

## **1 - Introduction**

How do you see the Bible? Do you see it as a collection of disconnected stories? Do you see it as an instruction manual for moral life lessons? Or do you see Jesus as the central character and central to the plot line?

When you read or study the Bible - particularly when you are doing an in-depth study of a passage or book - how do you remind yourself to keep Jesus in view? How do you remember that “every story whispers his name”?

## **2 - Messages**

What do you think about summarizing the message of the Bible with this statement, “Jesus saves”?

How do you respond to the following? “Jesus is at the center of everything. And we know how it ends. It is not about you, but is good news for you. Jesus wins! Jesus’ victory is our victory.”

Does it feel “Meh.” Or, “I’ve heard that before.” Or, “Yes. I know that to be true, but . . . .”

## **3 - Perspectives**

- 1) End Perspective, v1-2 - What do we mean by the end perspective? What does this statement mean to you? “The end of the story is always written in Christ”? What does it mean - or what does it look like - to look at your story from the end perspective? At the end of the day? Tomorrow morning?

“Your story is part of the great tapestry of God’s story.” What is your response to this statement? Does it feel abstract? Irrelevant? Or does it give you assurance? Confidence? Hope?

- 2) Sovereign Perspective, v3-4 - What do you think of Martha and Mary’s message, “Lord, he whom you love is ill”? More specifically, what do you think of its simplicity? Its lack of instruction or a request? Augustine says their message implies, “It is enough that you know. For you are not one that loves and then abandons.”<sup>1</sup>

“It is enough that you know . . . .” Do I have this perspective?

And what is the sovereign perspective? See v4.

What have you found helps you remember the sovereign perspective? Particularly in the midst of hardship, suffering, or uncertainty?

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<sup>1</sup> Elowsky, Joel C., Editor, and Thomas C. Oden, General Editor, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament IVb, John 11-21*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 3

- 3) Comfort Perspective, v5-6 - “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” And this, of course, is true for you. Jesus loves you! “Look at the love in the story. It is the only perspective that makes sense when nothing else makes sense.”

Sometimes we simply have to hold onto - believe - this by faith. This is perhaps why Jesus says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (John 6:29).

And perhaps it is part of why we are in community - to walk with each other, to love and serve each other, to care for each other, to forgive and be forgiven, and to remind each other of who and what is true.

#### **4 - For Further Study and Discussion**

Read Ezekiel 37:1-6. Can you draw parallels between this passage and John 11:1-6?