

Word Notes Sunday 27/04/14

Clare Reed – How to read The Bible

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: Matt 4:1-11; James 1:22-25; Heb 4:12-13

The Bible is God's Word to us – divinely inspired but written by a whole range of human hands – our benchmark for what God is saying us. How do we work out what it means?

1, Did God really say? (Gen 3:1)

In Matt 4:1-11 Jesus uses God's word to deal with the devil's attack of temptation – the devil tries to get him to say go against the Word but Jesus knows what God really said. In Gen 3 the serpent manages to deceive Eve about what God really said. Both these show how important it is to know just what God said and we do this via two kinds of study: 1, Exegesis – interpreting and understanding what the Bible says and 2, Hermeneutics - interpreting and understanding AND applying it to our lives. We need to be careful that when we read our Bibles that we are aware of putting our own understanding on the words and meaning – which might have meant something completely different to the writer. Asking the following questions can help:

- What kind of translation am I using? Literal, paraphrase or in between: dynamic equivalence.
- What type or genre of writing am I reading? Poetry, history, letters, laws, allegory, prophetic or proverb.
- What does it say before an after? What is the context of the verse we're quoting?
- What did it mean to the original readers? Who, where when and why was it written? Culture, politics etc.
- What does the rest of the bible say about this? God doesn't contradict himself – check out tricky passages against the rest to understand better.
- What do other people say about this passage? Any teaching, writing or commentary is only as reliable as the person who wrote it, their opinion; it doesn't have the same weight that God's word has.

Underneath it all are we hearing what God really wants to say to us?

2, How do we apply it to our lives. (James 1:22-25; Heb 4:12-13.)

We can absorb ourselves in all of the above and be academically knowledgeable but the aim is so that we can be challenged by God's word, empowering us and enabling us to grow. Three questions to help us in this regard:

- Where is your heart when you read God's Word? Are you seeking to justify what you already think or seeking to have your heart and/or mind changed by what God says? Is it love or duty?
- What, where and when to read? Daily routine vs deeper academic study, book by book or topics, memory verses etc.
- Are you hungry? The big question – Matt 4:4.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

The Bible isn't just one book like a novel, it's a whole library with different kinds of writings in it. How many different types of writing can you identify – read a brief example of each.

How do you handle each of these different types of writing? If they are all Truth (with a capital "T") how does that work? How might different traditions interpret Luke 22:19 and 20 and what does that mean for the way they share communion? What other scriptures would you bring in to support your understanding?

Clare asked us to discuss "What works for you" in relation to reading and applying the Word. What gets you excited and enthused to read more of the Word? What do you do in "dry times"?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

What do your non-Christian friends make of the Bible – where do they get their ideas and opinions from?