

Don't Trust Overconfident Theologians

In the earliest days of the church, one of the greatest theologians of the holy land was knocked off his horse by a mystical encounter with the living God. Saul of Tarsus, a protégé of the esteemed Jewish rabbi Gamaliel, was absolutely certain of his theology. So certain and zealous was he that it drove him to violence he perceived to be the “will of God.” He was on a righteous rampage in an attempt to snuff out the fledgling first-century Jewish sect which eventually became known as the church. In that moment, he came face to face with the God he thought he knew but who told him point-blank that he was persecuting Him by his actions.

At that time of his life, Saul was the epitome of an overconfident theologian—well-versed in theology and history and with an arsenal of supporting arguments at his disposal. Yet in one moment, he experienced a life transformation through an encounter with the God of Israel. No matter how much learning we have accumulated, an authentic encounter with God trumps well-packaged theology—every single time.

Similarly, Peter, the disciple, was a Jew who encountered the rabbi Jesus (Yeshua) in a profound and life-altering way. Often facing persecution from the likes of people like Saul, the early believers continually counted the cost of their faith that was undergoing a new-found transformation. Every day was an opportunity for their faith to be stretched all over again.

Into the environment of Acts 10, God showed up in Peter's open vision on the rooftop at Joppa (Jaffa) where Peter was staying, and Peter saw a sheet filled with animals coming down from heaven as God's voice said to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” Peter responded, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten

anything common or unclean" (vv. 13-14).

Have you ever argued with God when He offends your mind to reveal your heart?

Changed forever by his own experience, Saul (Paul) the persecutor became the most prolific writer of scripture in the Christian Bible. The theological knowledge that he had amassed in his life became subject to a higher authority than his own world-class intellect. The apostle Paul learned something that cannot be taught by years of seminary classes: His theology was transformed through the power of humility and the necessity of mystery.

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