B.I.B.L.E. – Yes That's The Book For Me

Week 1: Jesus at the Center

- Begin in Prayer (5 Minutes)

- Read: *Luke 24:13-53; Luke 4:16-21; John 5:39-40*

- Overview: [For Leaders]

  Western Christianity in 2021 is a bit of a paradox. On the one hand, we have instant access to more and better translations of the Bible than any of the heroes of Christian history. We also have instant access to more and better resources than any community of Christians since Jesus walked out of the grave on Easter morning. And yet, on the other hand, biblical literacy is abysmally low among western Christians. Confidence in the Bible is perhaps at an all-time low. The growing mood around the Bible is that it's something that needs to be deconstructed or perhaps abandoned altogether, leading to a cultural moment full of what some people have called "post-Bible Christians."

  Our conviction is that most of the 'problems' people have with the Bible in our day and age are not problems with the Bible, per se, but problems with our assumptions about what the Bible is, how it works, and what it means to read it well. With that said, our goal in this series is not necessarily to defend the Bible's validity, history, content, or relevance. Our goal is to help people become readers of the Bible, to become better and more responsible readers of the Bible, and to become readers who are transformed by how they read the Bible. To accomplish this, we are framing this series around a simple question: "*How will these conversations help us to be better at practicing the way of Jesus together?"* In other words, when it comes to the Bible, we believe that practicing the way of Jesus together means that we must learn to adopt the perspective, posture, and practices that Jesus Himself had toward the Bible.

  So what did Jesus think the Bible was? Well, for an answer we can eavesdrop on the first conversations he had with his disciples after the resurrection (see Luke 24:13 and following). Here, Jesus shared with his disciples a fresh way of seeing the Scriptures that they had never encountered before *and* one they would have never been able to work out on their own apart from him. But he doesn't do it by taking them to a couple of proof text verses. And He doesn't do it by providing them with a creative or counterintuitive reading of a few passages and stories. He did it by showing them how the *whole story* of the Bible was pointing to Him. They finally understood the Bible when Jesus presented Himself as the key that unlocks the door to its true purpose, meaning, and goals. Which means: You cannot understand the Bible in its deepest and truest sense without Jesus.

  The point is that Jesus saw the Bible as a collection of stories that tell one unified story that ultimately points to Him. He believed Himself to be the fulfillment of all its promises, the true embodiment of all its big ideas, and the only solution to all its major problems. Putting Jesus at the center of the story is the first step in learning to read the Bible well. When you put Jesus at the center of the Bible, literally and

figuratively, everything eventually clicks into place. Without Him at the center, you will inevitably misread, misunderstand, and misuse the Bible.

- Questions for Discussion (20-30 Minutes)
    1. What arrested your attention/heart/mind from the weekend talk or overview above?
    2. See 'This Week's Practices' for additional discussion questions.

- This Week's Practice (10 Minutes)

  Writing (or Telling) Your 'Bible Story'

  None of us are a blank slate when it comes to the Bible. We each have a somewhat unique relationship with the Bible, a perspective on what the Bible is and how it works, based on our life experiences. The problem is that while these beliefs and habits exercise immense influence on our lives, they remain largely intuitive and unconscious to us. Our encouragement is that you take some time this week to give language to your view of the Bible by writing out or discussing your answers to the following questions:

    - What is your view of the Bible? (Ex. It's God's Word; It's essential; it's a guide book for life; it's a rule book; It's important; It's old; it's confusing; it's boring; it's out of touch with modernity; it's full of contradictions and errors, etc.)
    - Where did your view(s) come from? In other words, who or what has had the biggest influence on your view of the Bible? (Ex. My family, my church growing up, TV, etc.)?
    - What role has the Bible played in your life? (Formative; none; a lifeline in emergencies; a source of guilt or frustration; background noise, etc)
    - What is/are the biggest obstacle(s) you in engaging the Bible? (Ex. I'm too busy; I don't know where to start; I've tried before and didn't get anything out of it; I'm not a reader)
    - What about Jesus? (i.e. What is your view of Jesus? How does your view of Him inform or impact your understanding of the Bible? Do you see it as He did? Does it play a similar role in your life to His?)

  The first step to becoming a reader of the Bible, or a better reader of the Bible, is *not* necessarily to try and change your 'Bible story', but rather to elevate your view of Jesus. Andrew Wilson writes: *"Ultimately, our trust in the bible stems from our trust in Jesus Christ, the man who is God, the King of the world, the crucified risen and exalted rescuer. I don't trust in Jesus because I trust the Bible. I trust the Bible because I trust in Jesus. I love Him and I've decided to follow him. So if he acts and talks as if the Bible is*

trustworthy, authoritative, good, helpful and powerful, I will too...even if some of my questions remain unanswered or my answers remain unpopular."

Going Deeper

If the idea that Jesus is the center of the Bible is not a new one for you, but you would still like to hone your Bible reading skills over the next week, we recommend a resource to you called The Bible Project: https://bibleproject.com

Specifically, if you would like to go deeper with some of the items discussed on Sunday, then check out the following episodes of their podcast on the Book of Jonah, how it fits into the themes and design of the Hebrew Bible, and how Jesus would have read both Jonah and His Bible.

> Our Assumptions About Jonah:
> https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/bibleproject/id1050832450?i=1000532778717
>
> Jonah's Literary Context:
> https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/bibleproject/id1050832450?i=1000533514017
>
> Hyperlinks and Patterns in Jonah:
> https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/bibleproject/id1050832450?i=1000534422481