



RESHAPE: “The Bible”

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Graham Ashby

This Study Guide provides a summarised study with additional discussion questions based on the scriptures mentioned in the sermon.

Connect:

1. Watch this clip from The Simpson’s Movie
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RftYkOvfpo>

Engage:

2. Is the Bible what you expect/expected it to be?
3. Like Homer, do you expect a book where all the answers and direction for life are neatly laid out with specific guidance for every situation?
4. Do you expect a book that logically describes what to believe as a Christian and explains the Church’s different doctrines?
5. Do you find some of the Bible difficult to understand and maybe even problematic or offensive (particularly the Old Testament)?

Framework:

6. **The Bible:**
 - ⇒ *Is **not** a book with direction on every circumstance. But that does not mean it doesn’t describe principles that offer us direction on the path of life.*
 - ⇒ *Gives the basis for all theology - and all good theology should never contradict the Bibles underlying message – but sometimes this involves ‘wrestling’ with the text.*

Let’s take a step back, look at the Bible and ask ourselves the question:

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

“(The Bible is a) material channel of God’s grace and is uniquely used by God to bring people into a transforming encounter with God that informs and changes them.”

Roger E Olson (See resources - P.106)

7. There is a change or a literal re-shape that supernaturally can come by being informed through God’s Word.
8. How has reading God’s Word changed you in the past?
9. **What have you read (in the Bible) that:**
 - ⇒ Challenged the way you acted?

⇒ Comforted you when you were low?

⇒ Encouraged you to action?

10. The Holy Spirit and the Bible are inextricably linked – The Holy Spirit is involved with both the writers and readers of The Bible:

- ⇒ **Revelation** - The Holy Spirit revealed truth to the authors.
- ⇒ **Preservation** - The Holy Spirit preserved the oral and written scriptures for hundreds of years.
- ⇒ **Compilation** - The Holy Spirit moved in people’s hearts to guide how the scriptures were chosen and compiled into The Bible we have today.
- ⇒ **Illumination** – The Holy Spirit shines light on the scriptures as we read them today and makes them come alive to us.

11. The Bible took over 1,500 years to write involving many authors – perhaps around 40 writers. The Holy Spirit was involved in this process. Therefore, we can rightly say there is an element of the Divine about the Bible.

12. Let’s look at a typical protestant Christian statement of faith about the Bible, to help us further understand what it is:

⇒ The AOG UK statement of faith says:

“We believe that the Bible (i.e. the Old and New Testaments excluding the Apocrypha), is the inspired Word of God, the infallible, all sufficient rule for faith and practice.”

2 Timothy 3:15-16 & 2 Peter 1:21

<https://www.aog.org.uk/about-us/what-we-believe>

13. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17



⇒ Timothy describes Scripture as **God-Breathed**. Here he is referring to the Old Testament.

He says that it can be used for:

- Teaching
- Rebuking
- Correcting
- Training
- Equipping

14. Read 2 Peter 1:16-21

⇒ Peter is explaining in his letter that he is not making things up about Jesus, but that he has a prophetic message. Much like the prophetic scriptures the Jews were used to reading, where the Holy Spirit had spoken through the prophets in the past. The phrase he uses is that these prophets were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

15. From these scriptures we can see that scripture testifies to itself that it is authoritative because it is derived from God – But this process can be seen as God working through humans by His Spirit. This is the **Inspiration** mentioned in the statement of faith. The Holy Spirit acts as a Divine external influence on the human authors.

16. How did this inspiration take place? Should we consider it ‘dictation’ or something more ‘dynamic’?:

⇒ If simply considered ‘dictation’, the writers become no more than ‘passive pens’ for God’s words. However, if considered more ‘dynamic’ this leaves the options open for some combination of both divine and human elements -

“(The Holy Spirit) directed writers’ thoughts and concepts, while allowing their respective personality, style and disposition to come in to play with the choice of words and expressions.”

Michael F. Bird

* When reading scripture (particularly in the original languages) the authors own individual **‘style, personality, vocabulary and even idiosyncrasies come out’** in the text.

