



## **Why read the Bible?**

### **Leaders version**

#### **For a one hour study, just do the starred \* questions**

**Check in** – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

#### **1. STICKERS** Why do you think Christians read the Bible?

*Read out their answers, but don't comment on their accuracy.*

### **What does the passage say and mean?**

60 minutes

**2. Read Deuteronomy 8:3.** The Israelite nation lived in a desert for 40 years. God gave them 'manna', which was like bread, to feed them. What was God teaching them through this provision of food?

*People 'cannot live on bread alone' – food only keeps us alive for today, and even then only in a physical sense. All living things need food, but mankind is the only living thing that needs the word of God to really live. From v3, this provision taught them that they lived on 'every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord'. Reading on to v4&5, God disciplined the people to totally depend on him, by being the only source of food they had.*

**\*3.** What do you think it means to 'live on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord?'

*It might help to think about the phrase 'to hang on their every word' – meaning to be devoted to them and wanting to know everything about them. If we are devoted to God and to knowing him as well as we can, then we will live on his every word.*

*To do this, we need to know his word, and to know it we need to read it. Having heard what God has to say on a subject, (and made sure that we have understood it correctly!), someone who is living on God's word will bring their life i.e. thoughts, attitudes, behaviour in line with God's word and under God's authority.*

Questions 4-6 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

\*4. **SDL** Read Hebrews 4:12. List the things you learn about the word of God (the Bible).

*It is alive*

*It is active*

*It is sharp*

*It divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow*

*It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*

\*5. **SDL** What do you think each of these things means?

*Alive – not dead! God's word, the Bible was written 2000 years ago, parts of it nearly 3000 years ago, but it is as relevant today as it was then.*

*Active – through reading the Bible, God changes people. The Bible tells us what God is like, how to respond to him and, from this, how people who love God should behave in order to bring honour and glory to him. The Bible is not a list of restrictive rules, it is a book of liberating promises – promises of what it means to be a child of God, and how our lives can be changed as we allow God to be the King of our life.*

*Sharp – it pierces our defences and reveals our thoughts and motives, it cuts through the lies of the world.*

*Divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow – it divides truth from lies, and sin from righteousness, revealing the reality of sin in our hearts.*

*Judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart – as we see the sinfulness of our hearts, thoughts, attitudes, behaviour etc, and are convicted that this dishonours God, we start to change, with the help of the Holy Spirit. As our heart changes, our behaviour will start to change too. A behaviour change that is not based on a heart change will probably revert to old patterns of living.*

\*6. **SDL** Are you prepared to read the Bible, on your own, or in a group like this, and allow God to change you?

*Encourage them to tell the truth. They know the 'right' answer is 'yes', but it may not be the truth!!*

\*7. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What do you learn about the Bible?

- *God has inspired it – all of it.*

*This may bring up some questions – if it does, and you think the questions are genuine and need to be answered for the group to be able to move on, take a diversion. Don't take this diversion unless the group asks for it! Make sure you can answer such questions before the study – if you give a jumbled answer, you will seem to prove the point that you can't trust the Bible! If you don't know an answer, tell them you don't know, and find out the answer ready for next week.*

*Questions from the group may include:*

- *How did God inspire the Bible writers?*

- *How do we know the people God inspired heard him correctly?*
- *How do we know the people who wrote the gospels told the truth?*
- *How do we know that the people who copied the original documents got the copies right?*
- *How do we know that the English translation says the same as the original languages?*
- *There are different versions of the Bible i.e. NIV, RSV, KJV etc, so how can they all be inspired?*
- *It is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (i.e. showing people how to live a life that honours God)*
- *...so that Christians can be equipped for 'every good work' i.e. serving God.*

**\*8. From v16, how does the Bible equip us 'for every good work'?**

*The Bible teaches us about God, about mankind and about the relationship between God and mankind. It has been called a handbook of salvation. The Bible shows us how to be saved, what it means to be saved and how to live our lives in a way that brings honour and glory to God.*

*The Bible rebukes us – it tells us what sin is, and as our understanding of sin increases, God exposes more and more of our sinfulness. On its own, this would be crushing, but...*

*The Bible corrects us – it shows us the right way to live. When we have understood the depth of what Jesus did for us on the cross, we find that we actually want to live in a way that honours and glorifies God.*

