

A Refresher Course on the Bible

Fall – 2022

Alex Evans

Questions

“Do you believe in the Bible?”

”Do you believe the Bible?”

“Is the Bible pertinent to our life of faith?”

The Bible

- Presbyterians strive to be “People of the Book”

- The Bible intends to be central to all we do

- Ordination Question for all Ministers, Elders, and Deacons:

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s word to you?

Some Reminders on Holy Scripture

- The Bible is NOT a divine instruction manual that tells us what to do
- 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

The Bible seeks to nurture us in WISDOM

- Wisdom is about a life-long process of being formed as disciples
- Wisdom is not about certitude – but mystery and hope
- Wisdom knows God as personal and engaged in all of life
- Wisdom trusts God's presence and care, even through hard times
- Wisdom focuses us for a life of courage and commitment
- Wisdom reminds us we are always growing, changing, and God never lets us go.
- Wisdom leaves plenty of room for questions, pondering, thinking, debating

The Old Testament is NOT -

- Less important than the New Testament
- Just a bunch of insignificant and ancient stories, laws, and out of date messages
- A boring and tedious history of God's people, only relevant to Jews, and preserved as a token affirmation to our genealogy – our ties to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 12), Moses and Miriam (Exodus), etc
- A collection of books that depict an angry, war-like, grace-less God
- Mostly about laws and punishment and therefore spiritually irrelevant

The Old Testament is Full of Good News

- The world belongs to God – who creates and sustains all (Gen 1)
- The Lord knows, claims, and calls us to be God's people (Gen 12f)
- God's steadfast love is forever (Genesis - Malachi)
- God makes a way when there is no way (Exodus 15, I Sam , Is 40)
- God keeps covenant – adapts, forgives, blesses, and sustains
- God appoints, anoints, watches, waits, and works with all things
- The Lord is our light, our shepherd, our rock, our foundation
- Nothing can separate us from God's love and promises

The Old Testament encourages us

- Types of literature – law, history, prophecy, and wisdom –
- How to live with God, with others, with creation
- A Story/Family in which to root our lives – related to God/covenant
- Exodus 20
- Leviticus 19
- Amos 5, Isaiah 43
- Proverbs
 - Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses (10:12)
 - Whoever belittles another lacks sense, . . . (11:12)
 - Rash words are like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (12:18)

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 -

“The Bible Doesn’t Tell
Us What to Do –
and That Is A Good Thing”