

Thinking Christianly – Part Four: Scripture

By Pastor Dave Fields

“So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine Scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them” – St. Augustine of Hippo, 5th C

2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are *able to* make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

I. The Nature of Scripture

A. The Story of God leads us to Salvation in Jesus

“...the Holy Scriptures, which are *able to* make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” – 3:15

These pages lead us to a *Person* – to Jesus.

³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that *in them* you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come *to me* to have life.”
– John 5:39-40

Jesus himself tells us to read the Bible as a Story that comes to its climax in him.

B. The Scriptures are God-Breathed

- Inspired does not mean merely *inspiring*
- Inspired does not mean ‘faxing down’ from heaven, overtaking the minds of the writer
- Inspired or “God-Breathed” means the product of this “Divine/Human” endeavor, initiated by God, with God’s Spirit guiding the whole process.

Listen to how Luke describes his process of writing his Gospel:

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that *have been fulfilled among us*, just as they were handed down by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write and orderly account for you most excellent Theophilus, *so that* you may *know* the certainty of the things you have been taught.” – Luke 1:1-4

II. The Authority of Scripture

The Scriptures are Authoritative and have the 'privileged voice' in the Quadrilateral. That means that each of these are not weighed equally for Christian thinking.

The Authority of Scripture means: "God's authority" exercises *through* these writings.

"All authority in heaven and on earth have been..." what? "Written down in this book?" No. Jesus say: "All authority in heaven and earth have been given to *me*." - Matthew 28:18

III. The Function of Scripture

"All scripture is God-breathed and *useful* for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness *so that* the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- 1 Timothy 3:16-17

- **Teaching**

This book teaches us *about God...about who we are...about where we come from...about where we are going...about what is wrong with the world...about God's plan of redeeming what is lost and broken...and about how to live, how to engage in our part in God's mission.*

But even those instructive parts come to us within the context of this whole *Story that leads to Jesus. Like, it's the Gospel, the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus that 'makes sense' of all the 'teaching, correcting, rebuking and training in righteousness.'*

- **Rebuking and Correcting**

God speaks kindly to us through this book, and like a friend who cares about our well-being will say things like: "You are wrong to respond that way...to look at that...to want that." And God is kind to give us this resource. It tells us what Jesus would have us do in various situations – and which things we ought to avoid. It doesn't leave us guessing what God wants or what would be good for us and our world.

This story, and particularly the teaching of Jesus, furnishes us with a way of being in the world, and a way of correcting our thinking, that keeps us from being 'deformed.' This addresses our experiences and helps us evaluate what do with our emotions. It does not put down our experiences, but it helps us frame them rightly.

- **Training in Righteousness**

That's about what it means to be human – lining ourselves up with living as God made us to live. This is "God's way of life." (See Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).

IV. Indwelling the Story

1. We don't engage this story alone. We live out our life with God in a community of other Jesus-followers, and so we help each other. We live this out in a community of other Jesus-followers, and so we help each other.

2. Regular reading reframes our world. A habit of reading the Bible will reshape your imaginative framework. You will begin, slowly but surely, to see the world differently. We **also read with expectancy** – not just of getting some devotional moment of 'inspiration', though that happens regularly too. We come to the scriptures with expectancy of meeting Jesus through this prayerful, open posture.

3. Get help to understand it. Because the Bible was written in a different language and in different cultures, we need additional background information to understand it. Good study tools can fill in the blanks. See my own blog that is a reading guide for much of the New Testament. See the "For Everyone" series. Ask our pastors your questions.

4. Regular worship is a key of "indwelling the story". If you followed Jesus around in his earthly ministry, you would find yourself in a worshipping community: Every. Single. Week. Like we read in Luke 4, Jesus made that his regular practice. And we also see there that Jesus reads the Scriptures – that's a key part of our worship practice – and then he explains that this Scripture is about himself and his kingdom. That's Biblical preaching. The songs and prayers and giving – these help us stay rooted in this story. Jesus leaves us with a practice – a way of indwelling the story – and that is found in the regular ritual of taking the bread and the cup.

We *remember* in order to *relate*.

Life Group Discussion and Reflection Questions:

Open Up: When you think of "the Scriptures" or your experience with reading them, what are some of the initial thoughts and feels you have? (Could be positive, negative or mixed). How might the regular practice of reading the Bible – like, all of it and repeatedly – help a person live according to a different story? Share if you have any experience with that. Talk about what it might be like to try it.

Dig In: Read Luke 24:13-35

Name some of the things Jesus says as he takes this couple through his "Bible study" in vv.25-27.

How might reading the Bible as a story (a true story that has a plot line) that leads to Jesus – his life, death, resurrection – help you best adopt this story as your guiding-story?

How might that confront those competing stories?

Take it Home:

In the message, we saw four practical ways to “Indwell the Story of Scripture”. These includes:
1. This is something we do in community; 2. Regular reading reframes our world; 3. Get help with understanding it; and 4. Regular worship, including reading and the preaching of the text, helps us live into this story. Which of these would you most like to strengthen as a practice and why? What steps will you take this week?

Prayer:

Take time to hear and pray for specific needs in your group and our broader community. Ask God to help you in those areas you would like to grow in. Give thanks for the resource of Scripture – that these pages lead us to meet the Person!