

2 Timothy 3:14-17

The Reason For the Bible

Introduction: Last week we begin series through the Bible, and we are doing a year of Biblical literacy as a church. We are spending this year, reading and discussing the Bible, in order to know the Bible, and be formed and shaped by the Bible. Last week we discussed the problem of the Bible. Most people on the street today have a problem with the Bible. It used to be that people and modern culture saw the Bible as prudish and outdated, now people see the Bible as morally reprehensible and dangerous to human rights and human flourishing.. And as you read through the bible you realize that there is some really offensive stuff in it. Terrible people who do terrible things. The Bible is violent, it's teachings are often hard to hear and receive Not only that but then there are the things people have used the bible to justify.. So why don't we just move on from the Bible -get rid of it; why don't we drag the Bible, kicking and screaming into the modern age. Ultimately... our trust in the Bible stems from our trust in Jesus Christ... If you are a follower of Jesus, then you ll be keen to believe, and obey what the Bible says because, that's what Jesus did!

But we aren't done talking about the Bible..

Part of our problem with the Bible and our cultures problem with the Bible is we aren't asking this basic question - What is the Bible for?

1. What is the Bible for?

1. Intellect and Education

1. The Bible contains Language, history, culture, ideas, geography, poetry, and the list goes on. You can spend a lifetime reading, studying, lecturing and writing about the Bible. This is the intellectual approach to the Bible - a fascinating ancient text to be appreciated and poured over, just like other ancient text. We can use the bible this way as simply facts, information to know and make us smarter more educated.. is this what the Bible is for?

2. Timeless truth

1. Then there is the more practical approach to the Bible - people have questions of how to live well, how to raise children, make life decisions, how to have a happy marriage, how to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. Some see the Bible as timeless truth, ancient

wisdom passed down to us. So the Bible becomes a self help book, that is interpreted to your liking and your situation.

1. I heard Gavin Newsom's inaugural speech the other day, and in it he was talking about building a stronger California. He used Jesus' story of the two men who built their houses...one on sand and another on the rock. Governor Newsom used this story to make the point that "we" (The wise in this story) are building California on a rock. But I highly doubt that Jesus and Governor Newsom are talking about the same rock. (Newsom never mentioned Jesus or his source for this parable) Gavin Newsom is doing what so many of us do with the Bible; we take a verse, we rip it from it's context and we say this is what I take this to mean, and this part means this and this is how I apply it to my life and my situation. Is the Bible ours to interpret, and take what ever we want it to mean?

3. Spiritual Inspiration

1. Another approach to the Bible is as a spiritual self help book. We use it for a shot of adrenaline to pick us up when we're down, or to brighten our spirits for a daunting task. We turn to the psalms, or proverbs - some inspirational words that we can apply to our need or experience. Is the Bible to be used like a book of inspirational quotes or a hallmark card?? Is the Bible for Etsy prints and Pinterest boards?
4. The spiritual guide and answer book
 1. Many of us go to the Bible like this, It's the magic eight ball - looking for the answers to life's big questions, and answers to our questions. Can I sleep with my boyfriend/girlfriend and still be a christian, can I smoke weed, can I be gay and be a christian...
 1. The Bible does answer many of these, but is that what the Bible is for?
 1. *"What is surprising today is how many people treat the Bible as a collection of Sibylline Oracles, verses or phrases without context or connections. This is nothing less than astonishing. The scriptures are the revelation of a personal, relational, incarnational God to actual communities of men and women with names in history. The witnesses to the revelation are real writers who do their writing and witnessing in the full light of dyad with the confirmation of*

their worshipping communities. Everything is out in the open... The practice of dividing the Bible into numbered chapters and verses has abetted this "Sibylline complex." It gives the impression that the Bible is a collection of thousands of self-contained sentences and phrases that can be picked out or combined arbitrarily in order to discern our fortunes or fates. But the Bible verses are not fortune cookies to be broken open at random. And the Bible is not an astrological chart to be impersonally manipulated for amusement or profit." - Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading

2. Though the Bible does answer many of our life's questions and our personal questions that is actually not the purpose of the Bible. The Bible has a specific purpose.