*And the Bible trains us in righteousness – training in a gym is not a once in a lifetime affair. It is a continuous discipline. Being trained in righteousness is the same – it is a daily discipline of bringing our lives under the authority of God, no longer being king of our own lives, but applying the teaching of the Bible to our own lives. As we are trained in righteousness, we are shaped more and more into the people we were made to be, and more and more we take on the character of Jesus (not his divinity, ability to do miracles etc, but his character).*

*Put simply, the Bible:*

*teaches (what is right)*

*rebukes (what is not right)*

*corrects (how to get right)*

*instructs in righteousness (how to stay right)*

**9. STICKERS** What do you think 'every good work' means in your life today?

**\*10. Read Luke 4:1-13.** What is happening to Jesus in these verses, and how does Jesus deal with it?

*Jesus was tempted by the devil for 40 days. He deals with it by replying with quotes from the Old Testament – 'it is written...' (The New Testament hadn't been written at this point, so the OT was Jesus' Bible). Note that, although Jesus was tempted, he didn't sin.*

11. What were the 3 temptations and what were the 3 replies? Can you see what the hidden meaning of each temptation was?

*Draw a table on the flip-chart to fill in, so the group can see the bigger picture.*

<b>Temptation</b>	<b>Hidden meaning</b>	<b>Jesus' reply. 'It is written...'</b>
<i>You're hungry, so make some food</i>	<i>Prove that you are the Son of God. Don't put up with hunger when you can do miracles!</i>	<i>'Man does not live on bread alone'. (Deut 8:3) We have just learned the rest of the verse, 'but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord'.</i>
<i>You can have the whole world for yourself!</i>	<i>World domination without going to the cross.</i>	<i>'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' (Deut 6:13)</i>
<i>Throw yourself off this point and the angels will catch you</i>	<i>Test God's faithfulness to his promises and get some easy publicity.</i>	<i>'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' (Deut 6:16)</i>

*Jesus states God's law in response to each temptation. The Son of God puts himself under the law which God had given to men. Jesus is making a statement that he is fully human as well as fully divine, and that the law applies to him just as much as to anyone else.*

*Jesus resisted the devil's temptations not because he quoted the Scriptures, but because he believed them. Quoting the Bible is not a magic formula that makes temptation go away. Believing the Bible means that we put God above the temptation, and fight against it, with God on our side.*

\*12. Read Ephesians 6:11 and 6:14-17. What armour has God given us against the devil's attack?

*Belt of truth*

*Breastplate of righteousness*

*Shoes of readiness (to stand firm in our faith and fight, or to share the gospel – meaning unclear. But in either case, the gospel threatens the devil)*

*Shield of faith*

*Helmet of salvation*

*Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*

\*13. What do you think it means to call the Bible 'the sword of the Spirit', and how do you think this helps us when we are tempted?

*The sword is the only offensive weapon in the list, the only one that can be used to attack as well as defend. The sword of the word pierces the heart with the truth of the gospel, as in Hebrews 4:12, and can deal the devil a crippling blow, see the temptations of Jesus. However, if we don't truly believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is effective to fight temptation, then we are fighting with a broken sword and have already lost the battle.*

*When we are tempted, we need to call to mind promises of God. To do this, we need to know them, which means we need to read the Bible and really get to grips with what it teaches.*

14. Read John 1:1-2. Who do you think this is talking about and what is the significance of calling this person 'the Word'?

*Jesus is called the Word of God. Jesus is the way that God speaks to us, as we look at Jesus, we see what God is like.*

15. **SHOUT OUT** What do you know about Jesus' character?

*Try to focus on attributes e.g. compassion, love, anger at sin rather than facts such as birthplace, mother's name etc. Use the list to think about what God is like.*

### **How can I live according to these truths in my life?**

20 minutes

\*1. What have you learnt today from the Bible that will affect your attitudes, the way you think and the way that you behave? How are you going to put this into practice this week?

\*2. Do you have a Bible reading plan or daily Bible study notes? Do you use them?!

*Try to have a supply available, or suggest a simple Bible reading plan – a paragraph a day is plenty for some people, others can manage more.*

\*3. **MEMORY VERSE** 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.' (Psalm 119:105)

*Help the group to learn this, and don't forget to learn the reference too. Remember to go over this verse again next time you meet.*

**Check out** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

### **Bibliography**

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### **What does the passage say and mean?**

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