

## How to Read, Understand and Use the Bible

### Part 2: Should we really do what the Bible says?

**IN:** Just do what the Bible says...

Not such great advice... would definitely get you arrested in some cases. And confusing what rules to follow, nuanced individualized situations...

“Doing what the Bible says” has been used to justify some pretty weird/horrible stuff.

Honestly, it seems that doing “what the Bible says” can mean just about whatever anyone wants it to mean.

But the Bible is also where we discover who Jesus is, what God’s love really is like, and it has guided/changed lives for the better for thousands of years...

So what do we do? How do we read, understand, and even use the Bible properly and not just use it to justify whatever we want?

Great question... let's talk about it together.

**WE:** When we talk about “doing what the Bible says” what we are really talking about is everyone’s favorite word... authority.

The Authority of Scripture. Ever heard that phrase? Good feeling/Bad feeling?

**The “Authority of Scripture” has been used to guilt, burden, and coerce people for centuries.**

People have tried to justify themselves, their ego, their desire for power by telling others they need to submit to the authority of scripture and then they make the biblical writings say whatever lines up with what they want.

But why would a collection of ancient writings have ANY authority? Sure, they might tell us what ancient people believed and what religious rules they followed but how could these writings have authority for us now?

**TEACHING:** So let’s get one thing clear from the beginning...

After J’s resurrection he didn’t tell his followers... “All authority has been given to the books you are going to write about me.”

No, he said, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”

So all authority belongs to Jesus not the Bible. This might seem like semantics but I think it’s very important to get us all on the same page.

**JF’s don’t follow the Bible they follow Jesus.**

The foundation of Xianity is not a book... but an event... J's D&R... proof he was God.

There were JF's 100's of years before there was a The Bible.

So what do we do? Just throw out the biblical writings? Only obey the stuff we like? What is the point of the biblical writings/Scriptures?

**The real question is...** If Jesus has all authority... **What role do the biblical writings play in Jesus exercising his authority?**

It's not by providing true information about God... they do... but that's not why they are authoritative

It's not by giving us a list of rules that we can follow and check off or search to see if we can find loopholes... "Section 5a Subparagraph 2 line 6 says... it's not a sin if you pray first and it's a Thursday."

And they don't exercise Jesus' authority by being quoted to guilt, condemn, and dehumanize people who don't follow Jesus.

Shoot, Not JF's don't have to do anything in them at all.

The biblical writings are authoritative for JF's b/c they are what Jesus uses to actively carry out his purpose in his people.

- How he shapes and transform his people to be his people
- **Jesus uses the biblical writings to shape and transform his people to be his people in his kingdom**

How does that work? Great Question...

Go back to 6 Part Play we talked about in the last episode... Jesus' authority is exercised through biblical writings as we allow them to inform how we play our role in our part of the story.

- We allow them to tell us who God is
- Who we are, why the world is the way it is
- Who Jesus is and what his purpose is.
- And what it means to be a JF

**NT WRIGHT**- "We read scripture in order to refresh our memory and understanding of the story within which we ourselves are actors, to be reminded where it has come from and where it is going, and hence what our own part within it ought to be."

So **for a JF, all of the biblical writings** (OT/NT Jewish/Xian) **are uniquely authoritative**... but in different ways.

The first Acts of the Play (the OT) give us the foundation of the story... Who God is, Who we are, What is wrong with the world, and how God implemented his plan to fix it...

The climax of that story is the foundation of our own...

It's like a good sequel... you can watch a sequel and enjoy the merits of the movie on its own... but the true depth, the true story isn't fully understood unless you know the beginning of the story

**The Jewish Scriptures are authoritative, not b/c we follow Israel's rules, but b/c they give the foundation for our part of God's story.**

Which is why First JF sermons explained that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT story. Acts/Romans/Galatians...

The first JF's used the OT to explain who Jesus was, why he came, the purpose/effect of his D&R...

But they also recognized that those laws were done... Jesus had replaced them with a New Covenant (New Agreement between God and humanity) and only 1 rule: Love as I have loved.

They recognized that some parts of the OT scriptures were no longer relevant for their ongoing life... not b/c they were bad/less inspired by God.. but b/c those parts belonged to the earlier parts of the story that had now reached its climax... part of the earlier acts of the play that had now passed.

Allow me another analogy for a second... If you go on a trip to Hawaii... you fly on a plane and then leave it behind after you land and get in your rental car... the plane wasn't bad... it's simply accomplished its purpose. It's still part of the story... it explains how you got to the rental car area... and you are still the people that got there from that plane. But for the remainder of your trip the purpose of the plane is fulfilled... the rules of the plane are, as the author of Hebrews says, obsolete.

**The NT is the fulfillment of the story told in the OT....**

Which is why we don't stone our disobedient kids, why we eat pork, why we don't need a temple or even a building to worship... that part of the story is over.

