

## **Weekly Grace – (compiled by your Chaplain)**

# **The Bible Is Not About Us! Really?**

Adapted from: <https://www.knowableword.com/2023/01/02/the-bible-is-not-about-you/>

Were you up for the Bible reading challenge this year? If so, as you read, you may like to keep the following in mind: *The Bible is not about us!*

It's not about you, or me either. We are all dreadfully self-centred by nature aren't we? Of course, this tendency toward egotism can vary with culture and personality, but we *all* seem to have a deeply ingrained impulse to focus on the person in the mirror! So, it is not surprising that when we turn to the Bible we think about *ourselves* first. We look for principles for self-improvement, or for a better life for ourselves and our loved ones. We look for comfort, or for rules for living a good life or getting to heaven. But aren't these all rather self-centred goals? What might be a more healthy way to approach reading the Bible?

Well, for a start, when we read the Bible, let's not immediately look for ourselves or our situations in the text. Of course, the Bible has *implications* for us, but *the Bible is not about us!*

### **The Bible is about God**

If the Bible is not about us, then what is it about? Don't take my word for it—search the Bible from beginning to end and we will see there is *one* primary actor and *one* main subject. The Bible is about *God*. Notice how the Bible begins:

*“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1)

And when the Bible ends, we see the servants of this creator-king gathered around to worship:

*“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.”* (Revelation 22:3)

God is infinite and eternal, so glorious and holy that humans could *never* know him without his self-revelation. And while God *has* revealed himself generally through his creation, he has shown himself in more detail and precision in his word, the Bible, and abundantly, radiantly in the person of his beloved Son, Jesus.

Consider the way this displays God's heart attitude toward us: *God wants to be known!* With access to a Bible, we are able to learn about this wonderful, powerful God, and meet Jesus, our saviour and Lord. This is God's desire for us all!

### **The Bible is about Redemption**

As we read the Bible, we learn who God is and what he is like. But we also learn about the place of humanity in the world and how we relate to God.

Adam and Eve turned against God early in the Scriptural story, disregarding his command and seeking their own way. God responded with *judgment, mercy*, and a

*promise*. God's *judgment* was the exile from Eden (Genesis 3:22–24) and the curse—childbirth, the husband-wife relationship, and work in creation would all be painful and difficult (Genesis 3:16–17). God's *mercy* was that he continued to speak with the man and woman, and that he covered their shame and nakedness (Genesis 3:21). God's *promise* was that there would be a child of Eve that would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

The rest of the Bible unfolds these responses of God and the fulfillment of his promise, and everything in the Old Testament points forward to Jesus the Messiah (Luke 24:44–48). Jesus, a man born of woman, is God in the flesh (Galatians 4:4–5, Hebrews 1:3); he came to make God known most clearly (John 1:18), to redeem God's people (Titus 2:14), and to bring them to God (1 Peter 3:18).

So, the Bible is about God, but it is also about how (and why) he is redeeming a people for himself.

### **Implications for Reading the Bible**

If *God* and *his redemptive purposes* are at the core of the Bible, that should shape how we read!

Firstly, we should **be aware of the big picture** as we read. When we focus on small bits of the Bible (maybe a chapter of a book or a verse) we may miss the author's main point and how we should respond. *But* when we read the Bible in larger chunks (maybe whole books) we begin to see a bigger picture. Then the themes and arguments of a passage or book make more sense, as we see how they connect to the overall sweep of Scripture.

Renowned theologian Don Carson ascribed to his father, a Canadian minister, this well-known saying: "*A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text.*" When we read the Bible, we should attempt to **interpret what we read in context** before we try to apply it to our lives. As we read the passage and the ones around it, ask "What does God want me to *know* (with my head) *feel* (with my heart) and *do* (with my hands) concerning him and concerning myself and others from this passage?"

Finally, we should **think corporately, not individually**. Especially in the global west we have a far more individual mindset than the first audiences of the Bible. God has set out to redeem *a people* for himself, *the Church*. This collective body is not the same as a group of random individuals! So, while applying the Bible has clear implications for us as individuals, those implications (often) flow out of truths and commands for the corporate people of God. (So many of the New Testament commands are for *you* (*plural*), not *you* (*singular*)!)

So, the beginning of another year brings many of us back to the Bible. As we turn to the Bible for the first time or for the hundredth time, let's recognize *our* place. We *are* part of this grand story, but none of us are at the centre. That would be far too small a story!