MARCH 11, 2018

BE ONE
Essential Truths

SESSION 9:
Why the Bible?
PART 2
**Sermon Notes**

**Week 9: Why the Bible, Part 2, Good Counsel**

**Why the Bible? The Bible is God’s Story that has the power to shape our story.**

**QUESTION: How does God’s Word change us?**

**Psalm 119:24.** Your statutes are my ____________ ; they are my ____________.

**ALLOW THE BIBLE TO ____________ WHAT’S IMPORTANT**

**Matthew 6:25–34.** “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

**ALLOW THE BIBLE TO ____________ WHAT’S IMPORTANT**

**1 Corinthians 10:1–13.** For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud (cf. Exodus 13:21) and that they all passed through the sea (cf. Exodus 14:22) 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. (cf. John 6:32-35) Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.”

**ALLOW THE BIBLE TO ____________ WHAT’S IMPORTANT**

**Psalm 119:24.** Your statutes are my ____________ ; they are my ____________.

**ALLOW THE BIBLE TO ____________ WHAT’S IMPORTANT**

**Isaiah 58:1–9 (NIV84).** “Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. 2 For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right. 3 ‘Why have we fasted, and you have not noticed?’ ‘Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? 6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to clothe the naked when you see them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. 9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. Why the Bible? It is the power of God to provide us with ____________.
Why the Bible?
The Bible is God’s Story that has the power to shape our story.

Welcome to Part 2 of our question, Why the Bible? In Part 1, we reviewed the fact that the Bible is God’s story. It builds upon the general story that God tells in nature by specifically speaking through chosen authors, until at last He speaks through Jesus, the Son of God who is also the Word of God.

But how does God’s Story affect our story? How does God’s Word change us? By speaking God’s powerful truth, the Bible clarifies, corrects and comforts. Let’s look at each of these effects.

1. The Bible Clarifies Our Story

A Clear Path

The Psalmist says that:

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

So much of our life depends on our ability to discern truth from lies. It seems that falsehood surrounds us in a culture of deception and misinformation. Everywhere we turn, people are trying to convince us to buy this or that product, to vote for this or that person, to accept this or that idea. How can we possibly sort through all this fog and land in a good, solid place?

The Scriptures declare that they can provide the light we need to make good decisions, even when circumstances seem confused. Again, the Psalmist observes:

“How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.” (Psalm 119:9)

We need this word because rebellious minds for centuries have created all sorts of paths that lead us in all kinds of erroneous directions, and these errant ways will always, at some point, lead to disappointment and destruction. In the book of Proverbs we read:

“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” (Proverbs 16:25)
A Tried and True Way

Because of this multitude of errant ways, God has been telling the story about His way, so that everyone can experience His blessing. Note, for example, what He says about His choice of Abraham:

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:18-19)

As another example, consider these words that God speaks to Joshua:

“As strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” (Joshua 1:7-8)

From the very beginning, then, God wants His way to be clear to those who wish to follow Him.

Jesus, the Way

• A Clear Light

The reason why the scriptures bring such clarity to life is because they all point to Jesus, who is the true Word of God and the true Light of the world.

As Jesus Himself says:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

And the Apostle Peter adds:

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19)

In other words, once we accept the true story of Jesus, a lot of things in our life will become much clearer.

• Opposition to the Light

We need not be discouraged by the fact that so many people in our world reject the way that Jesus teaches. As He reminds His disciples:

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

Not everyone will see the wisdom of God's way revealed in Jesus. Sin has this darkening effect on human minds.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools....” (Romans 1:21-22)
• A Spirit Who Brings Light
But Jesus brings the necessary correction to our corrupted minds, if we are willing to listen and apply His teaching. And, He continues to bring clarity through the work of His Spirit. Jesus makes this promise to His first disciples:

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” (John 16:12-15)

In other words, the Holy Spirit has been given to all who follow Jesus, and He will continue to point to Jesus as the revelation of God. He will continue to illuminate and clarify the Word of God that comes to us in Jesus through these pages of scripture.

From Clarity to Correction and Comfort

Practically speaking, then, this means that the Bible provides two great guardrails to the path that God assigns to us. On one side of the path, we receive correction, and, on the other, we receive comfort. We must receive correction whenever we are tempted to stray off the path into areas that will only lead to pain and death. But, we also must receive comfort and encouragement, because sometimes this narrow path of life can become challenging and overwhelming.

