

# READING THE BIBLE LIKE JESUS

## SESSION ONE: HOW JESUS READ THE BIBLE

*“Jesus had a deep relationship with the Bible, and he saw it as a pointer to Him, a story to prepare the world for what he had come to do.”*

– Dan Kimball, *How Not to Read the Bible*, p294

*“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”* – Jesus, *The Bible*, Luke 5:39

### HOW DID JESUS READ THE BIBLE?

#### Luke 24:13-48 (NASB95)

<sup>25</sup> And [Jesus] said to [the disciples], “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

<sup>32</sup> They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

<sup>44</sup> Now [Jesus] said to [the disciples], “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

**When Jesus looked at the Scriptures, he saw them as a unified story that led to Him: about an anointed representative who would go through death and suffering, come out the other side, so that a whole new existence could open up for the world.**

- ‘Christ’ means ‘Anointed One.’ Since the garden of Eden, humanity has been trying to find a way back to that kind of existence with God. Over time, God, through His prophets and words, revealed one would come and begin this restoration. Jesus saw Himself as this Christ.
- The word ‘Scriptures’ literally means ‘Writings’ – This is referring to the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Old Testament to us. We also use the term ‘Scriptures’ to refer to the whole Bible for us, Old and New Testaments, or to refer to passages within the Text.
- Jesus refers to the Hebrew Scriptures as a two-part (“Moses and the prophets”) or a three-part (“Torah, prophets, and Psalms”) collection. Jesus is not alone in this. He is expressing the most common way the Bible was referred to in Jewish culture from this period.

**We will look at these words and ideas more throughout this study. But this is how Jesus read His Bible**

## HOW DID THE DISCIPLES (APOSTLES) READ THE BIBLE?

### 2 Timothy 3:14-17

<sup>14</sup>You [Timothy], however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, <sup>15</sup>and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

**Jesus and His early followers consistently portray the Hebrew Scriptures as a unified collection of wisdom literature that tells a forward pointing story, a story that leads us to Jesus!**

‘Sacred writings’ again are referring to the Bible, specifically, Paul is referring to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament that is able to give us wisdom (a word we will unpack more later) that leads to a saving through that anointed representative.

‘Inspired by God’ or ‘God breathed’ is actually literally translated ‘God-Spirited’ – that God put His Spirit into the creation and formation of the whole of Scriptures (both Old Testament and New Testament) in order that we might receive wisdom for life! Again, these are all ideas and views we will be exploring more throughout this study.

**How did Jesus and His followers reach this conclusion? They did not invent this way of reading the Hebrew Bible. Rather, they inherited from their Jewish tradition a set of convictions about the origin, nature, and meaning of these texts. And not only that, but they also grew up in communities that modeled how to read and make sense of the Hebrew scriptures.**

*“One of the most fundamental questions which has faced theology and the Church in every age... is whether or not Christianity also needs an Old Testament. Is the Old Testament to be thrown away as obsolete, or preserved as a relic from days of yore, or treasured as a classic and read by scholars, or used occasionally as a change from the New Testament, or kept in a box in case it should be needed some day? Or is the Old Testament an essential part of the Christian Bible, with continuing validity alongside the New Testament?” — D.L. Baker, Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study Of The Theological Relationship Between The Old And New Testaments*

## A LOOK AHEAD – THE PARADIGM OF THE BIBLE

Our goal in this study is to introduce and discover seven lenses (or perspectives) we need to adopt in order read the Bible like Jesus did. As we adopt this paradigm, we will begin shifting the way we see and read the Bible to line up with that of the way Jesus did, which not only brings a renewed fire to our hearts but also a greater transformation and wisdom to our lives.

“A paradigm is a standard, perspective, or set of ideas.”

“A paradigm is a way of looking at something.”

