

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
Series: A Mans Guide to the Bible
Developing your understanding of what the Bible is about
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Good Morning, Men!

Today's shout out goes to Extreme Men; eight men that meet every week at Extreme Christian Fellowship in Clarksville, TN. They have given out 12 boxes of the Man in the Mirror at church and to any man that comes on the campus.

Turn to Colossians 1

This is the series a Mans Guide to the Bible. I decided to put this into a book because one of the most important issues I see that needs to be addressed is that men are not leading powerful transformed lives. The reason is they don't have confidence in their knowledge of the scriptures. This is the working title for the book: Not Quite Everything there is to know about the Bible subtitled Gaining Confidence to make the Bible your own.

Just to review, the first part of the series is: knowing about the Bible. We looked at the formation of the Canon and saw that from 367 on we have had a complete agreement of which books are the Bible. We looked at the transmission of the Bible and then last week we looked at the translations of the Bible. Just how exciting it is to see that the Bible we hold in our hands actually is the very words of God.

The second part is: knowing the Bible: developing your understanding of what the Bible is really about.

Today we are going to look at the structure of the Bible and how it is organized.

A member on our board of directors said I am so excited you are doing this because when I first became a Christian I would feel so confident at my place of work because I knew what I was doing; like a doctor with a scalpel. But when I walk into the church I feel like putty. I didn't know where things were or how the Bible was put together. I didn't know the major events and periods of the Bible, so I felt queasy and didn't really like going into the church on Sunday. We are doing this series to have more confidence to make the Bible your own.

First I want us to imagine you are God, some might find that easier than others; maybe I should have said pretend you are God. If you are God you are wholly other, completely unlike human beings. It is said that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite.

You want to have this relationship with these creatures that you have made and yet you are completely different then they are, so you decide to write a book.

That is how I will communicate with these earthlings.

I write books, I have written 17 or 18 books and one of the things you must do before you write the book is know what it is you want to write the book about. So you develop a premise; sort of a problem that you want to resolve with a solution that you will propose to the problem. And you will be able to write a purpose statement. This is why I wrote this book.

I am going to read two verses from Psalm 106:7, 8; throughout the Bible there are many places that have summary statements that summarize many verses.

7 When our fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. 8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known.

That is the story. We can stretch it out and talk about it from many different angles but really that captures the whole essence of this relationship.

You want to write this book and to do it you have to have a purpose. You can't structure the book unless you know why you are writing it.

God wants to write a book that records the history, predicts the future and guides the present of these people with whom he has created for a relationship.

You run into the problem when writing and speaking – one of the main principles is you can't say everything all the time. So you have the issue of selection. God had this issue that you can't write about everything so you have to write about something.

Turn with me to John 21:25, keep your finger in Colossians, while you are doing that I want to read a couple of other passages about this purpose of the Bible.

John 1:45

45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Philip understood that the Law and the Prophets had been written about Jesus. Jesus himself said in John 5:39

39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me

So the scriptures are all about Jesus.

Then in John 20:30

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This is the purpose around which the book was written, but you can't write everything every time so you have to say something.

Look at verse 21:25

25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Here is the perspective of the week. This week we are saying the Bible is a collection of 66 books given by God to 40 human authors, who each addressing the needs of his own generation progressively reveals inspired answers to a handful of mysteries by the constant repetition to a few major themes.

We will look into a number of different aspects this morning. The first is, notice the idea of progressively revealing inspired answers. Revelation is progressive. In Exodus 6, when God is talking to Moses he said I am going to reveal my name to the people, but to Abraham and the others I had not revealed this aspect of my name. And throughout the scriptures we learned more and more about Him.

Notice it is human authors addressing the needs of their own generation and these authors are not taking dictation from God. God has left them with their own personality and has taken His thoughts and put them into these men and has inspired them to write in their own words His thoughts.

Take Solomon for example. Solomon wrote 'Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless!' Well, is that true? It's not true in the sense that life is meaningless; it is true in the sense that apart from God life is meaningless. But what is true is that really is how he felt. And God really inspired Solomon to write down how he really felt. The purpose of the book is to record the history of this relationship and give us guidance for the presence of this relationship.

David prayed the Psalm of calling down for the destruction of his enemies. Is that the way David should have been praying? No, but that is exactly how David felt at the time. God inspired David to put that down.

These are the thoughts of God, expressed through these human men, each addressing the needs of his own generation. And might I add, to the need of every generation. Then the idea of the handful of mysteries; five would be: who is God? Who is man? What is the nature of the relationship between God and man? Why is life so hard? And what happens when I die? The Bible is written in order to address these mysteries and other similar ones by constantly repeating the major themes and we will get to that later.

This book is organized to accomplish this purpose: my word will not return empty but will accomplish what I intended.

There is a super structure to the Bible and the big idea expresses it in one summary statement. The Bible records the history, predicts the future and guides the present of our relationship with God; who creates sustains and redeems us.

Let's take a look at the hard data.

The Bible was structured mostly chronologically and there are different epics. Max Anders has a book called 30 days to understanding the Bible, which after 20 years is still a best seller. A great primer if you want to know the facts and figures of the Bible. If you want to play trivial pursuit of the Bible, that is your book.

It starts with creation, flood, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, then you have the period of slavery, the exodus, the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, the period of Judges, the period of the kings and then the nation became more and more wicked. The nation became progressively worse, and then came the Babylonian captivity and exile, Daniel was a key figure in that period. After seven years the return, Ezra the priest, Nehemiah had the vision to rebuild

the temple. Then the 400 years of silence and you come to the epic of the gospels and the time of Jesus. After the incarnation you have the resurrection- those were the markers for the gospel era. The time of the early church with Peter in Jerusalem; then the missions era with Paul going out on these 3 missions trips in the Roman empire.

