

## Session One: What is Kairos Theology?

### Objectives:

- 1) *Develop a sense of group familiarity.*
- 2) *Establish covenant for productive and open discussion.*
- 3) *Introduce Kairos Theology in order to establish the context for Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA.*

### Preparations:

- *Have schedule for the session written out on a board or on flipchart, or projected on the screen via powerpoint or overhead projector.*
- *If possible have participants indicate in advance the level of knowledge about and connection to Israel-Palestine. This could be done through a pre-registration process, a quick survey, or informal conversation. If this cannot be done in advance, take a few minutes during this session to gather this information.*
- *Have participants read the Introduction, Preamble and “Our Kairos Legacy” sections from KAIROS USA in preparation.*
- *Print out copies of **Handouts 1.1-1.5**; You should have enough copies of Handout 1.1 and 1.5 everyone in the group to read (perhaps one copy for every two participants); **Handouts 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4** will be read in small groups, so you can have one handout per group.*

### Getting to Know Each Other (25 minutes)

- *Welcome everyone.*
- *Give quick overview of schedule.*
- *Introductions*
  - *Ask each person to introduce self and to share ONE reason why he/she is taking the course.*
  - *As facilitator, model this by going first. Set the model by making sure your introduction is brief but substantive.*
  - *If the group is 20 participants or less, keep this in one group, ideally in a circle. Take notes of the reasons for taking the course on flipchart paper or on the board. If the group is larger than this, consider breaking up into smaller groups. Ask each group to write out on flipchart paper the reasons people are taking the course, so that this can be posted for the entire class to see.*
- *Getting a sense of the room*
  - *By show of hands, ask students to indicate their prior experience they with the Israel-Palestine topic.*
    - *How many have visited the region?*
    - *How many have lived in the region?*

- How many have family connections to the region?
- How many have attended films, lectures or conferences on the topic?
- How many have participated in a previous study, such as *Steadfast Hope*, or another study?
- How many have read about the topic?
- How many have followed the topic through the news?
- *This will help the facilitator gain a sense of how much background to the conflict will be needed for Session Two.*

### *Establishing a Covenant (10 min)*

- *Review objectives for the entire course (with key words listed either on a powerpoint slide or flipchart).*
  - To understand the context and purpose of the Kairos USA document, its relationship to the Kairos Palestine document, and what Christians in the Holy Land are calling on U.S. Christians to do.
  - To begin to wrestle with the theological and biblical issues raised by this issue, and explore what is at stake for us as Christians and for the Church today.
  - To empower participants to engage in concrete, thoughtful action that is mindful of our roles as U.S. Christians in our relationship with Palestinian Christians, Jews and Muslims.
- *Facilitator explains:*
- Engaging in study and discussion about Israel-Palestine often raises strong emotions and significant disagreement, and it is important to create a classroom space in which participants can feel safe to explore ideas, opinions, hopes and fears in confidence and without being judged.
- In order to do this, we should establish a covenant, i.e. mutually agreed-upon guidelines, for our time together.
- *Ask for ideas from the group. These might include:*
  - Respect each other's viewpoints (ask for an illustration of what that looks like in action).
  - There is no such thing as a dumb question.
  - Fully participate in activities.
  - Complete homework assignments.
  - Actively listen when someone is speaking (ask for examples of what that looks like in action).
  - Arriving on time and attending regularly.
  - Using "I" statements to avoid making generalizations and assuming that everyone holds the same view.
- *Write these up on flip-chart paper. Once the group has finished brainstorming ideas, ask if there are any questions or concerns about what is listed. It is*

*important that the entire group is comfortable with the list, so if there are any points that someone cannot agree to, modify or eliminate it.*

- *Once questions have been clarified and the group indicates it is comfortable with the list, ask if everyone is comfortable with this as the class covenant.*
- *Post this on a wall of the room. You might clean this up for the next session, or keep this list as written, but it is important to bring it back each week and post, so that, if necessary, the facilitator can refer back to it if there is a problem.*

