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The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read The Bible



Synopsis

Why Can't I Just Be a Christian? Parakeets make delightful pets. We cage them or clip their wings to keep them where we want them. Scot McKnight contends that many, conservatives and liberals alike, attempt the same thing with the Bible. We all try to tame it. McKnight's *The Blue Parakeet* has emerged at the perfect time to cool the flames of a world on fire with contention and controversy. It calls Christians to a way to read the Bible that leads beyond old debates and denominational battles. It calls Christians to stop taming the Bible and to let it speak anew for a new generation. In his books *The Jesus Creed* and *Embracing Grace*, Scot McKnight established himself as one of America's finest Christian thinkers, an author to be reckoned with. In *The Blue Parakeet*, McKnight again touches the hearts and minds of today's Christians, this time challenging them to rethink how to read the Bible, not just to puzzle it together into some systematic theology but to see it as a Story that we're summoned to enter and to carry forward in our day. In his own inimitable style, McKnight sets traditional and liberal Christianity on its ear, leaving readers equipped, encouraged, and emboldened to be the people of faith they long to be.

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Customer Reviews

Infused with common sense and seasoned with candor, the latest work from McKnight (*The Jesus Creed*), religious studies professor at North Park College, takes a stand in controversial territory by bravely asking the question: how is it that even Christians who claim to be led by an authoritative

Bible read it so differently? In response, the author asserts that believers need to take a fresh look at how they adopt and adapt Scripture before they can read the Bible in a way that renews a living relationship with the God behind the sacred text. Using the analogy of a water slide, McKnight argues that the Gospel is the slide, the Bible and church tradition the walls that both protect and liberate the believer as he or she discerns how to apply Scripture as a living document. In the last section, McKnight tackles the controversial issue of women's role in church ministry in a way that is both scholarly and confessional, documenting his own journey alongside that of the apostle Paul and other biblical characters. Enriched by folksy anecdotes, this volume could be very useful for evangelical readers and any others wanting a safe place to ask the same bold questions. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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A wonderful book that will encourage you to reevaluate how you read the Bible. Not many casual readers of the Bible seem to understand that the various books of the Bible were written over the course of thousands of years by different authors, and are different types of writing aimed at different purposes. You can't read the Epistles in the same way you read Leviticus. The setup using the parakeet could have had a clearer tie-in with the concepts he discusses, but his application of the literary skills to the issue of women being in positions of leadership in a church is brilliant. I feel this particular issue has been one that has led to the wasting of a lot of wonderfully competent talent

in Christian leadership, and is one that any woman who feels the slightest compulsion by God to enter that realm should read.

This book has opened my eyes to a more wholistic and true way to read the Bible. Scot's straightforward language and commentary has given me a new depth of understanding and his refrain from offering his opinion (though I have felt like I could confidently guess what his opinion would be) in other arenas gives me respect for his opinion. He clearly doesn't just teach but believes what he is saying and has spent a great part of his career trying to better understand the Bible, its purpose, its range, its language, interpretation, and application. You need not be a theologian to read it but I think even a theologian could appreciate the ideas presented and the manner in which they are presented. Really good for lay theologians or theologian wannabes.

I am not a theologian but I love Bible history and study. Most approaches to Bible hermeneutics have been helpful, but they focused me on the specifics of a particular passage in which I was reading. McKnight's book gave me a much better understanding of the whole of scripture and the message of God through the Bible. Without this view of the whole, I am afraid I/we often lose the broader context of what God is saying to us, and we too easily focus on the narrow issues that reflect our own biases and interests. I recommend this book highly. It is easy to read and written with the lay Bible study person in mind. It is clear, but highly provocative.

The reader experiences a look in the mirror to question premises, realizing that views or traditions held dear are not necessarily substantiated by what is written in the bible. A refreshing read with contemporary, inviting language.

It is a very well thought out and readable book on thinking through how to interpret scripture. About halfway through it turns into almost a different book, where it takes the reader through the process for interpreting how the Bible treats women in church leadership. Absolutely fascinating, one of the most comprehensive while still being accessible/readable books on that subject I've ever seen and it is very very affirming of women in leadership positions in churches. It addresses the tough Pauline passages directly but first takes a full canonical context of women through the entire bible. Well done.

I liked that this book so closely stuck to discernment and interpretation conflicts, that many

Christians struggle with. The importance of story, and culture, history, and world view, is skillfully presented here. I recommend this book to people who struggle with how to still value and honor the scriptures, yet seek to learn its message to every culture and generation that reads it.

Fast and the book arrived the way it was described.