2. The Reason for the Bible - What is the Bible for?

1. To Know God.

1. *"This is a text that reveals the sovereign God in being and action. It does not flatter us, it does not seek to please us. We enter this text to meet God as he reveals himself, not to look for truth or history or morals that we can use for ourselves. What he insisted on supremely was that we do not read the Bible in order to find out how to get God into our lives, get him to participate in our lives. That's getting it backwards." - Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*
2. The Bible is about God - The God of creation and redemption— Scripture has been written down and recorded that we may know God and the Bible doesn't do this through giving us facts, and bullet points about God. It isn't a doctrinal thesis. It tells us A Story, God's story.
3. *"I had always felt life first as a story: and if there is a story there is a story-teller. - G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy*
4. The Bible begins with - "In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth", or if you will, Once upon a time.. along time ago... God created the heavens and the earth... Genesis is not a scientific text on cosmology. It's a story. The Bible is first of all a story, a story about God, the creating God- who gives identity and purpose to his creation, the redeeming God - who enters into covenant relationship with his creation, and who

rescues, redeems and ultimately restores humanity to its original intent.... And it takes the whole Bible to tell this story.

1. Even when you think about the first time God tells someone to write the Bible - does anyone know the passage I'm talking about? In Exodus 17 (also recorded in Deuteronomy 25), The children of Israel are in the wilderness making their way to Mount Sinai, and all of a sudden A tribe called the Amalekites, came from behind Israel's caravan and started slaughtering, the elderly, and the weak. Moses sends Joshua and a make shift army out to fight with the Amalekites, and there's this weird thing about Moses lifting up his staff and when he does they prevail but when his arms go down they begin to lose.. Finally with some assistance Moses keeps his hands up and Israel prevails. **“Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” - Exodus 17:14**
2. So even the first story that God has people write down (As far as we know) is a story that records God's deliverance from those who would destroy his people and his purposes for them.
3. The Bible is a story about God and his continual acts of salvation, and his covenant relationship with human beings. Story is so compelling to us as humans all throughout history; humans are story telling creatures. So much of our knowledge and education comes from receiving and telling stories. The Bible is the story of God, given to us that we might know this God, to know his love and grace, his salvation, his truth, his character.

2. To know and understand the true history of humanity from God's point of view.

1. There are many views about the world, about humans, how we got here, what our purpose is, what is wrong with the world, and how to fix it...

1. Platonism - Ancient Greek Philosophy

1. **The Purpose:** the physical world is shadowy and flawed, but the real world is the non-material realm of forms and ideals. The purpose of life is to know and live in accord with the perfect realm of ideals.

2. **The Problem:** The soul is good, but the body is bad. Even within the soul, the emotions and desires (tied greatly to bodily desires for comfort, food, sex) often war against the reason, which, if it is properly educated, is fixed on the realm of the “Forms.” The problem is that the body and its passions too often win over reason.
3. **The Solution:** We must educate people so that reason triumphs over their bodies and appetites. We must put the most educated citizens, the philosophers, in charge of society.

2. Scientific Naturalism - Modern Philosophy

1. **The Purpose:** History is a linear movement linked by cause and effect. There is no reality beyond the physical. Everything is the product of biological evolution by means of natural selection. Everything about us is there because it helped us survive. That is the “purpose” of life- to survive.
2. **The Problem:** The problems of the world are basically due to competition that produces winners and losers.
3. **The Solution:** Empirical investigation and scientific implementation can eliminate many human problems, and in the end the process of evolution moves us “ahead.”

