

22nd November 2020 10 am The Beauty, Wonder and Completeness of the Bible (The Power of God's Word – part 3)

Service led by Andrew Attwood, "What the Bible Means to Me" by Simone Royle, Introductory words & reading by Karen Mills, Discussion between Andrew Attwood, Lindsey Attwood, Michelle Harris and Denise Coomber

This transcript is only of the reading, contributions by Simone and Karen & the discussion.

Psalm 119:9-16

So let's just pause for a moment, and we will begin to focus on God. Let's focus on God now. Maybe close your eyes for a moment, and we'll have just a moment of stillness.

9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? ♦ By living according to your word.

10 I seek you with all my heart; ♦ do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart ♦ that I might not sin against you.

12 Praise be to you, LORD; ♦ teach me your decrees.

13 With my lips I recount ♦ all the laws that come from your mouth.

14 I rejoice in following your statutes ♦ as one rejoices in great riches.

15 I meditate on your precepts ♦ and consider your ways.

16 I delight in your decrees; ♦ I will not neglect your word.

Just have a moment of quiet and just reflect again on the richness and benefits of God's Word to you in the Bible.

We thank You, Father, for the Scriptures. We thank You, Father, for the breadth and depth and wonderful extent of Your light and life captured in these many words. Would You help us this morning, Lord, to have an even more open heart towards the Scriptures, so that we can enjoy and grow and be changed by Your living Word. Amen.

What the Bible Means to Me

We're going to have a short video now from Simone, sharing her views of Scripture. So let's do that now.

[Simone Royle:]

The thing I love about the Bible is the scale of it, that you have everything, the beginning of everything, like the universe, and more. And then you have God, for some crazy reason, making us in His own image, and the scale of that permeates throughout the whole Bible. We have human beings whose lives could seem so ordinary and boring, but then God's working in their life so they become wild adventures full of hope, and when I read the Bible and those stories mirror up in my own life, and I see how my life begins to become the same adventure full of hope. And the Word of God that I'm reading gives me hope because it is alive. And I love that when I read a Scripture in the morning, even though I forget most things in my life, that Scripture stays with me at least for the day. And in that single day, it is such an encouragement and it transforms so often the day and my perception of it in itself. I love it because it's alive.

Introductory prophetic thought

[Karen Mills:]

Good morning everybody.

What heart could fathom such grace? I do thank You Father God, that wherever we are this morning and however we feel, Your grace is upon our lives.

It's lovely to be with you this morning. And I wonder how you all are? And I expect like me, you've had some ups and some downs. Well, I have to confess that recently I've been on a bit of a downer. And I was out on my bicycle, and God quite often speaks to me whenever I'm on my bicycle and I say to God, "Why do I feel as if I'm just walking through treacle all the time?" And He showed me this picture, which is probably for me, but I felt that it might speak to some of you as well, so I hope it's helpful. And so God showed me this picture of a tree in the desert, and I could see the roots of the tree, they were really shallow, and they were spreading out as far as they could, in order to find water, but of course in the desert there's no water, really. And God said to me, don't grow these shallow roots. Concentrate on this root here, and He showed me a really thick root, that was going straight down under the tree, and it was going right down into some really deep water. And He said, this is the root that will sustain you. This is the root that goes deep into the living water. The shallow roots are the things that we do, I don't know, it might be your box set, or it might even be good things, but they're not God's best thing for you. So, just maybe we get distracted sometimes and we look for solutions where perhaps there aren't any. And God said, "Grow your root, your taproot deep into the living water." So I hope that's helpful for you. And I'll just pray now.

Father God, thank You that You are there. Thank You that You are to be found. Thank You that You do sustain us and grow us. And thank You that if we grow this deep, strong root into Your living water, into Your Word, then when the storm comes, we will not be blown over. Amen.

Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 [NKJV]

[In the New King James Version, italicised words are not in the original Greek]

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, **15** and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Amen.

