

## **GROUP QUESTIONS: Sunday, May 28, 2023 - w/ Brian McClaren + Pastor Mindy**

### Announcements:

June 4th - Graduation Sunday! Don't forget a note of encouragement for the graduates Lucy and Dahlia

1. What's one thing you're looking forward to this summer?
2. If something stood out to you, take a minute to briefly share with the group.
3. Brian McClaren acknowledged that there is a lot of difference between religions and peoples in the world. He suggests that the difference is not the problem. The problem is that we build identity by reinforcing hostility toward the other. In other words we learn who we are by learning who we are against or we learn who we are by learning who is against us. He asks - can we find a way of defining our christian identity that sends us toward the other with love and hospitality rather than with fear and hostility?

Does this idea resonate with you? What might it look or sound like when we figure out who we are based on who we are against? What might it look or sound like when we figure out who we are based on who is against us? What might it look and sound like when we approach those different from us with love and hospitality rather than fear and hostility? What does that require of us that fear and hostility does not?

4. Brian McClaren says that if we do not come to terms with the history of the church and what harm it has done we may still have the worst atrocities ahead of us. He cites examples of the holocaust and colonization of native americans, slavery and support of nuclear war as a few well known examples. Said another way, history often repeats itself until we face it.

If you believe this dynamic is true, what can you do, say, consider or be open to in an effort to not repeat history? How might what happened before us impact us? How do you think it influences what happens in the future?

5. McClaren says we must face how the church's doctrines have been used as weapons and reexamine these doctrines so they might bring peace and healing rather than destruction.

He gives the examples of creation being used to fight science but it could be used to emphasize that we all come from the same source. We are all related to one another.

Doctrine of original sin has said that God hates everybody except the few redeemed and saved but it could be understood as the desire to play God. The desire to judge for ourselves who are the good guys and who are the bad guys.

Is there a traditional doctrine you currently struggle with? If yes, would you be willing to share it? Is there a doctrine that you have rediscovered that gives you hope and renewed faith? How do you see a change in doctrine producing a change in actions?

6. McClaren said his other faith friends have told him that having a christian as a neighbor is always the worst because they will never actually be their friend. They will not enjoy you for being you but rather attempt to use your connection to convert you. It seems as though christians always have a deeper agenda of conversion.

How does this statement about Christians make you feel? What does it make you want to do? What does it make you think?

7. McClaren suggests we need to learn to be collaborators with people of other faiths to face the problems of our world today. He says it requires us to reexamine how we view God's presence in the world and the work of the spirit in the world. Can we see the caring and loving of one another as evidence of seeing the Spirit in the world? Can we come together with Jews, Muslims, atheists...and see how the spirit might work through us all for the good of all?

What do you think? What is hard about this? Does anything excite you about this?