

Following the Framework

Frameworks are extremely useful and powerful things. In building, they make it possible for structures to be light and graceful yet incredibly strong. Climbing frames enable children to climb quickly and safely, exercising their balance and strength. Garden frames are used to help plants grow to their maximum potential, supporting them and their fruit.

The same thing applies in other areas. Teachers use frameworks to help students grasp ideas. They're a very helpful way for students to see how things fit together, so they can understand the material properly. Companies put frameworks in place to make sure their purchasing and management processes are efficient and risk free. We all need the help that frameworks can give if we are to learn and then apply that learning.

God uses frameworks, for similar reasons. His word is very structured and follows patterns, which mean we can grasp it and respond to it. And His principles of life and death are also very structured, leaving no room for doubt or accidental mistakes. This is all good news for us.

A Structured Book

The Bible looks and feels like a big book, especially when we pick it up for the first time. Yet its structure makes it very accessible and we can view it as a library of books.

The Bible is presented in two parts – the Old and New Testaments – which deal with the time before Jesus (Old) and then the time of his mission and beyond (New). It is made up of 66



books, each of which can be categorised as history, prophecy, poetry, law, or letters.

Each book is broken down into chapters and verses, and the Bible has a 'contents' page to help us navigate the different books, to find the part we are looking for. These sub-divisions are man-made rather than God-given, but they are very helpful!

With this helpful structure, it makes sense to read the Bible in a structured way. If we just start at the beginning and read through, we may well become discouraged and may not find what we are looking for. Starting with the work of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John can be a very good approach.

Then using a Bible reading calendar can help us make progress at our own pace. *Glad Tidings* publishes such a calendar every December, please take a look at past issues on www.gladtidingsmagazine.org to find them. There are others, of course, and you may find one to suit you better; the important thing is to get reading!

Language Structures

One of the amazing things about the Bible is the way it is written. As we read

it, we are struck by how it is harmonious from end to end, despite being written over 1600 years. Not only this, but we find some real ‘gems’ in the structures it uses.

One example is the use of ‘acrostic’ poetry in some places. This means that in the original Hebrew, in which the Old Testament was written, each verse begins with the next letter of the alphabet. Examples are in Lamentations and there are many in the Psalms. You will notice these have multiples of 22 verses, because there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

A wonderful example is Psalm 119, the longest chapter of the Bible. In this Psalm, each set of 8 verses starts with one letter, then the next start with the next, and so on. For example, verses 1–8 each start with ‘aleph’ (the first letter in the alphabet), verses 9–16 each start with ‘beth’ (the second letter) and so on to verses 169–176 which each start with ‘tau’ (the last letter). In fact, many Bibles are laid out to show the Hebrew letter for each section.

In a man-made book, this would quickly become contrived and clumsy, yet Psalm 119 is elegant and poetically beautiful. How appropriate then that its subject is the Word of God!

A Framework for Life

In communicating His plan of salvation, God is equally structured. In *Glad Tidings* we often write about God’s plan, set from the beginning and being unfolded even now, towards the ultimate establishment of His kingdom.

The same applies to His message to each man and woman, which is clear and structured in describing why we need to be saved. We will use just Romans chapter 5 to illustrate this.

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (v8).

Why did Christ have to die to save us? Because we all sin, like Adam did, and so eventually we all die:

Just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (v12).

Jesus was sinless. So if we are associated with his sacrificial death then God can forgive us, count us as sinless, and give us eternal life:

For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous... so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (v19, 21).

So there is the good news: we have the Word of God in a structured form, which makes it easier for us to read and understand it. He has given us a simple framework for life – believe Him, be associated with the sacrifice of Jesus (this is through baptism). God’s framework is strong, elegant and attractive: let’s use it.

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