

Beyond Belief – Session 4
“Reading the Bible”

Marianne

Bible – contains stories of wonder, poses questions

Mature reading – stories that are nuanced, complex, evocative

“It may not have happened that way, but it doesn’t mean the stories aren’t true” - why is the story told *this way*?

Marcus

The Bible speaks with more than one voice – there are conflicting voices

“My passion, vocation, *mission* is talking to those who can’t be biblical literalists”

“The Bible is the *lens* through which we see God; some people make the mistake of thinking that being a Christian is about believing in the lens”

A Christian life is about entering into relationship with the One we see through the lens

The Bible is a human product, and a response to the experience of God

“Anything we say about this [anything] is a human construction”

“Religions are responses to experiences of the Mystery, and the Bible is as well”

Chapter 2

There is a deliteralization and deabsolutization of Christianity going on
“Christianity has enormous credibility as one of the great religions of the world”

Ancestors in the tradition declared certain texts as sacred, *these books are foundational to our tradition like no other books are*

“The Bible has been a means whereby the Spirit of God has spoken both to individuals and to the Christian community through all the Christian centuries”

Chapter 3

The three primary stories that shape the whole of the biblical narrative

-The Exodus from Egypt (Ancient Israel’s primal narrative)
bondage & liberation

-The story of Exile and return (Ancient Israel’s exile in Babylon)
life with God; journey of return and being reconnected

-“The priestly story” - the Institution of the Temple and priests
Sin & guilt; sacrifice must atone for sin; forgiveness needed

Important to realize we have all three of these stories – different needs

LtQ Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Chapter 1

What do you find most helpful for your journey in the way Borg describes the Bible as a human product?

What are the advantages to reading the Bible metaphorically instead of literally?

Chapter 2

Define: De-literalization

De-absolutism “surplus of meaning”

According to Borg, what are the reasons the Bible has such significance?

Chapter 3

Borg details three Biblical “macro-stories.” Describe each. 1. Exile and Return

2. Bondage and Liberation 3. Priestly Story

What disadvantages do you see in Christianity having emphasized the Priestly Story (to the exclusion of the other stories)?

Further Questions

Which ideas from this session did you resonate with? Which did you find challenging?

What are the implications of this material for you personally? For your community? For faith-based institutions as a whole?