

HOW (NOT) TO READ THE BIBLE

We love the nice parts of the Bible. You know, the inspirational verses we slap on coffee mugs and share on instagram. The problem is, there are other verses that aren't so nice. This can lead to confusion, doubt, and even loss of faith for many. So what do we do with that? How do we read the Bible?

WEEK 2: DOES THE BIBLE SUPPORT SLAVERY?

BIG IDEA

The Bible does not support slavery, it subverts it.

SCRIPTURES

Genesis 1:27, Exodus 21, Deuteronomy 15:12-17, Philemon 15-17, Galatians 3:26-28, 4:7

1. As humans, we often do whatever we want to do. Sometimes, to justify our behavior, we make the Bible say what we want it to say. Have you ever seen this? Have you ever done this?
2. It's an unfortunate fact of US history that before and during the Civil War, the Bible was used as justification for the owning of human beings and the supremacy of white people over other races. What do you make of this? How/why do you think this happened?
3. Read Genesis 1:27
 - a. What does it mean for people to be made in God's image? How should this inform the way we think about slavery in the bible?
4. Slavery was a normal practice in the ancient world (it was also much different than slavery in the modern world). How does the Old Testament law, in places like Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 15, subvert this practice in its ancient context? How should this inform the way we think about slavery in the bible?
5. Read Philemon 15-17 (or the whole letter if you'd like)
 - a. Are there any words, thoughts, or ideas that stand out?
 - b. How do Paul's words to Philemon subvert slavery in the Greco-Roman world?
6. Thomas Cahill, in his book *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, states that what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28 is the first instance in the history of world literature of an argument for the equality of all human beings. Read Gal. 3:26-28. Why is this verse so important today? How can we build the kind of community Paul outlined in Gal. 3:26-28?
7. An estimated 50 million people are in slavery today. Where do you see slavery in the world today? What can you do as an individual to subvert slavery in the world today? What can we do as a group?