

IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

CLASS 1 and POWER POINT 1:

1. **"The Spirituality of the Cross,"** 1999, Written by Edward Veith Jr., an English professor at Concordia University, Wisconsin, this book as well as a few other of his publications have received a lot of acclaim mainly from college and seminary students. Like **"Mere Christianity,"** **"The Spirituality of The Cross,"** takes a fresh, view of solid Christian teaching that engages and captivates to both those exploring or familiar with Christianity.
2. Similar to CSL, Veith comes from a journalist/writer background, and has a fresh-outsider's perspective to the Christian Faith. CSL was highly influenced by atheism/apathy of Western Europe's tired view of Christian dogma prior to and during WWII and the mid 20th century Western World. Contrary, Veith was influenced by the ever changing landscape of American 'Christianity in the late 20th century.' His exposure covered the expanse of America's religious expression, from rigged Fundamentalism, to wishy washy "Liberalism," of social justice and environmentalism and included time with many familiar main line denominational theologies.
3. Like CSL, Veith ultimately landed on solid ground. Not that of morality or mysticism or vague spirituality, but something much deeper. Much more than a vague view of "God on the shelf," who we only need when we're in crises. Veith's unfolding of truth and Scripture pointed to an intriguing, clear, celebrative view of the reality of God in the flesh and God on the cross.
4. This class is the most popular choice from participants. But I bring glad tidings of Great Joy. This is a shorter class than **"Mere Christianity,"** so we will get to other popular classes soon. We will work on getting more in-depth material to you shortly, so that you may be adequately prepared.

INTRODUCTION: THE FIRST EVANGELICALS:

1. Most want a spiritual life, even though they don't know what that means. We yearn for the transcendent, but come crashing back to earth. Mysticism promise enlightenment and spiritual empowerment, but there is no after life. Mundane life intrudes all aspects of life and hurting and failures break the spiritual mood.
2. Churches seem to be custodians of spiritual reality, but often don't seem spiritual, they too seem mundane. Preachers, fellowship dinners and pew sitting is not spectacular, but ordinary. That has been my experience. In my life I have embraced liberal, progressive theology, that pushes for justice and I have been a raving miracle expecting fundamentalist. One seemed vacuous, the other seemed shallow. Buddhist promises are empty and mysticism and activism were bitter disappointments.
3. What I needed was a spiritual framework for the entire human experience, a realistic spirituality. This would not be a negation of the spiritual world or ordinary life, but one that transfigures them. I found it in Christianity, not a religion about God, but God in the flesh and on the cross. There are many varieties of Christian religion, and traditions in the historic faith (3000 Christian denoms in U.S.) They hinge on the mystery of the incarnation, atonement and redemption.

4. CSL, "Mere Christianity" has a huge influence on me. CSL said Christianity's common theologies are like a long hallway that takes one into the house of Christianity, but to LIVE in Christianity, one must leave the hallway and enter a room. In the room is food/meals/fires or to be a Christian must join a church. Veith's frustration was that no local congregation measured up to what he read in the books. Christians hold impossible ideals and have an inadequate theology of ordinary life. CSL says new Christians think of church as togas/sandals, rather than ordinary people like themselves. It is true that Christian rooms lack food/meals/fires.
5. Every branch of Christianity represents some distinctive teaching. It would be naïve to think that they don't have problems/distortions. The search for Christianity runs aground here.
6. Today, these traditions are hard to find. (Traditional denominational churches are drying up!) Like Anglican, Wesley, Aquinas traditions have been all merging into pop American Christianity. It is as if CSL's rooms all had the same fast food, Styrofoam containers, same music, plastic flowers and shag carpet. It is bland, one dimensional, good feelings, but empty of content. The rich historic traditions of Christianity are all but forgotten.
7. This book is about one of those historic traditions, which satisfied my spiritual belongings for God. This book is an introduction to the Lutheran Spiritual Tradition. This faith is centered on the cross of Christ. It is a framework of embracing in an honest and comprehensive way the whole range of spiritual life that RESONATES in everyday life.

NOTES: