



Introduction to Deconstruct / Reconstruct

A Bit About Me

- Senior Pastor of Caféchurch since 2008
- Degrees in Philosophy, Classical Civilisation, Computer Science, and Theology (and I'm working on another Theology MA and a Grad Cert in Entrepreneurship and Innovation)*
- Candidate for Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church of Australia



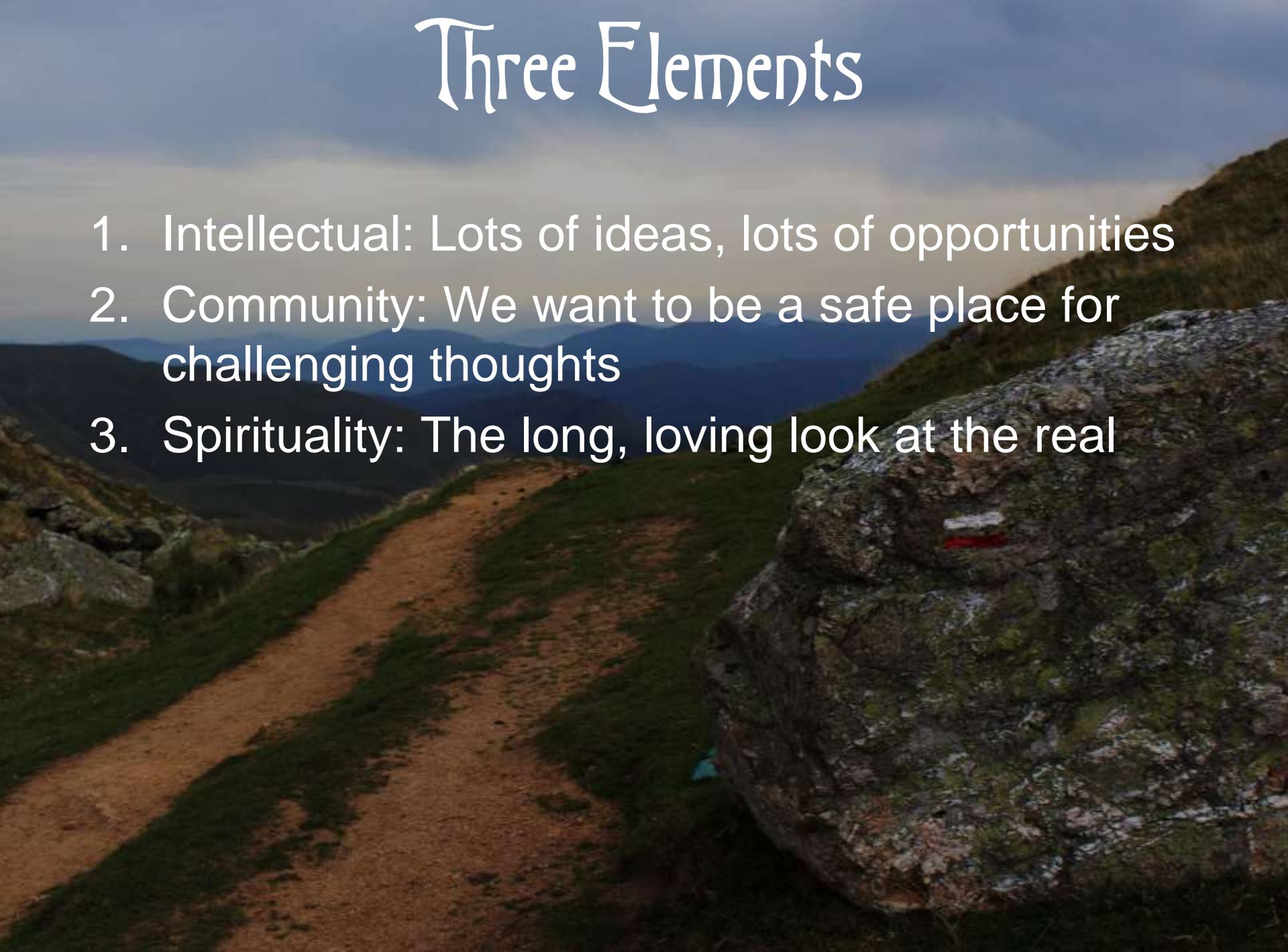
*(Sometimes I wonder if I have a problem)

