

**The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript**  
**Episode 1**  
**Introducing the Bible Unmuted**  
**February 15, 2023**

**Teacher: Matthew Halsted**

**Episode Summary:**

In this episode, Matthew introduces The Bible Unmuted. What can you expect from the podcast in the days ahead? What's the format going to be like? In addition to answering these questions, Matthew also explains why he named the show "The Bible Unmuted." Here's a hint: the name is all about hermeneutics!

If you like this podcast, consider subscribing and sharing with your friends.

+ + +

If you like this podcast, consider becoming a Patreon supporter. You can do so by visiting: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted>

Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast and share it with others!  
[www.matthewhalsted.com](http://www.matthewhalsted.com)

**Transcript:**

0:00 Hey everybody! Welcome to the podcast! My name is Matthew Halsted. Thank you for tuning in. This podcast is all about engaging the bible. While every episode is different, the goal is always the same: learn more about scripture and how to interpret it. So sit back, grab your favorite beverage, and enjoy the show.

0:37 Hey everybody! Welcome to the very first episode of the Bible Unmuted. I'm super excited to get this podcast going. I've been thinking about it for a long time and I'm just excited to finally launch it. I hope its something that's enjoyable to you. I pray that this whole podcast is an encouragement to you, your faith, and I pray it gives you a lot of resources down the road for thinking about scripture, and thinking about your Christian faith. I thought I would spend this first episode talking about what you can expect from the show. Just introducing the show. Like, what's behind the name: The Bible Unmuted? And what's the format going to look like for the show? I also thought we could chat just a little bit about hermeneutics, which is my field. It's the area that I've spent the most amount of my time researching throughout the years. And, in fact, my little talk today on hermeneutics actually stems from the reason I call this show The Bible Unmuted. So, there is a story behind the name, in other words. We will get to that in a moment.

I think the first thing I want to talk about though is the format of the show moving forward. What can you expect from the show? Well, the show is... first I should say, it's not going to be...well, let me just back up and say this...I don't have a lot of time to produce a fantastic show. In other words, I don't have a lot of time to go back and edit the audio to be pristine. I wish I had the time to do that...it sounds like a lot of fun. I'm a perfectionist by nature, so that's something I want to do, but in fact, I am finite. I only have some many hours in my day, and so I'm just basically not going to be able to edit out my dog barking in the background or even find time where there is no dog in the background, (chuckles), right? There will probably be interruptions. You're gonna hear, maybe my kids walk into the office...well, it's just going to be very informal. And in a way, I love that! In more ways than one, in fact, because I want this podcast to be chill. I want it to be inviting. I want it to be...just relaxed. I don't want it to be...well, as a perfectionist, I like all my ducks in a row. I like everything to be in order. I like things to be predictable, and yada, yada,

yada. But you know what? I'm just releasing all that. I'm not going to mess with it...I'm just going to have fun with this and share some thoughts as I get them, and regularly post a podcast episode no matter how imperfect it's going to be. I promise you it will be imperfect. So, I'm not spending my time writing scripts...I probably will sometimes, but you know, a lot of it will be off the cuff and the result of some scribbles of notes that I've made throughout the week. So, anyway, we'll see how it goes. Again, I apologize from the get go. It's just going to be a pretty simple show.

Okay, but in terms of format, what can you expect? I plan to do a lot of biblical commentary. So, don't be surprised if we find a book of the Bible, or a passage in scripture, or some theological/biblical topic that we just take deep dive through. And, everything's on the table. We can look at all sorts of topics and go through them together. We can do an extended series on one topic. We can do some one and done episodes...whatever. You can expect a lot of that...a lot of commentary, obviously focused in some way or another on the Bible...because it's called The Bible Unmuted. It's a Bible podcast. Everything we talk about will go back to scripture in some way. So, yeah – biblical content is the first thing.

The second thing is interviews... I want to do interviews with scholars and authors that I think would be great resources for you. And in fact, I just recorded an amazingly fun interview with a great scholar on a fantastic topic. I can't wait to share that. That'll be released in – it's an hour long episode – probably, I would say episode 3, maybe? I don't know, we'll see. Maybe the next episode... I don't know. Maybe we'll just flip a coin and see what happens. It's a fascinating chat with a NT scholar that I think you will enjoy. So you can expect things like that. Interviews, dialogs with folks and so forth.

5:24 And I would say the third thing would be that I just want to do a lot of episodes of Q&A. I want to interact with you. I want you to pitch me some ideas. And maybe you have questions you would like to investigate or topics you would like search further...let's do it! Let's do it on this show. I'm looking forward to that.

