

Kinetic Method of Theological Reflection

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Introduction

The word kinetic comes from the Greek *kinetekus* which means moving. This method of TR is an attempt to respond to those students who long for a more active method of reflection. It combines active imagination study methods with the method beginning with scripture.

Choosing a passage

The scripture passage needs to embody a story. One of the encounters of Jesus; for example, a controversy story or a healing encounter would lend itself to this method. Stories from the Hebrew Scriptures would also work well. Some of the moments in the life of Moses, some of the encounters of the prophets with the people or with kings would also work.

The Reflection

After the passage is chosen it should be read by a group member. The group needs to identify the actors in the passage. For example the story of the woman taken in adultery in John 8:2-11 has a number of characters. Jesus, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the woman taken in adultery are the principle characters. But there are also the onlookers whom Jesus was teaching and one might also consider the absent character of her male partner. After the characters are listed people need to choose the role with which they wish to identify and explore. For each character or group of characters there should be at least two people. So a group of eight people might choose the roles of Jesus, the woman, the Scribes and Pharisees and the onlookers with two persons in each role. Larger groups can study more characters, for smaller groups it may be necessary to select which characters to include.

The chosen passage is read aloud and characters are encouraged to assume the positions, attitudes, stances which are indicated in the text. The accusers might point in accusation. The woman taken in adultery might cower from those who are hefting large stones in preparation for her execution. The scribes and pharisees might look offended and outraged by the conduct of the woman. Each person must identify as closely as possible with the present reality of their character.

Process note: It is important that this identification take place at a serious level. It is tempting to move into caricature rather than characterization. Reflectors need to examine their character as sympathetically as possible.

The characters should move to different parts of the room to enable easy conversation but should not leave the room.

At this point the mentor begins to ask questions and to allow time for the small groups to discuss. The first questions need to lead to a better understanding of the text. Questions from theatre (thanks to C. Gardener) might be considered: Who am I? Where am I? What do I want? Other possible questions include: In what way is this incident unexpected or remarkable in the time and place in which you (the character) live?" Allow three to five minutes for discussion and then ask each pair or group to share a brief summary of their conversation with the whole group.

We move into the four sources. The participants may remain in the small groups. It is not usually necessary or desirable for the mentor to write responses. Questions are suggested only and should be used selectively by the mentor.

Tradition

What is the world like in this story?

How is God experienced or understood by the participants?

Where is brokenness revealed?

What is the occasion for celebration?

Action

Are you reminded of a time in your life when you had a similar experience or an experience where you had similar thoughts and feelings? Some people may wish to briefly share their incidents.

In what ways do you identify with your character? Do you identify more closely with any of the other characters? Why?

Culture

What does our culture say about the world described in this story?

What did you learn from your parents and teachers about the issues of this story?

Position

What do you believe about the issues in this story?

New Insights

What new insights have emerged from this reflection? What have you learned?

Implications for Action

Is there anything you might do differently in your ministry now?

What are the consequences for yourself and others?

What support do you need?