

#’s 1-4 Replacement Presuppositions for Doing Faith & Church

Psalm 46... What a great passage to just sit with, listen to it and relax into it... And that is what we will be doing for the next couple of weeks: remembering that God is God, on the throne and taking care of the God business. We then are just trying to be faithful and real. I recommend of you’re checking out these notes to start with reading and praying Psalm 46! Really.

I started making notes on some new “presuppositions” soon after I moved to Bethesda, and many of them have clarified thru our two-year journey. I think they are important, because in some ways they have been a signposts for me as a leader, reflections on you as a community of faith, and I believe, promptings from the Spirit of God.

This doesn’t mean that you are not able to disagree with the eight presuppositions that we’ll look at over the coming two weeks. You are people of liberty, wisdom, and above all, the same Spirit upon which I try to rely for wisdom and truth. I like to think of the next two weeks of sermons as akin to when Paul would say something like, *“Hey, this is me talking here, not the Lord.”*

So, I invite you to listen, participate, see what resonates and sinks in, and see what just bounces right off... but, at the beginning, in the middle and at the end, we will stop and thank God for being God, we will be still and allow God some space and time to move in us, and we will offer to our Saving God, all glory and honor due to One who authors such life giving peace and grace as we have come to enjoy.

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We all have sets of presuppositions... about small things like computers and cars, about big things and concepts like politics and economics, and deep things like our how we relate to God, how we relate to our neighbors, and how we “do faith.” Some presuppositions are spoken, and some are quiet, working in the background unseen but powerful, unspoken and often thereby not reflected upon.

I have been given certain presuppositions about faith and church since birth having been raised in churches all my life. I’ve come to question many of those presuppositions and search for new, alternative ones that reflect a faithful understanding of hope and grace and a desire to follow the Way of Christ.

1

Church is not supposed to be like picking kickball teams in PE.

The weak should not be weeded out while the cream rises to the top.

The undeserving should not be excluded and left in the bleachers.

Can we leave the systems that we’ve learned in education and sports and jobs behind?

Scripture is clear about partiality and looking at people in ways that undervalue them!

And we’re not in the running for “Church of the Year,” no awards, no accolades.

2

Folks don't always show up at our door because they need us... often we need them.

Many of you are here because God brought you to us bearing gifts!

Don't we already know what that looks like in an individual's life, "*God's gift to women?*"

We're talking about what the church represents in the world... a shared kingdom.

Just as God came to us and brought us into something bigger than ourselves...

We get this when we watch Jesus' insane method of welcoming & including.

3

People in other religions and churches are not our enemies.

And even if they were, how are we taught to treat our enemies, again?

Jesus taught about loving neighbors, and it seems to cross important boundaries!

We don't need to be frantic... watch Jesus in the garden, healing an enemy...

When people cease to be neighbors and become enemies, we cease to love and serve.

We can't communicate love if we can't communicate dignity and respect.

4

God really is "love."

We have tended to internalize fear in a very non-biblical way.

When we forget that God is love, we tend to fall back on "God is right."

And if God is right, you gotta get right! 'Cause you ain't!

Maybe we've made this really difficult to understand with our cultural economics of life?

How difficult would it be for us to hate, if we ever really got it, that God loves?

Obviously, these are not word-for-word notes from Sunday morning, but these are the first four of the eight presuppositions... and we alluded to a lot of scriptures through the morning. They were also intended to go from the lighter to the heavier, moving toward the recognition that God is in fact **love**. Of course, God is also truth, right, just, good, merciful, and many more deserving attributes than we can list. But, God really is love. The "greatest commands" and Jesus' own "new commandment" in John 13 become so clear to us in the light of a God who is love. Piety finds its true place in our lives when it's an action of receiving and giving love instead of an alternative to it. Church polity, history, methods and traditions fit most comfortably in the divine picture when allowed to point toward love.

It's all fun to talk about, but funner to do, even if we aren't getting it perfect!