

what makes the Bible make sense

the vision of the gospel project

show slide 1:

How should we understand the Bible? Whether you're a new Christian, a mature believer, or someone trying to figure out what this book even is, we need to understand this in order to be able to make sense of what it says.



slide 1

Many people, regardless of their background, see the Bible as basically an instruction manual. A book of rules to obey and examples to follow. But that's not how we are meant to understand the Bible, because it's not what the Bible is about. And when we treat it this way, things generally go bad.

Take, for example, a group of religious leaders from Jesus' day called the Pharisees. They devoted their lives to studying the Bible and trying to follow their interpretation of its commands as closely as possible. They saw the Bible as an instruction manual, with strict obedience to their interpretation of its commands as the secret of eternal life.

Then Jesus began His ministry, proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven is near. Eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors, the outcasts of society. Performing miracles, healing the sick, doing good works on the Sabbath, the day of rest.

Declaring the teaching of the Pharisees' wrong.

Jesus infuriated the Pharisees, but no matter how they tried to get people to see that He was wrong, they failed. Jesus consistently put them to shame. And in John 5, after the Pharisees challenged Jesus for healing a blind man on the Sabbath and calling Him a blasphemer, Jesus offered one of His most blistering condemnations—and He did it by challenging their view of the Bible itself.

show slide 2:

He said, “You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me.”

Jesus’ words were, and are, earth-shattering, not just because of the strength of their condemnation, but because they reveal what we’re missing when we read the Bible as an instruction manual. They are the key to the puzzle that the Bible can seem to be for us. When we see the Bible as primarily being filled with commands and examples to follow, we may study the Bible diligently. We may pore over every page searching for the secret of eternal life. But we may miss the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We need to look at Scripture the way Jesus does, as testifying about Him. When we do, it changes how we understand the Bible, and how we live in light of it.

We recognize the Old Testament as the foundation and foreshadowing of everything that happens in the New, the first part of one big story told from Genesis to Revelation.

We see the New Testament as good news of great joy for all people because Jesus came to fulfill the Law, to rescue us through His death and resurrection, and restore the relationship with our Creator that sin ruined.

And we can live faithfully in the world right now, as good news people in a bad news world. People who know how the story God is telling ends, a story that says that all the bad we experience right now in this world will come to an end in the world to come, when Jesus returns to make all things new.

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because you think you have
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John 5:39, esb

slide 2

show slide 3:

This is the understanding we need to fully make sense of the Bible in the way God intended.

As much as the Bible helps us to live wisely, and provides powerful examples of courage and compassion, we cannot reduce it to being about such things. God wants us to see something so much more than that, something so much bigger—that the gospel is at work from beginning to end.

That Jesus is at its center.

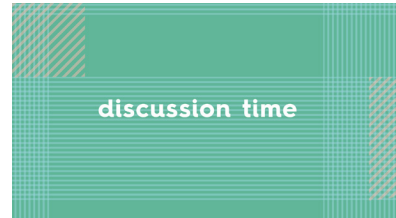
the Bible makes sense
when **Jesus** is at
its center.

slide 3

We need His help to see this—and we need His help so that we might help others see it as well. To be people who say with John the Baptist, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”, people with good news to share with the whole world.

show slide 4 & discuss the following:

- How were you taught to understand the Bible, whether while growing up or as an adult?
- How does the way of understanding the Bible we’ve just discussed differ from what you were taught?
- Why does it matter that we keep Jesus at the center of our Bible teaching?



slide 4