Discussion

[Note: this is not an absolutely word-for-word transcription, in that *some* filler words like 'like', 'kind of' & 'sort of' are removed, repeated words or phrases are removed when they are caused by hesitation, and any phrases that are subsequently corrected are also removed. Where "... " appears, that means the train of thought was interrupted, not that any text has been removed unless the three dots appear in brackets, like: [...]. The discussion is based around some questions that Andrew poses that are marked in **bold**]

[Andrew:]

Amen. Thank you, Karen. Thank you for your prophetic word and thank you for reading Scripture to us. It's now an opportunity to to join in with something that has been happening for quite some time on Wednesdays. I was talking with Michelle and Denise about this earlier this week, about how I could do this particular Sunday and it kind of came to us, why don't we just do a discussion like we've done on Wednesdays? The Wednesday pattern has been exploring particular pieces of Scripture and following a book, and just discussing things. And that seems to have been a benefit to a number of people who are watching either live or later. And it just seemed appropriate to do it this Sunday. So thank you, guys, for joining in. Thank you, Lindsey too, who sits on all of that as well.

I've put some questions before these guys just to help us explore a particular theme this morning and I'm just going to set the scene briefly first. One of the things that has been most persuasive to me about the miraculous nature, if you like, of the Scriptures, is what you would call its coherence, the fact that it holds together in such a beautiful, complete way. You can look at the Bible and think, well, this was written over thousands of years by multiple different authors, and yet they seem to be things that run all the way through it that make clear sense from beginning to end, its different genres, its different ways of communicating, but I just wanted to have some questions with these guys just to discuss what it is that resonates with them about the Bible.

So let me put this first question to you guys, and do chip in whenever you feel ready. **What do you guys personally most love about the Bible**, what do you love about it?

[Michelle:] This is where we all just sit there and go, "you go first," "No, you go", "No, you go first!"

[Denise:] You just said quite a lot about it about, how it's coherent and it all sticks together, even though it's written by lots of different people over thousands of different years, and I was thinking of, no matter how old you are, there's always something there for you that's going to help you in your life that applies to you. And no matter how many times I read it, there's always something that I will notice that is applicable to me, maybe that is new to me, and it gives me hope. And there's always something that will catch my attention and lead me off onto some sort of interconnected thing all the way through my Thompson chain reference Bible, so I'm off. And St. Augustine said that "The new is in the old concealed, the old is in the new revealed," or whatever it is. So, the Old Testament...

[Michelle:] Say that again slowly?

[Denise:] The new in the old concealed...

[Michelle:] the new in the old concealed?

[Denise:] Yes, and the old is in the new revealed.

[Michelle:] Nice.

[Andrew:] Very good.

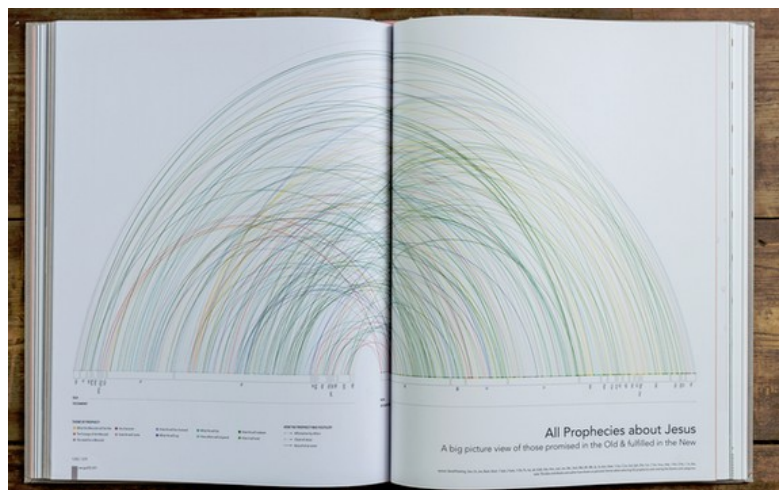
[Denise:] So they're interconnected, and so the Old Testament isn't separate from the New Testament, it all melds together. So for example, yesterday I was reading in Ezekiel, about the Temple and the dimensions of the Temple¹, and how God wants to meet with His people, and then also in 1 Peter about "We are the Temple²". So there's all themes like that you can read in it, that makes the whole thing makes sense. And you said earlier, when we were chatting, that it's rich, full, wonderful, coherent and makes sense, and Simone said it's living and active so it's...

