

Spiritual Reading of Scripture

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ONE OF THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE claims made for the Bible is that it is the word of God. This claim has set Christian against Christian, church against church, Christian against non-Christian. It has spawned countless sects, engendered inquisitions and martyrdoms, and been used to justify the most heinous acts of human depravity. Yet the claim persists, in part because it continues to provide a convenient rationale for defending belief or behavior, but in deeper measure because it expresses a profound and mysterious reality which has transformed numberless women and men across the centuries and made them agents of healing love in a broken world.

How can the same claim result in both trauma and transformation? Brokenness and wholeness? Hurt and healing? Or more importantly, how can we insure that our reading of scripture will open us to the transforming presence of God and not entrench us in the destructive dynamics of our own brokenness? How can scripture become for us the living word of God and not simply dead echoes of our own damaged emotions and unhealed memories? How can scripture become God's shaping of our life for redemptive outreach to a broken world and not an excuse for inflicting our own brokenness upon the world? Such questions provide the context within which we approach the Bible as the word of God.

The answer to such questions is much more than a method or technique we can apply to our reading of scripture. Methods or techniques can readily become structures which formalize and