

The Hidden Message of the Kingdom

Read Matthew 13:1-23, 34, 43, 44; Mark 10:15; John 3:1-5; 4:1-12;

1. If someone asked you what Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom was all about, what would you say? What did Jesus say?
2. How easy / difficult do you find the teachings of Jesus?
3. Read John 3:1-4; 4:1-12. What might you have said to Jesus if he had said to you what he said to Nicodemus (3:3) and the Samaritan woman (4:10)?
4. Steve said that "born again" terminology needs to be understood as a verb not an adjective. What did he mean and what difference will it make?
5. Do you think that we as Christians need to be born again? [that is using the term the way Jesus used it, not the way that it is most often used in evangelicalism].
6. Why might Jesus have answered people's questions with a question? (e.g. Matt 9:14-15; Mark 2:5-9; 4:38, 40; 12:14-17; Luke 2:48-49; 18:18-19; 20:1-4; John 18:33-34). Why are questions so important to our spiritual growth?
7. Why did Jesus speak in parables? (see Matt 13:11, then Jesus' answer in v11-13). Do you understand what Jesus is saying? Put it in your own words!
8. Brian McLaren informs us that the genius of a parable is "it doesn't grab you by the lapels and scream in your face, 'Repent, you vile sinner! Turn or burn!' Rather, it works gently, subtly, indirectly. It respects your dignity. It doesn't batter you into submission, but leaves you free to discover and choose for yourself." Thoughts?
9. Steve said that he believed that there is a kind of Christianity that has reduced Jesus and the message of the Kingdom to a formula. What was he referring to?
10. Another Brian McLaren quote: "Is it possible that Jesus was intentionally keeping his message of the kingdom a secret so that it wasn't obvious, wasn't easy to grasp, wasn't like a simple mathematical formula that can quickly be learned and repeated? Is it possible that the message of Jesus was less like an advertising slogan—obvious and loud—and more like a poem whose meaning only comes subtly and quietly to those who read slowly, think long and deeply, and refuse to give up?" What do you think?