

Questions – Role Play

Episode 6: Where did the bible Come from?

Leaders Introduction

In Episodes 1 & 2 we laid the foundations of understanding the importance of trust and the inevitability of people having an ultimate authority, be it reason, experience or revelation. We saw that reason and experience are important in the Christian faith, but not ultimate; they are used in thinking about faith but are not the content of faith. We began to look at why revelation from God in his word the Bible, as an ultimate authority is reasonable when you think about it and experience it.

Episodes 3 to 6 look in more detail at the reasonableness of the Bible as a foundation for knowledge by considering the Bible's historical reliability. The episodes break it down as follows:

Episode 3 – Looks at the idea of apparent contradictions in the bible

Episode 4 – Considers the question of whether the Bible was simply made up

Episode 5 – Examines how the Bible was put together (the canon of scripture)

Episode 6 – Looks at transmission and translation, how the Bible was passed down to us today.

Each of these issues is a part of the picture of the reliability of the Bible. In normal conversations they won't come up as nice neat separate subjects, but we have created an episode for each one to help focus on the specific aspects of each question in turn.

In considering the question of historical reliability we might be tempted to move over to a wholly evidentialist approach to apologetics (see the introductory video for what that means). But whilst the focus does indeed shift towards that, there is still half an eye on the key ideas unpacked in Episodes 1 & 2, namely that no one is neutral everyone has a faith position. So in considering evidence there is a reason why some people consider it convincing and others don't; none of us are objective.

Questions – Role Play

Leader's Questions

1. **Sylvia has some genuine and important concerns about the reliability of the Bible, what are they?**

She mentioned three main concerns:

- That the Bible has been passed from person to person like a game of whispers (and so we have no idea what was originally said or written down);
- That people who wrote it down to being with were simply exaggerating what they saw, and;
- That in translating the Bible the reliability of any coherent message has been further undermined.

2. **Chris tries to answer Sylvia's questions. Do you think he does a good job? What does he do well and where could he improve?**

Was sovereign over the process and ensured it was preserved, but that is unlikely to have much traction with Sylvia at this point. He doesn't ask any questions. He doesn't get behind why Sylvia has this view of the Bible, or push here to justify and defend her own position on the Bible. Let's see how Holly does.

3. **When Holly enters the game what does she do immediately and how does it help?**

She asks Sylvia a question, about what Sylvia believes about another ancient book written by Aristotle. This helps as it immediately puts the onus onto Sylvia requiring her to do some of the thinking and justifying.

4. **How does Sylvia respond to Holly's reference to the earliest copies of Aristotle's work and what does it reveal about her position?**

Sylvia responds by saying that whether the Bible is true is more important than whether the works of Aristotle were written by Aristotle. This is of course true and shows that her views are not simply historically informed but are bound up in her wider thoughts about the Bible (And not wanting Christianity to be true).

5. **Holly doesn't leave it there; she asks another question, she asks her if she can "show us anything written by eyewitnesses that says something else happened?" What is good about what Holly does here?**

She again puts the onus back onto Sylvia and asks her to bring evidence to the table to justify her own views. At the same time, because Sylvia can't provide any evidence like that it shows Sylvia just how good the point about eye witnesses is.

Questions – Role Play

6. How does Holly use the laser tag game bring their discussion together at the end?

She shows how to get the communication right in the game, to ensure the messages were reliably passed on, they went back to the source: Sylvia. In the same way the Bible has been translated and transmitted by going back to the original sources, the very early copies of eye witness accounts.

7. Can you think of any ways that Holly, Chris, Beth or Sam could have done better?

If the relationship and situation merited it, they could have pushed even harder on the neutrality question that we have talked about in previous sessions. Sylvia appeared to actually know relatively little about the transmission and translation process, so why was she so persuaded that the Bible was not a good record of what really happened? It might be simply natural scepticism but she knew that there is more at stake with the Bible than say, the works of Aristotle. It might be worth pushing Sylvia to consider the possibility that she doesn't trust the Bible because she doesn't want to.

Role Plays

In turns have a conversation, with one person playing the role of a Christian and the other a non-Christian. Start with one of the following:

- You can't trust the Bible, I mean we've all tried the game whispers; you always end up in a mess and that's only between a few people over a few minutes!
- OK, but how do you even know that what the writers of the Bible wrote down wasn't exaggerated from the very beginning?
- What about all those different translations? Surely your English version is going to be different from say the Japanese version?!

Remind them that they are focussing on responding with a question back to the other person.

If these conversations don't go well, don't worry and tell the people in your group not to worry, it is likely that it's the first time most of them have tried any of this and like anything else it takes time to get used to.

Questions – Role Play

Group Member Questions

1. Sylvia has some genuine and important concerns about the reliability of the Bible, what are they?
2. Chris tries to answer Sylvia's questions. Do you think he does a good job? What does he do well and where could he improve?
3. When Holly enters the game what does she do immediately and how does it help?
4. How does Sylvia respond to Holly's reference to the earliest copies of Aristotle's work and what does it reveal about her position?
5. Sylvia's son, Andy wades in which allows Sylvia to switch back to her idea of whispers. How does Sam help here?
6. Holly doesn't leave it there; she asks another question, she asks her if she can "show us anything written by eyewitnesses that says something else happened?" What is good about what Holly does here?
7. How does Holly use the laser tag game bring their discussion together at the end?
8. Can you think of any ways that Holly, Chris, Beth or Sam could have done better?

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