

COMMON GROUND

A Loving Defense of Christianity



Discussion #4: "Onion Cake"- *The Bible's Disturbing Passages*

Devotions for the Week of 9/2-9/7

Monday, September 2 Read Psalm 23

This is of course one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. Notice that in the first three verse the psalmist is talking about his relationship to God. At v.4, after having spoken about his relationship, it shifts to a prayer, actually speaking to God. What does this psalm say about God and what does it say about the psalmist? _____

What might it mean to you? _____

Tuesday September 3 Read Daniel 7

Daniel was written for a people who were in danger of compromising their faith, who were ruled by people who worshipped other gods. What would this story have meant to them? _____

Are you ever tempted to compromise your values and beliefs to fit in? _____

How is Daniel an example to us today? _____

Wednesday, September 4 Read Isaiah 55:6-9

Even with all the revelations God gives us of Himself, we must never forget that the whole picture is neither given to us nor are we capable of understanding the entirety of God even if it were. How might we see such mystery as essential to a growing faith and relationship with God? _____

Sermon Notes from
September 1, 2019

"Onion Cake"

1. The Bible is God's self-revelation through the experiences and history of his people on earth.
2. It must be understood...
 - A. ...in its internal and external context
 - B. ...as a single message in multiple forms
 - C....as a mystery provoking further inquiry.

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Thursday, September 5 Read Luke 8:19-14

Describe the heart of the religious leader (Pharisee). _____

Describe the heart of the tax collector (*these were often seen as traitors since they worked for the Romans and tended to be non-religious, therefore sinners*). _____

Which is your heart more like? Why? _____

Why did Jesus tell this story and what does God look for in us? _____

Friday, September 6 Read Philippians 1:9-11; 2:3-4 & 4:4-9

Paul wrote this letter while in prison awaiting news of his possible execution. Why does Paul pray this (1:9-11) for his readers? _____

How does 2:3-4 apply to you? _____

Given what he is facing, why can Paul have the joy he relates in 4:4-9? _____

What might God need to say to you in these passages? _____

Saturday, September 7 Read Genesis 12:1-9

What does Abram's call teach us about age and God's call on *our* lives? Note that Abram's most exciting period was still *ahead* of him! _____

What does this story tell you about God's expectations of you and how you use your blessings? _____

Below are some quotes from Eugene Peterson, author of the most recent Biblical paraphrase, The Message. Reflect on some of these insights as to the purpose and nature of the Bible. How do these affect your understanding of what the Bible is and how we are to make use of it?

"All serious and good writing anticipates this kind of reading—ruminative and leisurely, a dalliance with words in contrast to wolfing down information. **But our canonical writers who wrestled God's revelation into Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek sentences...**make up a school of writers employed by the Holy Spirit to give us our Holy Scriptures and keep us in touch with reality, whether visible or invisible: God-reality, God-presence." - Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book

"This Biblical world is decidedly not an ideal world...suffering and injustice and ugliness are not purged from the world in which God works and loves and saves. Nothing is glossed over. God works patiently and deeply and often in hidden ways, in the mess of our humanity and history....So we read personally, not impersonally. We read in order to live our true selves, not just to get information that we can use to raise our standard of living. Bible reading is a means of listening to and obeying God, not gathering religious data by which we can be our own gods."- Eugene Peterson, The Message- introduction

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Small Group Leader's Discussion Guide

Section 1: Looking Through the Lens of Scripture

1. **Read Psalm 23** Share: "This is of course one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. Notice that in the first three verse the psalmist is talking about his relationship to God. At v.4, after having spoken about his relationship, it shifts to a prayer, actually speaking to God. " Ask and discuss the following:
 - What does this psalm say about God and what does it say about the psalmist?
 - What might it mean to you?
2. **Read Daniel 7** Share: "Daniel was written for a people who were in danger of compromising their faith, who were ruled by people who worshipped other gods. "
 - What would this story have meant to them?
 - Are you ever tempted to compromise your values and beliefs to fit in?
 - How is Daniel an example to us today?

Section 2: Applications

1. **Read Luke 8:19-14** Discuss: Describe the heart of the religious leader (Pharisee). Describe the heart of the tax collector (*these were often seen as traitors since they worked for the Romans and tended to be non-religious, therefore sinners*).
 - Which is your heart more like? Why?
 - Why did Jesus tell this story and what does God look for in us?
2. **Read Isaiah 55:6-9** Share: "Even with all the revelations God gives us of Himself, we must never forget that the whole picture is neither given to us nor are we capable of understanding the entirety of God even if it were. " Discuss:
 - How might we see such mystery as *essential* to a growing faith and relationship with God?
3. **Look at these notes from last Sunday's sermon. Discuss the questions that follow.**
 - A. **The Bible is God's self-revelation through the experiences and history of his people on earth.**
 - Look at the quotes from Eugene Peterson on page 2 of this study. Do you agree with this understanding of the Bible? Why or why not?
 - B. **It must be understood...**
 - * **...in its internal and external context**
 - Why is the context or background for the Scripture important to our understanding?
 - * **...as a single message in multiple forms**
 - Does this mean that there is no one 'meaning' for a given scripture? Why or why not?
 - * **...as a mystery provoking further inquiry.**
 - Why might it be important that we do NOT always understand God?

What is the Bible?

The Bible is not a book, but rather a library or collection of many books. There are different genres, styles and purposes behind each book but collectively they reveal a multi-faceted, developing and nuanced story of God's interaction with His creation. As such no single book tells the whole story and if taken out of the context of the larger whole can create a misleading or skewed picture. In the readings for this week we have looked at a variety of different types of writing. As you and your group wrestles with these texts, explore them on multiple levels: their literary style, original purpose, the goals for the people who originally wrote and heard them and how they relate to our own time and very different culture. Most of all, reflect on how God uses these words to reveal Himself to you.