

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 4, Year 3

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 4, Year 3

Date Completed

____/____/____ Doctrine of Salvation [Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments:

____/____/____ Leading Worship/Teaching: [Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

____/____/____ Joy: [Estimated time: _____]

Mentor Comments

Participant Signature

Mentor Signature

I. Doctrine of Salvation

1. In terms of doctrinal knowledge this is both the area you will need to have greatest mastery of for your examination in classis as well as the area you are probably already best prepared for. This has been a area of primary focus in the Protestant Reformation. The doctrine of salvation played a central role in Luther's complaint against the Roman Catholic church. Calvin too focused on this area. For this reason much of the focus traditionally within the Reformed tradition in studying and preaching in this area has been *contra* the Roman Catholic tradition. You will need to review this material and have a high degree of mastery of it for ministry amongst people who have grown up with these terms and within this frame of reference. At the same time the diversity we currently face in a society of peoples not from Christian cultures means that we also have to look at questions and learn language to communicate what the gospel is in terms they can understand.
2. Review your tradition:
 - a. Page through once again the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt to just remind yourself of what is in those confessions. Both focus predominantly on this doctrinal area.
 - b. Review the section "Doctrine of the Application of the Word of Redemption" in Louis Berkhoff's Manual of Christian Doctrine. Berkhoff isn't flashy but he concisely covers the traditional areas and topics and provides Biblical examples of his points, something that is important to know for a classical examination of the area.
 - c. Read Donald McKim's Introducing the Reformed Faith (if you don't have a copy we'll order one for you) chapter on Salvation. It will be interesting for you (and should be telling) that his treatment of the Doctrine of Salvation is broader than Berkhoff's for the reasons I mentioned above. The questions and assumptions of our audiences have changed forcing us perhaps to lighten up on some of the detail and focus on the big picture.
3. Salvation
 - a. Be careful of your assumptions. You may assume that when you talk about "salvation" that your listener understands the word the same way you do. You may assume that when you say "the gospel" everyone in church understands that term the same way you do. I remember an elder in my church exclaiming in a worship committee meeting that in the he had not heard "the gospel" presented from the pulpit in the last 10 years. What did he mean? He didn't say it to offend or insult me or the previous pastor, but if you can figure out what he was saying you will have a good understanding of what he understands "the gospel" and "salvation" to mean.
 - b. The reduction of "the gospel" to atonement and "salvation" to hell-avoidance:
 - i. American Evangelicalism is in my opinion the convergence of the Protestant Reformation and American marketing culture.
 - (1) The Protestant Reformation pointed a spotlight on the area of atonement, salvation by grace and it was over this area specifically that those of left the

Roman Catholic church in Europe protested. As the history of the Protestant Reformation continued groups continued to fragment around these issues. One of the more important divisions for our tradition is between the Arminians and the Reformed. (You can read about that in the Canons of Dordt). In terms of evangelism, the “target audience” for the Protestant church tended to be Roman Catholics and nominalists, Protestant and Catholics. The goal of missions was to help Catholics and nominalists experience the certainty of their salvation. (The Heidelberg Catechism is very much written to help those from a Roman Catholic background experience the “comfort and joy” of their salvation ,no longer fearing God’s judgment.)

- (2) The Great Awakening in England and America as well as the Methodist movement (and others) heightened the study and discipline of evangelism. Itinerant preachers traveled and held meetings in the open air, seeking the conversion of the nominalists in the midst of Christendom. These obviously were the seeds of revivalism in America. After WWII the Evangelicals, differentiating themselves from the liberals while seeking their own form of ecumenism. The Arminian/Calvinist split divided them, baptism divided them, but they could easily agree to two basic things: substitutionary atonement and salvation understood as escaping the judgment of hell.
 - (3) Probably the cleanest, clearest example of this is the program “Evangelism Explosion”. In this program Christians are encouraged to go door to door (Fuller Brush company method) and ask the door opener “If you were to die tonight do you know where you would go?” If they said no, assurance was offered in an exposition of substitutionary atonement and the offer was given to embrace this idea as their own. If they agreed with this then the assumption was they were “saved”. This is very quick and very clean. Churches could fight about a myriad of doctrinal positions and practices but all could agree that they didn’t want to see their friends, families, or neighbors suffering the torments of hell after death and all could agree that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was the instrument by which we no longer have to fear the penalty of our own sin.
 - (4) This clean and clear understanding of “the gospel” was helpful, but very quickly in real terms things got more complex. There were other expectations on the new convert: enfolded them into the church, addressing sinful and destructive patterns in their lives, developing new Christian disciplines, etc. Sometimes this process of assimilation into the Christian community went smoothly, sometimes it didn’t. Ambiguities raised additional questions: were they really saved? What does it mean to be saved?
- ii. It also became apparent to many that the culture itself changed. The fear of hell only proves to be a motivational factor if it is already assumed. Fewer and fewer Americans fear hell, and more and more Americans come from countries where they have no religious tradition of hell. Fewer and fewer Americans recognized things in their own lives as “sins” which needed to be atoned for. Increasingly it was recognized that the church’s definition of “salvation” which had been understood

