

Confronting Christianity

Week Six: How Can You Take the Bible Literally?

Pre-Group Reading Material: Chapter 6 (Pages 95-108)

Questions:

- McLaughlin begins this chapter by asking; “Have you ever had your heart broken?” Why does she ask this question, and what does it have to do with the Bible?
- Can a metaphor be true? Explain. Scripture contains many metaphors. Read the following passages, write down the metaphors used, and describe what they mean.
 - o Song of Songs 5:13 _____
 - o John 15:1 _____
 - o John 10:14 _____
 - o Matthew 23:37 _____
- Does it surprise or concern you that 47% of Pastors in the United States believe “The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally.”? (96) Why or why not?
- What are the dangers of understanding everything in the Bible literally? What are some categories of Biblical literature that should not necessarily be read literally?
- What important distinction does the author make at the bottom of page 97 about the difference between the metaphors we make, and the metaphors God makes?
- In Pastor Will’s recent series, did he generally take a literal or figurative approach to interpreting the book of Revelation? Can you remember any examples of his interpretations? How can we navigate areas where Christians disagree about how literally a passage should be understood?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-14 and consider; would the Apostle Paul have been comfortable with the suggestion that the resurrection of Jesus was metaphorical or spiritual, but not physical or literal? What can we learn from this text that we could apply to other Scriptures?
- Have you encountered someone who was troubled by contradictions in the Bible? Have you been troubled by contradictions in the Bible? What principles does McLaughlin give us that might help us make sense of seemingly contradictory passages in Scripture?
- The chapter concludes with a reflection on the trustworthiness of the gospel accounts of Jesus’s resurrection. If the early followers of Jesus were trying to make up a convincing story about Jesus’s resurrection, what facts might they have changed?
- What does Richard Bauckham say about the gospels’ use of names, and how might this support the reliability of the gospel accounts? (106)
- In your experience, do most of the objections people have about the Bible come from their concerns about its accuracy or their disagreement with what it clearly says? Discuss.

Additional Resource: Peter Williams “Can We Trust the Gospels?” <https://youtu.be/hBLyatge8BM>