



“The Word ought to be exposed in the words.” Learning with Barth how we might do that afresh today.

Christina Baxter

As part of the Evangelical Alliance's *Confidence in the Gospel* initiative we are hosting a series of five national consultations to wrestle with significant and timely issues relating to the gospel.

To ensure that as many people as possible can engage with this programme, the talks are being filmed and made available online.

Why not watch some of the videos, and use the questions provided, to explore these vital subjects with your small group or leadership team?

For more information, videos and resources visit eauk.org/confidence

Christina Baxter

is the former principle of St John's Nottingham. Her subject areas include systematic and historical theology and her research interests include the theology of ordination and Karl Barth. She is author of several books, including *The Wounds of Jesus: A Meditation on the Crucified Saviour*.

Synopsis

Karl Barth was shocked that his lecturers could support Hitler and was equally appalled that the German Church was so quick to collaborate with the Nazis. Meanwhile, as a Parish Priest among ordinary workers, he struggled to know what to say and how to say it. Crisis forced Barth to rethink his theology, to go back to basics, to return to scripture in order to understand it afresh.

Christina Baxter suggests that we have a crisis in the UK today when it comes to communicating the gospel. We need to figure out how we can communicate it with the many different people groups in our country who understand the world and society differently than we do. It's a crisis that is different from the one faced by Barth, but we can learn much from the process he went through to resolve the challenges he faced.

(1) We must let God be God

As we seek to make the gospel accessible to people we must remember that God is God and we can do nothing without Him. The Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the scriptures for us and for others as we try to communicate it.

(2) We must have a double hermeneutic

In order to contextualise the gospel we need to understand both the world and the Bible. We must struggle to understand society as much as we struggle to understand the scriptures.

(3) We need to do it in community

Karl Barth conducted his study with others. A fellow pastor, other Christians, and later ecumenically to learn from the breadth of the Christian Church. We would do well to learn from his example.

Questions

(1) Reflect for a few moments on the idea of 'letting God be God'. What do our attitudes and practices reveal about our understanding of God's position and ours?

(2) For which group(s) of people do you need to find a way to effectively communicate the gospel? How can you go about applying the principle of a 'double hermeneutic' to do this?

(3) Christina speaks of the need for a double dialectic – affirming the people we are with, but standing apart from them. For the communities we find ourselves in, what does it look like to stand alongside people, and in what ways does the gospel need to challenge these communities?

(4) Do we need to do more to ensure that we are studying and interpreting the scriptures in community rather than in isolation? Why is this important and how could we achieve this?