

EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK

SESSION FOUR:

SCRIPTURE'S FORMATIVE AUTHORITY

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | FEBRUARY 26, 2022





READING SCRIPTURE: EIGHT TIPS

- 1. Through the Lens of Jesus Christ
- 2. In light of the whole witness of scripture
- 3. With emphasis on the rule of love
- 4. With a community of faith
- 5. With awareness of contexts
- 6. Devotionally and Prayerfully
- 7. Habitually
- 8. Humbly



WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears *unique* and *authoritative* witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but *the witness without parallel.*”

~Confession of 1967



WHAT KIND OF AUTHORITY?

- Authority is domain specific—to which domain(s) does scripture belong?
- Not primarily a legal/academic text—a different kind of power.
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17—a *teaching* authority.
- Scripture's authority denotes the Bible's capacity to shape and transform people into mature communities of faith. ~William P. Brown
- Formative Authority: *auctoritas*



SCRIPTURE AS SCRIPT

- The Myth of Scriptlessness
- Which scripts have shaped us?
 - These dominant/dominating scripts are *not* neutral
- An Alternative Script(ure)
 - De-scripture, disengagement...formation
- The Elusive, Irascible Author of our Script



SCRIPTURE IN THE CHURCH

- The Bible belongs to the Church—what impact does that have?
- Scripture reading points beyond itself
 - Not a research project
- Scripture reading is a communal *practice of faith*
 - Repeated over time, done together, rooted in conviction
- Scripture reading is an *art*
 - Creative act, aims for beauty, each project is unique
 - How to learn? Apprenticeship



THE AUTHORITY OF TOUGH TEXTS

- “No biblical text may be safely repudiated as a potential source of edification for the church. When we think we have reached the point of zero edification, then that perception indicates that we are not reading deeply enough.” ~Ellen Davis
- Insufficient strategies: outright dismissal and vapid whitewash
- Charitable reading
- Suggested Strategies:
 - Difficult texts are worthy of charity from interpreters
 - Wrestling is an act of faithfulness
 - Seek the blessing...enlarge the field of view (key themes)
 - Learn from dangers as well as insights in the text

Charitable reading requires considerable effort. It is easier to dispense with the difficult text. Those who regard a text as religiously authoritative are willing to sustain that effort, because they perceive it in some sense as a gift from God.

~Ellen Davis

"We read neither with a kind of blind and thoughtless obedience to every word of scripture, as if it simply represented the mind of God, nor do we read with that rather priggish sensibility that desires to look down on the authors of scripture as benighted savages. We read with a sense of our own benighted savagery in receiving God's gift, and our solidarity with those writers of scripture caught up in the blazing fire of God's gift who yet struggle with it, misapprehend it, and misread it"

~Rowan Williams

“The quarrels we undertake must be kept in perspective, because none of those quarrels concerns this holy character unduly. What counts is that we were not there at the outset of creation and will not be there at the curfew; our life between the outset and the curfew is the gift of the One who calls us not to assault neighbor but to be on our way in wonder, love and praise.”

~Walter Brueggemann



TOUGH TEXT: WEALTH/POSSESSIONS

- 🎬 Luke 18:18-30
- 🎬 From Early Church to the Prosperity Gospel
- 🎬 Which Script? Abundance or Scarcity
- 🎬 Which Path? Generosity or Selfishness (Luke 12)
- 🎬 The full witness of Scripture: Psalm 24, Philippians 4:12-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-11
- 🎬 Scripture's Formative Authority—How would the God we know in Christ form us?

Which scriptures
form the heart of
your faith?