



DISCUSSION GUIDE

# SCRIPTURE AND AUTHORITY IN AN AGE OF SKEPTICISM

with David Platt

SECRET  
CHURCH

KNOW HIS WORD. KNOW HIS PERSPECTIVE.



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# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Directions</b> .....                             | 4  |
| <b>Session 1:</b> Introduction .....                | 5  |
| <b>Session 2:</b> Is the Bible Divine? Part 1 ..... | 8  |
| <b>Session 3:</b> Is the Bible Divine? Part 2.....  | 11 |
| <b>Session 4:</b> Is the Bible True?.....           | 15 |
| <b>Session 5:</b> Is the Bible Clear?.....          | 20 |
| <b>Session 6:</b> Is the Bible Sufficient? .....    | 23 |
| <b>Session 7:</b> Is the Bible Good?.....           | 26 |
| <b>Session 8:</b> Conclusions and Exhortations..... | 29 |
| <b>Recommended Reading</b> .....                    | 32 |

# Using This Discussion Guide

We get it. The amount of new information in a Secret Church study, not to mention the speed at which it is communicated, can make it challenging to share what you've learned. That's why this Discussion Guide exists—to help you lead others through the truths taught in Secret Church 17.

## What You'll Need

Only the group leader will need this Discussion Guide. The rest of the group should have the following items:

- **A Bible**
- **A Secret Church 17 Study Guide**
- **Access to David Platt's teaching in Secret Church 17**

The Secret Church 17 Study Guide and David Platt's teaching may be accessed for free at [radical.net](http://radical.net).

## What We're Providing

We've tried to make this material less intimidating by breaking down more than four hours of in-depth teaching into eight manageable sessions. (Note: the truths covered will make more sense if everyone watches the video and follows along in the Secret Church 17 Study Guide.) We've given you an approximate length of time for the video in each session so that you can plan your time accordingly. For each of the eight sessions, you'll see . . .

- A brief overview of the content
- Notes for leading
- A list of key terms and concepts
- A suggested exercise for applying the session
- Ten discussion questions

Use the Discussion Guide in a way that will best serve you and the needs of your group.

## What We're Hoping

Participating in a Secret Church study was never intended to be an end in itself. The goal is not simply to listen, but more importantly to understand, apply, and then spread the truths of God's Word to others. Our hope is that you will take the good news of Jesus Christ to your neighbors and to the nations.

# SESSION 1: Introduction



## OVERVIEW

This first session introduces common objections to and critical questions about the authority of Scripture. Recent trends and surveys indicate that the Bible's influence in our culture is decreasing. In the sessions that follow, we will consider what level of authority the Bible should have in our lives, in the church, and in the world. Every Christian needs to have confidence that the Bible is divine, true, clear, sufficient, and good. God's Word must be our authority in an age of increasing skepticism.



## NOTES FOR LEADING

This introductory session is brief and would be a good opportunity to gauge your group members in terms of how they view the Bible. Ask them whether the statistics shared in this session match the views of their friends, family, co-workers, etc. Highlight the importance of Scripture's authority for following Christ and for the health of the church and its mission.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- The Word Before Us ...
  - What level of authority should the Bible have in my life?
  - What level of authority should the Bible have in the church?
  - What level of authority should the Bible have in the world?
  
- The World Around Us (Significant Trends) ...
  - Increasing skepticism about the authority of Scripture.
  - A new moral code that rejects external moral authority in favor of internal moral autonomy.
  - Digital access has made not only the Bible more accessible than ever, but also everything else.
  
- Common Objections We Must Consider ...
  - The Bible is a human invention.

- The Bible has dangerous implications.
  - The Bible is offensive.
  - The Bible is outdated.
  - The Bible is full of errors.
  - The Bible is full of fiction.
  - The Bible is insufficient for the church.
  - The Bible is irrelevant in the world.
- **Critical Questions We Must Answer ...**
    - Is the Bible divine? (Or did humans create it?)
    - Is the Bible true? (Can we trust it?)
    - Is the Bible clear? (Can we understand it?)
    - Is the Bible sufficient? (Is it the only book we need?)
    - Is the Bible good? (Is it worth giving our lives for?)



