

WHY GOD GAVE US A BOOK

by Gene Edward Veith

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Does God still speak to us today? If so, how does He do it? (5-10)

God has always communicated. He communicated with Himself when there was only the Trinity; He communicated when He spoke matter into existence; and He still communicates today. See what responses the group has, but try not to allow too many stories about how God might have “spoken” to any individuals in the group. The point of this booklet is that God literally speaks to us – in words, with human language, one person addressing another – **through the Bible, His Word.**

2. What was the #1 reason God gave us the Bible? (10-13)

See what answer the group had, but the main reason was so we could know Him! Only when we start to understand Who God is can we truly understand our world. We must first understand the God of Genesis 1 before we can understand why Genesis 3 shows sin as so heinous in His sight. God created us out of the overflow of His love (not because He needed us – as He needs nothing but Himself, the Trinity). When you have a relationship with someone, especially someone you love, you reveal yourself and talk together.

3. In what sense do we meet God in the Bible? (13-16)

Rom. 1 tells us that we can know certain things about God through nature. But, only in the Bible do we get a chance to know God personally. God reveals Himself and also reveals where we stand with Him – our sinfulness and what He has done to rescue us from our sinfulness by His grace through Christ. This makes Him a personal God Who wants to have a relationship with His creation.

4. What do we mean when we talk about “God’s Law,” or the “Law of God?” (16-20)

You should get some interesting answers from the group on this question. Try to help them understand God is presented to us not as the “law maker” but as the “Law Giver.” He did not make up laws as He went along. The Law is the representation of the character of God. This means it is personal to Him. When we sin, we personally offend God. Understanding this makes all the difference when we try to explain sin to someone we are evangelizing who has no concept of what sin really is.

5. Read Habakkuk 1:13a, Matthew 5:48, and Romans 6:23. What hope can there be for us? (20-22)

Take the group through the gospel message. Make sure they know it, believe it, and can articulate it. This is too important a section to skip over. Remember, there are many who sit in church for years before the Holy Spirit opens them up to receive Him.

6. How important is the Bible? Why? How important is it to you? Why? (22-24)

This is a critical question that each member of the group must answer, either aloud or to themselves. Their answer will determine their Bible reading habits, and consequently their relationship with God. A lot of Christians recognize the authority of the Bible, but they then treat it as a reference book! Help instill in your group the sense that the Bible is something we should look forward to reading as a personal encounter with God but it is also where we are repeatedly convicted of our sins and continually renewed in the Gospel, a process that builds our faith and our sanctification.

7. What about all the errors in the Bible? (28-31)

This question is raised many times by non-Christians. The interesting part is, they can never seem to produce one. There are parts of the Bible which we do not understand, but we don't say the Bible is wrong; it is our lack of knowledge which is at fault. We claim this because we start with God. God is perfect and cannot produce a document containing errors. Only a Creator is capable of producing a document without error through a fallible human. Seeming inconsistencies point to the human quality of the Scriptures, but fixating on them misses the point of how God reveals Himself to us by means of this book.

8. Who should be allowed to interpret Scripture? (31-34)

No one individual has the right to claim to be the sole interpreter of the Bible. This privilege belongs to Christ's church (the whole church, not just a local church). God has given different gifts, such as teaching, but even these teachers must be subject to something. The *only* supreme interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. The reason we also depend on human teachers is so we can learn from each other the things God has made clear in the past. Therefore, if anyone claims to have found something *new* in the Bible, we all need to stand back and see if it is truly what the Bible teaches. In most cases it doesn't. Besides, the Bible is not just something to interpret, as if it were a set of unintelligible data. Most of it is clear enough!

9. The Bible was completed 2000 years ago. Should we not expect God to give us more? (34-39)

The answers you get to this might prove very interesting. To answer this, you will need to steer them to understanding that only God could give us the kind of Book that would have contained in it everything we would need for faith and life. Nothing more is needed.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

For the Group

Evaluate how much time your group spends just reading the Bible. Many groups spend a great deal of time studying the details of the Bible, but not enough time just reading it and letting it speak for itself.

For the Members of the Group

Dr. Veith gives a number of good ideas for improving your Bible reading with a small commitment of time. (39-43) You might find it helpful to get a copy of the *One Year Bible*, which is available in most translations. Commit yourself, right now, to develop the habit of communing with God every day in His Word.

For Further Study

What is the Bible? Basics of the Faith Series, Guy Prentiss Waters. P&R, 2013.

A Book Like No Other: What's So Special About the Bible? Carol Ruvolo. P&R, 2009.

The Story: The Bible's Grand Narrative of Redemption, Jon Nielson. P&R 2014.

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