



Session 8:

'The Bible: Rulebook or Loveletter?'

Faye Harris

Group Questions:

1. Which images of the bible do you most relate to and why? *(Rule Book, Love Letter, Text Book, Living Word, Drudgery, Encounter, Story Book, Book of Truth, essential guide to life?)*
2. Has this changed over the years? Why?
3. Is there a particular view of the bible or the way you read it need to change? E.g. seeing it as an authority, love letter, be more expectant, etc
4. Tell us about a time when the scripture spoke to you? How did it impact your life? Have you ever experienced the word like Hebrews 4:12?
5. Have you found a way/ways where the bible becomes more alive that you could share with us?
6. Read Luke 8:8, how can you prepare your heart for God's word?
7. What are you going to do as a result of today, to encounter God in the word?

Notes

1. Textbook or Living Word:

You could study without expectation or as a mind exercise without engaging the heart

John 5:39-40: You study^[a] the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

'Christians read the Bible not as a document from history but as a world into which they enter so that God may meet them there' (Rowan Williams)

The living word of God can reveal God to you, His ways and the ways of His followers and this can radically change your life.

2. Rule Book or Love Letter:

The bible is the story of God's loving relationship with His people and His loving ways to His people. *1 John 3:1-2- See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

3. Drudgery or Encounter?

How we approach the word will affect the way we see it. We need to have the expectation of meeting with God through the Word; He reveals Himself, His ways and speaks into our life.

[Hebrews 4:12](#)

For the word of God is **alive and active. Sharper than any double**-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul **and** spirit, joints **and** marrow; it judges the thoughts **and** attitudes of the heart.

Maybe we need to find different ways to approach the Word to keep it fresh.

*Read the bible with a pen in hand!

4. Story book or book of Truth and Radical Guide for Life:

How do we see the authority of scripture? Are we reading it like a story or a piece of literature rather than the Truth of God that will impact, heal and direct our lives. He will set us free: John 8:32

Is the bible just a reference book to pick and choose what we want to follow, or is it the foundational guide book for our lives?

God can give us directional guidance for the big things in our life.

How do approach the Word in a way that will bring the Word alive?

1. Think about how you hear!

*Matthew 13:9: Whoever has ears, **let them hear.**"*

Jesus says this statement 15 times on different occasions. The Old Testament is full of 'Hear O Israel'. There are religious people in the Bible who study the scripture but don't hear what Jesus is saying.

The soil of our heart needs to be open for His word:

*Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to **hear, let them hear.**" Luke 8:8*

- We need to listen with our heart and not just with our heads.
- We need not to read out of duty but with expectation
- We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us.

2. Think about the lense you use

We talked about the love of God but also view scripture through Jesus, even the OT. It's called a Christological hermeneutic. (Storylines by Mike Pilavachi and Andy Croft)

But also, look to Jesus as you read and ask Him to speak. Focus on God and not the words.

*Luke 10:26: "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "**How do you read it?**"*

3. Think about treating scripture as THE authority:

Do we respect it as the Word of God?

How we view it will affect our expectation.

It can make a difference in our life

But if we view it as God's word, we will also obey what He says, and when we obey, we encounter His voice more through His word.

*Make sure you do what it says!

Tips about how to read it?

- Slowly
- Prayerfully
- Journaling your main thoughts
- Try a different way to how you usually read/listen
- Treat it as a love letter

Try Lectio Divina:

- **Reading.** Read a passage slowly and carefully within the bible.
- **Prayer.** Having a loving conversation with God and respond in prayer.
- **Meditation.** Thinking deeply or swelling upon a spiritual reality within a text. Or put yourself in the story and experience it.
- **Contemplation.** Resting in God's presence.
- **Action.** Go and do likewise.
- **(Try the lectio 365 App)**

The Discovery Bible Study: Great for reading the word with others

- Read slowly twice
- Read tell the passage and then think about the bits you missed
- Ask yourself:

What stood out to you from the passage? What does it show us about God, his people or the way we should live?

What can I do as a result of reading this today?

Who can I tell about this?

(<https://www.dbsguide.org/>)

Further Reading

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

How To Hear God by Pete Greig