

1 Beginning Study of the New Testament

1. Think about a book you have read that has had a deep impact on you, such as a novel, a mystery-thriller, a biography, a real-crime book, a children's book, a history book, a political manifesto, or something in nonfiction. Then answer this question: 'Why did the book have such an impact on me?'

2. Now think about the New Testament, your favourite part of it, the parts you might not know so well, parts that unsettle you, and verses you can recite from memory. Then answer this question: 'Why does the New Testament matter to me, my family, and my church?'

3. In *The New Testament in Its World* we make the following claim:

The biblical drama is the heaven-and-earth story, the story of God and the world, of creation and covenant, of creation spoiled and covenant broken, and then of covenant renewed and creation restored. The New Testament is the

book where all this comes in to land, and it lands in the form of an invitation: this can be and should be *your* story, my story, the story which makes sense of

us, which restores us to sense after the nonsense of our lives, the story which breathes hope into a world of chaos, and love into cold hearts and lives.

How can studying the New Testament help you make *the biblical* story become *your* story?

4. The New Testament is not just a story we read; it is a story - a drama even - in which we participate. The two main things the New Testament drives us to are w_____p and m_____n.

5. Why study the New Testament? Fill in the blanks from the list of words below.

'The New Testament is designed to draw us into the story of _____, to rescue the world from _____ and _____, and to launch his new transformative _____.'

chaos, God's plan, creation, idolatry

6. What do we lose if we forget that the New Testament is history?

What do we lose if we forget that the New Testament is literature?

What do we lose if we forget that the New Testament is theology?

2 The New Testament as History

1. What event in the biblical story do you wish you could have witnessed in person?

2. Provide one example of how knowing some historical background helps you better understand something in the New Testament.

3. Discuss one way the ancient world of first-century Judea is very different from your own twenty-first-century context.

4. Why is retrieving and understanding the past fraught with problems?

- a.Sources can be sparse and open to interpretation.
- b.Historians can be biased and project their biases into their research.
- c.Historians need to be aware of diverse sources and various disciplines, including ancient languages and literature, archaeology, sociology, and philosophy.
- d.All of the above.

5. Match the view of history with its description:

modernist view	History is knowable, but it is never known independently of our own interpretation and biases.
postmodernist view	Historical knowledge is possible, objective, and definitive.
critical realist view	There is no true history, only interpretation and ideological agendas in the social science called history.

6.Why is it that 'myth' can never be substituted for 'history' in regard to Christianity?

7.Explain your answer with references to the historical Jesus.

3 The New Testament as Literature

1. What do you think is the most beautiful part of the New Testament? Maybe the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' discussion with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Paul's ode to love in 1 Corinthians 13, the 'hall of faith' in Hebrews 11, the throne scene in Revelation 5, or something else?

2. When we say that a text 'means' something, what are we talking about?

- a. What the author *intended* to communicate.
- b. How the text makes *arguments* and *creates* a story.
- c. How readers *respond* to the text.
- d. All of the above.

3. Where is meaning to be found in biblical texts? Fill in the blanks from the list of words below.

It appears that authors _____, texts _____, and readers _____ and that 'meaning' occurs in the _____ of all three. Ultimately, 'meaning' is the web of _____, _____ we make with the world behind the text, the world in the text, and the world we inhabit in _____ front of the text. The more _____ we make, and the thicker those connections appear to be, the more preferable is a particular meaning ascribed to the text because it explains more of the elements involved in the entire reading _____.

understand, cognitive connections, intend, experience, fusion, connections, signify

4. According to Christopher Spinks, 'Meaning is the mediation of God's truth that takes place between authors, readers, and the community of God of which they are all a part. It is neither a determined object nor an open-ended idea.'

AGREE or DISAGREE

Why?

5. What is a 'hermeneutic of love'?

6. A type of reading known as *lectio catholica semper reformanda* entails which of the following?

- a. A reading that champions the authority of the Bible over the magisterium or managerial class of any church, whether it is Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox.
- b. A reading of and for and in the whole church, but a reading which is always in need of revising and reforming, even as such readings themselves should revise and reform the church.
- c. A reading that affirms catholic sensibilities about consensus and is sensitive to Protestant suspicions about medieval dogma.
- d. A reading that advocates the competency of every soul or person to interpret the Bible for themselves irrespective of what the church or anyone in church history thinks.

4 The New Testament as Theology

1. Which of the following did the risen Jesus say in Matthew's gospel?

- a. 'All authority is given to the holy books you shall write about me.'
- b. 'All authority is given to Peter and his successors.'
- c. 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'
- d. 'All authority belongs to the politicians who sound the most like me.'

2. Why does New Testament theology need *both* historical description *and* rheological prescription?

3. If the authority of the New Testament derives from its message, its theology, then what are the central tasks in any exposition of New Testament theology?

4. What makes New Testament theology theological? Fill in the blanks from the list of words below.

New Testament theology plots the _____ that answers, as only stories can, the great worldview questions: _____, _____. _____, where we are, what time it is, what's wrong, what the solution might be, and what we should be doing about it. The church then lives under the 'authority' of the extant story, being required to offer an _____ of the final act of that story as it leads up to and anticipates the intended conclusion.

improvisatory, performance, story, who we are

5. How does New Testament theology help churches grow disciples and address the wider world with its message?