

SERIES – Does the Bible Really Say That?
How To Read the Bible - 2/1/26
II Timothy 3:16-17

I. The Lenses We Read the Bible Through

1. Lens of Familiarity

- Mere exposure principle = The more we are exposed to ideas, sayings, teachings, etc., the more credible and truer they seem to us.

2. Lens of Certainty

- We feel much more comfortable when we feel certain about something we've heard or been taught.
- We experience cognitive dissonance (discomfort) when familiar beliefs are questioned

II. What Does It Mean that the Bible Is Divinely Inspired?

- God speaks through it
- The original Greek word for *inspired* means God-breaths out his influence and life-transforming power
- The later Latin word for *inspired* changed the meaning to God breathing into the minds of its writers

III. The Ways the Church Has Approached the Bible

- The Early Church leaders recognized its use of allegory, symbolism, and metaphor as well as historical narrative
- The inerrancy movement that approached the Bible as a historically and scientifically accurate book developed in the 19th and 20th centuries to defend it against scientific explanations - e.g. theory of evolution
- Today there are three ways to read the Bible:
 - Literally = taking every word as being dictated by God
 - Fictionally = taking moral lessons from it without believing any of it really happened

- Incarnational view – God's word comes to us through human voices influenced by their experiences and cultures

IV. Tools to Discern Biblical Facts From Symbolism

1. Know the genre of a text whether poetry, song, parable, legal code, prophecy, historic record, etc.
2. How a particular event, passage, image, etc. is referred to elsewhere in the Bible. For example, trees often symbolize life or wisdom
3. Know the cultural and historical context. The writers used words, ideas, and examples from their own cultural and religious experiences
4. Scripture should not contradict reason. "If it happens that the authority of Sacred Scripture is set in opposition to clear and certain reasoning, this must mean that the person who interprets Scripture does not understand it correctly" (Augustine 4th century)

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

II Timothy 3:16-17 - All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

If we approach the Bible as the 'living breath' of God, we don't have to be afraid of what we might discover as we dig into difficult topics. We can do so knowing that the Breath that proclaimed Jesus as his beloved Son is the same Breath that speaks to your heart through the pages of Scripture today

Note: Two good Bible commentaries are:

1. The Oxford Bible Commentary
2. The Jerome Biblical Commentary, 3rd edition