[Andrew:] Ah yes,

[Denise:] [...] as well.

[Andrew:] Fantastic, wonderful. What about you, Michelle?

[Michelle:] Well you see, I've got a little, what's the word, prop to help with mine. So I've got this thing which is called the Infographic Bible³. I love the Infographic Bible, mainly because it's pictures, yes Denise has got it too. And the



1 Ezekiel chapter 40 onwards

2 1 Peter 2:5; see also 1 Corinthians 6:19

Infographic Bible is brilliant because it shows like all the different connection points, so I mean it's got loads and loads of stuff, it just basically shows the Bible in pictures but making it make sense. So, this picture here (You probably can't see it because it's just lots and lots of arches) but what it actually is, that you've got all the prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament here, and then it shows you where in the New Testament each of those prophecies is fulfilled.

[Andrew:] Wow.

[Lindsey:] Wow.

[Michelle:] It's just amazing. I don't know how many prophecies are about Him and I won't read it [out loud], but I just love that it references it exactly, but that's just a picture of what the Bible says, like, so, I love that so much of, like, that it's just, it's complete, like it was written, like you said, it was written over thousands of years, so this person who was writing back in, I don't know, Moses' day or whatever else, he didn't have any idea that what he wrote was going to be completely fulfilled in the New Testament, in the time when Jesus was there. It's like,...

[Andrew:] It is.

[Michelle:] It is, it's ridiculous, like how can that - well, yes.

[Andrew:] Absolutely, but for me... Any thoughts, Lindsey? Like what do you love about it?

[Lindsey:] Well, I have to be honest I've been a Christian for a long, long time and I have...

[Michelle:] Not that long Lindsey, because you're not that old, lovely!

[Lindsey:] [laughs] Thank you, Michelle. I think for me, for such a long time, I had such a sense of relationship with Jesus. But my knowledge of the Bible was quite small, I think. I like to read it, but having teenagers, I think, who would challenge me on lots of things, I think I really have to be honest, they came up with so many good things, "I actually don't know the answer to that." And so I had to do a lot more digging deeper. It's interesting that Karen was talking about the roots, about pushing roots out on the surface, I think that's what I was doing a lot of the time, my insecurity was, I was a bit insecure and the taproot going down and I felt God say to me once, "You need to dig deeper," and the other word I had from a friend of mine was "Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and the light to my path," forgotten where that is now.

[Denise:] It's Psalm 119:105.

[Lindsey:] Thank you very much.

[Andrew:] It's great to have to Denise on.

[Lindsey:] It is Psalm 119 and I felt that it was God was inviting me into going, "If you really want to know what I'm like, if you want to know and have your faith deepened, and you want to feel more secure, you need to dig deeper," and I think it was an invitation to go deeper with the Bible, and that's what I've done for the last few years. And even if I'm struggling sometimes I'll go and read stuff, but then I get into "Ooh, what does He mean by that?" And "What does that mean?" And I start doing research. So rather than just accepting what people say, or even struggling with a verse and then, "Well, culturally, we struggle with that now," but actually it is God's Word, what is it saying? And being more open to listening to what God is saying. So I've really begun to really love the Bible, and as if it's come alive, I think.

[Michelle:] I've been there - isn't it? Like it's life-giving.