## **APPLYING THIS SESSION**

Ask your group what questions they have about the Bible's authority and tell them to write these questions down on a piece of paper or in the blank "Notes" page at the back of the Secret Church 17 Study Guide. Let them know they can be honest about their doubts and questions related to the Bible. Encourage them to pray and ask God to open their hearts to the truth and authority of His Word.



## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What sources of authority does our culture look to when it comes to moral and ethical issues? Where does the Bible rank among these sources of authority?
2. What are some indications that a church does not view Scripture as authoritative?
3. On which issues are you tempted to follow your own opinions and wisdom over the teaching of Scripture?
4. Based on your experience, why do you think many people in our culture find it difficult to believe that Scripture is authoritative?

5. What is the most common objection you've heard concerning the authority of Scripture? How do you respond to this objection?
6. Respond to the following statement: "The Bible is clearly outdated because we have progressed as a society in terms of our views on sexuality."
7. How do the mature Christians you know view the Bible?
8. What questions do you have about the authority of Scripture? Make a list.
9. How does this topic affect the rest of the Christian life? Explain your answer.
10. What role does the Bible currently play in your spiritual growth?

## SESSION 2: Is the Bible Divine? (Pt. 1) Or Did Humans Create It?



### OVERVIEW

This session is Part 1 of the answer to the question, “Is the Bible Divine?” Because the church agreed upon which books should be included in the canon of Scripture, some people claim that the Bible is the creation of men. However, it is more accurate to say that the canon was revealed by God and then later recognized by man. This session deals with two aspects of God’s revelation—general communication and special communication. While God reveals some truths to all men in His general communication, special communication is revealed to particular persons at particular times in particular places. Only special communication provides men with the opportunity to be saved, for it reveals the gospel of Jesus Christ. We receive special communication today through the words of Scripture, though our sin and human weakness means that God must open our hearts to Scripture’s saving message.



### NOTES FOR LEADING

Explain to your group the importance of the question, “Did the church create the canon, or did the canon create the church?” At stake is whether or not Scripture is simply a man-made invention or the authoritative Word of God. Also, be sure to help your group distinguish between the two types of revelation mentioned in this session—general and special communication. Point out that this is not simply a debate for theologians and pastors: the need to take the gospel message (special communication) to the ends of the earth is due to the fact that God’s general communication (through nature, history, and humanity) is not sufficient to save anyone.



### KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- **Canon:** an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The concept of canonicity deals with whether or not a particular writing should be included in the biblical canon.



- **Revelation:** God's communication to humans of truth they need to know in order to properly relate to Him.
- The canon was revealed by God and recognized by man.
- Two Categories of Communication (types of revelation)
  - 1. General Communication**
    - It comes through nature (God's creation), history (the rise and fall of nations), and humanity (man's innate spiritual awareness and knowledge of right and wrong).
    - It makes knowledge about God accessible to all people (ex: seeing the design of the physical creation).
    - It leads to overall condemnation (insufficient for salvation).
  - 2. Special Communication**
    - It comes through history, Christ's incarnation, and speech.
    - It makes specific knowledge about God known to particular persons at particular times in particular places.
    - It leads to the opportunity for salvation.
- The bottom line: We cannot know God unless God reveals Himself to us.



## APPLYING THIS SESSION

Explain the difference between general and special communication by reading two different passages in Romans. First, read Romans 1:18–32. This passage speaks to the fact that God has revealed Himself to all men in nature. Ask your group how, according to this passage, man responds to God's general communication in nature. (Answer: all men naturally reject God's general communication due to sin.) Next, read Romans 10:13–17 and ask your group what is necessary in order for someone to be saved. (Answer: this passage speaks to the fact that the gospel message must be communicated—God's special communication—in order for people to believe and be saved.)



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so critical that we believe the Bible is divine and not simply a book of helpful instructions?
2. Apart from Scripture, what are some ways God reveals Himself to us?