The Purpose of the Course

- The point of all this is *not* to answer all your theological questions, and it *definitely* is not to impose a new orthodoxy on you. It is to suggest a meta-level way to approach the whole God / Life / Church / Jesus / Thinking gestalt
- It is based on conversations I have had over the years, focusing on the top level issues that present to people trying to move on from conservative religion (especially from Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches)
- My intent is to present a Missional “Generous Orthodoxy” (the reason for this will become clear during the next few weeks)

Three Elements

1. Intellectual: Lots of ideas, lots of opportunities
2. Community: We want to be a safe place for challenging thoughts
3. Spirituality: The long, loving look at the real



Five Lenses

1. A model of spiritual growth
2. Modernity and the church
3. Christian Community
4. The Bible
5. God
6. Bringing it all together

Community Guidelines

Guideline 1: Respect

Treat one another with respect. You can be angry or upset, but abusive or threatening language or behaviour is not ok.

This applies to conversation, email, Facebook, and any other communication.

Guideline 2: Boundaries

Respect your boundaries and those of others. E.g.

- Be appropriately vulnerable. This means being aware of what you share, when and with whom.
- If you don't feel comfortable giving your contact details to someone, don't.
- Not everyone is equally comfortable with physical touch. Don't take liberties.

Guideline 3: Give Everyone a Chance to Speak

Often we are trying to get through a lot of content in an evening. Give everyone a chance to speak.

Guideline 4: Listening

We are not here to solve one another's problems. Rather, we are here to listen to each other and support each other as best we can.

If someone says something you disagree with, you are free to say so, but respectfully.

Guideline 5: Appropriate Privacy

Sometimes people share quite intimate stuff. Please respect that, and don't repeat things inappropriately outside of the group.

Spiritual Journey



- Just sitting around talking about faith only gets us so far.
- We need some primary material
- It's an experiment – a risky spirit quest

Ignatian Spirituality

- Scriptural
- Imaginative
- Grounded
- Contemplation in action
- Relates our inner landscape of desire with the great conversation of Christianity
- A way of engaging (post)modernity



Spirituality

A silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is centered in the frame, looking out over a landscape at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that fills the sky and reflects on the ground. The person's hair is curly, and they are wearing a dark shirt. The background shows rolling hills or mountains under a cloudy sky.

Working definition: A long, loving look at the real.

(From Michael Smith SJ)

Ignatius of Loyola

- C16th Spanish mystic and founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits)
- Brought together the resources of Medieval spiritual practice and his own experiences
- The Spiritual Exercises
- Increasingly popular with Protestants, especially of the Evangelical tendency



The Examen

My faith tells me that God is everywhere at all times, and that Christ is in my heart and embedded in all of creation – regardless of how conscious I am of his presence at any given moment. That's wonderfully consoling, but I want more! I want to *feel his* presence all the time. I want to feel him not only when I leave the nitty-gritty of my life and go to church; I want to feel his presence always!... I long to tap into his presence right there in the mud and muck, the pencils and French fries of my complicated yet incredibly ordinary life.

Mark Thibodeaux SJ *Reimagining the Examen*

Spiritual Conversation



As part of our spiritual experiment, we will try out a communal spiritual practice called “spiritual conversation”

The Practice



“Be slow to speak, listen quietly, treat others as equals, be humble and sincere, speak with kindness and love, and see the Trinity at work in all.”

Michael Hansen SJ *The First Spiritual Exercises*

The Final Session

A photograph of a church interior during a service. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being several ornate candelabras filled with lit candles. The candelabras are positioned in the foreground and middle ground, casting a warm, golden glow. In the background, there are large, arched windows that allow natural light to filter through, creating a bright, hazy atmosphere. The silhouettes of people, including what appears to be a priest or minister in the center, are visible against the light from the windows and candles. The overall mood is solemn and reverent.

- Currently has no content.
- We could use it however we wish – tricky questions, discussion of the way forward, liturgical dance... the choice is ours

Sharing Our Stories

- What has brought you to this place?
- What do you hope for?
- (If you're feeling brave) What do you fear?



Reading Further

- Mark Thibodeaux SJ *Reimagining the Examen*
- Michael Hansen SJ *The First Spiritual Exercises*
- Daniel Migliore *Faith Seeking Understanding*