[Lindsey:] Yes,

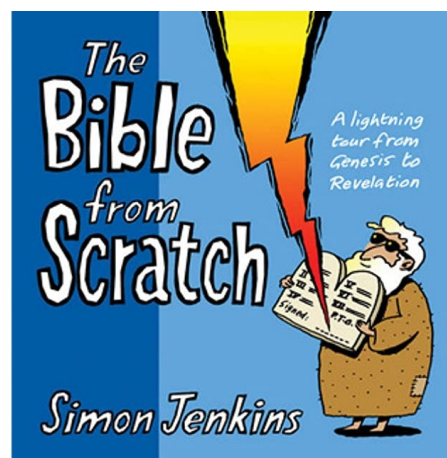
[Michelle:] It's not like it's just a book that you just read and then it goes over your head. There's something that genuinely energises me when I'm really digging into Scripture and doing Bible study, and I think to be fair, it's only really a recent thing, over probably the last 8-10 months or whatever, where I've really stood - no, make a bit longer than that, probably since we started doing Bible study. When was that, Andrew?

[Andrew:] I don't know, but I think it is worth mentioning, there was you and I, when I was trying to give some input for you into how to get into Scripture better, but since lockdown, when we've been doing this online, it has become a kind of a touchstone, a point of going, "Right, let's concentrate," and the interaction around the Word is energising, it does give you a kind of an oompf to what your life is all about. It's really good.

[Lindsey:] I think I think it's important that sometimes [when] you're thinking, "Oh, not another Bible study," in the past when I was growing up, I think I've realised that actually true Bible study should actually affect how you live and doing it together in a way where we're honest about it as well, is life-giving. We're meant to do it together, I think. I think you can study it on your own, but when you come together, you get a variety of the way God has put it together, and you sort of think, "Ah, I didn't see it like that!"

[Andrew:] So...

[Denise:] I'd like to share a book, this book, *The Bible From Scratch* by Simon Jenkins, so if you don't know how the Bible holds together. It's for children, but it just does a sort of rush, quick run, through every book. It's about how it holds together. There's bits about poetry and prophecy and all that sort of stuff in it as well. So, if you don't really don't know where to start, then this book is brilliant! I bought it for one of my children I think, but I've got copies as well.



[Andrew:] Wonderful. Really good. And, I mean, the enthusiasm that sustains for years is just a joy to see, but with regards to the challenges of reading the Bible, I did want to ask another question. **What do you find hard about reading the Bible**, guys? What are the hard things that you come across when you're dealing with Scripture?

[Denise:] Doing what it says.

[laughter]

[Andrew:] That's not to do with understanding, that's to do with obeying what you understand. I like that.

[Michelle:] Maybe we need to pray about that, Denise!

[laughter]

[Andrew:] What about you, Michelle? What do you find hard about it?

[Michelle:] It can be really wordy at times, can't it? Like, you know, when we've been doing Bible study online and you'd read it through and you just like, "What?!" It just seems like a jumble of words that don't make sense and that they, they shouldn't be together in an English sentence. It just can be really wordy and some of it can be quite [tentatively] boring?

[Andrew:] Ah yes, we'll come to that ...

[Michelle:] Like the genealogy bits.

[Andrew:] You're right! Some bits are not kind-of novels. [laughs]

[Denise:] Genealogy bits, but then you can find bits in the genealogy, like I was reading Ruth the other day and I've been doing it with [a house group] but then you can find there's Boaz and then it gives a little bit of his backstory. And then if you go into Matthew 1, the genealogy in there, then you find out that his mum was Rahab. So that's a genealogy but it goes "Oh! So that then links back to Joshua and the fall and the battle of Jericho and all that stuff," so there are things in the genealogies that make you interested in the people.

[Michelle:] Yes, but it only works for you because you retain so much useless information.

[Andrew:] [laughs] Well, to some extent, though, you see, that's through

sheer exposure over a lot of time when you see those, you know in your [Infographic] book those loops - but you're right, I think on the first encounter, when you read Levitical laws or Numbers you kind-of go "What!!" because it feels so foreign to me.

[Lindsey:] I've tried to read... I don't think I've read Leviticus for a very, very long time. There might be a reason for that but I thought it's actually really good that I do, because in order to understand some of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is referring back to Leviticus actually and think, "Oh, there is a bit in here," I have to say it goes on and I've gone, about what you have to do, like, sacrificing this, that and the other if you've done this, that and the other, and you know what? I thought, "Praise God that Jesus has done it all."