As far as hard data goes that is the basic chronological structure of the Bible. I am going to do a separate talk on the similarities and differences of the Old and New Testaments.

You have 40 different authors of the Bible. Moses was about 1400 B.C., the Gospels were written some time in the end of the first century. So you have about a 1400 year time span. The first 5 books of the Bible – the Pentateuch- are the books of Moses, the Torah. When you read, even though it is obvious that Moses is the God inspired author of these books, there have been editors that worked on the books. If God can inspire Moses to write it down, He can also inspire an editor to make a segway between one thought and the next with no problem.

The super structure is we are recording history, so there are historical books; we are predicting the future, so there are prophetic books; and we are guiding the present, so in the Old Testament there is the poets and wisdom writers. The three kinds of literature in the Old Testament are Historical, Prophetic and Poetic/Wisdom literature. In the New Testament guiding our relationship, we have two kinds of literature. We have proclamation (kerygma) and teaching (didache).

Some of you might have heard that term before; there is actually a book by some early Christian fathers called The Didache which literally means the teaching.

I have asked you to imagine that you are God; how many were successful doing that? And then we looked at the hard data and now I want you to imagine that you are Paul. This is where we will go to Colossians.

Colossians 1:15; I want us to see a few of these major themes.

Remember He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, God is spirit. It is kind of hard to write a book about a spirit.

Hebrews 1 says he is the exact representation of His being.

John 10:30 says I and the Father are 1 he who has seen me has seen the father.

Colossians 2:8 in him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the God in bodily form.

Continuing in verse 16:

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

So what did Jesus not create? Nothing! So there you see one of the great themes of the Bible is that God is the Creator.

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

One time when my son was in elementary school, the teacher asked the kids what they were thankful for and when they got to John he said, gravity.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

You see that he is the Sustainer of life.

In verses 19 and 20 you see that He is the Redeemer.

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Pick up at verse 24, Proclamation

24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

You basically have the whole Bible in those few verses.

What does the rest of the Bible do? It keeps repeating a few major themes in many different ways repetitively stated so we can see them in many situations and contexts, applied by many people in many ways. It is genius. When you read it you see how everything relates to each other. That a shepherd and a king could say what they wanted to say and it would sync up even though they were writing hundreds of years apart.

Yet there is a sublime Excellency, a feeling that when you read it everything is so fully integrated and is the one place you can go that the longer you look the more you see and the more you fall in love; because the flaws we thought were there are not there and we realize there is power in the name of Christ. There is power in the name of God and we find that power, that spiritual energy, is released when we cast our eyes on the word of God.

I heard a story about a pastor who was in the grocery store with a friend in New Orleans. Apparently he has a very unusual accent; he is from England but has lived in New Orleans for a while. He was in the grocery store with his friend and saw a young couple at the register. They looked disheveled, unkempt with dirty clothes. He is reading his Bible and hearing God talk and the Holy Spirit prompts him to go over to the man. He takes all the money in his pocket - \$200- fold it up and says to the man don't turn around. Because the power of God is at work in my life I have been prompted to give you a gift. I don't know why, but I am doing it because of the name of Jesus Christ. He slipped him the money and walked off. The man never saw his face. The pastor 15 years later was speaking in New Orleans at a seminary and after he spoke a man came up to him and said you don't know who I am but I know who you are, because of that unusual accent.

Fifteen years ago my wife and our infant child and I came down from the north to New Orleans because our lives had fallen apart and we had decided to jump off a bridge and we wanted to do that here. We were on a bridge getting ready to jump and my wife said I don't want my daughter to die on an empty stomach. So we decide to take a few pennies that we had left and go to the store to buy some milk. But then you put that gift into my hands; my wife and I talked it over and

felt that it must have been a sign. So we decided not to kill ourselves that night. Instead we drove back home and though we didn't know what to do next things began to turn around. Two or three years after that we were walking down the street and started to pass a charismatic Pentecostal church and we heard from inside the name, Jesus.

That is the name that the man mentioned down in New Orleans. They went in to find out what was going on and gave their lives to Christ.

After that I sensed God calling me to seminary and now I am an Assembly of God pastor. So I wanted you to know that story and just say thank you, because you had the confidence to come and act on what God was telling you to do.

That is what having confidence in the Bible can do for each of us. When you go out of here today, you can be a Paul. You just have to have the confidence that we really are representing God, that this really is God telling you to go and be a witness.

God has gone to great lengths to record the history, predict the future and guide the present in our relationship with him. He is Creating, Sustaining, and Redeeming all around us. It is kind of like the elephant in the living room. He is creating, sustaining and redeeming all the time.

When you see somebody at the office today or out in the field on the job and they look discouraged or despondent you can have confidence about what God wants you to do. You can go up to them and speak and offer encouragement and maybe have a story come back to you 10 or 15 years later. Or you can pretend that you don't see that God is creating, sustaining and redeeming all around us.

The point of this message is you can get in on this deal and the way to get in on it is to understand what the Bible is really about. The purpose of the Bible, everything in it is designed to point to me, Jesus said. Let us be men who are taking every circumstance around us and looking at it through the lens of what God is doing. Let's see what God is doing today on the job.

I am at a point where every single thing that happens, or doesn't happen, I blame on God. Because I know from the Bible that He is either Creating, Sustaining or Redeeming everything!

Let' Pray

Our dearest Father, Lord, some of us today are going to have extraordinary opportunities to either be agents of reconciliation or to ignore what is going on in the world. I pray that by understanding the basic structure of the Bible and what the Bible is all about, that we might each in a larger way than we did yesterday see every single thing that happens as being related to your work of creating, sustaining and redeeming. And I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.