

What is The Bible?

Authority

Inspiration

Revelation

Part I

Authority

Overview

The Bible is the AIR we breathe, yet many Christians struggle to understand it and to know how best to apply it. This session helps a small group leader facilitate a discussion about the authority of scripture, enabling the group to handle it well and apply it positively.

Objectives

The aims of this session are to

- Appreciate how Christians have interpreted scripture very differently over time and hence why liberals differ from evangelicals in their approach to it.
- Understand why and in what ways the Bible is authoritative.
- Inspire us to allow the authority of the Bible to be worked out in our lives in the most fruitful way.

Question Led Discussion

In what ways had the Bible been used negatively in our history and culture?

- To back up slavery and apartheid.
- To condemn Copernicus and Galileo.
- To mistreat women and keep them subservient to men.
- To allow us to mistreat Homosexuals.

Why do you think that is?

- Blinded by greed and pride, we *used* the Bible to back up our actions.
- Fear of not taking the Bible seriously enough. If we don't insist the world was created in 6 24-hour days, what other scriptures might we 'ignore'?
- Misunderstanding what the Bible is for; it's not interested in our scientific outlook, as that does not affect the way we treat one another. It cares deeply that we should know all men and women were created in the image of God so that we honour one another. Likewise the Bible is not concerned with the way we choose to structure our society; all kings, servants, governments, etc are secondary to living well.
- Misreading scripture through ignoring context. So we could happily quote "I do not permit a woman to have authority over a man", but ignore the trend of scripture to honour women as co-heirs and rulers alongside men. Jesus had female disciples whom He encouraged to learn which was outrageous in His day. This process continued with Paul and the early church appointing female apostles like Junia (Romans 16:7).

In what areas does the Bible have authority?

- In our understanding of God and His mission.
- In helping us recognize, hear and trust the *voice* of God.
- In helping us *see* ourselves and each other.
- In shaping us to live well, that is, to live in line with what God is seeking to do on the earth.

Materials

These books and blogs may prove helpful

- 📖 Surprised by Scripture by Tom Wright
- 📖 Scripture and The Authority of God by Tom Wright
- 📖 What is the Bible? by Rob Bell
<http://robrellcom.tumblr.com>

Application

Notice that we didn't say the Bible gave us authority to tell others what to do. We only control ourselves, not others. On the contrary, Jesus told us not to resist evil people forcefully (Matthew 5:38-48) and Paul encourages us, as Christ's representatives, to *beg* people to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20).

In what ways has the Bible shaped your life?

- 📖 Get the group to give personal testimonies.

In what ways is God challenging you through the Bible today?

- 📖 Be prepared to be vulnerable yourself

If folk need challenging again, read Matthew 5-7 or Romans 12 together and allow the Spirit to speak.