

PREPARATION

Spend the week studying 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE | which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group

PRAY | for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT | The Bible is a guide that leads us towards life change when its truths are understood and applied.

◦ Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

1. **Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
2. **No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
3. **No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
4. **Sharing.** Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

In this current series we are exploring Pinelake's five distinctive values and how they shape the way we understand God and live for Him. Last week your group discussed the first value, which was openness and belonging. You discussed how the Church is not a physical building but a people who:

- 1) *Share a spiritual confession*
- 2) *Experience spiritual transformation*
- 3) *Declare and bring in a spiritual kingdom*

As God's people, we are being built into a spiritual house for others to witness God's redemptive love and power working in and through us. And we advance God's kingdom by helping people know the hope and love Jesus gives to the lost and broken.

This week your group will discuss Pinelake's second value, the Word applied. The Bible is God's authoritative Word and our ultimate source for truth. When we read the Bible, we're reading God's message to us. And it's a saving message (the Gospel) that tells us who God is, how we can know Him and what it looks like to live for Him.

God has given us the Bible as a guide. It gives you direction when navigating the icebergs of life; it helps you live out your faith in the everyday. We believe life change happens when you understand

INTRODUCTION [cont'd]

the truth of God's Word and apply it in daily living. It isn't enough to just believe what the Bible says. God wants your beliefs to lead you into action. Only when this happens will you see real change.

How does the Bible help you live out your faith in the everyday?

True faith (or belief) in God always leads to action. The Bible says without action our faith is "dead." Why is this true?

LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

◦ No ordinary book

Some people view the Bible as just another ancient text written by men. We don't. The Bible tells us God is personal and wants a relationship with us. So He spoke to the characters of Scripture (patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets and apostles), revealing Himself and His will. The Bible is God's story told to us. It is true and reliable, because it's words originated in God, not man. That is to say, God is the Author of the Bible.

Of all the people God chose to reveal Himself through, His greatest revelation was Himself. Jesus is "the Word" who became a man to reveal God to us. In Jesus we see God's Son dwelling among fallen humanity and making a way for us to have a relationship with the Father. No other world religion makes such a bold claim as this—that God became a man, lived, died and rose again for the salvation of sinful humanity.

The Bible is relevant for every generation, because it reveals the biggest problem (sin) and only true hope (Jesus) for a fallen world. The Bible is described as a: mirror, hammer, fire, plumb line, lamp, light and a sword. It is also described as "living and active," being able to discern the deepest matters of the heart.

How does Jesus change our understanding of the Bible and God's revelation? In other words, what does Jesus tell us about God?

Split the group into pairs. Over the next 5-7 minutes, take turns responding to the following objection: "I don't believe the Bible, because it's just a book of fairy tales passed down and written by men. I can't trust it."

◦ God's love letter

The Bible isn't a textbook. God doesn't desire that we know more information about Him; He wants us to know Him personally. He wants a relationship. At its heart, the Bible is God's love letter to us. It's His way of showing how much He loves us and how far He was willing to go to win us back to Him.

LEARN [cont'd]

God's message in the Bible is not about what you need to do to gain eternal life (legalism, works righteousness), but, rather, what He has done for you to give you eternal life (grace, true faith).

Describe the differences between viewing the Bible as a textbook and viewing it as God's love letter to us.

Can you recall a time when God revealed His love to you through His Word or through an experience? Share your experience with the group.

LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

◦ Knowledge: understanding the Bible

We aren't alone in trying to understand the truths of the Bible. God has given us a Helper, the Holy Spirit. Every believer has received the Spirit, and it illumines God's Word so that we can understand it. If your eyesight is poor, you can use prescription glasses to help make clear what you see. In the same way, the Spirit makes our once blind eyes able to see and discern God's truth in the Bible.

The Spirit is the power source that makes our knowledge and understanding of God's Word possible. When we plug into it, God reveals truth and direction that leads to change. When we don't plug into it, we don't see God's truth clearly and experience a lack of direction in our lives.

Why is it important to understand the Holy Spirit's role in our understanding of God and His truth?

What is one change you can make this week to tap more into the Spirit's power when reading God's Word?

