



Bible

Discussion

The Marvelous life of Jesus

Making Bible Study Fun-The Imagination Method

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Reading the Bible Together — The Imagination Method

Some say reading the Bible can be difficult. However, we CAN make it fun, so that anyone can freely learn from the Bible.

READING TOGETHER makes it easier.

READING TOGETHER makes it fun.

READING TOGETHER brings a new discovery.

1. USE YOUR IMAGINATION

The Bible was written in a different time and culture, which can make it difficult to understand. However, we can gain a better understanding if we try to imagine the scene or the feelings of the characters.

2. Neither “TEACHING” nor “BEING TAUGHT,” but learning from EACH OTHER.

It is not bad to have confidence in what you know, have learned, or think, but it is important to realize that there are limits to what we understand. Our understanding of the Word, therefore, allows for some margin or range of individual interpretation, so let’s do our best to listen to the opinion of others. Remember, there is no single “right” answer to everything. You can learn a lot from others, and if you have questions, please don’t hesitate to ask them.

3. FOCUS ON CHRIST

The main character and theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ, so it helps you to better understand the Word if your focus is on knowing Him through the Bible.

The Bible speaks to us through the life of Jesus, but it speaks differently from person to person. We might ask, “What is this passage saying to me?” It is very helpful for us to have an attitude of listening to the Bible in order to make it meaningful in our lives.

Some Information about the Bible

When you read the Bible, which has been the best-selling book in the world, it is helpful to know some background information about it.

1. How it was completed

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. There is the word "Testament" in both, and that means "covenant". The theme in both Testaments is Christ (the Savior). In the Old Testament, the emphasis is on waiting for Christ, and in the New Testament, the emphasis is on the arrival of Christ.

Different scholars say different things about exactly when they were written, but the Old Testament was probably completed around 400 BC, and the New Testament was completed by the end of the first century. After various incidents, The Bible came to be in its present form — a compilation of 66 books (39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament).

2. Composition

There are 4 types of literature in the Old Testament (the Law, history, poetry, and prophecy), and there are also 4 types in the New Testament (the Gospels, history, epistles, and prophecy).

We can identify about 40 authors, who were kings, farmers, poets, fishermen, politicians, scholars, warriors, doctors, and so on. This wide variety of people wrote in different times, yet there is one theme in all their books, as though there is one editor.

This "mystery" is explained in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right" (NLT). That's why The Bible is called "The Word of God."

3. Approach

Some people can't believe the miracles in the Bible, and won't even try to understand. It is too bad that they are stumbled by miracles. It would be more constructive to try to draw what we can from what the Bible is saying. You may have your conclusion about miracles after reading the Bible. As the Bible is not a natural science textbook, it would be more useful for us to have the attitude of "What is it saying to me?" in order to grasp the meaning rather than dwell on details.

4. Chapters

There were no chapter divisions in the Bible at first. Probably it was harder to read, so chapters and verses were added. For example, now we say John chapter 5, verse 2. Then other people will know which sentence we are looking at.

The marvelous life of Jesus

People today have different opinions about who Jesus was. During the time that he lived, people also had different opinions about him. Some said, "He is a great teacher." Others said "He is a prophet," and some even said, "He is crazy." In this series, we read through five events from the Gospels which some people have difficulty to believe about Jesus.

I Birth of Jesus Luke1:26-38, Matthew1:18-25

Jesus was born from Mary, but his birth happened in a mysterious way. Some people say such an event is impossible and therefore deny the story of his birth. His birth is obviously different from other people.

- 1.** When the angel came into Mary's house, she was surprised and greatly troubled by his greeting. The Angel Gabriel said to her "You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus." Put yourself into Mary's place. What is going through your mind after meeting the Angel?
- 2.** What is the focus of Mary's answer? (v.34) Why do you think she answered this way?
- 3.** The angel responded to her answer (v.35-37). What is the emphasis in his response?
- 4.** I imagine Mary did not understand everything, but she believed and accepted. She says "Let this thing you have said happen to me!" What can you learn about Mary by observing her attitude and response? If you were her, what would you have done?
- 5.** When Joseph learned that Mary was expecting a baby, he struggled in deciding what to do (Gospel Matthew). It was obvious that the baby was not his. Since he didn't want to cause her public disgrace, he planned to divorce her secretly. But an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream and explained what was happening. When Joseph woke up, he decided to marry Mary. What do you learn about Joseph by observing what he did? If you were him, what would you have done?