We will do this through seven different but unified ways of viewing and reading scripture. This paradigm is that the Bible is:

- Human and Divine Literature
- Unified Literature
- Messianic Literature
- Communal Literature
- Ancient Literature
- Meditation Literature
- Wisdom Literature

## HOW DO WE BEGIN RESHAPING OUR PARADIGM OF SCRIPTURE?

First, by recognizing the *limiting* or *harmful* ways we typically engage the Bible. There are three main ways we limit or harm the original design of the how we read the Bible:

*“The way we view the Bible and what it is all about will shape how we see and follow Jesus”*

### #1 - As a Theology Dictionary:

- **THE IDEA** is seeking the Bible for answers on life issues like one would look in a dictionary or reference book to explain a word or topic.
- **THE INTENT** is to find through scripture how we should engage God, others, and the world. **In fact, the Bible was designed to shape our views on life and issues but not as a theology dictionary.**
- **THE ISSUE** comes when we expect the Bible to give us a clear definition of an issue through single verses or stories that we often twist to say something that it was never meant to say. **Worse, it makes us a people who are after answers more than a relationship with God.**

*“We believe the Bible was written for us, that it’s for everyone of all times and places because it’s God’s Word. But it wasn’t written to us. It wasn’t written in our language; it wasn’t written with our culture in mind or our culture in view.” – Dr. John Walton*

**#2 - As a Moral Rulebook:**

- **THE IDEA** is that the Bible is just a list of rules of what to do and not do.
- **THE INTENT** comes from a place of wanting to do and live right in this world and with God. **In fact, the Bible does want to shape how we view right and wrong and live, but not as a moral rulebook.**
- **THE ISSUE** is that the Bible ends up unclear, confusing, and even contradictory on some rules, leaving the reader conflicted. **Worse, we stop seeking the Spirit for wisdom and discernment in our decisions each day.**

*“Are we imposing a set of questions that are foreign to what the authors are trying to communicate? Do we need to set our cultural agendas aside to just listen?” – Session*

*Quote from the Bible Project Classroom – Unit One, Session One*

**#3 - As a Devotional Grab Bag**

- **THE IDEA** is that we just pick certain passages to focus on in order to find an uplifting and encouraging message that makes us feel good.
- **THE INTENT** usually is to be in the Scripture and to be close to God. **Which is exactly what the Bible wants us to do, to know God and His story of rescue for us, but as a devotional grab bag.**
- **THE ISSUE** is that we lose the context of these passages, therefore, losing the path to their true meanings and right applications. **Worse, we are never challenged to change and be the image of God we were created to be.**

*“We must always guard against trying to make the Bible say what WE want it to say! There is only one interpretation, and it is imperative that we discover the correct interpretation. For if our interpretation is in error, so too will be our applications.” –*

*How to Study the Bible, p6,12*

**BONUS! – As a History Book**

**When we read the Bible by just using any of these methods, too often we will do one of two things: 1) We will bring our own views, opinions, and agendas into the Bible and end up making the Bible say something the authors never meant for it to say or 2) we will stop reading and end the story before the Bible gets to finish telling the full story, leaving us lost, confused, or disheartened about our God and faith.**

Whether it is taking a Bible verse out of context or making our own conclusions even when the story continues on, There are many ways we can lose the true intended purpose and meaning of scripture, but our goal is to rediscover the way Scripture was meant to be engaged so that doesn't happen to us anymore.

*“The Bible isn't a cruise ship experience where we get to take all our stuff with us. We must leave our luggage at the port, our own cultural assumptions behind, and allow the authors of that day and time to immerse us in the portrait of which they saw their God, their world, and their hope.”*

So, how do we start reshaping the way we engage Scripture?

First, recognize the limiting and harmful ways we engage the Bible.

Second?

## **READ THE BIBLE ON ITS OWN TERMS**

*“Am I willing to leave my experiences, views, ideas, opinions, and agendas at the door and just be willing to step into the Bible the way David did, the way Jesus did, and the way the Apostles did?” – Quote from the Bible Project Classroom – Unit One, Session One*

It starts by setting everything you think you know and everything you’ve been taught to the side. Allowing the Bible to speak for itself, fully and completely, teaching you how to read it the way Jesus did.

Are you ready for your own *Road to Emmaus* journey with Jesus and the Scriptures? Give your answer to God in prayer.

*Don’t let your experiences define Scripture  
but let Scripture define your experiences.*

## **PRACTICE: PREPARING TO READ RUTH WITH THIS NEW PARADIGM (See Practice Packet)**