◦ Wisdom: responding to God's Word in life

There's a difference between knowledge and wisdom. You can know something, but that knowledge may or may not have any effect on your life. Wisdom is applying your knowledge to life; godly wisdom is putting into action what you know about God and His Word.

Wisdom is believing God's truth and living it out. All we know about God and Scripture can be applied to life. The specific application may not always be clear. This is because the Bible doesn't give us step-by-step instructions for every circumstance in life. Rather, the Bible gives us guidelines and principles for living that can be applied in any situation and relationship. Think of the Bible as a compass that will always guide you towards the true north of God's truth. For example, the Bible doesn't tell you how to fill out your tax return, but it does speak about being honest and having integrity in all things.

Who is someone you know that has wisdom? Describe them. How might you emulate them in your life?

What area in your life do you need more wisdom? In what practical ways could you seek wisdom in this area?

 LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

◦ Learning and living out truth together

If we desire growth and change in our lives, we need to be in God's Word on a regular basis. Spending time reading, studying and meditating on Scripture will show you how God's truth applies to your daily life. It will also show you how Jesus and His Gospel change the way you think and act in life, the workplace and relationships.

God intends for you to spend time alone with Him, reading His Word and talking to Him in prayer. But God also intends for you to learn and live out His truth in community. The Bible tells us to mutually encourage one another towards love and good deeds and to not neglect meeting together, which leads to isolation and a lack of accountability. The Bible also gives us vignettes of a community of godly people centered on His Word.

How would you evaluate your personal time with God? What change(s) could you make to make this time more significant and fruitful?

How does your group value engaging God's Word as a community? In what ways could it improve in this area?

 PRAY

Praise God for being a personal God, who has revealed Himself and His will to us in the Bible. Thank Him for revealing Himself and His salvation to us in the pages of Scripture. Pray for a desire to understand and apply His Word in your life and community. Ask the Father to make the Gospel something relevant and life-changing in your everyday.

 FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

Share any significant experiences or interactions you had this week in light of the group's discussion.

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and reflect on what Paul says about the origin and purpose of Scripture.

COMMENTARY

◦ Reliability and authority of the Bible.

Many critics of the Bible (past and present) contend that it's a book full of myths and contradictions. They give a variety of reasons why the Bible is not authoritative or trustworthy. In response, much ink has been spilled responded to these accusations and showing the Bible to be the most reliable ancient document in history (i.e., what we have today is remarkably close to what was originally written in the Old and New Testament). R.C. Sproul, in his book *Reason to Believe* (Zondervan: 1982), offers five premises and a conclusion about the trustworthiness of the Bible as it relates to the teaching and authority of Jesus:

1. The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document
2. On the basis of this reliable document we have sufficient evidence to believe confidently that Jesus Christ is the Son of God
3. Jesus Christ being the Son of God is an infallible authority
4. Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is more than generally trustworthy; it is the very Word of God
5. The word, in that it comes from God, is utterly trustworthy because God is utterly trustworthy

Conclusion: On the basis of the infallible authority of Jesus Christ, the church believes the Bible to be utterly trustworthy, i.e., infallible. [1]

Regarding the Bible's authority, it all comes down to Jesus. And all Scripture points to Jesus, which is something Jesus taught two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-25). If He is who He claimed to be, what He said about Scripture has ultimate authority.

◦ Wisdom in the Bible.

The Old Testament describes wisdom as practical skills used to live a successful life. "In the Bible, wisdom is often associated with trust in and fear of God (Deut 4:6; Prov 1:7)." [2] In the New Testament Jesus is identified as the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24) and one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Many scholars and theologians believe John's language in the first chapter of his Gospel reflects the personification of wisdom found in Proverbs 8. In the Gospels Jesus is presented as a teacher, whose teaching revealed God's truth. In that sense, Jesus was more than a wise teacher; he was also a prophet and priest, who exposed lies, deceptions and misunderstandings of God's Word used by God's enemies and pointed others to its true meaning. Other popular passages that address wisdom in the New Testament are: 1 Corinthians 1-3 and James 3:13-17.

1. R.C. Sproul, *Reason to Believe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 19-34.

2. Martin A. Shields, "Wisdom," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).