⇒ The Bible is not simply one type of literature, it is a rich collection of many genres -

“God chose to use almost every available kind of communication: narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry of all kinds, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons and apocalypses...”

Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart

* We have to take this in to account when we are reading scripture. However, these different genres and the fact that the humanity of the writers shines through the text make the Bible come alive. The human side of the Scriptures bridges the gap, as if it were between you and God as you read.

17. Interpreting Scripture (Exegesis) should always come before applying scripture to your life (Hermeneutics):

- ⇒ It can be very easy to take a few scriptures out of context and develop your own theory of what they might mean. (This can be extremely damaging.)
For example, Acts 17:26 was taken out of context and used as the main justification for apartheid.

(Please see reading Material/Resources section for valuable tools in interpreting and understanding the Bible.)

18. The Bible:

- ⇒ Is **never failing and always effective.**
⇒ Will accomplish that which God intended for it.
⇒ Will accomplish what God intends for **your** life.
⇒ Will help re-shape you into the person God has called you to be... if you let it!
⇒ Is **All Sufficient** – It is our highest authority.

19. 4 FURTHER THOUGHTS:

- ⇒ **You should not neglect your own personal reading, study and reflection of the Bible but spirituality isn't about being academic -**
- God is more concerned about you knowing one piece of scripture and putting it into practice, than knowing loads in the original Hebrew and Greek and putting none of it in to practice.
 - If you are to read one passage, and one passage only and put it to practice (James 1:22-25) we suggest you read Matthew 22:36-40.
 - Pause for thought - If you are not good at reading you could try an audio book.
 - Journaling is a useful tool to help you reflect on scripture and writing your thoughts down makes it a great reference in the future.

Here is a daily reading plan and journal outline available to use:

[Click here to download 1 Year Life Journal](#)

- ⇒ **Don't forget the role that community (i.e. church community/church tradition/home groups) have in helping you interpret scripture –**
- Therefore, we shouldn't neglect the wisdom of those that have gone before us or neglect meeting with other believers. If the only way, we study scripture is by ourselves we can be prone to error.
- ⇒ **When reading the Bible, remember that God is essentially good, and that Jesus is the revelation of who God is –**

- This can help us through some of the difficult passages that we read and have to put mentally to one side whilst we wrestle with understanding them.

⇒ **The Bible is best interpreted and applied pastorally and with love -**

- The first Christian theologians were pastors – not ivory tower academics.
- God has shown grace to us and we should show grace to others.
- There are times when we need to be firm and declare the truth, but we should never be harsh. We should also avoid causing strife by misapplying the Bible.
- The word of God may be described as a sword in Hebrews 4:12 – but it doesn't mean you have to continually wield it as a weapon against your brothers and sisters in Christ!

Prayer:

“Father God thank you for the Bible. Forgive me when I have neglected it or taken it for granted. As I read your Word every day, help me to love it more. I pray your Holy Spirit illuminates its truth to my spirit. May your Word re-shape me into the person you want me to be. In Jesus Name Amen.”

Going Deeper

Reading Material/Resources

As well as the Bible itself the following may be helpful:

- Read “*The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*” by Roger E. Olson (see: Chapter 4: Christian Scripture)
- Read “*Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*” by Michael F. Bird (see: pages 638 to 646 on the doctrine of Scripture; note some of Bird's writing on this are also reproduced on the Patheos blog- link below)
- <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/euangelion/2018/07/the-case-for-the-dynamic-view-of-biblical-inspiration/>
- Read “*How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth*” by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- Kevin Giles writes on how one scripture can be taken out of context and used to justify apartheid - <https://www.cbeinternational.org/blogs/justifying-injustice-bible-apartheid>

Personal Spiritual Response

How is God speaking into your life right now? What decisions need to be made?

Have you made a personal commitment to fully trust in Jesus? Have you been baptised? If not, there is information at bcc.church/baptism to learn more.

Why not contact the Pastoral team to consider whether baptism, an Alpha Course or joining a Life Group could be a next step for you? Contact info@bcc.church for more information.

Serving Opportunity

BCC's directory of service opportunities <https://bcc.church/ministries> may help you find an opportunity to grow spiritually, whilst helping others.