On that note, you can always email me. You can go to my website, and there is a contact form you can email me. It goes straight to me. I try to be as quick as I can in responding. But, please, please do that. Send me your questions for the show. My website by the way is pretty simple. It's just my name, MatthewHalsted.com. I want to hear from you. I want to field some questions. I want to do some episode for Q&A. We might mix it up, and do maybe half the episode with biblical content and half just fielding some questions. I don't know...we might do total episode to nothing but Q&A. And so I am really excited about that. I think that'll be a lot of fun and I hope you enjoy it as well.

I want to talk a little bit about the name. Where did I get this idea for this name "The Bible Unmuted"? Well, in a couple of my books – the Paul book, *"Paul and the Meaning of Scripture"*, that was released August 2022; and then my new book, which actually won't be released until 2024 - that book is on eschatology... It's a popular level book on eschatology. I'm super stoked about it – I think it will be... well, I just had a lot of fun writing it. So, anyway, my point is, in those two books, I make this comment about how we as modern readers, need to be careful not to mute scripture. We need to be careful about not muting the voice of the bible. What do I mean by that? This opens up a whole can of hermeneutic worms. Let's just, I don't know, let's just open it up a bit and explore. How can a person mute the voice of scripture? How can you mute a voice of scripture? Well, there are these two different ways. The first way is when you read scripture, you impose upon your modern assumptions that are foreign to scripture. And you impose those assumptions upon scripture in a unilateral way. Meaning, you are only reading out scripture what you put into scripture. In a sense this happens all the time when you just take a modern, western American Christian (I'm an American so I'll pick on us)... A modern, American Christian might read certain scriptural texts from a modern, western enlightenment sort of way, and in doing that they flood the text with modern assumptions. I mean we kind of do this...well, a lot of people do this in our reading of Genesis 1. Because we live in a scientific age – an age of reason, an age of science, we have this tendency (whether we realize it or not), we have this tendency to interpret the first creation story of Genesis 1 in sort of a scientific way where we are looking for it to teach us science. It's just an assumption, like oh...this is teaching us about the material beginnings of the universe. Like this is teaching us about

the “how” of creation. How did God create? But that’s a very scientific question to ask. In our post-science world, or in a scientific age, we are trained to think about the “how”. We are trained to think about the mechanics of how things came to be and how things work. There’s nothing wrong with that – I love science, by the way - but when it comes to reading a text like Genesis 1, we have to come back just question that assumption. Should we be asking the “how” question. In other words, why assume that Genesis 1 is giving us an answer of “how”. Is it giving us a story about how the universe came to be? *Well*, arguably *no*. Many biblical scholars are saying “*No!*” It was never intended to be a scientific text.

10:26 Now it does use the science of its day to explain things, to explain and make certain points. But that’s a different thing than to suggest it’s teaching us science. It seems to me that Genesis 1 is more about the “who” (laughs). *Who* started everything? *Who* is sovereign? *Who* created? It’s not so much the *how* He created, its establishing the *who*. And of course, it’s the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It’s Israel’s God. He is not a tribal deity. He is the universal deity. He is *the* Creator of everything. And I think it’s answering those questions. We can talk more about this later, of course. I don’t want to go into the rabbit trail of biblical scholarship on Genesis 1. But it’s just an example of sometimes how we come to the text with assumptions that we have not even evaluated. I mean, even if you think Genesis 1 is teaching the *how* of creation, have you ever stopped to think that is just an assumption that you brought to the table none the less? It might be a right assumption, but it’s still an assumption you are bringing to that text. Because nowhere in that text does it say, ‘Okay guys...In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and here is the science of it all.’ It doesn’t say that. It doesn’t use that language. We kind of have to supply that in our assumptions. So my point is this; be aware of your assumptions. And sometimes your assumptions that you bring to the biblical text; they can flood it and overwhelm it to the point that the only thing you’re going to read out of that text is what you put into it. If you assume from the outset that Genesis 1 is a scientific text, you will find reasons to think it is teaching you science. Because you’ve put in an assumption that will reward you with an answer. All that does is mute the text. We want to be careful about the assumptions we bring to the text. We want to question our assumptions. Maybe it turns out that our assumptions *are* correct. Maybe it turns out they are not. Either way, question your assumptions. And by putting your assumptions to the test; by raising your awareness about the fact that you even have assumptions; that gives space for scripture to test your assumptions. That gives space for scripture to speak back. And you’re no longer muting the text. You mute the text, you silence the voice of scripture when you impose upon it unilaterally your own assumptions. I’m sure this raises a lot of questions. This will be something we talk about down the road. That’s one way we mute the text of scripture.

