

Pathway to Biblical Understanding | “The Story the Bible is Telling”

Week 4: How Understanding the Big Picture Changes

How We Read Individual Passages

Speaker: Anthony Conley

Introduction: Why does the “Big Picture” matter?

- Luke 24: 25-27- “The purpose of all scripture is to point us to Christ.”
- The Bible is not just a collection of books. It tells one story throughout the entire book.
- We often misunderstand and misuse scripture when we isolate one verse and don’t read it in context.

How to Read the Bible - Context is KEY

- Who is writing? Who is it written to? When was it written? What events shaped the message?
- It is helpful to read verses or even chapters before and after a passage to help understand it in its intended concept.

How to Study the Bible

- Finger Method (not recommended): Drop a finger in and read where it lands.
- Topical Method (study by topic): eg. Godhead, salvation, overcoming anxiety & depression
- Book Study Method (One Specific Book): Research the author, background, audience, and purpose.
- Verse Mapping Method: Focus on one verse and explore its meaning, connecting the verse to another relevant and supporting verses with a concordance or similar study guide.

Common Mistakes Without the Big Picture

- Using verses to support ideas without context
 - There are an estimated 45,000 different denominations of “Christians”.
- Moralizing: turning every story into “Be a better person.”
- Applying promises or commands incorrectly; Promises given to Israel vs promises to believers today.

Benefits of Understanding the Big Picture

- Greater understanding of difficult passages
- Consistency in interpretation
- Deeper appreciation of God’s plan
- Stronger faith and confidence in scripture

How this Changes the Way We Read the Bible

- Slow down and observe before interpreting.
- Seek understanding before application.
- Let scripture interpret scripture.
- Read devotionally and contextually.
- If in doubt, talk to someone who has greater knowledge and insight than you.

Conclusion

- The Bible is one story about God’s redemptive plan for us.
- When we understand the whole, the parts make sense.
- A text without context is only a pretext, but a text within a story reveals the truth.

Things to Think About (Discussion Questions):

- Have you ever misunderstood a verse before because of lack of context?
- Where does your favorite passage fit into the big story?
- How does the big picture change your understanding?

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NOTES:

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