

The Road Less Travelled Class

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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

– Robert Frost

Some readers of “The Road Not Taken” simply admire its rhyme or meter; others hear its lyric as a call to non-conformity. Another group are sure that the poem describes the role of destiny in the choices of the soul. Still others take a pragmatic view, perhaps agreeing with Yogi Berra: “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” Some people just don’t like poetry and the critical thinking needed to fully appreciate the poetic creation and the mind of the gifted poet, so they never sat quietly with the poem and thought about the poem’s ambiguities or inconsistencies, never wondered why the speaker sighed about the choice or what might have inspired the poem.

We who found our name in Frost’s poem find soul satisfying the journey along the less travelled road, where a rigorous curiosity makes all the difference.

Members drawn to “The Road Less Travelled Class” enjoy, perhaps need, the deeper and wider view of all things spiritual. We believe that the heart cannot worship what the mind cannot accept. Consequently, we find both intellect and passion necessary to the formation and sustaining of faith. So we gather to read and view materials that prod us to think differently, to see differently, to act differently, to the end that our faith in God becomes more real and the teachings of Jesus more relevant, so that we live more boldly and generously as servants of God and followers of Jesus.

For us the phrase “because the Bible says so” is merely a starting point. For instance, if we studied the plagues that tormented the Egyptians and set the Israelites free, we would investigate the authorship of the story of the plagues, the kinds of gods that Egyptians and Israelites worshipped, the role of religion in Egyptian life, the transition from polytheism to monotheism, the author’s purpose in writing the story, independent corroboration from science or history of the plagues, the role and power of myth, and the source of the writer’s understanding of and characterization of God. We would then look at the New Testament to discern if there is conflict between God’s nature revealed in the story of the plagues and his nature revealed through Jesus. Because our class members

believe in and respect diversity in Christian beliefs, we would come to individual conclusions about the story of the plagues in our experience of God. In this partnership between intellect and emotion, we often find the questions more tantalizing than answers. We smile approvingly at the “Question Authority” bumper sticker. Our appeal, then, is not to those who need the comfort of easy, unexamined answers or who value tradition more than truth.

In that understanding of education, the class continues its study of God, Man, and Suffering. We began with a viewing of “Sicko”, a documentary that criticized the American health care system, and explored how Christians, including Christian politicians, should view access to health care. We read *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch and *The Shack* by William Young. We are now reading *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* by Prof. Bart Ehrman. From communal and national suffering to individual suffering, we are discussing the origin of suffering, using the text’s examination of Old Testament suffering stories, like Job and Daniel, New Testament stories of Paul and Jesus, and contemporary suffering in the Holocaust or the African famine, among others. Is suffering of God? Does suffering have a purpose? What do the answers say about the nature of God? the nature and efficacy of prayer? our relationship with God? The book raises serious questions and offers unpopular conclusions. Suffering—a universal experience. By spring we will have concluded the topic and tried to discern our individual understanding of suffering, and to what extent we are called to end the suffering that is within our control.

For those who want a Sunday School experience that engages the mind, celebrates diversity, and finds virtue in reforming childhood faith to an adult reality, all in the company of the friendliest of persons of all ages, join the discussions any Sunday morning.