3. What is the difference between general and special communication?
4. Respond to the following statement: "People who have never heard the gospel will go to heaven if they simply believe in what they do know about God from nature."
5. What must a person know and believe in order to be saved?
6. What are some benefits of having God's special communication, i.e., the Bible, in a written form?
7. Why do unbelievers naturally reject God's revelation? What role does the Spirit play in changing man's response to God?
8. Respond to a friend who says, "I just wish God would reveal Himself to me—then I would believe."
9. What does this session tell us about the privilege of hearing and understanding God's Word?
10. What does this session teach us about the need to get God's special communication—in particular, the gospel message—to those who have never heard?

## SESSION 3: Is the Bible Divine? (Pt. 2) Or Did Humans Create It?



### OVERVIEW

This session is Part 2 of the answer to the question, “Is the Bible Divine?” Much of this session deals with the inspiration of Scripture, a mysterious supernatural process by which God worked through men to reveal His truth in written form. While there is some mystery concerning *how* God inspired Scripture, *that* He inspired Scripture is evident to us in a number of ways (see below). The final portion of this session explores the reality that the canon was recognized (not created) by man. In order to determine whether or not a particular book or writing was inspired, the church applied specific tests of canonicity. One such test was, “Was this book written by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle?” If we are going to bank our lives and our eternity on the truths of Scripture, then we need to know whether or not we are reading God’s Word or merely the religious insights and opinions of men.



### NOTES FOR LEADING

As stated in this session, the process of inspiration is, in part, mysterious to us. However, you can help your group by pointing out some misconceptions about inspiration. For example, Scripture is not inspired in the same sense that men are inspired by a sunset or a poem. The authors of Scripture were moved by the Holy Spirit such that they wrote precisely what God intended (though without bypassing their individual personalities, thought processes, writing styles, etc.). Their Spirit-inspired writings are God’s Word.

The concept of canonicity may also be confusing for your group, as it may seem to imply that the church had the authority to decide which books were authoritative. Explain the difference between granting authority to Scripture (which the church did not do) and recognizing the authority that certain writings possessed and manifested (which the church did do). The quote by J.I. Packer on p. 13 of the Secret Church 17 Study Guide is helpful at this point:

*“The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.”*

Challenge the group to experience the way Scripture attests to its own authority by reading it for themselves.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- **Canon:** an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).
- **Revelation:** God's communication to humans of truth they need to know in order to properly relate to Him.
- **Inspiration:** the mysterious supernatural process by which God worked through human instruments to reveal divine truth in written form.
- **Apocrypha:** additional books which the Roman Catholic Church claimed were canonical at the Council of Trent in 1546. However, each book contained in the Apocrypha fails one or more tests of canonicity (see below for tests of canonicity).
- When Christians argue for the authority of Scripture based on the testimony of Scripture itself, they are sometimes charged with circular reasoning. However, remember that any argument for absolute authority must ultimately appeal to its own authority. For example, a person who appeals to reason as his ultimate authority must rely on his own ability to reason.
- The Reality of Inspiration:
  - Proclaimed by the prophets
  - Demonstrated by fulfilled prophecy
  - Taught by the apostles
  - Declared by Jesus
  - Authenticated by the Spirit
  - Affirmed throughout history
- That God inspired Scripture is certain; how God inspired Scripture is mysterious.
  - A wide variety of authors (lawgivers, prophets, kings, doctors, etc.)
  - A wide variety of styles (Gospel accounts, laws, laments, letters, etc.)
  - A wide variety of processes (divine dictation, historical research, etc.)

- Tests for Canonicity
  - Was it written by a prophet or apostle of God?
  - Does it tell the truth about God?
  - Does it demonstrate the power of God?
  - Was it accepted by the people of God?



