WHY WE HAVE THE BIBLE WE HAVE

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We have the Bible we have, because God is the God he is.
Category: Observations

I've written a bit about narrative over the past couple of days, and it seemed appropriate to revisit this post, though it is less than a year old.

Although Sue and I are both from the North of England, we met at university in the South-West, in Bath. Looking back at our student days, the main thing I remember is that we would talk, and talk, and talkâ€¦. Sue told me all about her family and showed me photographs of her year living in France as part of her studies. I would talk about my mam and my brothers and the church youth group that I was part of back home. We told each other the story of our lives.

Thatâ€™s what happens when people want to get to know each other, they tell each other their stories. What doesnâ€™t happen is that people sit and tell each other facts about themselves. If you want someone to know *about* you, you give them facts and figures but if you want them to know *you*, you tell them your story.

And this is why we have the Bible we have â€“ a story. God does not want us to know *about* him, if he did, he would have given us a systematic theology. He wants us to *know him* and so he tells us his story. Yes, the Bible does contain the odd list of facts about God, but for the most part it is quite simply Godâ€™s story. Itâ€™s as if God was holding his photo album out to us and saying, â€˜look this is what me and my friend Abraham did when he left his home in Urâ€™, â€˜this is the time when Pharaoh thought heâ€™d got the better of my friend Moses â€“ but I showed him!â€™ And so it goes on, episode after episode as God shows us his character through the way in which he interacts with people â€“ good and bad. And theÂ story reaches a climax when God himself takes on human form and walks on the earth â€“ showing us what he is like in the most profound way possible.

Sometimes we might be more comfortable with a book of theology â€“ it allows us to compartmentalize God, make him tame and predictable. But the God of the Bible is as free as the wind and doesnâ€™t fit in with our expectations at all, he does unpredictable things and makes friends with some very uncomfortable people â€“ he is not a tame lion! And he tells us this story because he wants us to know him and love him as he is in all his glory and power.

Thatâ€™s why weâ€™ve got the Bible â€“ because that is the sort of God we have.

But it goes deeper than that. The Bible is not simply a story; over time it becomes our story. As we draw near to God and come into the sort of relationship he wishes for us we recognize ourselves in the Bible story. The God of Abraham, David and Paul is our God and our experiences mirror theirs as we walk with God too. The Bible is finished, but the story goes on as men and women find its reality working out in their lives.

The Triune, relational God has given us a Bible which is designed to draw us into relationship with him.