

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

by Guy Prentiss Waters

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. What difference does it make how we view the Bible as compared to other books? (5-7)
If we see the Bible as just another book, religious or secular, we will cast it aside as unimportant. If we believe the Bible to be the actual words of God that He has for us, we will pick it up and read it. If we believe it is the most important book in all the world, then we will invest our time in learning all we can from it.
2. List some of the reasons God gave us the Bible. After you have your list, try ranking them in order of importance. (5-7)
You will probably get a list of reasons such as, to show us the way of salvation, or to show us how to live. However, the most important one to emphasize to your group is this: the Bible is God’s way of letting us know Who He is. It is a revelation of Himself. This is no small matter! The Bible is not primarily about us, it is about God. This is the only way we get to know Him intimately and personally.
3. Keeping in mind we are talking about the Bible, how would you define the word “revelation?” (8-13)
Go over, carefully, the distinction between general/natural revelation, which clearly tells all men there is a God, and special revelation, which tells us how we might come to know this God intimately and personally. It also lets us know why we are separated from God by sin.
4. Among Paul’s last words to us in 2 Timothy 3:15, he tells us, “All Scripture is inspired by God.” What does he mean by “inspired?” (13-18)
In going over this verse, also take the group to Peter’s last words in 2 Peter 1:19-20. Help them understand God’s working in and through each Bible writer to communicate every work and idea He wanted us to know and understand. Take them through John 14:26 and 16:12-15 so they can see it is the Holy Spirit Who is the member of the Trinity Who actually moved the mind and hand of each writer so he wrote exactly what God wanted to say.
5. The church teaches the Bible is inerrant. What does that mean? (19-25)
*The answer to this lies in two spheres. The first takes us back to what we know about God – He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). If God is that desirous of getting His thoughts through to sinful men, then He is going to make sure it is without error. If there is even one error, then we would never be sure what part of Scripture we can trust.
The other sphere is the perception of men. Our minds are limited and never fully capable of understanding the mind of God. To understand God, we need the working of the Holy Spirit. He is the One*

tasked with giving us the ability to understand the mind of God. (Have someone read 1 Cor.10-16.) Therefore, we approach the Bible in a very different way than does the non-Christian, who does not have the Holy Spirit. When we read a difficult passage in the Bible we do not conclude it is a mistake; we conclude we do not yet have a correct understanding to the passage. So, we keep working on it, knowing the difficulty we are having with the passage lies with us and not the Bible.

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

Hopefully now, if not before, you understand the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to us so we might know Him and what He expects from us. The church in America today has a very low view of Scripture and many, if not most, Christians don't know much of the Bible. The world, your flesh, and the devil are constantly at work to keep you from reading God's Word. It is up to you to make a decision. Do you really believe this is the most important book ever written? If so, how much time are you spending getting to know it? Make a plan, right now, to change that. If you are not in the habit of reading the Bible at all, then make a decision, asking the Holy Spirit to enable you to keep your promise (knowing the enemy will always be working to stop you) to read and think through just **one chapter** of the Bible each day. That is not an impossible start, is it? If you don't know where to start, begin with the Gospel of Luke, for Luke reveals Jesus to us. The goal of the Christian life is for us to be like Him, so we need to get to know Him. Write down everything Luke teaches about Jesus and what He tells us to do, and then prayerfully work on ways you can begin to do it.

For Further Study

Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine, R.C. Sproul. P&R, 2013.

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

Did God Really Say? Affirming the Truthfulness and Trustworthiness of Scripture, David Garner, ed. P&R, 2012.

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