

Growing Confidence in the Bible 1

Understanding the Big Picture

November 2016

These are the notes from the evening. Everything in italics are comments about what was said on the evening...

Why read the Bible at all?

We had all sorts of reasons: it opens us up to the heart of God and the story of God. It gives us an awareness of how God has worked in the past and helps us to imagine what might happen in the present.

We are told to read, 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us of the value of the Bible to us.

It shapes us over the years, and speaks to us in the present.

We asked, so why don't we read it?

We talked about how it's difficult to understand; how it's hard to get what was going on in those days. We talked about the lack of time, and how sometimes it feels like a duty rather than something we would do for pleasure.

What has happened to you in the past as you have read the Bible?

There were some great stories of how people felt that God had spoken to them directly in times of pressure or trouble.

Questions we may have....

There were questions about how do you interpret what is literally true, what is metaphor, what was for then and what is for now?

Questions about hearing God speak through the Bible.

Questions about how the Bible came to us – who decided what went into the Bible.

We will look at these in the weeks to come.

How to read the Bible

In Big Chunks Read it like you would any novel, you might not understand everything, but go with it. Read it out loud together with others if you can, you'll hear all sorts of rhythm that you might miss otherwise.

We looked at the picture of Rembrandt's Prodigal Son as an example of seeing a big picture and seeing all sorts of things in it ...

In Small Bites ... but then see that sometimes you want to concentrate on just one small part of the picture. Sometimes it's good just to take a small part of the Bible and really let it sink in, to memorise it so that it sticks with you.

With Help: *we all need help to read, though and these are some of the places you can get some good help...*

www.E100.scriptureunion.org.uk/index - the overall story of the bible in 100 readings

www.wordlive.org – daily readings and explanations and prayers

<https://jointhebibleproject.com/> - brilliant videos that introduce books of the Bible and themes

http://www.bible-history.com/geography/helpful_maps.html - maps that deal with every era in the Bible

<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/index.html> - a massive collection of theological articles on every topic under the sun

<http://www.ntgateway.com/> - brilliant collection of New Testament resources

What the Bible is:

- Written and compiled over a long period
- Written by many different writers
- Written in three languages: Hebrews, Aramaic, Greek
- 66 Different Books (39 in Old Testament, 27 in New Testament)
- Divided into two: Testament = Covenant (or 'formal contract, agreement')
- Different styles of writing
- Driven by an overarching story

The Big Story (below is one person's overview)

The film – this is the overview of the Old Testament and worth watching a few times over...

The big picture though can also be summarised as a play with 6 acts, or a story with 6 moves... it helps to see where all this fits together.

Creation – all of creation in harmony with God

Fall – everything disrupted, people do their own thing

Israel – a people called to be a sign of a different reality; they fail

Jesus – the 'new Israel' – the one who does all that Israel couldn't; offers reconciliation and forgiveness so able to come under God's kinship (the kingdom).

Church – the followers of Jesus and agents of God's kingship all around the world.

Consummation – Jesus returns to establish his kingdom finally, heaven (God's space) and earth (our space) come together. The whole of creation is in harmony with God.

The Difference the Big Story makes

As we tell other people about why Christian faith makes sense.

As we make sense of the Bible

Sunday's Sermon as an example. On Sunday I was preaching about Samson, and talked about how he was similar to the nation of Israel, but also how he foreshadowed Jesus – in other words I was wanting to fit Samson's story into the Big Story of scripture to help us know how to get the most out of this period of Israel's history.

Trying it out

We took some passages and asked these questions of them. The passages were Genesis 1, 12; Deuteronomy 5, Psalm 99, Jeremiah 29, Matthew 1, 16; Ephesians 2, Revelation 22.

In using these three questions you can help yourself understand how the part you are reading fits into the whole.

1. How does this fit into the story as a whole?
2. What does it tell us about what God is doing and what God is like?
3. How does this part of the Bible help me as a disciple of Jesus?

THE 39 BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT				
17 BOOKS OF HISTORY		5 BOOKS OF WISDOM, POETRY AND PRAISE	17 BOOKS OF PROPHECY	
5 BOOKS OF LAW	12 BOOKS OF HISTORY		5 BOOKS MAJOR PROPHETS	12 BOOKS MINOR PROPHETS
1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy	6. Joshua 7. Judges 8. Ruth 9. 1 Samuel 10. 2 Samuel 11. 1 Kings 12. 2 Kings 13. 1 Chron. 14. 2 Chron. <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> 15. Ezra 16. Nehemiah 17. Esther	18. Job 19. Psalms 20. Proverbs 21. Ecclesiastes 22. Song of Songs	23. Isaiah 24. Jeremiah 25. Lamentations 26. Ezekiel 27. Daniel	28. Hosea 29. Joel 30. Amos 31. Obadiah 32. Jonah 33. Micah 34. Nahum 35. Habbakuk 36. Zephaniah <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> 27. Haggai 38. Zechariah 39. Malachi
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> 9 / 3 DIVISION BASED ON BABYLONIAN EXILE </div>				

The Three Kinds of Books in the New Testament

Historical

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts

Pauline

TO CHURCHES:

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians

TO INDIVIDUALS:

1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

General

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

The Whole Bible Story in 500 words (roughly!)

God created the world in love. By his Spirit and his word, he made all kinds of plants and creatures, the stars in the sky, but as the pinnacle of all he created human beings—male and female in his likeness, as companion to one another, to share his rule.

But the people he had made turned from him and refused to follow his pattern of life. Yet God continued to provide for them—even as their rebellion destroyed their relationships, God's world, and even each other.

God called Abraham to trust him and know him. Through him God would make a nation who would be a blessing to the whole world. Even as Abraham, and his children, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, struggled to trust God, he provided and protected them, and fulfilled his promise.

The nation sold themselves into debt slavery in Egypt. Oppressed, they cried out to God for deliverance, and he raised up Moses as their leader. Through him, God led them from slavery to freedom in the promised land and gave them the gift of the law to live by. Even as they questioned and complained, God continued to provide for them and protect them.

Joshua led the people to settle the land, though they did not drive out the enemy. As the people turned from God, the nations around oppressed them. They cried out, and God delivered them. Rejecting God's rule, they asked for a king like the peoples around them—and he anointed Saul, David and Solomon to rule for him. Through them he blessed Israel with wisdom and worship, he established his presence in the temple. By his Spirit, he raised up prophets to call them back to faithfulness. Yet they continued to turn from him and worship others.

He sent empires to take his people captive again—but he could not give them up—his heart would not let him. Through leaders and prophets, he brought his people back to the land and back to the law, restoring the worship of his temple. Yet as they struggled, he sowed in their heart the desire for a new obedience, a new freedom, a new experience of his Spirit—even a new age, a new heavens and earth, through the renewed presence of God with his people.

Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus came proclaiming the longed-for reign of God as king. He healed the sick, delivered the possessed, and proclaimed good news of God's grace to the poor. He called God's people back to the true heart of the law, to true

worship of God's presence; he proclaimed forgiveness, freedom from living in the slavery of sin. But the leaders rejected him and had him crucified as a common criminal—just as they had rejected the prophets before him. As before, God turned rejection into redemption, and raised him to life, pouring out his Spirit and forming a renewed people from those who continued to trust and follow. This new life of the Spirit spilled over, beyond the bounds of his people the Jews, so that all the world would know God's blessing.

Through his people, Jesus continues to heal and bless and call others to life in all its fullness. One day Jesus will return to complete the fulfilment of God's promise to his people, to renew all creation, and to make real God's presence forever.

By Ian Paul, <http://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/whats-the-bible-all-about/>