

Reading the Bible
for understanding and transformation
October 22, 2021
Class 4 outline

Opening remarks.

Aim of the course.

- To give us opportunity to read the Bible.
- To think about and focus on how God uses the Bible to transform us.
- To name and address potential obstacles that may hinder your Bible reading and engagement.
- To refresh and renew our commitment to asking God to change us through engagement with Holy Scripture.

Proper Orientation.

- week 1: humble eagerness.
- week 2: God speaks ... to us, personally!
- week 3: God speaks ... to us, collectively!
- week 4: total wisdom.

Potential Obstacles.

- week 1: Technical Efficiency
- week 2: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
- week 3: Rugged Individualism
- week 4: Secularism

Two challenges for this topic:

- The enormity of the topics
- The complexity of who we are.

The Bible as “Total wisdom.”

- Genesis 1:1-3. Acts 17:28. Revelation 4:11.
- Psalm 104:27-30. Psalm 96:10-13. Ephesians. 1:10.
- 1 Cor. 15:24-28: Phil 3:20-21. Col 2:1-5
- The universe is enchanted by the person of Jesus Christ.
- The “shape” of the universe and the human soul is Jesus Christ.

The poisons of Secularism.

- “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.” (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*)
- Orthodox Theologian, David Bentley-Hart, *Christ and Nothing*, October 2003. *First Things*. “[T]he will, we believe, is sovereign because un-premised, free because spontaneous, and this is the highest good. And a society that believes this must, at least implicitly, embrace and subtly advocate a very particular moral metaphysics: the unreality of any ‘value’ higher than choice, or of any transcendent Good ordering desire towards a higher end. Desire is free to propose, seize, accept or reject, want or not want — but not to obey. Society must thus be secured against the intrusions of the Good, or of God, so that its citizens may determine their own lives by the choices they make from a universe of morally indifferent but variably desirable ends, unencumbered by any prior grammar of obligation or value (in America, we call this the “wall of separation”). Hence the liberties that permit one to purchase lavender bed clothes, to gaze fervently at pornography, to become a Unitarian, to market popular celebrations of brutal violence, or to destroy one’s unborn child are all equally intrinsically “good” because all are expressions of an inalienable freedom of choice. But, of course, if the will determines itself only in and through such choices, free from any prevenient natural order, then it too is in itself nothing. And so, at the end of modernity, each of us who is true to the times stands facing not God, or the gods, or the Good beyond beings, but an abyss, over which presides the empty, inviolable authority of the individual will, whose impulses and decisions are their own moral index.”

For Discussion.

Romans 12:1-3. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Matthew 22:37. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

2 Corinthians 10:5. “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”