

THE BIBLE – WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?

Instructions for Leaders in **RED**.

Leader's Notes: *In preparation for this lesson you may want to read the excerpts given regarding studying the Bible. The Leader's notes can be found at the end of this lesson. They are included to stoke your interest and passion for the lesson you are teaching, not so much to provide material you will use.*

Lesson Outcomes:

- 1) Students will understand that as God's Word the Bible can be used to learn about God and how we can relate to him.
- 2) Students will understand that the Bible is living and active.

OPENER:

Give students handout for this study and have them silently fill out the opening question(s). Give them a couple minutes for this, once it seems like most of them are done, move on to discussion.

ASK: So let's talk a little bit about the questions you just answered, what are you an expert in?

What is something on which you would be able to give detailed "how-to" instructions?

What other experts do you know? What are they experts in?

ASK: What makes someone an expert, and therefore worth listening to?

INTRODUCTION:

This is our third week talking about the Bible, and so far we have discovered that the Bible is God's Word: his book to tell the world about himself.

So God has decided to tell the world about himself, and he uses some people to write down the story of what he has done and is doing in the world throughout History. And in this story about himself [hold up or point to your Bible] we find out that there is some stuff for us in here as well.

So the question we want to ask to tonight is, what do we do with this book? Or maybe, how are we supposed to use it?

Before we get to our text, I want to remind us of something we talked about the very first week. We mentioned this thing called the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and specifically the first couple of questions. They ask, *what is the chief end of man?*

ASK: Do you remember the answer? **It's okay if they don't.** Ans: **To glorify God and enjoy him forever.**

Alright, just keep that in mind when we study our text, because it helps explain some of what we are going to talk about.

READ:

TURN in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3 and **READ** verses 16 and 17..

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

ASK: So Paul lists four things that the Scriptures help us to do. What are they? [teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness].

Let's break each of these down. [At this point, work through each of these words and what it means for the Bible to be useful for these. Try to get them to think through how the Bible does this, and point back to the idea of expertise. Just as an expert in cooking could teach, rebuke, correct and train someone to cook better, so the Bible can do all of these things for us.]

ASK: What does it mean that the Scripture is *useful for teaching*? What (or who) does it teach us about?

- What does it mean to rebuke? How do the Scriptures rebuke us?
- Correcting? (How is this different than *rebuking*?)
- Training in Righteousness?

Paul seems to then sum it up in verse 17. **Have someone read it, then ASK:** What does that mean?

He says that all these things "equip us for every good work."

If we were to use the language of the Westminster Catechism, Paul is essentially saying, "*Scripture is useful for all these things so that we can know how to glorify God and truly enjoy Him!*" Cool, huh?

If we think about the fact that the Bible is God's book to tell the world about Himself, then of course it is the place we should turn when it comes to learning about him, and how we can glorify and enjoy him. *Who else would be a better expert on God, than God himself?!?*

This is why the Bible is so central to the Christian life. This is why the Bible is so central to our Youth Group. **And this is why the Bible will be so central to our Small Group over the next several years.** It is the rule, the expert guide, by which we will evaluate everything we talk about. We will be looking at the Word to help determine what God would have for us.

THE LIVING WORD:

Last time we mentioned that there was a fancy greek word in this verse. **ASK:** Do you remember what it was, or more importantly what it means? *Theopneustos: God-breathed.*

Okay, this is really cool. **ASK:** Can anyone think of another time in the Bible, when God breathed? [See what they say. They may mention Adam in Genesis, or Ezek 37 with the valley of the dry bones].

TURN to Genesis 2:7. Somebody read it.

⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Starting with Adam, all throughout Scripture we see allusions to the fact that we are alive because God put his breath in us.

Job 33:4 says, *The Spirit of God has made me; the **breath** of the Almighty gives me life.*

Isaiah 42:5 says, *This is what God the LORD says— he who ... created the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives **breath** to its people, and life to those who walk on it.*

ASK: If God breathed into Adam and he came alive, what does it mean then that Scripture is “God-breathed”? [See where they go with this. We want them to wrestle with the fact that the Bible is *alive*.]

The Bible is unlike any other book we have on this planet. Not only is it the expert source on who God is and how we can better glorify and enjoy him, but the Bible itself is *alive*, it is God-breathed. It not only tells us how to enjoy God, but we can enjoy God through it! Because it is alive.

When we go to the Bible, we are not sitting down to read a novel, we go to meet with God. It is his Word; and His breath – His Spirit – speaks to us through it.

What does this mean? Well the Bible, then, is not *primarily* a cookbook with a perfect recipe for a tasty life. The Bible is not *primarily* an instruction manual that tells you how to assemble all the pieces of life to make it work the best. The Bible is not *primarily* an entertaining piece of literature, or *primarily* a set of fables that we read and then figure out how we can be more like the people in the story. It is entertaining, we can learn to be like people, it does give us instructions, but those are not its primary purpose.