3. Post Modernism - Deconstructionist view

1. **The Purpose:** Objective knowledge of the real world is unachievable. Properties of objects are creative human projections. This agrees with existentialism that we are free to create our own reality, but it says we cannot do this as individuals. All truth is socially constructed in communities.
2. **The Problem:** Community identity unavoidably defines itself by those who are “not us” or “the other.” This marginalizes and oppresses. All truth claims are really just power plays by one group or another.
3. **The Solution:** to undermine and deconstruct all truth claims by unmasking them as socially constructed efforts to maintain power.

4. The Bible (God’s View)

1. **The Purpose:** God (The God of the Bible) made a good, beautiful world filled with beings to share in this life of joy

and peace by knowing, serving, and loving God and one another.

2. **The Problem:** Instead we chose to center our lives around ourselves and on the pursuit of things, rather than on God and others. This led to the disintegration of creation and the loss of peace within ourselves, between people, and in nature itself.
3. **The Solution:** God entered history in the person of Jesus to deal with all the causes and results of our broken relationship with him. Jesus lived the life we were created to live and then died to pay the debt of sin incurred for the life we actually live. By his resurrection he showed that death is now defeated and he showed us the future - new bodies and a completely new heaven and new earth, in which the world is restored to full joy, glory and peace.
 1. Through reading the Bible we get God's view of the world, of humans, and his heart for humanity, and his ongoing relationship to and with broken humans, sinful humans just like us...And again God does all this through story...
 2. *"The canonical scriptures are a veritable book of life, showing us God in relation to **the most dramatic human crises** (births, sicknesses, deaths, loves, losses, wars, falls, risks, disasters, failures, victories), **the most elemental human emotions** (joy, grief, love, hate, hope, fear, pain, anger, shame, awe) **and the most basic human relationships** (to parents, spouses, children, friends, neighbors, civil authorities, enemies, fellow-believers)...."* - J.I. Packer, *God has Spoken*
 3. *As you read scripture, allow God to tell you the story from his point of view*

3. To Be Formed and Transformed By It - The purpose of scripture to find our story being taken up into God's story. Not the other way around..

1. The reason for the Bible is to Know God, to know and understand history and humanity from God's point of view, but not as a spectator, Not as disconnected information. The Bible is for being shaped and formed in the way of Jesus, and of course

being caught up in this story requires participation, active listening, response - Dialoging with God, the one who is speaking..

1. *Eugene Peterson, for the last time, says, "We are given this book so that we can imaginatively and believably enter the world of the text and follow Jesus"*
2. *"To be formed by the Story of scripture is to be formed as a Christian. To take the thousand and ten thousand, decisions to open the Bible today and read more of this Story, even if we don't see the whole picture yet, is to take the next small step toward being the sort of person who, by second nature, will think, pray, act, and even feel in accordance with God's character and will. And before you know it you find your story caught up in the Story of God...." N.T Wright, After you Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*
3. As we read through scripture we encounter the lives of men and women who did many great things and many terrible things, they had great victories, and great failures, times of acting in great faith toward God and times where they responded in fear and unbelief.. (And we think, wait a minute, these people are no different than me.. Exactly) And underneath all of this we have the unfailing character and promises of God to rescue and redeem, to forgive and heal. As we read this story, we like those in the pages of scripture, are being invited into covenant relationship with this God - The God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - to experience his fatherly love, forgiveness, his grace, his discipline, his teaching, his character, His love of the world, his mission - to know him and to follow him.
4. **So how do we do that, how do we enter into the story?**
 1. **Meditation** We meditate on the word, we think it over, we contemplate the story, what it means and our lives in light of it... How are we being invited to believe, to repent, to hope, to love, to humble ourselves, etc.
 2. **Conversation** We speak back to God through Prayer - It's a dialogue with the living God, reading the Psalms and the prophets we see that God's people rarely had an agreeing posture with God; they complain, argue and accuse, they

repent and praise.. they thank and sing - They wrestle with God.

3. **Obedience** - Participatory reading - what can I obey? An active response to the living God. Early Jewish Rabbi's taught -The primary body part God gave us for taking in his word is not the ears but the feet - Follow Jesus, obey him.

Conclusion: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:14-17