**What Is the Bible?**

**The Word**

Read together Psalm 1 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**The Big Idea**

The Bible is the word of God written by human beings. As the Word of God, it deserves our utmost attention and delight, and as a set of ancient documents written by human beings, it requires a lot of work and thought to properly understand and apply it to our lives today.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider the idea that you are in a relationship with the Bible. How would you describe your current relationship with the Bible (e.g. passionate, conflicted, curious, business-as-usual, disconnected, etc.)?

2. As you read Psalm 1:2-3, what word or phrase stands out to you most at this time in your life and why?

3. Consider the Bible’s own claim that it is “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16) and therefore utter reliable and trustworthy. What questions or doubts do you have about the full inspiration of Scripture, and/or what has been most convincing to you that it truly is the Word of God?

4. On Sunday we discussed how some of the expectations and assumptions we bring to the Bible may not set us up well to experience it for the thing that it is. Consider the Eugene Peterson quote: “We do not read this book in order to find out how to get God into our lives or to get him to participate in our lives. No. We open this book and find that page after page it takes us off guard, surprises us, and draws us into its reality, pulls us into participation with God on his terms.” What are some of the expectations you see people bringing to the Bible these days? And as honestly as you can, try to identify some of the expectations you bring to the Bible that may or may not be helping you in your relationship with the Bible.

**Sermon Outline**

I. How do we know what we know?

A. We all arrive at our beliefs through a combination of various means: reason, experience, intuition, science, community, tradition. Christians affirm these as potential sources of knowledge.

B. But Christians add to these their most authoritative means of knowledge: divine revelation. We believe that the Creator God has spoken and revealed himself through the Bible.

II. We all have our own unique and sometimes complicated relationship with the Bible

A. It brings encouragement, clarity, comfort, and guidance

B. But it sometimes brings pain, confusion, and doubt

C. Much of our experience of the Bible has to do with the expectations and assumptions we bring to it.

III. The Bible is the very word of God

A. It is “God breathed” (2 Timothy 3:15-16)

1. The God who spoke/breathed creation into being has breathed through the words of Scripture

2. The Bible is not just “inspired” but “expired”

3. Jesus himself held this view that the words of Scripture are the words of God (for example see Mt 19:4-5)

B. There are some clear implications of this

1. The Bible is reliable because God himself is reliable. He doesn’t deceive nor is he in error

2. The Bible is authoritative for our lives. It is “holy” (v. 15) and set apart from any other writings in history

C. There are good reasons to believe the Bible is God’s Word

1. The witness of millions of people who have been transformed by it

2. It’s explanatory power to reveal reality as it actually is

3. Prophecies and their miraculous fulfilment years later

4. The self-effacing nature of the writers that has the ring of truth

5. Jesus’ own view of the Bible that is as high as it could be

D. There are postures that are fitting to the Bible as God-breathed (Psalm 1:2)

1. Meditate: thoughtful, prayerful, reflective reading

- Like a dog chewing a bone, turning it over, licking it, taking it in

2. Delight: Not that Scripture always has delightful content, but there is a delight in coming to know reality and God as they actually are

E. There are rich benefits that come from reading God’s Word (Psalm 1:3)

1. Rooted in truth

2. Refreshed by an ever-flowing source

3. Bearing practical fruit in your life over time

IV. The Bible is written by human beings (2 Peter 1:20-21)

A. Men were carried along by the Holy Spirit

1. God did not put them in a trance

2. Rather their personalities, style, context are all intact. God doesn’t obliterate them or do an end-around, but rather speaks through their unique human lives

3. The Bible is fully God and fully man in a similar way that Jesus is

B. When we fail to acknowledge the humanness of the Bible, we often make some inaccurate or incomplete assumptions about it. Here are some examples:

1. “I swear on the Holy Bible”

a. We often picture a leather bound book that is all one thing

b. But the Bible is a collection of ScriptureS (plural) written over

1500 years with 40 different authors, 3 different languages, and many different styles.

c. Just because it’s all God’s Word doesn’t mean it’s all one kind of thing

d. There are different genres/styles with their own rules. We can’t read the Psalms exactly like we read Romans or Revelation exactly like we read Luke. We need to read each book the way it wants to be read rather than fitting it into our preconceived mold.

2. “The Bible is God’s love letter to me” (SLIDE)

a. The Bible doesn’t read like a love letter: wars, sacrifices, incest, judgment

b. The Bible wasn’t written directly “to me”. There’s not a single verse where author had me in mind.

1) This means many verses can’t be directly applied to ourselves

2) This also means the writers often aren’t seeking to answer questions the I’m asking or address the felt needs I have

c. This doesn’t mean the Bible doesn’t have a lot to say about my life or that God can’t speak directly to me through the Bible, it just means I need to get inside of its world before I try to fit it inside mine.

3. “The Bible is God’s Instruction Manual (B.I.B.L.E.)”

a. There’s a lot that isn’t instruction: genealogy, poems, stories, etc.

b. Many of its stories don’t have an obvious moral or salient application point to draw out of my life today.

c. In our quiet times we are often looking for that salient point or practical nugget to apply to that day, but it’s not always there.

V. Conclusion

A. Will we humble ourselves and do the hard work of finding our place within the Bible’s story and on its terms, or will we force it to conform to ours?

B. “We do not read this book in order to find out how to get God into our lives or to get him to participate in our lives. No. We open this book and find that page after page it takes us off guard, surprises us, and draws us into its reality, pulls us into participation with God on his terms.” - Eugene Peterson