- within a cultural framework was no longer as intelligible to many in the population. Much more foundational questions had to be addressed with regard the story of the world. Fortunately the Protestant impulse of returning to Scripture proved helpful.
- c. Understanding “salvation” from a variety of ways: See McKim for a list of these. It is important to understand that not going to hell is only one aspect of “salvation”, of all that Christ does and brings. This is especially important in figuring out how to describe “salvation” to the context you are working in.

4. Questions to Answer

- a. What are some of the things in your ministry context that people experience as their need to be saved from?
- b. Understanding NT terms for “salvation”
 - i. Read the story of Jesus and the Rich Man in the three Synoptics: Mk 10:17f, Mt. 19:16f, Luke 18:18f
 - (1) Do some research on the terms: (See your mentor for resources if you need guidance)
 - (a) Kingdom of God/heaven (Synoptics)
 - (b) Eternal Life (predominantly in John)
 - (c) Life in the age to come
 - (d) “in Christ” (not in this passage but predominant in Pauline literature)
 - (2) Jesus uses a, b, c synonymously in this passage and this becomes the core of Jesus’ teaching. What does it mean in your own words?
 - ii. How are the terms Jesus uses broader than simply hell avoidance?
- c. How can you articulate the “salvation” that Jesus offers to the people you work with?
 - i. What terms connect with them?
 - ii. What pictures, parables, metaphors communicate what Jesus is offering?
 - iii. How can these be show to no just be about things after they die, but impact everything in their lives today?

5. Means of Salvation: Substitutionary Atonement has been central to our tradition. The Bible, however, expresses other understandings of how Jesus saves us in addition to substitutionary atonement. It is important to know these Biblical themes as well and to be able to indicate passages where they can be found.

- a. Christus Victor: Jesus conquers sin, death, and the devil. Find some Biblical passages that teach this theme.
- b. The Restoration of true humanity and God’s creation: Jesus comes not just to “save our souls”, but to undo the fall, the curse, and its consequences. Find Biblical passages that teach this theme.
- c. Union with God: Jesus not only paid the penalty we deserved for our rebellion (substitutionary atonement), but also removed the obstacle separating us from each other and us from God. Find Biblical passages that teach this theme.

II: Teaching/ Preaching/ Leading Worship

Write an evangelistic sermon or lesson based upon your study of salvation.

1. Target your message for a particular audience that you minister to. Express the need for salvation in the terms you believe they most closely experience.
2. Use one of the means of salvation we described above. How does Jesus address the need they experience most intensely.
3. Express the goal of salvation in the terms that best fit the need and the means.

III: Joy

Take some time this month to take your temperature on how joy is functioning in your life. You can use these questions as a guide if you want to talk with your mentor about this area of your life.

1. Is joy currently a regular part of my spiritual experience. Why or why not?
2. If I have given reasons that joy is not a part of my current experience, are those good reasons or am I allowing secondary things to weigh me down?
3. When in my life was my sense of joy most acute? What happened? Did it stop? Why?
4. What does the Bible have to say about joy.
5. Bill Easum writes, "In the twenty-first century duty motivates nothing. Joy motivates everything." Am I currently more motivated by joy or duty?
6. What do I need to pray about, address, or change in my life?