



Leader's Note

John Wimber on the Bible...

If the Bible is Gods Word and he uses it to point us towards Christ - it is the words of Christ - the most fundamental reason for reading the Bible is to maintain and refresh our relationship with God. Back in the fourth century a famous church leader named Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance to Christ." But lets face it; many Christians find it difficult to read the Bible. Two attitudes towards Scripture inhibit many Christians from allowing the Bible to have its full authority in their lives. The first is the "leave it to the experts" mentality, where people abdicate personal responsibility for knowing God in Scripture. Modern Theologians and pastors have unwittingly contributed to this problem. Armed with the latest discoveries in linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology and history, they leave most laypeople with the impression that interpreting the Bible is far too complex an operation for the ordinary person. In many instances Christians use the Bible to shield themselves from authority in their lives, especially from pastors and more mature Christians. But the Bible teaches that we are an interdependent people, and the wisdom and understanding of pastoral leaders with vital elements of the Christian life. This abuse of Scripture by some discourages others from ever starting to read it. Pastors and theologians have much to offer for understanding Scripture. But they cannot stand in the way of our freely reading and submitting to Scripture. This doesn't require much expertise as some people think. We gain much benefit from Scripture without being scholars, especially when we keep in mind the goal of our faith:

Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior.

- Read to learn from God
- Read to obey God
- Read to share with others

Learning Session

How well do we know our Bible? The answer for most folk in your group will probably be: 'Not nearly enough!'

Have a bit of fun by starting with a quiz (can be done individually or in groups). I have made some difficult just to reinforce the above point.

1. How many books are there in the Bible?
2. What is the split between NT and OT?
3. What were names of Moses' brother and sister, the ones who helped him?
4. Read Leviticus 19:27-28, Why do only observe one out of these three rules?
5. What sacrifice did God ask of Hosea, why?
6. Who replaced Judas Iscariot as the 12th apostle?
7. Who wrote the book of Acts?
8. What gentile family was the first to receive the Holy Spirit?
9. Where was Caesarea?
10. What is the Pentateuch?
11. In the temple worship in the OT how often did the High Priest enter the Most Holy Place (the inner sanctuary)?
12. Why did they tie a rope around his foot/leg?

Answers

1. 66
2. 27 and 29 respectively
3. Aaron and Miriam
4. These laws were designed to insure that the Israelites remained holy to the Lord (i.e. separated from the pagan practises around them). All three of these acts were used as ways of worshipping other Gods. If the Israelites did these things they would be in effect worshipping other gods. We are now under a different covenant, our holiness is marked by our allegiance to Jesus, so understanding this passage means that we do not worship the gods of this society, i.e. money and personal convenience being above all else. We still, however, do not cut our bodies for the dead because they are God's sole responsibility and because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 6:19) and thus should not be abused.
5. He asked him to marry a prostitute/promiscuous woman to represent God's relationship with Israel.
6. Matthias (Acts 1), some may say Paul, but he is widely recognized as a 13th apostle anointed by God to take the Gospel to the gentiles.
7. Luke, also the author of The Gospel According to Luke.
8. Cornelius', he was Captain of the Italian Regiment at Caesarea.
9. On the Coast, it was an important port about 50 miles north west of Jerusalem.
10. Pentateuch is the name given to the first 5 Books of the Bible. When you read references to the 'Law' in other parts of the Bible, this is generally a reference to the Pentateuch.
11. Once a year.
12. Just in case he went into God's presence with un-repent sin or did not prepare as he was told and was struck down.

How did everyone do? Encourage folk not to be discouraged, but rather to be challenged to want to discover more about the word.

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Discuss the following questions (in groups if you like):

- What are the pitfalls of not knowing what our Bible says?
- How often do you struggle in your faith because of your lack of understanding of God's word?
- What sort of things can you do to get to know the Bible better?

Guide the feedback making sure that points such as, knowing your bible:

- so that you can give an answer for your actions,
- so that you are not led astray by heresy,
- so that you are not led astray by your own perceptions and self-image,
- so that you understand God's character
- so that you are able to test what you see and hear in Christendom in general.

Spend a little time discussing with folk things that help us to understand our bibles (hopefully most folk in your group will have some sort of aid). I would suggest that everyone considers looking at 'How to Read the Bible for all its Worth' by Fee & Stuart. This is one of those books that will equip people to better understand the word and work out answers to questions such as no 4 by themselves.

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