

Discussion Notes
Biblia (Part 2)
January 18, 2015

Introduction

- Biblia is a series on the need for the Bible's prominence in our lives and (hopefully) a tool to help us interact with it.

Reasons we might avoid the Bible

- Why, if the Bible is so important, so pivotal to our relationship with God, do we evade consistent interaction with it?
 - We may be unconvinced of its importance.
 - We may have negative or improper views of it.
 - Bad feelings when we read it, like guilt or shame. Or we may be daunted by the challenge of reading it. It's unlike reading anything else.
 - We have problems with our experience of it, or it's accessibly. This is where many of us my struggle.

Three Approaches to Bible Interaction

Relational Approach

- Luke's example of how he used to read the Bible, a task-oriented mindset.
- There is a reason we keep referring to "Bible interaction", we believe that the Bible is a composition of God's word and is "living and active" (Hebrews 4.12).
- Last week Doug highlighted 2 Timothy 3.16-17

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- This means that God's word is filled with his breath, his Spirit. If we remember our origins in Genesis, humans are also "filled with God's breath".
 - When we read scripture, in any context, we are interacting with God's Spirit. The Spirit of the text is the Spirit in you and I. So, God speaks to, serves, ministers to us through the text, by his Spirit.
 - This is what Doug was emphasizing last week when he said the Holy Spirit is a reading buddy, or reading partner. God's word doesn't lack animation; it is filled with breath, filled with his Spirit.
- When we approach the Bible then, we can approach it as we would any interaction with another living being. We can expect a sort of back and forth with the text, through God's Spirit.
 - Doug's prayer as an example: *"God open my eyes and ears so I can see you, hear you and know you..."*
 - We cannot take what is meant to be an interactive, relational, formational experience and turn it into a chore.
- The purpose of reading the Bible is not to earn favour.
 - We have favour with God. No amount of Bible reading can make God love us more or less.
 - Our identity and position in the family of God is not in jeopardy depending on how well we perform in spiritual disciplines.
 - 1 John 3.2 – we are God's children.
 - If we don't read the Bible for approval or love, why do we read it? The purpose of reading the Bible is to know God and become more like him.
- This is why the Bible and prayer go hand in hand. They are both avenues to knowing God. We can't divorce prayer and scripture.
 - The Bible informs prayer because we have to know whom we're praying to. Prayer is an interaction with God's Spirit that illuminates the Bible's truth.

- How do I know if I'm reading the Bible for merit or reading it relationally?
 - *Does my sense of satisfaction come from completing the task of Bible reading, or the experience we have of God while reading?*
 - If it is the former, then we bring that to God and ask him to transform us further by his grace and gospel.
- As much as discipline, routine and rhythm involved we must approach is relationally.

Personal Approach

- Because we approach the Bible relationally we therefore also approach is personally. This is the basis of the Christian life. We approach God the person, not God the idea. We approach God as persons ourselves.
- Since we take a relational approach we also recognize ourselves as one side of the relationship.
 - Any relationship is a two way street. We take interest in the other we're getting to know, but also are aware that our own personalities, interests, preferences and histories play a part in the dynamics of the interaction.
 - Could you imagine if I got married and approached matrimony as if my personality, interests or unique character would have no affect on the experience of the marriage or progression of the relationship? That would make me an incredibly un-self aware person. That's not how marriage works! It's a two-way street and a personal thing.
 - So, we must read the Bible with personality. God has personality, God has a character and his Word shows us this. We do, too, and should approach the Bible accordingly.
- St. Augustine understood this when he wrote about prayer. He said that before we pray we must recognize that we all suffer from a disorder of the heart.

- Augustine recognize that before we pray we first recognize that our hearts may want other things before they want God, and so it was useless to try and pray when our hearts are in “disorder”. This is a level of self-awareness.
- How do we read the Bible with self-awareness?
 - Know your maturity.
 - Know your capacity. People who like to read or not read...
 - Know your personality. Perhaps write or read silently?
 - Know your tendencies.
- By approaching the Bible personally we also recognize our own God-given personality and can explore the Bible creatively.
- Personal examples of self-awareness:
 - Luke’s aversion to reading plans and imposed structure.
 - Luke’s capacity is limited. I can’t expect to read the Bible for 2 hours a day starting this afternoon.
 - Luke’s tendency towards reading the Bible for merit.
 - Luke’s example of 2014 Advent poems.

Practical Approach

- Because we approach the Bible relationally and personally we also approach it practically, not in the abstract.
 - No relationship is abstract. It’s the in flesh. Relationships and persons have facts, histories and realities we can’t escape at the snap of the fingers.
 - As we said we’re interacting with God’s Spirit through the text, through the Bible, relationally. So we’re interacting with a living document but it’s still text.
- The Bible is a diverse, historical, ancient document.
 - So, just as we have to be self-aware when we approach the Bible, aware of our own nature, we also need to be aware of the nature of the Bible. Again, it’s a two way street.
 - The Bible is a varied composition, written over 1,500 years, with its latest parts written about 2,000 years ago.

- Depending on what page you turn to you might find history, a letter to a friend, poetry, predictions about the future, analogy, or literal, practical instruction that applies the same today as it did the day it was written.
- Respect the Bible like we respect a giant body of water. Don't fear the depth, respect it.
 - Example of a swimming in a large body of water. We respect it's depth and mystery but also enjoy it.
- We live with self-awareness and embrace some humility and have some fare expectations.
 - A steady diet results in health. Point to Doug's example.
 - Doug is not Godly *and so* he reads the Bible. Doug is Godly *because* he reads the Bible.

Discussion Questions

- Typically, how have you approached the Bible?
- What did you learn or were reminded of through this teaching?
- How do we read the Bible relationally and personally? What might we do to read the Bible this way?
- How has the way you approach the Bible brought health? What might need to change if you're not experiencing health by reading the Bible?