[Andrew:] [laughs] Yes, I think just as a personal response, what's hard about it, there's some obvious things for me. It was written by people who came from a different culture who spoke a different language, a long time ago. So there is an element of an obvious chasm between who we are and who they were, so it feels foreign. And that means you have to do some work to get into what Paul's head was like or what the Gospel authors thought, or how a Moses or a Joshua would have lived as tribal people so it's not easy.

[Michelle:] I think I forget that actually it wasn't written in English in the first place. I think that's what it probably comes down to. This is a translation, isn't it, it's the translation out of Hebrew and Greek, so that makes sense, I guess, logically, that we have to get our heads around a bit more because the English language is rubbish as well: we have one word for love.

[laughs] But how rubbish is that?

[Andrew:] and yet the richness of Hebrew and Greek goes far further, wider but it requires effort to get there.

[Andrew:] Anything else Denise from you on that one?

[Denise:] It has pretty much covered what I wrote down, which just is, obeying what it says and what it says, some of the time. Yes, that's what God saying, but putting into practice is sometimes hard, especially if it means having to have an awkward conversation or confront something.

[Andrew:] I think that's fair.

[Lindsey:] There's a bit that Mark Twain once said. He says, it's "It's not those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand that I have a problem with." In other words, it's easy to go "Well, you know, we can't really understand it," but actually sometimes it's the bits that are very straightforward to understand, like, I don't know, loving your enemies or forgiving people.

[Andrew:] Yes.

[Lindsey:] There's bits that are actually straightforward but hard to do.

[Andrew:] I think that's fair.

Let's move on then. **Which are the bigger themes, those kind of overarching themes that seem important to you across the Bible?** What kind of things come to mind when we talk about big themes?

[Denise:] Isn't it that everything leads to Jesus?

[Andrew:] Okay?

[Denise:] And then there's this long list, justice, mercy, love, forgiveness, salvation, redemption, life.

[Andrew:] So, themes that point and swoop all the way towards Jesus and those fairly complicated words that you just mentioned then, yes.

[Andrew:] Michelle?

[Michelle:] And, yes, can I just do, "what she said?" Because I love the way that the Bible (like the Old Testament) always points to Jesus, and I love the way that the themes of justice and love and mercy all run throughout it all.

Although, I think that you need to understand the Old Testament view of justice to understand why Jesus was important, and you need to understand the theme of love and why Jesus is important within that.

[Andrew:] OK. It was interesting when I recently did a talk, I think it's a couple of months back, maybe more, for the 6pm service and it talked about, was it Covenant, Kingdom and Temple?

[Michelle:] That was ages ago, but yes.

[Andrew:] Yonks ago, and I got some feedback from that, where someone was saying that they hadn't realised that the Temple thing went all the way from the beginning. So Genesis with the Garden of Eden is described in Temple language, and the Temple or the Tabernacle is decorated to look like a garden. And so you start to see connections from the beginning, through to the story of redemption that's got this Temple theme, and then you get the actual Solomon Temple. Then you get Jesus being the Temple, then like you said earlier, us being the Temple. It all has a coherence to it that makes sense.

[Michelle:] Well I don't need to go back and watch that. But haha it's on YouTube so we can!

[Andrew:] It's down below [on the YouTube web page] everybody, you can just listen to that and recover that.

[Denise:] So you can do a Bible study on a theme, and you can get things from all over the Bible about that particular theme, so, for example, there's a new series by (am I allowed to say his name? What's that guy's name? Rob, whatever his name was). But he did one on trees, so the same sort of thing, there's a tree in the garden of Eden⁴, there's a Tree of Life in Revelation⁵ and then we can be planted like trees by a river and all that sort of stuff in Psalm 1, so it's all things like that, so you can use themes all the way through, and the overarching themes can point something out, so 'tree' points to life and water going down taproots and all that, like, Karen was saying earlier, so it all links together.

