

Why the Bible?

Part 2: How do we use the Bible?

ME: This is one of my first bibles... cute right. Even original artwork by me.

At some point this was given to me... I'm so glad it was... started a love and foundation for the story in here.

But check out what's in this book that was given to this kid who couldn't even write his name properly...

But a bit confusing- Kill your disobedient kids/Prodigal son... what's the deal? Which is it?

WE: Many of us experienced(ing) the same thing

Either handed a bible as a kid told it the inspired words given by God, read it and base your life on it.

Or we became interested in Jesus and someone gave a bible...

But what do we do with it?

Read it like a book? Start at the beginning? That's what you do with most books, right?

Interesting stories but can get bogged down... and where's this Jesus I was interested in?

Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth? Treat it like a rule book... if it's in there do it...

- Get into some sticky situations

Magic 8 ball it? Pick random verses and try to apply them?

So How do we understand it? How do we use it?

When we understand how to use the biblical writings we can understand our role in the Kingdom of God. 2

Going to be Moving Fast. **Email**

TEACHING: To understand how to use biblical writings we first have to talk about how **not to use them...**

Not a rule book... well it says in verse...

Not a scientific textbook

Not a magical holy book that you can randomly select verses that now mean whatever you want them to mean to you so you feel good right now.

The biblical writings are first and foremost a story. A true story. THE true story.

The biblical writings tell the story of God bringing his kingdom to earth to love and redeem his children.

Now a story is a little bit more difficult to use than say a car's owners' manual right?

If it's a story (true story) how do we use it/apply it to our lives?

NT Wright 5 Act play...

Suppose someone discovered a recently unknown 5 act play by Shakespeare... not that one... this one.

One problem... though it was written as a 5 Act play, the 5th act is started, but unfinished...

But the play is so well written, the characters so rich, the plot so intriguing... the crescendo of the plot in Act 4 so exhilarating that it is agreed on that the play should be produced.

What should we do about finishing the 5th Act?

It's decided that can't just write one... force Shakespeare to say things he didn't say. Force the play into a mold it wasn't meant to be forced into.

So instead, what if the existing script was given to highly trained, sensitive, and experienced actors who would immerse themselves in the world, culture, language, experiences, characters of the earlier acts.

And they would then produce the rest of the 5th act themselves allowing the earlier parts to have authority over and inform them as they went.

These actors would need to enter into the story/plot and while being consistent with the characterizations of the earlier acts... be innovative and how the rest of the fifth act is played out.

That is the best analogy I've heard for how we use the Biblical writings... they are the story of God. How he has loved his people, interacted with them. How he came and died to redeem them and how that event changed the lives of the first Jesus Followers. And the story is not over, yet. We're part of it!

The only thing I would add to this analogy is that each actor/Jf also has the HS living in and guiding them as to what is inline with the plot and what is not.

The biblical writings show us who God is, what his love is really like and what it looked like to follow him in 1st cent.

And now **the biblical writings guide new actors (modern Jf's) on how to play our part in the kingdom of God.**

The biblical writings inform Jesus Followers on how to play their part in the Kingdom of God.

So how do we use these writings to inform our parts of the play?

YOU: Application

We need to understand first that **All of the biblical writings are equally inspired but not equally applicable.**

Wouldn't it be strange if the actors in the play simply played the 5th act by repeating the lines, plots, actions of the first four word for word?

Those first acts are fully part of the play and were written by the original author but they aren't the 5th act.

So the task is... **To allow the biblical writings to inform our lives we need to discover what they meant when they were written (Exegesis) and how that applies to our context (Hermeneutics).**

This is what we try to do in these episodes.

What did this mean when it was written... in light of our position in the story, how does that truth inform our lives today.

Sounds a little difficult... how do we best understand the plot in order to play our new parts?

Useful tools and practices

3 practices allow us to effectively use the biblical writings to inform our roles in the Kingdom of God.

1. Find an accurate translation that works best for you.

First, our original script is written in three languages most of us will never learn... Ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek.

Remember trying to understand Shakespeare in HS? Now try to understand it in Ancient Greek.

So what we have are translations... So many translations. More than 450 in English.

How do we know which to choose from?

1st- The best translation is the one you will use.

2nd- Later translations tend to be more accurate due to more recent discoveries of manuscripts. (Quite a few more discovered since 1611 when KJV was translated)

3rd- Two main types to choose from- Word for word or thought by thought

Word for word accurate but clunky...

- Translate from different way of speaking/thinking
- Also translators still have to make meaning choices (they said this greek word... it can be used in a few ways... which one did the author mean?)

Thought for thought not precise words but main point

- (why I use NLT) Understandable in our language
- Do have to rely on translators choices on meaning
- But accurate wording can hide true meaning b/c its not how our minds/language work
- Wasn't written to be ambiguous... why would we let the difficulty of language veil the meaning for us.

4th- Best route... use a variety.

- NASB, NIV/NLT
- Biblegateway.com

- Bible app

Cool.. I'm reading it but what does it mean?

2. Utilize Commentaries

Brilliant people have spent their entire lives learning the original languages, cultures, etc. We would be crazy not to use their works.

Like the actors consulting Shakespearean experts to better inform their roles.

A good study bible is very helpful... have a link to my favorite.

Really want to get in can find commentaries.

