

Dr. Legaspi – Lesson 11

Big Question: How do we deal with difficulties when we read the Bible?

Key points

This last lesson is really best seen as an “appendix” to the rest of the lessons. As Dr. Legaspi has taken students through the stories of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul, a number of questions have come up along the way which he now takes time to address. This final lesson can be used not only to engage Dr. Legaspi’s comments, but any other questions that may have come up with your students, as well as a general approach for when we encounter difficulties in the biblical text. Teachers should understand these few key points before the lesson, and students should take these points away from the classroom.

- A. One of the best ways to deal with difficulties in the Bible is to continually read the Bible as a whole. So often difficulties arise when we focus on one particular part of the Bible and ignore the overall witness of the biblical canon.
- B. We must also keep in mind that the Bible is the story of God meeting people where they were in life. Just as we continually grow in our relationship with Christ, the ancient Israelites and others in the Bible were met in their particular cultural and historical circumstances so as to be transformed by God.
- C. We need not despair when we face difficulties in the biblical text. The Bible tells the story of God’s relationship with His people. Relationships are often messy, and this one is no exception. Yet we can see as we read the entire Old and New Testaments together that God works through this messiness for the salvation of humanity.
- D. Our goal in life is to encounter the living God and be transformed by Him, not to satisfy every single curiosity we have or answer every single question that occurs to us.
- E. However, this is not to say that we should not engage questions or even doubts that occur to us as we read the Scriptures. Such engagement can often be essential for our own spiritual growth. When we engage such questions, however, we can ask for God’s guidance and have the firm conviction of His love and faithfulness.

Review

Ask students:

1. What did we learn last class? Review your notes and rewrite a key point or takeaway that you found significant. If you were absent, your job is to review the student guide from last class and then ask your fellow students questions about the points they’re about to share.

Give them 3 or so minutes to review and write, then ask them:

- Share what you’ve written (go around the room systematically to get feedback)
- Then ask students who were absent last class: do you have any questions they have about their points? Students may not be able to answer their questions, and that’s okay. You can affirm the question, and if it’s easy to answer yourself, do so.

And if not, say “We’ll hold on to that question to see if it’s answered in any of the future classes.”

Finally, review any key points from last class that were missed, especially if they are really important for this upcoming lesson.

Opening Reflection

Say something like:

- As we’ve journeyed through the Bible in these lessons, a number of questions have been brought up by Dr. Legaspi’s students, mostly dealing with the violence we see throughout the Old Testament.
 - What are some other problems we encounter as we read the Bible?
 - What should be our response when we encounter difficulties or doubts as we read the Bible?
2. Have you ever read a story or verse in the Bible and been greatly disturbed by what you read?
 3. When this happens, what are possible ways we might respond?

Take time to let them share their responses to questions 2 and 3. Hopefully their answers will map out some of the following. If they miss one of these, fill it in. (Eg, it may be that no one in your group wants to mention the first, but it is a very real possibility and happens frequently with people, so is important to name it.)

- Abandoning the Faith.
 - Suppressing our questions and doubts.
 - Continuing to search for truth in the firm conviction that God loves us and desires more than anything else our salvation.
4. Besides having a good approach to doubts and questions that arise as we read the Scriptures, where can we go for help in seeking answers to our questions?

Again, take time to let them share their responses to this question.

- The rest of the Bible. (So often our doubts come from reading a short portion of the Scriptures out of context. As we will see today, reading the entire Bible can help us greatly in answering our questions.)
- Our priest and other educated adults
- Orthodox Christian theologians
- Church fathers who often commented on scriptural passages in very wise ways centuries and centuries ago
- Critical commentaries – there are many good commentaries on the Bible that help us understand it today. There are also ones that are not as good, so it’s important to read widely to understand the difference.

Preparing for Video Clip

- This final lesson is really somewhat of an appendix to the rest of the lessons.

- We've seen a number of questions come up about violence in the Old Testament as we've listened to Dr. Legaspi.
 - Today he begins by discussing the violence in the Old Testament, then moves on to other various questions that have arisen throughout the lectures.
 - As we listen to the students' questions and Dr. Legaspi's answers, think of your own questions that have arisen throughout these discussions or at other times when you have read the Bible.
5. Now fill in the points Dr. Legaspi makes in this video clip.
- a. The Bible is not merely a _____ book, but is a word of _____ unto life.
 - b. As we read the Old Testament, we must remember that the majority of it was written in the shadow of _____ and in the midst of Israel's _____.
 - c. When thinking about the salvation of people of other religions who have perhaps never had the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel, we must remember that _____ is the way of salvation, that He alone can _____ others.

Reflection on Video

6. What did you think about the students' questions? Are these questions you have had as you read the Scriptures? What did you think of Dr. Legaspi's responses?
7. What other questions have arisen for you when you have read the Bible? What things have troubled you or caused you to doubt? What can you do when such doubts arise?
8. Any final thoughts?

Close with any of the key points that they might not have addressed in their own sharing/discussion.

Final Note

A lesson like this and the lessons preceding it can spark students to have their own set of peripheral questions that they think of along the way. Be prepared to take the students' questions and perhaps dedicate the next lesson to responding to them. Write them down and then during the coming week prepare good responses—you may want to gain insight from others and other sources for this. Good, hard questions are important for developing a real, adult faith. Students should feel safe to ask them, and our work as teachers is to provide the best responses we can.