[Andrew:] I think that's good. **Are there any particular passages or themes that that come to mind then?** I mean I could just reel off loads but are there different parts of Scripture that you think particularly link well together in your understanding of how to read the whole thing? Anything that comes to mind?

[Lindsey:] Well, one of my favourite things which I spoke on, it might just be the thing I quite like and I don't think it might be smart and I don't know how at this point, is looking at Song of Songs which is a bit of a strange book in the Bible, it doesn't quite link to anything else apart from, it's meant to be a sort of an amazing thing about a marriage or a relationship, a covenant relationship which is the bride and the bridegroom. And I see that as a big theme right from the beginning in, right from Genesis, this idea of God creating man in His own image, and this covenant idea of the man and the woman becoming one flesh in Genesis, and it's a symbol, a mystery that God is with His people, or the Church, and that whole thing is just beautiful. It links with love, and God's love for us is committed, it's faithful and all that sort of thing.

[Andrew:] Very good, very good. Anything from you guys?

[Denise:] One thing I quite like that I get quite het up about, well not het up about, but it is that when God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, there were two tablets they were written on. So it's like a contract, two copies of the same thing. And He left His copy with man because He wants to live with man, so it was in the Ark of the Covenant, and then you get in John chapter 1, "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us," so He's dwelling with us. So it's Temple/Tabernacle, that sort of thing again, and then Revelation [21], and

4 Genesis 2 [see also Ezekiel 31]

5 Revelation 22:2 [see also Ezekiel 47]

"look, God's dwelling place is with man, and He will they will be His people,"⁶ so there's God's presence is another thing, and then the burning bush, 'I am', the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, that sort of thing. And then Jesus uses, 'I am' all the way through the book of John. So the great 'I am' is Jesus and then there's lots of things about shepherds and sheep, and vineyards and vines and all that sort of thing which can teach you things. So His parables were "Oh, that's a nice story," if you're quite young to the faith, or you can read things, great truths in there that, as Lindsey was saying earlier, apply to your life, and there's stuff about buildings because He was a tekton [τέκτων], a builder, so there's lots of stuff about the cornerstone, the wise man and the foolish man, and all those sorts of things.

[Andrew:] I think that's great. It's really good. I've got this feeling in my bones that I need to reread Exodus again. And I can remember a few years ago realising that the Gospel accounts of Jesus' active ministry are a retelling of Exodus, where He is setting people free, like Moses set the Israelites free from Egypt, and again and again and again, the kind of the background messages, God rescues, God rescues, God rescues all the way through, right the way through to Jesus dying and rising to rescue. And so all of the old Exodus metaphor suddenly comes alive in one-to-one situations when Jesus is dealing with people. So folks watching us on screen now, you know God doesn't only rescue Israel, He rescues us, and that's through Jesus, so that link is so beautiful: Exodus pointing to Jesus again.

[Andrew:] **Which particular genres do you most struggle with?** Because the genres of the Bible include narrative, where it's just a story, poetry, or maybe law books or wisdom books or just the discourse like the teaching, which genres do you think you struggle with the most?

[Denise:] Okay, probably apocalyptic stuff, because I have no idea what I'm talking about half the time.

[Andrew:] What do you mean by apocalyptic, Denise?

[Denise:] Things about the end when God's going to bring everything back to how it should be sort of thing, so I suppose things to do with the end of time, and Ezekiel is weird, so, back to him again, talking about things with wheels on the bottoms of them and is that a helicopter? And all that sort of thing. You've no idea what that's all about [laughter]. And so there's that, but you've just got to trust God with that. And wisdom, I suppose, is is sort of like poetry, but it's not quite like poetry. So wisdom and apocalyptic.

[Andrew:] Okay.

[Andrew:] Michelle, what do you think?

[Michelle:] I'm not sure there is a particular genre that I struggle with other than the lists of people that seem to go on forever.

[Michelle:] I think for me it's more that I haven't read it all.

[Andrew:] Okay.

