

# Session 2 Discussion Prompts

## Immediate Engagement MINISTER-AS-SCIENTIST

Presenting religious messages as Knowledge, akin to scientific facts, often results in skepticism and inaction because there's no inherent impetus for action. On the contrary, News, which addresses the concrete predicament of the listener, prompts response.

1. Evaluate the claim that "Action in the form of application may result from Knowledge, but it never must result." Describe ways that the inherently optional application of Knowledge helps make sense of modern Lutheran ministry.
2. Classroom teachers face the challenge of the Knowledge–News distinction perhaps more than other called workers. Assess the unique challenges of religious training that seeks to be more than the plain transfer of information.

## Enduring Relevance MINISTER-AS-THERAPIST

Efforts should be directed towards proclaiming the gospel rather than shaping behavior through therapy, acknowledging the fundamental displacement of the human soul and the need for News from across the sea – the gospel of Jesus Christ, which carries real authority and remains relevant to all.

1. Identify several reasons why therapeutic, advice-centered approaches to ministry have such strong appeal in contemporary culture.
2. The presenter raised our Third Article objections to the idea that what the church offers is mere knowledge that anyone could, in principle, come upon by their own thinking and choosing. Evaluate the presenter's claim that therapeutic ministry inappropriately reduces the role of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

## Expert Authority MINISTER-AS-EXPERT

Knowledge, rooted in expertise, is subject to verification and acceptance, often leading to polarization. In contrast, News, especially of significant importance, fosters a sense of solidarity and can cut through divisive knowledge-based debates.

1. Evaluate the presenter's description of "dueling experts." Is it the case that trashing a worldview of some major intellectual figure from the pulpit and classroom does the job we hope it does? What are appropriate ways of handling such issues? How can ministers adjust their approach to worldview topics to reduce the likelihood of young people later leaving the faith that was handed down to them?
2. The presenter noted a seeming paradox in which intellectual humility about subjects actually yields greater credibility. Discuss the virtue of intellectual humility and what kinds of attitudes and approaches best embody the virtue.

## **Durable Credibility** MINISTER-AS-MARKETER

Genuine relationships, hospitality, and community service are essential components of effective evangelism, in contrast to the superficiality of digital influence. Newsbearers must be present, actively involved in people's lives, displaying authenticity and credibility in their communication of the gospel message.

1. In recent decades mainstream evangelical practice has leaned heavily into marketing. The presenter noted that most talk of evangelism is actually indistinguishable from marketing jargon. Evaluate the presenter's claim that there is nothing inherently Christian about marketing.
2. Percy's analysis reveals the critical importance of the conduct of the newsbearer. Analyze the effect of the church relying on gimmicks to gain attention or on ministers adopting personas that may reduce credibility and authenticity.

## **Authentic Involvement** MINISTER-AS-DEBUNKER

The detached objectivity that characterizes the debunking stance is best replaced with a deeply involved posture toward the world. Proclamation of News engenders involvement more than merely debunking modern worldviews.

1. The presenter notes that most people today consume a media diet designed to create a view-from-nowhere sense of objectivity over-and-above their neighbor. List ways that, ironically, large-scale issues consume more time and attention than they probably deserve. How does this trend affect church and ministry?
2. Contemporary culture richly rewards the person who can cast themselves as the objective (and aggrieved) outsider who casts stones at establishment ideas. Discuss ways in which ministers are tempted to earn credence in ways that the culture endorses. Why is this so tempting? What are the corrosive effects?

## **Meaningful Responsibility** MINISTER-AS-TROLL

Memetic communication leads to the erosion of trust, promoting debunking, detachment, and ultimately social disintegration. This affects Christian character, leading to a diminished sense of meaning and responsibility. News, specifically good news, increases meaning and purpose. Authentic engagement with real-world issues and genuine responsibility are essential virtues associated with faithfulness.

1. Analyze the role of sarcasm and cynicism in contemporary culture — and especially how sarcasm and cynicism arise easily in ministry settings. Determine whether sarcasm has a useful role to play. Diagnose common causes of cynicism.
2. Evaluate your own participation in online discourse and communication. Share stories of changes you have made to your approach to things like social media. Ask advice from one another about how best to disengage from cynical death cycles.