

What is the Bible? (Answers from Rob Bell, others, and you!)

FCCLA Seeker's Class - Fall 2017

Full schedule and all articles are linked here: <http://jlharmon.com/bible>

October 22: Looking beyond our first impressions

What is the Bible? chapter 10: "Turning the Gem" pp. 79-82

(recommended also chp. 9 pp. 71-78)

"Interpreting the Bible in a Non-Biblical World" by the Rev. Wil Gafney, Ph.D.

October 29: (no meeting – Sunday Forum on the Protestant Reformation)

November 5: The Good Samaritan

What is the Bible? chapter 19: "He Can't Even Say His Name" pp. 139-144

"Go and do Likewise" by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine

Rob Bell (pg. 80)

"I've heard people say that they read the Bible literally. As if that's the best way to understand the Bible. It's not. We read it literately. We read it according to the kind of literature that it is. That's how you honor it. That's how you respect it. That's how you learn from it. That's how you enjoy it. If it's a poem, then you read it as a poem. If it's a letter, then you read it as a letter. If it's a story but some of the details seem exaggerated or extreme – like when Samson kills one thousand Philistines...there's a good chance the writer is making a larger point and you shouldn't get too hung up on those details. You read it, and you ask questions of it, and you study and analyze and reflect and smile and argue and speculate and discuss."

Rev. Wil Gafney, Ph.D.

"When hard texts do pop up in the lectionary, sometimes excuses are made for the text or God—that's just the way it was back then, or silence is kept, and truths remained untold. A preacher might mention Sarah and Abraham's shared father but few tell the truth their relationship was incestuous. Some may talk about the use of slaves as surrogates to bear children for their masters but few will call it rape. There is a reluctance to confront, name and, own the ugliness of our scriptures because of what that might mean about our God. What are we to do when we encounter a god in the text who is not the God of our faith? Is the god of the text the god of your faith? Always and forever, in every text? Are you sure you know what is in your bible? Or is there a God beyond the text who transcends the text even when the text bears a faithful resemblance to her?"

1. Rob Bell's chapter is titled "turning the gem", in reference to the many different interpretations a passage in the Bible can have. Have you ever experienced reading a text over again and finding a new interpretation?
2. What does it mean to read the Bible "literately"? Is that how you read the Bible? Is that the only or best way to read the Bible?
3. What can we do when we read something we don't understand or don't agree with in the Bible? How should we approach the text?
4. Let's answer Dr. Gafney's question: What are we to do when we encounter a god in the text who is not the God of our faith?