[Michelle:] It's like sometimes people talk about stuff and I'm like, "I have no idea," because I don't know that I've ever read Revelation the entire way through. There's probably numerous books I've never read all the way through. And so, yes, I got asked by one of my young people a little while ago, "What's your favourite book of Bible?" and I'm like, "I don't know that there's an honest answer to that because I have never read the entire Bible the entire way through."

[Denise:] You need to do the Bible in One Year [phone app]⁷

[Michelle:] I know, I keep trying to do that and then I never get all the way through. I think I made it to March or April this year. So, I mean, I made it further than I've made it in previous years, usually I don't even make it past like the first month, so I made it but...

6 Revelation 21:3

7 <http://www.bibleinoneyear.org/>

[Denise:] Get the app to read it to you, that's easier.

[Michelle:] Yes, but then I just fall asleep!

[Denise:] Do it in the car or whatever.

[Michelle:] I don't do it regularly enough to do that though, do I, especially at the minute: we're locked down and I don't have to go anywhere.

[Denise:] Do it in the bath then!

[Andrew:] Lindsey, what do you think?

[Lindsey:] I'm just wondering, I appreciate everybody goes, "You need to read the Bible in a year," but I do wonder whether as Westerners, is it how the Bible is meant to be read? I mean, initially in Jewish times the Scriptures were read out loud in synagogues. We are all now into reading it in our own homes. That's very, very recent. People didn't have copies. I mean, even in the early church they didn't have a copy of the Bible, it was a much more oral tradition, I mean there was a big thing in the Old Testament of eating, isn't it, eating the Scriptures?

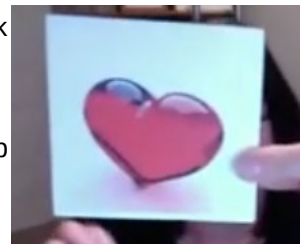
[Denise:] The food, isn't it?

[Lindsey:] The idea that this is meant to feed you. One of the issues can be with just this idea of "I've just got to go through it because I've been told to," it's one thing is reading it, but actually the other thing is digesting it, and it's working out how do we actually read Scriptures together, that makes it digestible.

[Michelle:] But that's why I find our Bible study so useful, because then I don't just read it and skim-read it and don't necessarily actually engage with it properly. Only with our Bible studies, I get to actually dig into it, and it's... I get something out of it, like it, that *is* life-giving.

[Andrew:] Okay,

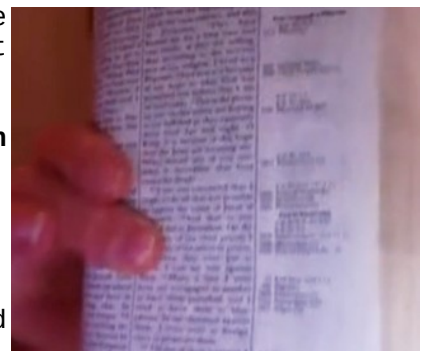
[Denise:] You need to be careful that we don't make it legally stick, you've got to do this quiet time every day. You should *want* to engage with the Word. I suppose what Lindsey was saying is true, that it was an oral tradition, but then Jewish families, they did the Passover Seder and all that sort of thing. So every time they sat down, it was, "Why are we doing it this way particularly?" and then they talked through why they're doing it. And then, and as you were saying, people didn't read. Lots of people couldn't read. So you've got in old churches stained glass windows telling you the story or, I don't know, different ways of saying, it's a verse of Scripture over the window in our church, there's stained glass windows and the symbols that remind you, different bits about the Bible. So I think it's important that we have reminders, like for example, we've got one here. So, so there's something we did with the kids once, on Valentine's Day, so you got that and then on the back it's got, "God says, 'I've never stopped loving you and I never will. Expect love, love and more love'" Jeremiah 31:3 [The Message translation]: things like that to remind you, and that's what Fiona was saying last week, wasn't it, stick it up on the fridge door or whatever, to remind you, of little things that God is trying to say to you. So it's not necessarily great tomes of Leviticus you've got to read through, it's just little bits sometimes.



