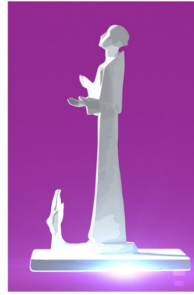


EXPLORING THE BIBLE

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Theme 2: How to approach the Bible

Question 2f. What are some of the traps to avoid in reading the Bible?

1. What appeals to you about the Anglican idea that we read and engage with all parts of the Scriptures? What challenges does this create?
2. While single verses might inspire and teach us? What problems arise when a verse is taken out of context?
3. In what areas of our lives do we routinely engage with complete 'texts'? Some people may read all the books by one favourite author, watch an entire television series, anticipate the release of the next film in a franchise. We have the skills to engage with broad and lengthy texts in other areas of our lives, what can we take from those passions to help enliven our commitment to reading the whole Bible?

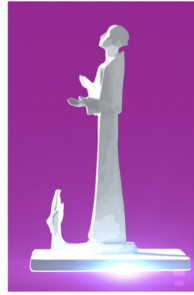
Archbishop Phillip Aspinall

There are quite a few traps in reading the Bible. I'd say one is only reading your favourite bits and not reading the whole of the Scriptures. That was a very important thing at the time of the Reformation. One of the principles that Cranmer built into the Prayer Book was that the whole of the Scriptures had to be read systematically, so that's a very big thing for Anglicans.

A second trap I think is overlooking the differences, the nuances, the tensions that are in Scripture. We need to let each voice in the Scriptures speak, and they are not always in agreement. That's part of our wrestling with Scriptures, to take the whole thing on board with its different voices and work out with the Scriptures what the truth must be.

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So that's a second trap.

I think a third one is trying to read the Bible from Page 1 to page 1300 like a novel. It doesn't work like that. The Scriptures are made up of 66 different books with more than 66 different authors writing in different places at different times to address different questions. You need to let each of those voices speak in its own terms. It doesn't make sense if you just start at page one and read right through to the end. You need to take each of the books and allow them their own integrity.

The Scriptures also tell us paradoxical things that are as true now as they ever were, are Jesus teaches us that if you want to actually find the deepest meaning your life can have then give your life away. Make your life a gift to other people in loving service and by giving your life away you actually find it.