

the bible tells me so

How to make the most of the notes below

Each week we will seek to:

- Read and study together
- Watch a video of John Andrews teaching
- Share with one another what we are processing
- Pray together

As a host, you may want to prepare in advance as some of the Genesis study can be dense and so we recommend reading through it before gathering and identifying how best to lead your group.

Below is a discussional guide. We encourage you to use the material in such a way you can meet your group where they are at. If this means adding, changing, or taking away from below, then do what you need to make this the most formational night for your group as we seek to become more like Jesus together.

the big story

The Bible is written by 40 authors over approximately 1500 years in three different languages and reflect changing times and culture. Within this single volume sit many 'books' and numerous genres, showing the manifold wisdom of God through poetry, history, prophecy, law, wisdom literature and stories.

Read

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Psalm 139:23
- Genesis 1:1
- Psalm 119:18

We cannot hear the term "God-breathed" and how Paul uses it and not be drawn to Genesis, when the Lord God breathed into the man and he became a living being. The Bible has a divine origin, bringing forth divine life to fulfil divine purposes.

Yet, so often we can read the Bible as we are, not as it is. We see from where we are and bring our nature, nurture, culture, history, context and traditions into the text. We must take care not to impose ourselves onto the text, but rather allow it to shape us.

Elohim is the third word in the Biblical text and He is mentioned 34 times in the first 34 verses. This is His story, yet it can so often become ours. The way we read the Bible generally has the danger of disconnecting us from the big story of the Bible. Though many stories, it is one. A grasp of the big story will help us to understand the 'little stories' and even help us interpret it into our story.

Watch

Take time to watch and listen to Dr John Andrews sharing Video 1 – The Big Story.

Share

- What did you hear that stood out to you as John shared in the video?
- How would you describe the big story of the Bible and what are its themes?
- The original audience of scripture would have heard it in the context of community rather than individual. How might this change how we read scripture today and live out its message?

Pray

the library of wonder

We must learn to be guardians of the text and understand that this is a learning process. As we begin, we have to adapt to the text. The Bible is written for us, but it wasn't written to us or about us so there is a genre we must understand. We must take the Scriptures seriously, but not always literally. Our quest should be primarily 'what does it say?' not, 'what does it say to me?'

Read

Imagine walking into a library or bookshop. A book is a book, but they are not all the same. Each section will speak, but in a different way, that demands from us a different skill or approach. Within the books of the Bible we see narrative, history, law, prophecy, wisdom, prayers, poetry, parables, letters and apocalyptic. All of these are speaking, but to hear them, we must recognise how they speak and thus adapt the way we hear. Unawareness of this then causes us to read everything the same, thus potentially hindering our understanding of what is being said.

The three main genres in scripture are:

Narrative – An account of connected events with stories that often help us make sense of events or help us to see meaning and purpose for them and us.

Poetry – One out of every three chapters in the bible are poetry. The majority of God's speech in the bible is 'poetry' and its purpose is to slow us down so we can contemplate, reflect and then act. Watch out for Couplets, especially in the wisdom books:

- Couplets that complete the thought - Proverbs 13:14
- Couplets that deepen the thought - Proverbs 12:9
- Couplets that contrast the thought - Proverbs 10:12
- Groups of couplets can come together to reinforce a key idea - Proverbs 18:10-11 and 18:20-21

Prose-discourse - This would include speeches, law, sections of the wisdom books and letters. The focus is building a sequence of ideas or thoughts to a linear argument that requires a logical response. The book of Philemon is a great example of this.

Watch

Take time to watch and listen to Dr John Andrews sharing Video 2 – A Library of Wonder.

Share

- What did you hear that stood out to you as John shared in the video?
- Would you be confident in reading and handling scripture?
- How does context and genre impact our reading of the Bible?
- How does what you have heard or thought of today, impact your reading of the Bible?

Pray

time travellers

We must understand the Scriptures in the context in which they were written if we are to understand and apply them into the context in which they are read. A fundamental principle in the interpretation of texts, including the Bible, is that every text carries a singular meaning — the one that the author intended when writing it. To help us understand the original intention or meaning, we'll consider in this session 'circles of context'

Read

Cultural Context - Luke 9:59-60 'let the dead bury the dead.' Sometimes it is so useful to use a map when reading certain bits of the bible, especially the Gospels and Acts.

Passage Context - Remember, chapters and verses (and headings) were not in the original text, so to help us the translators have inserted them in. Train yourself to read what went before and what follows to discern whether this alters the way the verse or statement is understood. Luke 15:11-32 'the prodigal son'.

Book Context - An awareness of the purpose or trajectory of the book in general, can inform how you read it. Does the book itself give us a clue as to what to expect and how then we might read it? Ecclesiastes 1:1-2.

Ask some questions when approaching any book of the Bible... sometimes these are helpful and sometimes not so much, but it's a good habit to develop.

- Who is writing?
- To whom are they writing?
- Why are they writing?
- When are they writing?

Bible Context - One of the best ways to interpret the Bible is by using the Bible. This is a principle known as 'Scripture interpreting Scripture.' One part of the bible helps us to understand another part of the bible.

Luke 14:26-27

What is Jesus saying? What can Jesus not be saying?

- Torah
- Tradition
- Language

Watch

Take time to watch and listen to Dr John Andrews sharing Video 3 - Time Travellers.

Share

- What did you hear that stood out to you as John shared in the video?
- What challenges might we face reading the Bible in the 21st Century?
- How does context help us understand the text more?

Pray

he said, she said

Many times in the Bible we are confronted with statements made by various people, and one of the great challenges for us as readers is discerning whether the true record of their words is actually Truth we can or should live by.

Read

- Ruth 1:20-21

These words of Naomi are true... but are they Truth?

Some guidance;

- All statements made by a member of the God-head are Truth.
- Angels and humans speaking by inspiration of the Spirit can be trusted as Truth.
- Some statements are intended only for a particular individual or group.
- Some statements are clearly applicable to all.
- Human opinions should be carefully tested.

The book of Job is a great example of how tricky this can be. Within this story eight persons speak; God, Satan, Job's wife, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (his 3 friends) and Elihu.

So when he said or she said, how should we read their words?

Read carefully:

- Who is speaking?
- Why are they speaking?
- What are they speaking?

Read contextually and apply to any human speaker the same principles of context that allow us to discern what is being said and with a measure of humble confidence, come to a conclusion on what they said.

Watch

Take time to watch and listen to Dr John Andrews sharing Video 4 – He Said She Said.

Share

- What did you hear that stood out to you as John shared in the video?
- How has this series changed your reading of the Bible?

Pray