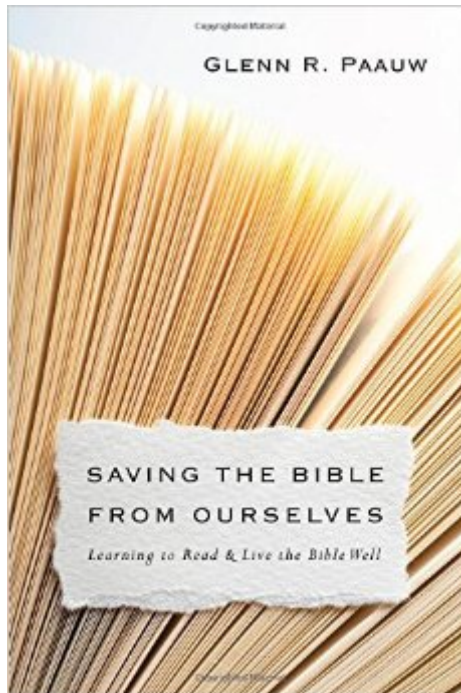


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Saving The Bible From Ourselves: Learning To Read And Live The Bible Well



Synopsis

Does the Bible need to be saved? Over the course of the centuries, Bible scholars and publishers have increasingly added "helps"â•chapter divisions, verses, subheads, notesâ•to the Bible in an effort to make it easier to study and understand. In the process, however, these have led to sampling Scripture rather than reading deeply. According to author Glenn R. Paaauw, the text has become divorced from the Bible's literary and historical context, leading to misinterpretation and a "narrow, individualistic and escapist view of salvation." Rather than being a culture-shaping force, the Bible has become a database of quick and easy answers to life's troubling questions. But these deficiencies can be corrected by engaging in what the author calls "big readings." In these pages Paaauw introduces us to seven new (to us) understandings of the Bible as steps on the path to recovering one deeply engaged Bible. With each "new" Bible presented, deficiencies in how we currently interact with the Bible are explored, followed by recommendations for a new practice. The Bible's transformative power is recovered when we remove the chains Christians have applied to it over the centuries. The Bible does not need to be saved because of any defect in itself, but because we have distorted and misread it. Saving the Bible from Ourselves provides students of the Bible a new paradigm for reading and living the Bible well.

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Customer Reviews

Glenn Paaauw observes that the Bible is not only the best selling book of all time, it is also the best selling book every single year (13). There are Study Bibles with shiny new notes and cross

references; there are patriotic Bibles, 'wilderness' Bible's, and a host of other Bibles for every variety of our Chicken Soup souls. Yet despite the ubiquity of the Bible, there is not a 'deep awareness of the themes, stories and truths of the Bible' (ibid). We tend to read the Bible in increasingly atomistic waysâ "mining the text for timeless truths totally disconnected from biblical history, canon and context. Scripture McNuggetsâ„¢. In *Saving the Bible From Ourselves*, Paauw aims at a recovering a "big reading" of Scripture: My core argument is that for most of us, most of the time, small readings prevail over big readings. "Small" and "big" refer to more than the length of the passage we take in. I define small readings as those diminished samplings of Scripture in which individuals take in fragmentary bits outside of the Bible's literary, historical, and dramatic contexts. Also implicated here is a corresponding meager soteriologyâ "that narrow, individualistic, and escapist's view of salvation so common among Christians. (11). In contrast, big readings result when "communities engage natural segments of text, or whole books, taking full account of the Bible's various contexts" resulting in an "apprehension of the story's goal in a majestic regeneration that is as wide as God's good creation"(12). Paauw aims at moving us beyond our highly individualized consumption of 'Scripture McNuggets,' and welcomes us to the feast of Scripture. Paauw presents his argument in the form of a chiasm (making this book one long chiastic utterance).

This is a thoughtful engaging look at the way we relate to the Bible and how that has changed for the worse over time. It is not a book about how we should "read the bible more" though author Glenn Paauw does encourage that. And it is not a book about how to make the Bible easier and more accessible. If anything it does the exact opposite. This is a book about how we try to make the Bible something that it is not and how that leads to misunderstanding and misapplication. Paauw weaves together a broadly reformed theology, the current discussions about narrative and Christ centered hermeneutics (led by NT Wright) and years of experience in printing Bibles to challenge the way we see our scriptures. Paauw believes that we have created an ugly Bible. Our Bibles are printed in columns with individually numbered verses, chapter headings and notes which break up our reading into little thought units. Such a format flattens out the natural rhythm of a narrative, the meter of a poem or the overall structure of a letter. It does not let the bible be what it is, a collection of books written in different genres to different people in different cultures yet crafted so as to reveal the story of God redeeming the world. Our Bible are collections of verses which we take out of context and treat as stand alone propositions, magic formulas or timeless promises. Thus we misunderstand, misapply and quickly become disillusioned. Beyond that we tend to read very small pieces of the Bible in isolation since the chapters and subject headings encourage that. The answer

to the ugly bible is the elegant Bible free of distractions, notes and verse marking speaking with its original rhythms and narrative structure. Instead of snacking on the Bible we can feast.

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