

Say What?

1. Warm up: As we move into September, what's something you're looking forward to this fall?
2. On Sunday we resumed our study of the New Testament book of Colossians by delving into a passage where Paul says things to wives and slaves that make us cringe. To remind ourselves, let's read the passage again together, as printed on p. 3.
3. We began Sunday's sermon by wrestling with what we should do when we encounter a scripture passage that causes us to say, "Really?" People often say that the Bible is inspired, but rarely define what that means? Jeff summarized three different perspectives. Let's read through those perspectives, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Which option we chose to embrace, Jeff said, shouldn't be based on what we wish God did, but what it actually looks like God did when we review the empirical evidence in the Scriptures. Based on what you see in the Bible, which means of inspiration you think God used and why you think that?
 - b. God could have dropped down golden tablets from heaven. Instead God chose to work through humans to create the Scriptures. Why do you think that is?
 - c. At the very end of his ministry, Jesus gave us important insight into how God goes about revealing truth to us humans. After teaching his disciples for three long years, shortly before his crucifixion Jesus told them, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all the truth." John 16:12. According to that verse, why did Jesus decide not to share "many things" with his disciples?
 - d. How and when did Jesus say these many other truths would eventually be revealed to us? Do you think that process is ongoing? Why or why not?
 - e. Why do you think God only reveals things to us when we're able to bear it? Why doesn't God just put it all out there in one fell swoop?
 - f. Are there any new truths that you think our generation of believers is just beginning to finally be able to bear? What are the inspired breakthroughs God is trying to give our generation of believers?
 - g. Does it excite or scare you that there may still be many more things that God wants to share with us when we can bear it?
4. Theologians call God's gradual process of revealing truth "Progressive Revelation." For example, in II Kings 1-2 God is portrayed as destroying misbehaving soldiers with fire from heaven and misbehaving little kids with bears. Back then, people often saw God as an avenger. So when a village of people rejected Jesus, "His disciples said, 'Lord, do you

want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them and said, ‘You do not know what spirit you are of.’ Luke 9:54. This is an example of Jesus critiquing how God is portrayed in an Old Testament story and calling us to something higher. What are the implications of this for when we encounter a passage in the Bible that makes us cringe? Do we have the liberty to critique a passage that strikes us as inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus? Why or why not?

5. Jeff suggested that if Jesus embraced the concept of Progressive Revelation, we should too. That would mean we should interpret all Scripture through the lens of Jesus and resolve any inconsistencies in favor of what Jesus taught. Jesus repeatedly fought to elevate women to equality. For that reason, Jeff suggested we should take Paul’s statement that wives should be subject to their husbands and apply it equally to wives and husbands and to all human relationships. Theologians call this “mutual submission.” Paul himself once managed to capture the fullness of the concept in Ephesians 5:21, when he said that we should all “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
 - a. Have you ever seen (or been in) a relationship that consistently practiced mutual submission? How was the principle of mutual submission exhibited in that relationship? What did it look like? Did it seem like a good thing?
 - b. Why is mutual submission so important to healthy relationships?
 - c. What does mutual submission look like in a marriage? In a parent/child relationship? In a boss/employee relationship? In a spiritual community?
 - d. Why is mutual submission so hard?
 - e. How can we get better at practicing mutual submission?
6. When it comes to slavery, Paul was a creature of his time. He wasn’t able to bear the fullness of what God wanted to say about slavery. It would be another 1800 years before many Christians were finally able to bear God’s truth that slavery must be abolished. But in spite of Paul’s human limitations, he was able to bear and share at least one eternal truth that applies to the work that all of us do. In verse 23, Paul says, “Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.”
 - a. What are the reasons why we, as people of faith, should pour ourselves into our work, doing it for the Lord instead of the people around us or above us at work? Why is it important that we make our work a love offering to God?
 - b. Do you feel you’re meeting the Colossians 3:23 standard in your job? (If retired or a student, do you feel you’re meeting that standard in whatever God is calling you to do in this season of your life?)
 - c. What one thing you could do to more ideally live the Colossians 3:23 standard?

Colossians 3:17 - 4:1

¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. ²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.

²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. ²³Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, ²⁴since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. ¹Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Different Christian Perspectives on Biblical Inspiration

Total Control = God's control over the writers was so complete, it's as if God's Spirit was dictating each word and completely overriding the writers' human limitations.

Low Control = God's Spirit elevated the insight of the writers, not in a supernatural way, but in a way akin to how all great literature is inspired.

Medium Control = God showered the writers with as much divine truth as they could bear within the confines of their humanity and the time in which they lived.