The NT writings are a new Constitution of a new covenant. Creating a new people... in a new kingdom.

In the NT writings we see who Jesus is, what he taught, what he did, his D&R... and then are told what it looked like to live all of that out in the 1st century.

**Our job** (big part of my actual job) now **is to take what that meant in their time and culture and use it to inform what we do as his people in our own time and culture.**

Which is why we don't condemn men for long hair or require women to cover their heads, etc.

But we do believe that everyone has worth, we do work to help/lift-up/empower the marginalized, forgotten and abused... We do bear each other's burdens and strive to forgive as we have been forgiven... and hold unity as the mark of truly being JF's

B/c the NT writings weren't given to be a rule book but to show us in real life examples of what it means to live in the Kingdom of God, but to know and love Jesus, and follow the Law of Love.

Think about it like this... One more analogy... When musicians improvise it doesn't mean it's a free for all... everyone plays whatever notes they want... no they are free to improvise within the framework already set by progression/key/etc.

By carefully listening to the other voices around you, remembering the earlier parts of the song, the rhythms, the themes, the harmonies... you can add your own fresh expression/voice as it adds to the rest of the music.

Ok one more... just as every artist is confined within the limits of what colors our eyes can see... each and every artist is free to create their own masterpiece within the Law of Art... Colors?? I don't know what it's called.

The NT gives us the colors with which we can paint our own masterpiece of love within the Law of Love.

Now... People disagree at times about which colors are best and whether or not certain artists (teachers) are painting outside the canvas... so it's important to always revisit/question/explore/study our understanding of the framework.

**The NT writings are authoritative b/c they are what Jesus uses to create the framework within which we can improvise our part of God's story.**

It's not a free-for-all... but it is freeing. It is empowering. It is life and purpose giving.

Specifically how we can use the biblical writings to do that... next episode.

**YOU:** In the meantime... Encourage you to let Jesus use the biblical writings to shape and transform you.

Best place to start? What we call the Sermon on the Mount ... Summary of Jesus' teachings. **Read Matthew 5-7**

Read them fast. Read them Slow. Get the big idea... narrow in on specific parts.

**Pray: What picture do you want me to paint today?**

**WE:** You are invited to play your role in the grand story of the universe.

You are invited to add your melody to the great symphony of love.

You are invited to paint your masterpiece on the mural of God's story of renewal, redemption, and true life.

The framework is there... read it, use it, let it guide you, let it transform you... become who you were always meant to be, discover your role, and add your part to the Kingdom of God.

**Jesus' authority, through the biblical writings, transforms and empowers us to play our role in God's Kingdom now.**

## Summary:

Honestly, it seems that doing “what the Bible says” can mean just about whatever anyone wants it to mean. So what do we do? How do we read, understand, and even use the Bible properly and not just use it to justify whatever we want?

## Main Points:

The “Authority of Scripture” has been used to guilt, burden, and coerce people for centuries.

Jesus Followers don't follow the Bible, they follow Jesus.

The real question is... What role do the biblical writings play in Jesus exercising his authority?

Jesus uses the biblical writings to shape and transform his people to be his people in his kingdom

For a Jesus Follower, all of the biblical writings are uniquely authoritative.

The Jewish Scriptures are authoritative, not because we follow Israel's rules, but because they give the foundation for our part of God's story.

The New Testament is the fulfillment of the story told in the Old Testament.

The New Testament writings are authoritative because they are what Jesus uses to create the framework within which we can improvise our part of God's story.

Jesus' authority, through the biblical writings, transforms and empowers us to play our role in God's Kingdom now.

## Weekly Challenge:

Read Matthew 5-7

Pray: What picture do you want me to paint today?

## Discussion Questions:

1. How have you seen God's love this week?
2. Jon said, “The “Authority of Scripture” has been used to guilt, burden, and coerce people for centuries.” Where have you seen this play out either in your life or in our culture at large?
3. How have you seen scripture transform and shape you or someone close to you?
4. Read Matthew 5:43-48. What are some personal examples of how this passage can help you improvise your role in the Kingdom of God? What comes to mind when you're encouraged to “play your role in the kingdom now?”
5. How can your group pray for you this week?

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## SHOW NOTES

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| SAY HELLO, ASK A QUESTION → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/welcome/>



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| FOR SALEM JUNE → Simonka Place Food Drive

Donate non perishable items for Simonka Place. Find out more: (<https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce37n1fsd3d>). Bring

needed items to our next gathering: canned veggies, tomatoes and beans, brown sugar, cooking oil, pasta, and tomato sauce.

You can also donate directly to UGM Salem here:

<https://ugmsalem.org/ugm-is-experiencing-food-shortages-you-can-help>



| GATHER TOGETHER → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/#gathering> |

Upcoming Dates: June 26 (Calendar online)



| GIVE TO CROSSCREEK → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/donate/>

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