

A Refresher Course on the Bible

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Some Reminders on the Bible

- The Bible is an ancient collection of many books – history, stories, letters, psalms, and more – all diverse and often complex
- The Bible is a BOOK written FROM FAITH and FOR FAITH -
- The Bible challenges us and cheers us on as we seek to love God and love what God loves
- The Bible invites us to trust God, take risks, and venture forth loving and serving God
- The Bible urges us to see - beyond the words and pages – and see God – present, active, and involved in all things
- We worship God and believe the Bible – (careful not to reverse)!

The Bible seeks to nurture us in **WISDOM**

- a lens for seeing and sensing God present and active in our lives and in the world
- Shaping us and forming us as disciples of Jesus who love and serve
- Helping us trust God and serve God
- Deepening our courage and commitments
- Reminding us to keep growing, changing, adapting
- Assuring us that God keeps working through all things and God never lets us go

“What do I do? That is all I want to know!”

- Deuteronomy 6 (The Shema – “Hear”):

⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Just Tell Me What I Should Do

- Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;
 - 1) ³you shall have no other gods before me.
 - 2) ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
 - 3) ⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
 - 4) ⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.
 - 5) ¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
 - 6) ¹³You shall not murder.
 - 7) ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.
 - 8) ¹⁵You shall not steal.
 - 9) ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
 - 10) ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Jesus – also teaching Wisdom

- “you have heard it was said, . . . But I say. . . .”
- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.”
- The rich man and Lazarus
- “Let the little children come to me”
- “Forgive seven times seventy”
- “the log in your own eye”
- “As much as you do to the least of these. . . .”

But then what?

- Raising children
- Making difficult decisions
- Dealing with difficult people
- Marriage and Divorce
- Facing climate crisis
- Seeing people on every street corner asking for help
- Dealing with greed, pride, racism, nationalism,
- Sexuality and identity

Raising Children -

- *Discipline your children while there is hope – Prov 19:18*
- *Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray (22:6)*
- *Do not withhold discipline from your children; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die – (23:13)*
- *If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son, . . . his father and his mother . . . shall say to the elders of his town, “This son is stubborn and rebellious, . . . a glutton and a drunkard.” Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. (Deut 21:18-21)*
- *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord (Col 3:20)*

We seek to be people of the Bible

- When we seek to use it as a rulebook, it unravels once you start pulling the thread
- We believe in God and seek to become God's faithful, loving, serving people
- The Bible is not an instruction book in child-rearing
- We seek to be shaped in WISDOM as God's beloved, serving people
- The Bible is intent on pointing us – Faithful Life, Faithful Wisdom, Faithful Discipleship

The Bible is NOT a rulebook or mostly a guidebook

- Seeking wisdom – and living with faith – trusting God and serving God is what this life is about
- When we read the Bible, we are crossing a chasm of time and culture; so we read with discernment, with faith, open to God’s Spirit
- We read and judge parts of Scripture with other Scripture, not allowing one verse or concept to deter our faithfulness of God’s steadfast love.
- When we read the Bible, we keep asking – “how does this connect to the here and now?” “What is God asking us to believe and do?”
- We – in community, with prayer, faith, and focus – seek to become disciples
- The Bible offers us wisdom - what does it mean to live in the presence of God? That is our goal.

Another example – Adam and Eve

- God creates us and breathes life into us
- One command – “You may eat freely of every tree in the garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. . . .”
- They eat – they are driven out of the garden, . . . exiled
- Life is about learning to live in God’s presence – WISDOM
- The Bible story is a journey of life, exile, promise toward life with God!
- We seek to find the essence of life – quality, purpose, harmony - God
- It is less about rules and more about knowing and living with God

Wisdom – life with and for God

- We stay rooted in God's love, open, trusting, loving, serving
- We seek to participate with God in moving the world toward the beloved community, where God reigns, where peace prevails, where heaven and earth come together.
- We connect our lives – singing, praying, reading Scripture, sharing life, growing in faith, discerning faithfulness, working for justice and peace
- Sacred living – with responsibility – in efforts big and small - following Jesus, promoting the peaceable kin-dom

- John 1 -

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

The same wisdom that was with God when God “ordered” creation (Gen 1) is available to us as we seek to “order” the chaos of our lives.

We open our hearts, live with faith, follow Jesus, living in the presence of God.

Why bother with such a strange, old book?

- Rob Bell – What Is the Bible?
- Because it is a book about *them (God's beloved people), then (ancient)*, that somehow speaks to you and me (*unique and authoritative witness*), *here and now*, and it can change the way you think and feel about everything (p. 15).
- In the Bible, people are taught first who they are, because the more you know about who you are, the more you'll know what to do (p. 260).

Living by Faith

- “If we want a faith that is truly vibrant and active, we have to get used to the fact that God’s presence comes not when we find the right passage, but when we embrace with courage – and anticipation – the way of wisdom.” (Peter Sens, How the Bible Actually Works p. 46)
- We read and study the Bible – written from FAITH for FAITH – seeking to become people who live always in God’s presence, with God’s purposes, working for God’s reign of love, justice, peace, and hope.
- The Bible can encourage us in living, instruct us in serving well, but faithful life is so much more than following rules – WISDOM is key!

Some resources

- What Is the Bible? By Rob Bell
- Whole-Hearted Faith, by Rachel Held Evans
- How the Bible Actually Works, Peter Enns
- The Bible Tells Me So, - “why defending Scripture has made us unable to read it” by Peter Enns
- Lies My Preacher Told Me – “an honest look at the Old Testament,” by Brent Strawn

Next Sunday -

- Jesus and all that
- Who was he? Who is he? How might we follow him more faithfully?