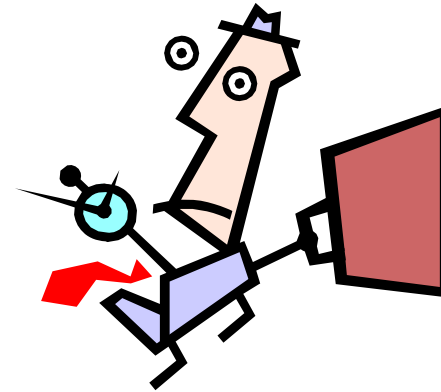
with those who have lay, or
clerical leadership?

if so, to what extent?

Other recommendations (in the light of Scripture)

IN CONCLUSION

coping with S-T-R-E-S-S



Sunday Readings

Exodus 18:13-27

Psalms 4

Mark 1:32-45

TO BEGIN WITH

What do you think causes stress?

Think in terms of

physical

emotional

spiritual

How much can be related to our own attitude?

Discuss what causes you most stress.

Are there certain types of people who seem to cause you more stress?