**The Bitterroot Collegium**

*“Where Faith Seeks Understanding”*

Winter 2018

Practical Theology: *“Choose & Choose Again”*

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 The purpose of “The Bitterroot Collegium” is to provide a comprehensive program of Christian education by equipping both the hearts and minds of Christian men and women to be more faithful and fruitful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Program Details**

Classes will meet for 1 hour per week and will continue from 4-8 weeks depending upon the topic. Topics/themes will draw from the 4 theological “food groups” including:

1. Biblical Theology
2. Historical Theology
3. Systematic Theology
4. Practical Theology

Classes will alternate between the “food groups,” while topics will be chosen based on the vision and values of Mosaic Church.

**Choose & Choose Again**

 Rev. J. Kevin Butcher is the former founding and Senior Pastor of Hope Community Church in the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood on the Eastside of Detroit. “In Detroit, Pastor Kevin has seen the true, deep, wild love of Jesus transforming the lives of prisoners and prostitutes, along with businessmen and lawyers, as they *choose* to lay down their fear, shame and pain and turn to the arms of our pursuing God. Through the stories of deeply wounded people from all walks of life, *Choose & Choose Again* offers hope for all to experience this profound love.” Students may engage in three different ways. The first is simply to come to each class. The second is to read the assigned book readings prior to each class. The third is to read the book readings *and* complete the focus questions prior to each class.

Jan. 7 –  **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Prologue (Death w/o Love) & Chapter 1 (The Power of Love)

 & Chapter 2 (The Emptiness Inside)

 Focus Questions: 1) What was the cause of Kevin’s near suicide attempt? What did he learn

 and experience as a result?

 2) What is the biggest issue in the Body of Christ according to Kevin?

 3) What caused Dan Schoenfeld’s descent into a life of drugs, crime and

 prison? How was he rescued?

 4 How was Brian’s story different from Dan’s? How was it similar?

 5 How is Satan’ fruit poisonous according to Kevin?

 6 What does Kevin say about hitting “rock bottom?”

Jan. 14 – **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Chapter 3 (Just a Kid) & Chapter 4 (Let Me Believe it for You)

 Focus Questions: 1) Describe Kennel’s story. What happens to unloved children? What is the

 “antidote?”

 2) Reflect on Kevin’s saying, “love that isn’t authentic isn’t healing” and

 “you can’t love anyone well without knowing God’s love.”

 3) How do we earn the right to “get into someone’s face” (from time to

 time)?

 4 Describe Samson’s story. Why is the old saying “hurt people, hurt people,”

 so true?

 5 Reflect on Kevin’s saying, “we don’t need to have much in common

 except our humanity and pain and a willingness to share that pain with

 Jesus.”

 6 Reflect on Kevin’s saying, “Healing usually isn’t in a straight line from

 pain to wholeness.”

Jan. 21 – **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Chapter 5 (Cry) & Chapter 6 (Shame)

 Focus Questions: 1) Describe Sophia’s story.

 2) Reflect on Kevin’s saying, “weeping literally leads to and creates space for

 the joy we all so desperately want to experience.”

 3) How does our culture deny death and try to suppress grief? How can the

 Church create space to allow others to safely grieve so that people can hear

 the voice of God?

 4 Why is Kevin’s saying, “grieving our pain happens in layers, like the

 melting of an iceberg,” so important in understanding the nature of

 healing?

 5 How does Kevin define and describe shame? How is shame different from

 guilt?

 6 Describe June’s story and her struggle with shame.

 7 What did you learn about shame in this chapter and how can love heal

 shame?

Jan. 28 – **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Chapter 7 (Call Me Abba) & Chapter 8 (Good Church)

 Focus Questions: 1) Why does everyone need a loving father? What are the results often

 disastrous for those who do not have a loving father?

 2) What are the characteristics of a loving father?

 3) Why is Jesus’ favorite term for His Father in Heaven . . . Abba? What is so

 powerful about this word?

1. Why must fathers connect with the hearts and emotional core of their children?

 5) How did Kevin’s granddaughter Ada teach him what “good church” was?

 6) Reflect on Elle’s story.

 7) What does the Greek word, *Koinonia* mean? Why is it an essential part of

 “good church?”

 8) Reflect on Nicola’s story. How was Hope Community Church, “good

 church” for Nicola?

Feb. 4 – **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Chapter 9 (Forgiven) & Chapter 10 (Deeper than Feelings)

 Focus Questions: 1) Outside of shame, why is feeling unforgiven the greatest emotional barrier

 between us and experiencing God’s love? Why do we long to be forgiven?

 2) Reflect on Cindy’s story. How did the love and forgiveness of Jesus save

 her life?

 3) How does Cindy now minister the love and forgiveness of Jesus to others?

 4) Reflect on Audrey’s story. What spiritual struggles has she faced in light

 of her debilitating M.S.?

1. Why are “canned” spiritual answers so unhelpful or even harmful for those who suffer deeply?
2. How did the church split affect Audrey and others? How was it the

beginning for Hope Community Church?

1. What “props” do people use to cope with life? Why are they ultimately

ineffective, if not useless?

1. What advice does Audrey and Kevin offer us in helping and loving others well who suffer physically and struggle deeply?

Feb. 11 – **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Chapter 11 (Stronger than Hate) & Chapter 12 (Like a Child)

 Focus Questions: 1) Reflect on the stories of Marc & Samson. How has racism been used of

 Satan and why is it still a problem for the Church of Jesus Christ?

 2) How has ethnic animosities crept into our culture, institutions and personal

 relationships, here in the U.S. and around the world?

 3) Why was the baptism of Marc and Samson so spiritually powerful as well

 as offering tangible hope to the problem of racism and ethnic animosity?

1. Why is *reconciliation* such an important work for Christians and dear to the heart of God?
2. How is homogeneity, comfort and religious clubs the death of “real

church?”

1. Why is the perspective of a child required for power and effectiveness in

the Kingdom? How did Kevin’s three daughters teach him that?

1. How have our “adult eyes” been wounded? How have we lost our “child

like eyes” that we were never intended to lose?

1. Reflect on the story of Keith Brown. How does he represent and live out

the Kingdom with “childlike eyes?”

Feb. 18 – **Choose & Choose Again**

 Reading: Chapters 13 (Free & Forever) & Chapter 14 (Coming Home) & Epilogue

 Focus Questions: 1) Reflect on Eddie’s story. Does God still love us, even if we don’t make the

 significant changes?

 2) In what ways is each and everyone of us just like Eddie?

 3) Christian author Jerry Bridges wrote a book called, “Respectable Sins.”

 What do you suppose he means by this? What do you think is God’s view?

 4) How is the fear of losing God’s love a false motivational principle?

 5) How did Kevin come to grips with the fact that his favorite Christian

 author, Brennan Manning (The Ragamuffin Gospel) died tragically of

 alcoholism, just like Eddie?

1. Reflect on Kevin’s comments, “When Eddie died, he didn’t hear, ‘well

 done, good and faithful servant,” but he did hear, “Surprised to be here,

 son . . . well you shouldn’t be.”

1. Reflect on Lory’s story. How does she embody the whole point of the

book . . . to “choose and choose again?”

1. Why did Kevin struggle with being “Pastor Fake?” Why would this be a

struggle for pastors, as well as laymen?

1. Reflect on Dan’s story. How does he remind us of the importance to “choose and choose again?”

**Notes:**