[Note]

- **Know** : In this passage, [it](#) means to have a physical relationship as a couple.
- **Engagement** : Among Jews, engagement was equal to marriage, and from a legal perspective, it means to become a couple.

The engagement period was about one year and after that, they had a wedding ceremony and then lived together as a couple. Therefore, if a woman became pregnant during the engagement period, she was considered an adulteress. According to the law at that time, it would be normal for her to be sentenced to death.

- **Book of Isaiah** : It is one of the prophets in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah was active during 8 BC. We notice that Matthew 1:23 was a quotation from Isaiah 7:14. It is described in the Bible that the appearance of Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophecy.

II Boyhood of Jesus

Luke2:41-52

We don't have much information about the boyhood of Jesus. However, based on the account of the New Testament, we can learn that he had a different type of thinking from other boys his age.

1. After spending time at the festival in Jerusalem, Jesus's parents started heading home. They traveled for a whole day thinking that Jesus was with them in the group. However, they soon realized that he was not with them in the group. How do you imagine his parents felt? What could they have imagined happened to him?
2. On the third day, they finally found him. He was sitting in the Temple among the religious teachers, listening and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. What do you imagine his parents thought about this situation?
3. Finally, his parents found him and his mother said "Son, why did you do this to us? Your father and I were very worried about you. We have been looking for you." Then Jesus gave a surprising answer, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Why do you think Jesus responded this way?
4. Jesus called the temple of God "my Father's house," which caused his parents to feel confused. If you put yourself in their place, what would you have thought of Jesus?
5. Although his mother did not understand the meaning of what he said, she treasured up all these things in her heart. What do you imagine she is thinking?
6. Is there a time in your life where you have treasured something in your heart? Perhaps a good memory or experience? If so, what was it?

[Note]

- **The festival of Passover** : In Old Testament days, the people of Israel were told to put the blood of lambs on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses when they escaped from Egypt. And the first-born man and animal of those who did as they were told didn't die. God passed over the house with blooded two drop posts and the lintel. Since then the festival Passover has been celebrated.
- **Jesus wasn't found** : In those days when traveling to festivals, people would travel in big groups of friends and relatives in order to protect themselves from thieves. Children and women would usually go first, followed by men. However, children would sometimes move around. Kids of 12 years of age would be around 6th or 7th grade. Among Jews, however, once a child becomes 13 years of age, they become accountable to the Law. Taking all of this into consideration, we can infer that Jesus' parents were not careless, but that rather his behavior was unusual.

III Claim of Jesus

John8:48-59(Exdos3:13-14)

Jesus said various things that sometimes seemed to be offensive. When Jesus spoke about himself, it seems to have offended the Jewish leaders at that time. Let us look at the claims he made and how the Jewish people reacted.

1. Because the Jewish leaders could not deny the healings and miracles that Jesus performed, they condemned his source of power by insisting that it came from demons. What do you think of what the Jewish leaders insisted? Do you think their argument had a valid point?
2. Jesus refuted the Jew's argument (8:49-51). Then Jews answered him back (8:52-53). What was the point the Jewish leaders were trying to make? Imagine their heart. How do you think they were feeling?
3. The answer of Jesus to the argument of Jews was written in verse 54-56. What was the main point of Jesus' response? Do you see any difference of attitude between Jesus and Jews? If there is a difference, what do you think is the cause of the difference?
4. What was the main point of the Jews' argument against Jesus' answer (v.57)?
5. What Jesus said (v.58) outraged them. They felt it was punishable by death(stoning). We see the reason in the Note. Jesus knew the Old Testament well and he ventured to say that. Why do you think Jesus said in this way? Do you know any other person like Jesus?

[Note]

- **Abraham** : He is the ancestor of Jews and the Jewish nation started from him. Jews respected Abraham and Abraham was a special person for them.
- **"I am who I am"** : In one version it is said, "I am who I am long before Abraham was anything(v.58)". Exodus (Old Testament) 3:14 uses the same word-I am who I am. This name was the answer when Moses asked God about God's name. "I am who I am". It is not easy to understand the meaning of it, but we can say at least that it means God doesn't depend on other existing things or God exists forever. Jews should know this word well. So when someone uses this word, they should have understood that it referred to God. If someone insists that he is God, that is a capital sin.

IV Death of Jesus

Luke 23:32-47

Finally, Jesus was nailed to the cross. Jews did not have the authority to execute criminals, so they had to appeal to the Roman governor to have someone executed. Actually, it was Roman soldiers who executed Jesus. Jesus who had been expected to be the Messiah was crucified and everybody thought that Jesus was defeated.

