

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 10/24/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, October 25 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, ask GOD to increase our commitment to JESUS call to love one another. Pray that, by showing GOD'S love to those we encounter that we might help to reach people for CHRIST and expand the growth of GOD'S Kingdom in the world.*

Whatever your level of involvement in Bible study, there may be even basic questions about the Bible that you have or have never really thought about. Perhaps the most basic is, “What is the Bible?” It is a good first question and a good place to start in learning about the Bible.

Most might say that the Bible is a book, and that in one sense would be correct. But the word “Bible” comes from the Greek ta biblia meaning the books. It's actually a plural word and recognizes that the Bible is a collection of books. These books include history, poetry, law, genealogical records, story, prophecy, letters, and more. When you hold the Bible in your hand, you really have a library at your fingertips.

This collection of books, though, is a story too. It is the story of GOD'S relationship with GOD'S people, and that includes, well, us. If you think about it, the Bible begins at the beginning—the beginning of everything related to our existence. And it ends at the end of that existence. The beginning happened a long time ago and that end hasn't happened yet, so that means that we're somewhere in the middle of everything. Many people think of the Bible as something that happened back a long time ago and we get to read about it and, hopefully, learn from it. That's true in part, but since we haven't reached the end, it is our story as well. So, the Bible is not just stuff from the past; it is our story. Looking at it that way helps us to realize what the Bible says is for us today and can help to shape how we live as the people who GOD created. The context of the Bible may have changed, but the truths, the values, the things it tells us about GOD have not changed.

Which leads to another important question: “Is the Bible true?” To answer that, we have to start with what does “true” mean? If you mean factual, in terms of things that can be proven, then the answer is, “yes and no.” For example, we can know that JESUS lived and died from other writings like “The Antiquity of the Jews,” a history of the Jewish people, written by the first century historian, Flavius Josephus. Josephus has a reference to JESUS, naming HIM as a wise teacher who was crucified by Pontius Pilate. “Antiquities” also says that JESUS was called the CHRIST, and had a brother named James. These support biblical information about JESUS, helping us to accept them as factual. We can also identify a number of historic locations named in the Bible from both the Old and New Testaments. There are other places we don't know specifically, but can identify generally. But the Bible also talk about things that can't be proven factually but we accept as true. Dr. David Lose gives an example of this when he talks about freedom. He states that we believe people are better off when free rather than when slaves, but you can't really prove that. And there have been times in history where groups of people did not believe that slavery was wrong. Today, we accept that freedom is preferable to slavery, but can't really prove that. You can give reasons for believing that, but you'd be hard pressed to show that it is factually true. So, facts may not be the best measure of what it means to say the Bible is true.

There are also other things in the Bible that seem to stand in contradiction to, for example, what science says. Like creation. The Bible says that the world and all that is in it was created in six days, while science says that it took a lot longer than that. In the creation story, day and night were not even created until the fourth day, so that makes it somewhat confusing, too. The Bible also says in both II Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4 that, with God, a thousand years is like a day and a day is like a thousand year. Confusing, maybe? II Peter also says that human life is nothing more than the blink of an eye to GOD. A human being blinks, on average, three times a minute. So, if human life is, say, seventy years, and that is just a third-of-a-minute to GOD, and you multiply seventy times three for a minute, and then time sixty for an hour, and then times twenty-four for a day, you start to see lengths of time that fit more with what science says. But there I go trying to factually prove that the Bible is true.

When we set aside fact-proofing, though, and look at what the Bible says, we begin to find truths with which we can feel much more comfortable. Whether it was six twenty-four-hour periods or six million years, the truth that the Bible tells us is that GOD created everything. And there are many other truths that the Bible offers us that maybe can't be proven, but are none-the-less true. Again, maybe some of this can't be proven by fact. But that's where faith comes in as we accept the truths of the Bible because we believe them and what they say to us and mean for our lives. And believing these things should then lead us to want to know more, and I've just led us to an argument for being a part of Bible study—so that we can better know the truth of the Bible.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey