

The Exploratory Function of Metaphors Post-Registration Information

Thanks for registering for the series, “The Exploratory Function of Metaphors” Here’s an overview of the series, including recommended readings.

Series description: Have you ever metaphor that you didn’t like? Or, tried to describe the inexplicable Other? We *know* that we speak metaphorically, but how do metaphors function? What’s at stake in the use and neglect of our religious language? How can we create better metaphors for interpreting the world and exploring the Christian life? This three-part series focuses on metaphorical theory as a theological tool. It has direct application for preaching, Bible study, pastoral care and congregational formation.

SESSION 1: JULIET IS THE SUN: THE INCREMENTAL THEORY OF METAPHOR

Overview: Session one discusses the modern theory of metaphor, namely, the incremental, or inactive, theory, which differs from comparative and substitution theories. A metaphor, in a word, creates new meaning. The session will present a simple five-point approach to understanding and creating metaphors that address (1) the source and the target, (2) the “yes and no” quality of a metaphor, (3) the irreducibly insight of a metaphor, (4) the aptness of metaphors and (5) the importance of using multiple sources. The session will consist of presentations and breakout groups.

Preparation: No preparation is required. See below.

SESSION 2: THE INEXPLICABLE OTHER: METAPHORS AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Overview: Session two addresses the problem of religious language with respect to the inexplicable nature of God. Applying the incremental theory from session one to specific case studies, we will discuss the challenges, implications and aptness of metaphors of God, including God as father, mother, friend and lover. We will also look at inanimate, non-personal sources, like wind, rock and stronghold. What do we do with contested metaphors, what do we lose when we neglect or dismiss certain metaphors, and how does the Bible model a metaphorical approach to exploring the nature of God? The session emphasizes the importance of using a balanced variety of multiple images.

Preparation: No preparation is required. See below.

RECOMMENDED READING (SESSIONS 1 AND 2)

While these readings are not required, the first two sessions rely on the work of Sallie McFague and Janice Soskice, which respectively applies the incremental theory espoused by modern linguistic scholars to religious language. Both books are be accessed on: www.archive.org.

McFague, Sallie. *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. Chapters 1–2, “Towards a Metaphorical Theology” and “Metaphor, Parable, and Scripture”, 1–66.

Soskice, Janet Martin. *Metaphor and Religious Language*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1985, 1–96.

FURTHER READING (SESSIONS 1 AND 2)

McFague, Sallie. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia: Fortress 1987. Also available on www.archive.org.

SESSION 3: LIFE IS A JOURNEY: CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

Overview: Using life as journey as our primary case study, session three discusses conceptual metaphors. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, whose book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) inspired metaphor studies as a part of cognitive linguistics, we inherently use certain metaphors to engage particular phenomenon, like argument is war, time is money and life is a journey. Conceptual metaphors are particularly expansive, and their specific expressions can be “mapped” in terms of their sources and connotations. Surveying studies from the field of cognitive linguistics, the session discusses how metaphors effect the way we think and behave.

Preparation: No preparation is required. See below.

RECOMMENDED VIDEOS

There are numerous YouTube videos on conceptual metaphors and the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

RECOMMENDED READING (LONG)

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Various editions.

RECOMMENDED READING (EASY TO READ)

Geary, James. *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How it Shapes the Way We See the World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.