1. The Bible Corrects Our Story

Correct Belief and Action

First, then, let’s look at the way that the Bible corrects. If we look carefully, we see that the Bible provides correction in both truth and practice. In our last session, we shared an important passage from Paul’s second letter to Timothy, and it bears repeating here, because it deals directly with this need for correction. Paul says:

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:12-17)

Notice the way that Paul emphasizes the fact that the scripture is meant to correct errors in belief, and this correction of belief should in turn correct our practice. It should lead us into righteous and productive living.


Love and Obedience

This correction of belief must always be paired with a correction in action. As the Apostle Paul reminds us:

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

And the Apostle John says:

“We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:3-6)

3. The Bible Comforts as We Live Out Our Story

Comfort for Us

True belief, then, must go hand in hand with faithful obedience to the commands of Christ. But what if, no matter how hard we try, we still fall short? What if the obstacles of life become unmanageable and overwhelming, and we are tempted to give up? God understands and remembers that we are flesh, and therefore He gives His Word to comfort us during these difficult times. The Psalmist says:

“My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. The arrogant mock me unmercifully, but I do not turn from your law. I remember, LORD, your ancient laws, and I find comfort in them.” (Psalm 119:50—52)

By remembering God’s faithfulness to us, we combat our fears. By meditating on the scriptures, we are reminded of the many times throughout His story that He has walked with His people through difficult and challenging times. God has left for us a long historic witness of His faithful love for His people. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us:

“Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.’ ‘Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!’” (Isaiah 49:13-15)

Over time, we will experience the truth of God’s faithfulness.
A Divine Comforter

And, to ensure this reminder to us, God gives us His Holy Spirit as a divine Comforter. The same Spirit who provides clarity also provides comfort. Jesus says to His disciples:

“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:26-27)

This word, “Advocate,” speaks of one who remains by our side, who clings to us in order to support, defend and encourage us. Jesus uses the same word when He wants to comfort His disciples, as they grieve the fact that He is about to depart from them. In that context, Jesus says:

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

Comfort Through Us

As God comforts us, then, through His Spirit, we, in turn, can comfort others. As Paul reminds the church in Corinth:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

While we are here on earth, living within our imperfect bodies, within broken families and broken societies, we will inevitably face the suffering that comes from all this brokenness. But, God promises His grace, witnessed in His word, to overcome the hardships that this imperfect world produces. And, as we experience His overcoming power in our own challenges, God will then use us to extend this same hope into the broken lives of others. We become living witnesses His healing and powerful word.

Conclusion

This then is what the Bible generally says about itself. The Bible is God’s Story that has the power to shape Our Story. We hope, therefore, that you will take up the challenges to study the scriptures more faithfully. Thank you for listening, and may God bless you as you continue your spiritual journey.
Discussion Questions

Opening
At some point in your life you have taken a history class or seen a movie based on history. What do you think distinguishes the Bible from any other type of recorded history?

Going Deeper

1. The Bible Clarifies
✓ Many people view the Bible as an antiquated book, yet we just learned that the Scriptures declare that they can provide the light we need to make good decisions. How have you experienced the Bible being relevant in your life during a difficult or confusing time? What scriptures have recently been a “lamp on [your] feet, a light on [your] path”?
✓ In a world where truth can be hard to distinguish from lies, and human nature has led us in a multitude of errant ways, why has God provided us with His story? (Genesis 18:18-19 and Joshua 1:7-8)?
✓ Describe the effect sin has on the human mind? (Romans 1:21-25)?
✓ Jesus has “much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:12-13) How can the Holy Spirit help guide us into all the truth? What guardrails are set up for us?

2. The Bible Corrects
✓ The Bible teaches that correction of belief should in turn correct how we live our lives (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). In what ways, if any, has the Bible changed how you believe you should live your life? In what ways has this lead you into a more righteous and productive way of living?
✓ How are love and obedience related in scripture? (See (1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 1 John 2:3-6)

3. The Bible Comforts
✓ When the obstacles of life become unmanageable and overwhelming, what do you turn to for comfort?
✓ What are some of your favorite scriptures that provide comfort and peace?
✓ Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the Advocate, the one who remains by your side, who clings to you in order to support, defend and encourage you. How does the Holy Spirit primarily encourage and comfort us? (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)?

Next Steps
Where do you believe that you need clarity, correction or comfort? How can God’s Story help you in this area? Reach out to someone you can trust to assist you in this search.