

LIVING THE STORY

Encountering God in the Bible

Small Group Study Notes by Sam Bloore

READ 2 Tim 3:14 - 4:5 NIV

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

SETTING THE SCENE

If you haven't been raised with an underlying or overarching account of how and why the world is the way it is...then you end up cobbling something together, even if you're completely unaware of the process. And even if you're completely unaware of the inconsistencies...

One of the central claims of orthodox Christianity is that we are spared that process – we have been given Scripture as God's revelation of himself and of creation – of us.

But the interesting thing is, if we're not careful, we can end up cobbling together our own version of Scripture – magnifying the bits we're happy with – disregarding the bits we're not happy with.

A couple of observations from the reading:

- Timothy has known the Scriptures from infancy!
- And he is still continuing in them...!
- He knows and trusts who he has learned it from
- It was possible even in Timothy's day (and even more so now) to look around until you find someone who says what you want to hear – not necessarily what you need to hear.
- If we read and interpret Scripture well, from trusted sources, it will help us to grow in what Paul calls in Acts “the whole counsel of God.”

FOR DISCUSSION

THE **PURPOSE** OF SCRIPTURE

The central claim from Sunday is that:

Scripture is a fundamental means through which God makes himself known and through which he makes clear his desire to establish saving fellowship with his creatures...

And in knowing God we come to know ourselves and the world we live in.

1. To Encounter God

- What can we say about God given what we see unfolding in Scripture?
- Can you think of a time when you sensed an encounter with God while reading the Bible?

2. To Encounter Ourselves

- What might we say about humankind given what we see in Scripture?
- John Calvin called the book of Psalms a mirror – when have you seen yourself reflected in a psalm or a story or a character in the Bible?

THE **FORM, STYLE AND AUTHORITY** OF SCRIPTURE

1. Complexity (Genres and Themes) and Continuity

The Bible is a collection of 66 books – 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament, written over a period of some 1600 years by more than 40 different authors in three languages... It contains different genres of writing: (e.g. Law, History, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, Prophecy) and some weighty, complex topics.

And yet, despite that **complexity**, we also see an incredible **continuity** – God is unfolding a story that hangs together if we know how to make sense of it.

- In the past, how have you made sense of the different books / genres / themes in Scripture?
- What are some resources that have been helpful? What might you use in the future?

2. A Serious Book

The Bible is a serious book...or perhaps a better way to put it is this: The Bible is a book that presumes...from beginning to end...that we will take it seriously. We could go even further and say: we have no business reading the Bible, unless we are prepared to be changed by it. Unless we are prepared to submit to it.

- Can you think of any examples where you have been struck by a sense of reverence for Scripture?
- Have there been any passages that have challenged you – where perhaps you felt like you needed to change?

APPROACHING SCRIPTURE FAITHFULLY

1. *With Humility* - see above!

2. *With Intentionality*

“In a wide-ranging study of a number of major American denominations the Search Institute of Minneapolis determined that the most important factor in producing a mature, well-balanced, and well-integrated Christian faith was not excellent preaching, worship, small-group fellowship, or anything else but adult Christian education. And yet I daresay there is no element in contemporary church life that is more poorly undertaken... A sermon and a home Bible study each week cannot possibly suffice.”

(Making The Best Of It – John Stackhouse)

- Firstly, well done on being part of a small group! John Stackhouse isn't having a go at you!
- But can you think of any extra resources / courses that have been helpful in the past?
- What might be helpful in the future?