The Bible is the Word of God. When we read it, we are reading God’s living Word for us.

REFLECTION:

Have them work on the Reflection Time on their handouts. Give them about 5 minutes to complete this (or until they are all done).

What would you do if you were holding a doll and all of a sudden it came alive? It would startle you, right?!? Or imagine you had a toy animal, and suddenly it became a real life, living, breathing, moving thing. We would be surprised. Why? What is the difference between something that is alive and something that is not?

READ Hebrews 4:12. *Think about what it says: the Word is living and active. How should this change the way we think about and the way we read and treat Scripture?*

In Genesis, God breathed into Adam and he went from being dead mud to being alive! We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that God also breathed Scripture, and Hebrews says that the Word is alive! Take some time to journal or write a prayer to God about His Word. Ask Him to teach, rebuke, train, surprise, encourage you through his living Word, and to help you grow to expect its living power to speak to you when you read it.

PRAY

When everyone is done, lead a time of prayer and ask God to open his word to you, that when you read the Bible you would experience *the living power* of his Word speaking to you, and that your lives would be shaped by what it says!

LEADERS' NOTES:

From "Spirit of Disciplines" by Dallas Willard

In the spiritual discipline of study we engage ourselves, above all, with the written and spoken Word of God... As solitude is the primary discipline of abstinence for the early part of our spiritual life, so study is the primary discipline of engagement.

Our early experience may be so full that we neglect study. But relationship with God, as with any person, soon requires a contribution from us, which will largely consist of study. Calvin Miller well remarks: 'Mystics without study are only spiritual romantics who want relationship without effort.'

In study we also strive to see the Word of God at work in the lives of others, in the church, in history, and in nature. We not only read and hear and inquire, but we meditate on what comes before us; that is, we withdraw into silence where we prayerfully and steadily focus upon it. In this way its meaning for us can emerge and form us as God work in the depths of our heart, mind, and soul. We devote long periods of time to this. Our prayer as we study meditatively is always that God would meet with us and speak specifically to us, for ultimately the Word of God is God speaking.

From "When I don't desire God" by John Piper

I would stress the importance of planning. I don't mean any elaborate, lifelong vision. I mean something as simple as, when you finish this chapter, take three minutes to ask for God's help, and to consider your schedule, and to pick out a time to read your Bible, and then write it down somewhere so that you remember to do it. Many good things do not happen in our lives for the simple lack of planning.

Consultants get paid thousands of dollars to tell executives the obvious because the obvious is neglected. It's the same with all of us. We fail to do what's best for us for lack of serious intention to it. Another name for serious intention is planning. Most Christians neglect their Bibles not out of conscious disloyalty to Jesus, but because of failure to plan a time and method to read it.

The result is not spontaneity, but the same old rut. If your longing is to be spontaneous in the way you commune with God, then build discipline into your Bible reading and prayer. It sounds paradoxical. But it's no more so than the paradox of corn growing in a Minnesota field because of the farmer's discipline of plowing and sowing and guarding the field. He doesn't make the corn grow. God does. But God uses his farming disciplines as part of the process. The rich fruit of spontaneity grows in the garden that is well tended by the discipline of schedule.

So I say again, plan a place and a time when you will read the Bible and think about it each day. There can always be more times during the day. There should be. But let there be one sacred time and place. Put it on your calendar. Treat it the same way you would an appointment with a partner or friend. If someone asks you to do something during that time, say, "I'm sorry, I already have an appointment then."

From "Doctrine" by Gerry Breshears and Mark Driscoll

God speaks to us through the Scriptures as a perfectly loving Father. Subsequently, we listen to what Scripture says, learn what it teaches, and make every effort by the Holy Spirit's empowering grace to repent of our sin, renew our minds, and redeem our lives.

Christians worship God, not the Bible. But the Bible informs us of who God is and how he is to be worshipped and is therefore essential to our worship. As a result, we come to the Bible for transformation, not just for information. As the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures illuminates our understanding, we deeply enjoy our new life guided by our new wisdom of Scripture and our new power from the Holy Spirit, delighting in our new gift of repentance as part of God's kingdom people together on mission in the world for Jesus.

In summary, we agree with Luther, who affirmed, "When the Scripture speaks, God speaks." Because Scripture is God speaking to us, we memorize, meditate, study, teach, and share his truth. Everything in life and ministry is guided by the truth of Scripture. Everything good is a result of the truth of biblical revelation being used by God the Holy Spirit to change our lives so we look more like Jesus both individually as Christians and corporately as the church.

From "Lectures to My Students" by Charles Spurgeon

It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord, so that your blood is Bibline and the very essence of the Bible flows from you.