

The Bible: Learning to Walk in God's Story
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We must rethink the purpose of Scripture. In the plan of God, Scripture is always the subject, we are the object. As such, Scripture stands over us; we do not stand over Scripture. The church does not determine what the Bible says; the Bible determines what the church says. There is a great difference between applying the Bible to our lives and applying our lives to the Bible. We must understand the nature and purpose of Scripture. Consider some misconceptions.

Misconception #1: The Bible is a toolbox. It contains all kinds of tools, and when one meets a certain situation, one just pulls out a text to address the situation. Some see in the Bible a hammer that can be used to hammer false teachings. Jeremiah (23:29) says that the word of God is like a hammer, but it is much more. Some see in the Bible a handy DIY guide to help one know what to do to fix any problem. While these ideas contain some truth, the purpose of the Bible is not to provide quick fixes to the problems or misunderstandings of life.

Misconception #2: The Bible is a law library. The Bible is filled with laws and when people misbehave, all you have to do is pull out the appropriate law. It is true that the Bible contains laws and commands. But the purpose of the Bible is not encompassed in a law book.

Misconception #3: The Bible is a love letter. It is true that the Bible communicates the love of God. But the Bible is much more than a syrupy expression of God's love for mankind.

Misconception #4: The Bible is a bank account or a safe deposit box. It contains all kinds of information and knowledge that can be accessed as needed. That's why it's good to know the Bible. That gives you ready access to the treasures when needed. An element of truth appears in this idea also (2 Tim. 1:14-15).

Misconception #5: The Bible is a map. This concept comes closer to the truth, but is yet insufficient. The Bible shows the way, tells when one is off the way, helps one know how to get back on the way, and continues to guide (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In the New Testament, disciple is a synonym for Christian. Disciples are followers; disciples are learners. Why do disciples seek to learn? So they can imitate the Master. They do not learn the teachings for the sake of the teachings. They learn the teachings to walk in the way of the Master. As Claudette Jones put it, "If doctrine doesn't change your life, why have doctrine?" The Bible is where I learn to walk in the story of God. Scripture narrates the presence of God in the lives of people—people who walked in the story of God, changed by the story, molded and transformed into something new and different. Scripture enables us to engage the story of God afresh in our lives in our day in our place in our way. God did not reveal himself so we could have handy tools. God did not reveal himself so we could know laws. God did not reveal himself so we could understand love. God did not reveal himself so we could have more information. God did not reveal himself just so we could walk in a certain way.

God revealed himself so that we could know where and how to walk in his presence, becoming more and more like him, spreading his story to the nooks and corners of our world. Will you try to read the Bible with fresh eyes this week? Learn how to walk in the story of God!