

BEVERAGES AND BIBLES

"The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed." - Patrick Henry

"The Holy Book of the living God suffers more from its exponents today than from its opponents." - Leonard Ravenhill

This year is the 500th anniversary of the protestant reformation beginning with Martin Luther nailing his 95 thesis to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. During the reformation many leaders of church movements stated that they wanted the church to be "Sola Scriptura" lead by scripture alone. On this anniversary year, we have a great opportunity to discuss the value, role, and the authority of the Bible for ourselves and others.

Question: How does the Bible work as a source of revelation to you? What does it reveal (teach, inspire, show) you about ethics, God, Christ, the role of the church, etc?

- The Bible is the truest utterance that ever came by alphabetic letters from the soul of man, through which, as through a window divinely opened, all men can look into the stillness of eternity, and discern in glimpses their far-distant, long- forgotten home. --Thomas Carlyle
- The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian. --AW. Tozer
- One of the many divine qualities of the Bible is that it does not yield its secrets to the irreverent and the censorious. -- James I. Packer
- The Christian community continues to exist because the conclusions of the critical study of the Bible are largely withheld from them. --Hans Conzelmann

Question: Is the Bible the final arbiter of religious truth?

- The Bible itself is intolerant, and true followers of God's word should be as well.-- Bob Jones III, president of Bob Jones University
- Too often we see the Bible through whatever lens we get from our culture. --Brian McLaren
- Were we allowed to read the Bible as we do all other books, we would admire its beauties, treasure its worthy thoughts, and account for all its absurd, grotesque and cruel things, by saying that its authors lived in rude, barbaric times. But we are told that it was written by inspired men; that it contains the will of God; that it is perfect, pure, and true in all its parts; the source and standard of all moral and religious truth; that it is the star and anchor of all human hope; the only guide for man, the only torch in Nature's night. These claims are so at variance with every known recorded fact, so palpably absurd, that every free, unbiased soul is forced to raise the standard of revolt. –Robert Ingersoll
- Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth! --Voltaire

Question: What do we need (passion, insight, cultural context, different translations) do we need to understand the Bible?

- Here, then, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy. - R. C. Sproul
- The question is: Why have these poems and prayers endured? Why, thousands of years later, do we still have them? And the answer you'll return to again and again is: They speak to our human experience. - Rob Bell

More Questions

- Do you accept everything the Bible says, in all its parts, as true and applicable to you? If not, why not?
- Is there a "right" translation which should be used? What do you tend to read and why?

- Are there parts of the Bible we should just throw out?
- How should we read the Bible?

More Quotes

- I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book that you can by reason and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man. It is the best Book which God has given to man. --Abraham Lincoln
- I have always said that a studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands. --Thomas Jefferson.
- The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity. --Immanuel Kant
- The Bible reveals God's adaptability, as it were, to take the human drama and bring to life from it a flawed document, with its mistakes and lost endings and errant genealogies, and then raise that document and elevate it to His use by imbuing it with spiritual power that transcends the level of humanity altogether. --Michael Phillip

Some well-known figures and voices on the Bible and it's value:

- Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand. -- Mark Twain
- If you believe that exposing your children to violence is a problem, by all means keep them away from the Bible. --Rev. Charles Henderson
- The Old Testament, as everyone who has looked into it is aware, drips with blood; there is, indeed, no more bloody chronicle in all the literature of the world. --Henry L. Mencken
- The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation. --Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world. --Charles Dickens

- We do not read the Bible the way it is; we read it the way we are. --Evelyn Uyemura
- Reading the Bible without meditating on it is like trying to eat without swallowing. --Anonymous
- The Bible is a book that has been read more and examined less than any book that ever existed. --Thomas Paine
- No man ever believes that the Bible means what it says: He is always convinced that it says what he means. --George Bernard Shaw

A few final thoughts

- To preach the Bible as 'the handbook for life,' or as the answer to every question, rather than as the revelation of Christ, is to turn the Bible into an entirely different book. This is how the Pharisees approached Scripture, as we can see clearly from the questions they asked Jesus. For the Pharisees, the Scriptures were a source of trivia for life's dilemmas. --Michael Horton
- The Wesleyan Quadrilateral - In the United Methodist Church, we tend to come up with complicated terms or acronyms to describe our beliefs. One example of this is the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" a term coined by Wesley scholar Albert Outler who noted that John Wesley used four sources to inform his beliefs and teachings:

1. Scripture, 2. Reason, 3. Tradition, 4. Experience.

This way of reading the Bible allowed Wesley to be faithful to the teachings of the Bible while responding to the ever changing needs of the world. For example, there are a few passages that seem to prohibit women from church leadership, however, there are other passages that seem to encourage leadership regardless of gender. Wesley looked at the teachings and example of Christ, reasoned about the needs of the world, thought about the experience in his life of a church group led by his

mother. With all this in mind, Wesley and the early Methodists continued the tradition of women in leadership.

As you read the Bible, consider these Quadrilateral Questions to inform your understanding:

Experience:

What experience was this passage originally for or about?

What did this passage mean to and for the first readers?

Is the experience written about timely (meant specifically for the original audience but not applicable today) or timeless (has meaning for all readers of any time)?

How is this passage similar or different than your own experience of God?

Reason:

What might have been the thought processes of the original writer?

How does this logic inform your own ways of thinking?

Scripture:

How is this passage similar to or different than other passages of Scripture you have read before?

Is this passage based on another passage of Scripture? If so, what was the original context for the other Scripture passage?

Tradition:

What traditions (Jewish, Egyptian, Greek, philosophical, etc) did this passage of Scripture come out of?

What traditions is it speaking to?

What do others (i.e. commentators, pastors, denominations, etc.) have to say about this passage?

How does this passage affirm or conflict with the traditions in your church or family?