I recently received an advance copy of *The Blue Parakeet*, the latest book by Scot McKnight. The sub-title pretty much sums up the subject of the book; it reads, "Rethinking How You Read the Bible." When describing *The Parakeet*, I use the term "pretty much sums up..." because I think a second question the book posits is part of the bigger picture of *The Blue Parakeet*; that is for me, anyway. The bigger picture question is "How do I (we) live out the Bible today?" Scot proposes the "how do we live it" question while tossing out a number of difficult passages from the Bible. These difficult passages are what he calls the "blue parakeets" (you'll have to read the book to find out the story behind that label; it's a pretty cool illustration). Without giving a definitive answer to how we live it, Scot suggests the answer to "how we live" can be found in "how we read" the Bible. The opening chapters describe some of the various methods people employ for reading the Bible. Each of these methods produces unique outcomes which bring with them certain challenges when the reading moves to life application. I enjoyed the descriptions of the different styles (or ways) that people read the Bible and was able to personally relate to what was being described. I have approached reading the Bible in some of the ways that Scot illustrates, and I have experienced the general outcome (incongruous application) which results from reading the Bible in a way that was not intended. McKnight proposes that the Bible was meant to be read as a story and he walks the reader through his reasoning for this belief. Although I do not need convincing (I share the same belief), I think the points put forth by the author to build his case are very persuasive. The book moves quickly from its foundational premise of "problem" (the generalized understanding that most of us in contemporary society approach the Bible incorrectly) to "nuts and bolts" solution (embracing the Bible as humanity's story). McKnight finishes his book with a response to the question of how the story approach relates to life-application in "real-life" with a case study illustration. This is a high-level overview of *The Blue Parakeet*; however, before I complete my review, I'd like to share a few points from the book that really stood out for me. As a disclaimer, please note that these points are my subjective interpretations and "your mileage may vary..."(1) The methodology and/or way that we approach reading the Bible. I re-enjoyed reading about and peering into the thinking of Scot when he shared his thoughts on how to read the Bible. His dialectic approach in presenting his case was

fair, thorough, and thoughtfully presented. Throughout his exploration and presentation I was continually asking questions, making reasoned deductions, and examining my own habits when approaching the Bible. I was effectually "drawn in" to the conversation. I was not a casual observer. I think this is the aim of most writers.(2) I connected my style and approach to the Bible in a similar fashion with that of the author's. While this may not be the case with every reader, I was affirmed and challenged at the same time. I am an adherent of the Methodist approach to Bible reading. This approach, attributed to John Wesley, is known as the Wesleyan-Quadrilateral and can be described as follows: Scripture - the Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments) Tradition - the two millennia history of the Christian Church Reason - rational thinking and sensible interpretation Experience - a Christian's personal and communal journey in Christ (For a more thorough explanation of the Wesleyan-Quad, there are any number of references online) The gist of the process can be summarized as Scripture holding authority, but not ultimate authority. Tradition and history of the people of God weigh-in when interpreting scripture. Reason comes into play as we ask questions and wrestle with Scripture to make application of it in our lives. Finally, experience gives voice to interpretation as we live God's Word today. I think this approach of reading and applying the Bible connects with the heart of The Blue Parakeet. This is, however, only my opinion. Personally, I advocate and employ an additional approach and view when interpreting and applying God's Word in my life. I prefer to use the Wesleyan-Quad as a base or foundation for my reading. I use inductive study and lectio divina as a dual path support of the WQ for a three-point methodology; it works for me and serves as a check and balance keeping my reading honest.(3) Intimate and Personal God...Oneness and Unity with God. From "Wiki-stories" to the One Story, McKnight engrosses the reader (at least this reader) in the unity-story of God-man-eternity-relationship-community. Knowing this Story and living it are two entirely different ends of the spectrum. Scot reminds us that it is paramount for our focus to remain fixated on the Story of God-the Story of Man and our relationship and role in the His-Story.(4) A Teacher. Showing his gift and calling as a teacher, Scot devotes a large segment of the book to a case study of reading the Bible as story and wrestling with application of the precepts and teachings of God's word in a changing world. This "lab practical" is an excellent exercise and the case study alone is worth the time and energy of reading this work. (I won't ruin the story by sharing what the nature and text of the study is) There are a number of other delightful discussions awaiting the readers of The Blue Parakeet. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time spent with it and continue to carry it in my book bag, finding myself flipping through pages and re-reading passages here and there. It has prompted thought, affirmed some methods, and challenged me in areas as well. I recommend the book with both thumbs up.

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