1. When Jesus was taken to the place called "the Skull" to be crucified, what do you imagine He was thinking about?
2. Crucifixion was agonizing, and the worst form of punishment available at this time. Around Jesus, Jewish leaders were inciting derision and the crowd was mocking Him. In the midst of His suffering, Jesus called out, "Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing."
What do you think was on His heart at that moment?
3. There were two criminals crucified with Jesus. One was on His right and another was on His left. The two men had contrasting attitudes toward Jesus. One of the men said, "... this man has done nothing wrong." How do you think this man came to such an understanding?
4. Jesus said to the man "Today you will be with Me in paradise." Why do you think that Jesus could speak with such confidence? (He does not seem like either a criminal who is being crucified or a resentful man who is being wrongly executed.)
5. Jesus' final words are also not what one would expect. "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit." What do you think Jesus was thinking when He spoke these words?
If you had been there, watching, what would you have thought?

[Note]

- **Skull:** The Gospel of Mark says that they brought Jesus to Golgotha, (translated "the place of the Skull"). Whether the name came from the fact that it was an execution site or because it was shaped like a skull is uncertain.
- **Paradise:** Rather than thinking of this as a specific place, it is probably better to think of it as the condition of being "with God" in the same way that one would be "with friends".

V Resurrection of Jesus-1

John20:1-18

The disciples were not expecting Jesus' death, so their hopes were crushed when He died. They felt despair because they had thought that this was the Messiah, the one who would save Israel. But what actually occurred was something far beyond their expectations.

1. It is possible that in their disappointment, the disciples didn't even think about going to Jesus' tomb. But a woman called Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark. The tomb was sealed with a large rock, which was impossible for a woman to remove. What do you suppose she might have been thinking about when she went to the tomb? (It is possible that a difference in the way men and women think shows up here. What do you think?)
2. Mary Magdalene was amazed, and ran to Peter and another disciple (whom the Bible says John) and reported what had happened. The two disciples ran to the tomb. When they got there, it was just as Mary had said— Jesus' body was not in the tomb. Verse 8 says, "He (John) saw and believed." What did he believe?
3. The two disciples went back to where they were staying, and Mary was left alone. While Mary was crying, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there but didn't realize that it was Jesus. She had a brief conversation with Him but still didn't realize who it was. Why do you think she was not able to recognize who he was?
4. When He called her name, she knew that it was Jesus. She hadn't understood who it was up to this point. Why did she understand now?
5. Mary went to where the disciples were and told them that she had seen Jesus and what He had said to her. What do you think the disciples thought when they heard that? If you were there, what would you have thought?

[Note]

- **Mary Magdalene:** In order to distinguish her from other Mary, Magdalene (from her hometown, Magdala) was added after her name. Luke 8:2 says that Jesus cast seven demons out of her. Her life must have been totally new after this, and she became a follower of Jesus.
- **Tomb:** This is different from a Japanese grave, and is more like a cave hollowed out of the rock. The entrance was blocked by a large stone.

VI Resurrection of Jesus-2

John20:19-29

The first person to meet the resurrected Jesus was a woman. We don't know if the disciples readily accepted her news when they heard it, but any doubts the disciples might have had were removed when Jesus Himself appeared to them.

1. The disciples had locked themselves in a room because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. How would you describe the disciples' emotional condition at this point?
2. Suddenly, Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, "Peace be with you!", and He showed them his hands and side. If you had been there as one of the disciples, what would you have thought? The passage says that the disciples were overjoyed when they saw Jesus. In your own words, describe what you imagine their mental condition to have been at this point.
3. One of the twelve disciples, a man named Thomas, was not there when Jesus appeared. Even though other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord," Thomas said, "What are you talking about?" And he insisted, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." What do you think about his attitude?
4. Eight days later, the disciples were again locked in their room, and Jesus appeared to them the same way He had before. Do you think that the disciples expected Jesus to appear? Both times, Jesus appeared even though the door was locked. How do you think He was able to do that?
5. This time, Thomas was there, too. Jesus invited Thomas to touch Him, but Thomas didn't. Why do you think that Thomas didn't touch Jesus?
6. If you were in Thomas' situation, what would you have done?

I picked up five events from Jesus' life. I hope you would understand Jesus better. When you are asked now "Who is Jesus?", how would you answer?