

JOURNEYING WITH THE BIBLE

A COMMUNITY THAT IS JOURNEYING, EVOLVING AND LEARNING TOGETHER WITH THE BIBLE CENTRAL TO OUR TEACHING AND OUR VALUES

THE BIBLE IN ALL ITS RICHNESS

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- “The book of sacred writings accepted by Christians as coming from God” (Dictionary)
- “The account of God's action in the world, and his purpose with all creation.”
- “The Bible has many different uses for Christians. It can be seen as a guidebook for life where Christians can turn to for advice, guidance and reassurance.” (BBC Bitesize)
- God’s love letter
- Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth

In reality, these are only part of the truth. It’s all of this *and more*.

WHY DO WE JOURNEY AND LEARN?

Precisely because it’s all of these things.

- Julie and Julia – “journeying” with a cookbook
- In the Bible, we have:
 - History – learning, context, understanding of heritage, appreciation of God’s power/faithfulness
 - Prophecy – provocation, perspective, companion narrative to history
 - Teaching – instruction on God’s nature, on good and evil, on wisdom, on relationships and behaviour
 - Letters – instruction, but also insight into relationship between Jesus-followers (Sosthenes)
 - Apocalyptic visions – hope and warning
 - Poetry – wisdom about the nature of God and life, but also appreciation of beauty, joy, wonder AND invitation to participate and experience
 - Piper at the gates of dawn: Otter loses child; Rat and Moley find it. But that captures nothing of the chapter.
 - Psalm 139, God’s answer to Job, the whole of the Song of Songs
- Question on Christianity SE: “What order should I read the books to best understand them in one go?”
 - No chance! We have to journey with the Bible.

The Bible changes us – James 1:22-25

- This brings us to an important point wrt last week. We want to be like Jesus, who was radically inclusive.
- Some of that is cultural, racial, financial, inclusion. But there’s something else.

- God calls us and welcomes us while we're still sinners - otherwise none of us would qualify. So we want our church to be wide open for people to come who haven't yet sorted out their life with God.
- But we don't expect any of us to stay that way. We expect to be changed into Christ's likeness, and that means putting down beliefs, attitudes and habits that aren't in line with him.
- So is this "inclusion"? From our point of view, yes – the doors are wide open, and Jesus calls *everyone* to change and become like him. From culture's point of view, no – "inclusion" tends to mean "affirm everything that a person already believes or does".
 - Question for us in terms of vision – do we want to keep the word and try to reclaim it, or do we want to change it?

WHY DO WE JOURNEY AND LEARN TOGETHER?

- Because we're often stubborn, and often blind. (consider <https://bit.ly/3dxv2zg>)
 - James passage (mirror) makes it clear that there are people who listen but don't do.
 - Best antidote is a good friend who can encourage and challenge.
- Because we sometimes need help to go deeper.
 - Acts 18:24-28:

"Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah."

- Because God gives gifts of wisdom and discernment to believers for each other's good.
 - Colossians 3:16:

"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."

ARE WE JOURNEYING?

Illustration:

1. Life happening to you
2. Journeying with the Bible central
3. Journeying together with the Bible central

(WHAT ABOUT DISAGREEMENTS?)

- Membership-governed, leader-led – not always neat and tidy, but effective so far!