

Controversy and conflict have surrounded the Bible ever since Moses came down the mountain with the first version of the 10 Commandments. You will recall that he smashed those tablets because of the unfortunate golden calf incident.

Our Lenten journey from dark to sight on the road to Emmaus reaches a curious intersection this week. This week we ordain and install elders and deacons who will be asked the following:

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?

I do.

Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

I will.

These vows are easier said than done. They express what we aspire to; they set forth a standard that we will fall short of; but down doesn't mean out. We will keep at it in confident hope that Jesus will not leave us by the side of the road lost in our misunderstandings. He will teach us in a way that transforms information into inspiration. We follow him from dark to sight.

✠ *Under the authority of Scripture*

Our lesson begins by the side of the road as Jesus says to us: *Luke 24:25 (NRSV)*
"Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!"

Remember that Jesus is speaking to disciples; these are his followers who may have heard the Sermon on the Mount on the Mount; they certainly heard the new commandment, "Love one another" in the Upper Room. They've been taught by Jesus for as much as 3 years. And they missed the point. They could not imagine that "crucified and risen" was necessary for the Messiah to be the Savior of the world. *That* just wasn't in their realm of possibility.

So it comes as no surprise to learn that we've been misunderstanding and misusing the Bible ever since. We've used it to bless what we bless. We've used it to curse what we curse. Sometimes we have a vested interest in doing this; we are protecting the status quo. Our lives are good and we want to keep them that way! Other times we simply cannot imagine *that*; *that* just isn't in our realm of possibility.

This isn't to say that we've *only* misunderstood and misused the Bible; this is a call to humility; this is a call for ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons to handle the Bible with care and with prayer.

A case in point: When I was 18 years old, my parents divorced. I was furious. I blamed my Dad and did not speak to him for 10 years. When caring friends would say to, "Dave, what about *"honor your father?"*" I would reply, *Malachi 2:16 (NRSV) For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless.*

I wasn't under the authority of Scripture; I was using Scripture to justify my hate. It is all too easy to do that especially when it's personal, when we have a vested interest in the outcome because it matters to us.

Elders and Deacons, don't be *"slow of heart to believe;"* do not limit your understanding of the Bible to what you presently understand. Be humble and prayerful with Scripture. With its authority over you, you will lead us well from dark to sight. Be on your guard and keep yourselves, keep us all *under* the authority of Scripture.

✦ From Dark to Sight

German theologian Eduard Lohse wrote, "Christ is the goal and the centre of all the Scriptures."¹ Thus, when Jesus says, *Luke 24:26-27 (NRSV) Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.* In this passage, Jesus is saying that

¹ Eduard Lohse, *Die Auferstehung* [see p. 1551] in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible, 28A. (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 1567.

from one end of Scripture to the other, for those disciples that's Genesis to Malachi, for us its Genesis to the maps, from one end to the other, the Bible is all about Jesus. It leads us to him; it guides us as we follow him from dark to sight so that we can say, *Luke 24:32 (NRSV)* "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

The Bible is more than information; it is a manual for life, but it is much more than that. It does more than lead us through life; it leads us from dark to sight; it leads us to Jesus.

Information isn't enough for this journey; we need inspiration. We do not think our way from dark to sight, but God forbid we open the Bible with a closed mind. We do not feel our way from dark to sight, but God forbid we open the Bible with a hard heart. We journey from dark to sight when mind and heart come together and open themselves as we open the Bible.

Mind and heart come together through prayer. Each week before we open the Bible, we open ourselves; we ask God to speak to us, to give us the kind of teaching that those disciples received on the road to Emmaus, and God answers that prayer!

God answers that prayer every time we gather; we come with our fear of what tomorrow will bring; can we find our way through that? We come with our hope what is wrong will be set right, what is wounded healed, what is lost found. We come and a certain passage of Scripture just happens to be read; a certain point just happens to come out in the sermon; and we are there on the road to Emmaus; our hearts are burning within us for the Scriptures are open; we are open; and the Holy Spirit inspired word of God is speaking to us. We're on target for the goal and centre of all the Scriptures – Jesus Christ, who is transforming us from dark to sight.

Elders and Deacons, lead us with your example; your example of being open to and opened by the Scriptures. Pray your way through the written word to the Living Word. God will bless you and God will bless us and make us a blessing as we journey from dark to sight through scripture. Amen.