[Andrew:] Okay, just to kind of bring a conclusion to our discussion then, I didn't mention it in the in the list of questions, the issue of cross-referencing. And this is something that kind of grows over time when you get used to understanding how all of the bits of the Bible fit together. **How used to and how comfortable are you with cross-referencing** now? Do you know how to do that?

[Michelle:] Can you define what you mean by cross-referencing?

[Andrew:] Yes, I think that's probably a fair point. Cross-referencing is something you can often find in probably bigger Bibles or study Bibles where you would



find a piece of Scripture but there will be a star or a letter or a number, or maybe a mark that, like in the margin where Denise is holding up there, and it will give you a reference from somewhere else that's relevant to the passage that you're currently reading. What do you find helpful about cross-referencing, guys?

[Denise:] It's the themes thing again I think. So, for example, in the beginning, Genesis *and* the beginning of John, so it's a new start and trees and gardens and all that sort of thing, but also it can take you down, "Oh there's that word there: what does that mean?" and then you go off and use it. Before you know where you are, you've spent an hour and a half, going from one thing to another, and you've immersed yourself in Scripture without really realising it.

[Andrew:] Wonderful. I just wanted to kind of encourage all of our viewers to understand there are ways and means of going further than you thought. I just want to **finish with one particular example** that's so poignant, and I was looking back to Genesis 22, when Abraham is called by God to sacrifice his son Isaac, and there's a particular passage that describes that and it says, "God said, 'I want you to take your son, your only son,'" and throughout that passage, all the way through to Isaac being put on the pile of sticks, and he's not sacrificed in the end, but all the way through He keeps saying, "your son, your only son." And when you look at the Hebrew version of what that word means, it's definitely saying, "your only-begotten Son," and you go all the way through to the New Testament and you read the most famous verse in the Bible, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." And where did that happen? On the same mountain that Abraham laid Isaac.

[Michelle:] Oh, was it?

[Andrew:] Absolutely, Yes.

[Michelle:] Oh, I didn't know that.

[Andrew:] And so you have God saying to Abraham, "I understand how this is going to feel: your only son," and Jesus Himself takes that word, and thankfully John records it in his gospel and says, "only son - brackets (like Isaac)." Yes, so so suddenly it just opens it up because you've cross-referenced, and the story of Jesus' sacrifice means God goes further than Abraham. You know, it's absolutely beautiful.

[Denise:] So there's something you said there about 'in the Hebrew', so it's quite important I think - though I'm not very good at it - knowing what the original Greek said (Phil Sowards) or the Hebrew and then there's, as Michelle was saying, English doesn't really capture those words like agape [ἀγάπη] for example, and doing a little cross-reference for that particular word and see where you get.

[Andrew:] Okay, well I think we need to finish there folks, so you can switch the cameras off now, you can disappear again. Thank you for joining in with the discussion, really, really helpful. And I'll see you guys later.

Prayerful response

So just in response to all of that, let's have a moment of quiet. You've heard us yattering on for some time, I just wanted to have just a minute or two quiet, maybe have a Bible in your lap or your phone Bible app near you. And can we just be still, and just remember and reverence the gift of the Scriptures. Let's be quiet.

Holy Spirit, do speak to us about Your Word.

I just want to pray that God would kindle in our hearts again an appetite, an appetite to learn from the Word He has given.

Again, just in a moment of quiet, allow God to reprogram, to reconfigure your desires to want to read and to share and to grow and to study in the Scriptures.

Come Holy Spirit.

I also want to pray, Lord, that you would set before us as individuals, and possibly in twos and threes in groups, an adventure with the Bible. Would you now, Lord, begin to bring to mind perhaps a particular book or letter or passage of the Old Testament to begin with. Would you help us, Lord, to start an adventure, if we're not already on one, to start an adventure somewhere in your Bible. Bring some Scripture to mind that you would like us to dwell on and to begin studying.

And so, Lord, would you remove from us unnecessary guilt about how we may have struggled with the Bible and simply draw us now into a healthy pattern of reading, of sharing, of learning. Lord, blow the dust off our Bibles and help us to grow with your living Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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