Okay what’s the second way? There is a second way, there is another way that we can mute scripture. And it’s actually by doing the opposite. We mute the text of scripture every time we treat scripture as if it’s this dead, lifeless artifact of antiquity. The artefactual view of scripture is not a good one. Or, it just treats it as if it’s something that belongs on the shelf in a museum. Like it’s this interesting, but very dead piece of literature. But as Christians, we believe that the scripture is actually God’s voice to us. That it’s God’s word to us. So if you treat scripture as if it can be objectified, if you treat scripture as if it is just merely some sort of artifact; then don’t be surprised if you’re not really getting the full sense and voice of scripture. You won’t be, in fact. Because it’s a dead text at this point. It’s just an artifact that is only good for looking at and analyzing. But quite frankly, as Christians, we believe that scripture should analyze us. It should speak into our lives. It should reveal to us God’s will and purposes for our lives. So there is a sense in which reading scripture from the angle of faith and from the angle of devotion and worship and prayer, that is a way in which scripture’s voice speaks into our lives for the modern world. So by being aware of our modern world and the questions of our modern age, we allow scripture to speak into those realities.

15:30 So just to recap; we mute scripture by overwhelming it with our modern day assumptions to the point that we only read out of it what have put into it. And we also mute the text of scripture when we treat scripture as if it this dead artifact that cannot and dare not speak into the assumptions of our modern world. So there’s sort of this delicate balance, this delicate dance between being aware of our modern day

assumptions and letting scripture speak into them; and on the other hand, not taking our modern day assumptions and just imposing them on scripture uncritically. My point is, it all comes down to your modern day assumptions. How do you handle them? Do you allow them to come into contact with scripture? You *should*, because scripture needs to speak to your modern day questions. But, you need to do it in such a way – very delicately – so that you don't impose your modern day assumptions upon scripture. Okay, I think you get my point here. Again, there is so much more to say about this. I mean, I wrote a whole book on this. And it's not a short book (laughs), so I can't hope to talk about every nook and cranny on this issue. But maybe, it's at least a conversation starter.

Okay about that word conversation. That really captures it, does it not? See, I think reading scripture and interpreting scripture is like a conversation. Here's what I mean by that. You read scripture by coming to it with questions. It could be questions about your modern world, questions about modern ethical questions, or whatever it may be...you come to scripture with questions. And you let scripture answer those questions. Scripture can supply answers to your questions. You need to be asking the right questions, of course, but you get the point. You bring questions to scripture, scripture answers those questions. But you also need to let scripture not just supply you with answers, but it also needs to be given room to ask you questions. It needs to analyze you. It needs to ask you probing questions about your life. And then *you* supply it with answers. And they need to be the right answers. So really, interpretation is like a dialogue – a back and forth conversation where both dialogue partners ask questions and give answers. And it's in that dialogue, that we call interpretation. That's how interpretation happens. That's how understanding happens. If you have a friend who, say, never allows you to have a word in the conversation, that could be, (laughs), that could be a lot of things...but it's overwhelming, right? And if one person in the conversation isn't allowed to talk, you'll never reach an understanding with one another. The only thing that's going to happen is that one side gets spoken, and the other side is muted or is silenced. So a good conversation, a healthy conversation, like a healthy relationship; it involves two dialogue partners. It involves two people who are willing to not only speak, but to listen.

19:02 So my goal of this podcast is to help us to think very critically, carefully that is, very carefully, about reading scripture and exploring topics. How do we interpret scripture? How do we interpret issues? How do we interpret anything? Life is interpretation. You are interpreting this podcast. What I am saying, you are interpreting. And you interpret based upon prior assumptions that you've brought to the conversation. But, that whole idea of interpretation is best captured in terms of dialogue. So, hey! I want to hear from you. Give me your questions, right?! And then lets dialogue back and forth on this podcast. That's why I think it's so important in this podcast to have that Q&A component. That's very deliberate. I want to have Q&A episodes. And I want to bring in scholars where I dialogue back and forth with them and you can listen to that conversation. And hopefully, we reach new horizons of understanding in that process and we continue to grow. That's the thing, right? We have to understand that we always have something to learn. There's always something to learn. We are not infinite in our wisdom or knowledge. We are still learning. We are still growing. Ask any teacher – the best way to learn something, the best way to grow in knowledge, is to ask questions.

So, why do I call this podcast The Bible Unmuted? Well, now you know (laughs). So I hope that gives you a taste, a little bit about my perspective. I hope you also feel invited to chime in. Send me some emails, and I will do my best to incorporate your questions in the show in the days ahead. I've got the first several episode already plotted and planned out, recorded even. I think most of them that I have are already finished, or almost finished. So I look forward to dropping those soon. My goal is - please do not hold me to this – but my goal is to drop an episode every week. That might fluctuate. I might drop two episodes in a week. Maybe depending on if the timing is right, or if the timing is important. I might at times only be able to drop one episode every two weeks, or something like that. But I'm hoping that those are exceptions and that we can have these episodes very regularly. Okay guys, well thank you so very much for hanging out with me today. And I pray this episode was encouraging to you. I pray that it generated questions in your mind and gets you thinking deeper about the bible. And I also pray that not just this

episode, but all of the episodes down the road will be an encouragement to you, an encouragement to your faith...that you get closer to God as a result of participating in listening to this podcast.

27:18 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.