### Defining Kairos Theology (20 min)

- *Read Mark 1:14-15 and 13:33*
  - “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The KAIROS is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’”
  - [Jesus said:] “Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the KAIROS will come.”
- *Go over definition of “Kairos” (have definition written on flip chart or in powerpoint slide)*
  - “Kairos” is one of two Greek words for “time” used in the Bible
  - “Chronos” is sequential, linear time, (e.g. “chronological”); what we normally think of when we think about time.
  - “Kairos” is an undetermined period of time in which something special happens; the appointed time in the purpose of God; a crisis moment that demands action.
  - In the passage from the Gospel of Mark we just read, we see this word used to describe the Kairos moment in which the Kingdom of God comes near. It is both fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, and is anticipated with Jesus’ return. In both cases, the idea of time is one in which something totally new is happening – something breaking through that we will miss if we don’t have eyes to see and ears to hear.
  - It is this biblical sense of time that informs the sense of urgency and action in Kairos theology.
  - In order to understand the Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA documents, we need to place them within this tradition of Kairos theology. This is the goal for today.
- *Distribute” **Handout 1.1: Karl Barth and the Barmen Declaration**”*
  - Karl Barth (pronounced “Bart”) is attributed to have said that one must do theology “with the bible in one hand the newspaper in the other.” Why might these two items be the essential sources for doing theology? What do we gain from reading deeply in both of these sources?
  - Who was Karl Barth? *(have someone read the short bio)*
  - What was the “Kairos” moment Barth was responding to in his own context?

- *Look at the example from the Barmen Declaration and its distinct components: social analysis, theological reflection, and call to action.*
- *This is the model of a “Kairos Document.”*

*Break (10 min)*

- *Before the break, explain that they will return to meet in small groups. You may decide to assign these by counting off or simply grouping chairs together. Or, if the space was already set up with participants at tables, keep them at tables. Make sure the small groups are no larger than 4-5 people each.*

*Exploring the Kairos Legacy (25 min)*

- *Distribute handouts to the groups (each group gets one of the three handouts).*
  - *Martin Luther King’s 1967 Riverside Church speech (**Handout 1.2**)*
  - *Kairos South Africa, 1985 (**Handout 1.3**)*
  - *Kairos USA 1994 (**Handout 1.4**)*
- *Each group spends time reading through the handout together, and then answering the questions.*
  - *What is the context out of which the document is written?*
  - *What theological issues are at stake? What concepts are used or implied? What bible passages are used?*
  - *What actions or responses are called for? From whom? Why?*
- *Have each group report back, briefly describing the document they read and what their answers to the above questions.*
- *Large group discussion:*
  - *What similarities do you see across these documents?*
    - *Specific to a time and place in history*
    - *Common theological themes and concepts*
    - *Aspect of urgency*
  - *What differences?*
- *Summarize for group:*
  - *Kairos Theology is about “doing theology with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.”*
  - *This means that it includes a serious analysis of one’s context (social analysis), which includes attention to economic, political, and cultural factors, and paying attention to who is being harmed and who is benefitting from the harm (whether directly or indirectly).*
  - *As we continue our study, we are going to look closely at the way this is done in the Kairos USA document, and the way that it explicitly places itself within the tradition of doing Kairos theology.*

*Kairos Palestine, Kairos USA and the Kairos “Legacy” (15 min)*

- How do the Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA documents relate to this “Kairos Legacy”?
- Distribute “**Handout 1.5: Kairos Legacy**” with quotations from *Kairos Palestine and Kairos USA*.
- Have people read quotations aloud, then discuss the questions on the handout.

Closing (10 min)

- Read *Romans 13:11*: “Besides this, you know what KAIROS it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.”
- For next week, we are going to discuss the specific context out of which Christian Palestinians are writing and to which Kairos USA is responding. In Kairos theology, this is called “reading the signs of the times:” the social analysis. As we prepare our readings for next week, we may be encountering new information. When the Bible talks about Kairos, it is sometimes associated with “waking up” and “being watchful”. If the documents we are studying are articulating a Kairos moment, what might we be asked to wake up from or wake up to?
- Close in prayer.

**Total estimated time = 115 minutes**