3. Ask questions.

- **What DID this mean?** What did this mean to those who first heard it?

What is the literary genre? To whom was it written? Why was it written? What is the literary context?(Does the surrounding context inform the passage?)

Genre- what type of writing is it?

- History? Poetry? Wisdom, Letter? Autobiography? Prophecy? Apocalyptic?
- Going to read a teaching from Jesus differently than you do a poem by David.
- Read them as such- Epistles (Letters)... when you get letter you don't just read one random sentence out of context and then post it to FB, You read the whole thing to get the context right? Also don't quote it to someone who hasn't read it yet. And telling them to do what it says even though it wasn't written to them.
- When you read an autobiography you don't jump around reading a chapter/sentence here or there. Same with Gospels.

To whom and why? Historical context-

OT describing history of Jews... focus on DESCRIBING.

One of the "heroes" David had a few wives. Does that mean God is saying it's ok? No, the writings are simply describing the reality that David had multiple wives.

Gospels accounts of Jesus life by disciples... Focus on INFORMING- Kingdom of God/Offer of New life.

Epistles- NT letters by Paul/Peter/John/James

Instructing 1st cent JF's how to live out NEw life. Focus on INSTRUCTION.

Not complete theological treatises

Nor summaries of entire theology

Letter written to specific churches, in a specific culture, at a specific time, for specific reasons.

Once we have a good grasp on what it meant... then we can ask... - **What DOES this mean for my life?**

- What does this say about God/Jesus/HS?

- What does it say about humanity in general?
- What do I need to DO in light of all of this? APPLICATION.

Need to understand all of those in order to be able to accurately let it inform our role in the story.

Seems like a lot. Let's see this in action...

Eph. 5:22 "Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord."

Study Bible answers first 3 questions right away-

What is the genre? Ephesians is letter written by Paul. So we know it is explaining what it means to be a JF in 1st century.

To whom was it written? JF's in Ephesus (4th largest city in Roman Empire) around 60 AD

- So first of all written only to JF's (all of Epistles are)

Why was it written? Paul had started churches there... felt like father to them.

Most Ephesian JF's were gentiles coming out of Greco-Roman culture.

New JF's not exactly sure what meant to live like JF

Wanted to make sure they understood what God had given them and what it was like to live in response to that.

So what about our troubling sentence?

What is the literary context? We are God's children and he has shown us how to love through his example of Jesus' D&R.

Section is talking about imitating God b/c they are his children. Living a life of love, following the example of Christ. And to do so need to allow the HS to fill them (**Eph 5:1-20**)

With that in mind... Paul moves to what a JF family looks like

Starts that section with main point- **5:21** Submit to one another (all other JF's) out of reverence for Christ.

What does that look like for wives? Submit to husbands

For husbands? Love wife as Christ loved the church- submitting his life for her good, NOT whatever he wants for self.

What did it mean to those who first heard it? From commentary we learn- the offensive part for Roman culture is not the wife part but the husband part b/c of the role the husband/father took in the family- extremely patriarchal... his word is law, you are his property.

So actually offensive that Paul says to submit life for wife and that he didn't tell wives to OBEY husbands.

With all of that we can now ask... **What does this mean for us today?**

What does this say about God/Jesus/HS- Jesus submitted himself and now we can allow the HS to fill us so that we can have the same attitude and allow Jesus to love through us.

What does this say about humanity?- We want to rule over others and live for what we want.

What do we do in light of all that we have discovered?

Despite examples to the contrary around us... A JF following marriage should look like a submission competition as we imitate Jesus' love to each other.

Ok great... what about the **Hard/harder Stuff**.

Gender Roles/Homosexuality/OT violence?

Things can be difficult to understand b/c it wasn't written to us.

Remember... ask questions.

1st- Is the author saying what you think they are saying?

Using the 6 ?'s we've just talked about can be very helpful

Also Good commentaries will give you an overview of all the major viewpoints for debated passages AND start with an introduction to the letter/autobiography/poem, etc for context.

2nd- Is this a major issue or a minor issue in the scheme of God's story?

Major on the majors and minor on the minors.

Does what Paul means or doesn't mean about gender roles, homosexuality, hairstyles change the fact that Jesus said he was God and then proved it by dying and rising from the dead?

Does it change the fact that Jesus died for everyone and trusting him frees us to play our part in his grand story of redemption?

If the biblical writers didn't make a huge issue out of it... maybe we shouldn't either and instead should be graceful to each other and trust the HS is working on all of us.

Use the script to inform. Trust the HS and play your part.

WE: We are invited to play a leading role in the story of the Kingdom of God.

We are here to continue the story God is inviting all of humanity to participate in.

But we aren't asked just to figure it out and just do whatever feels best.

We have the biblical writings to inform us of what those roles can look like. To help shape our part of the story.

We can trust that they are accurate.

And If we use them properly we can trust that they can guide us.

When we discover how to play our role in the Kingdom of God we discover the life Jesus has invited us to.

Questions

1. What's God doing in your life and world this week?
2. How have the past two episodes informed or challenged your thoughts about the Bible?
3. The Bible is something that can be used correctly or incorrectly (considering genre, audience, purpose, etc.). Can you explain another analogy of something else that is like that to you.
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17. How do you think what Paul wrote here can inform our discussion of the last two episodes?
5. What's your next step with the Bible? How can your group pray for you this week?