## APPLYING THIS SESSION

In light of the fact that God's inspiration of Scripture is demonstrated by fulfilled prophecy (among other evidences), read the account of Christ's crucifixion in John 19:17–37. Ask your group to note the places where John speaks of Scripture being fulfilled in this scene. Read the various Old Testament prophecies that John references in this passage. The relevant passages are listed below:

- John 19:24 fulfills Psalm 22:18
- John 19:28 fulfills Psalm 69:21
- John 19:36 fulfills Exodus 12:46 (and Numbers 9:12)
- John 19:37 fulfills Zechariah 12:10

Point out that the Gospel accounts contain many more instances of Christ's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Fulfilled prophecy witnesses to the divine character of Scripture.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you define "inspiration" as most people use the word today? How is this different from the biblical concept of inspiration that we read about in 2 Timothy 3:16?
2. The process by which God inspired Scripture is somewhat mysterious to us, but we do have some evidences of Scripture's inspiration. Give some examples of these evidences.
3. How is our view of Scripture related to our view of Jesus?
4. When arguing for the authority of Scripture, why should we not shy away from citing Scripture itself as evidence?
5. Does the wide variety of personalities and writing styles of Scripture's

authors undermine the doctrine of inspiration? Why or why not?

6. What's the difference between the church creating the canon and the church recognizing the canon?
7. Why should the Apocrypha not be considered part of the canon?
8. How would you respond to someone who says that we are limiting God by not allowing more books in the canon of Scripture?
9. Did this session increase your confidence in Scripture as the Word of God? How so?
10. Why is a low view of Scripture dangerous for the rest of your Christian life?

# SESSION 4: Is the Bible True? Can We Trust It?



## OVERVIEW

This session explains what we mean (and don't mean) when we claim that the Bible is true. In order to clarify some important aspects of Scripture's truthfulness, Articles I–XIX of the document titled "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" are used throughout this session. The following three questions are a sample of the kinds of issues covered: (1) "Does Scripture contain errors?" (2) "Is every word of the Bible inspired by God, or does inspiration only relate to the ideas and concepts revealed in Scripture?" (3) "Is it accurate to refer to our current Bible translations as the Word of God?" Such questions must be addressed in each generation as the authority of Scripture is constantly under attack. If we believe that God is true, then we must affirm that His Word is true.



## NOTES FOR LEADING

This will likely be the most difficult session for some of your group members to understand. The issues covered are important, but many of them are also very complex and technical, particularly for those who are not familiar with the issue of Scripture's inerrancy (see definition below). Remind your group that "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" was written not only to give us truths to affirm about Scripture, but also to address a variety of challenges to Scripture's authority. For those who want to read further on these issues, point them to the Recommended Reading on pg. 138 of the Secret Church 17 Study Guide. Given the subtleties and complexities of these issues, you will find it helpful to read this session carefully beforehand. Also, you may want to encourage those with questions about complex issues to meet with you in a one-on-one setting after this study. Some of these issues are difficult to resolve in one sitting and may get the discussion sidetracked.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- Three Foundations
  - God is true. (Titus 1:1–3)
  - The Bible is the Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - The Word of God is true. (John 17:17)

- One Implication
  - The Bible is truthful and without error in all of its teachings. (2 Samuel 7:28)
  
- See Articles I–XIX of “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” for affirmations and denials related to the truthfulness of the Bible. (This document can be downloaded for free at [radical.net](http://radical.net).) The following terms from the Chicago Statement are in alphabetical order, and the articles in which they appear are italicized below each term.
  - **accommodation:** to claim that Jesus accommodated his teaching on Scripture is to claim that, regardless of what He *actually* believed, Jesus was willing to speak as if He accepted the authority of the Scriptures so that His contemporaries, who *did* believe in the authority of the Scriptures, would be more open to receiving His message. One danger with appealing to accommodation is that it presents Jesus as being untruthful in his teaching. In addition, Jesus was often willing to oppose the teachings and assumptions of his contemporaries, so it is not convincing to dismiss His statements about Scripture by claiming that He was simply accepting false views for the sake of making His point.
 

– *Article XV*
  
  - **autographs:** the original biblical writings, which were written in Greek (New Testament) and Hebrew (Old Testament)<sup>1</sup>. A good Bible translation will aim to be as faithful as possible to the original autographs and their copies.
 

– *Article X*
  
  - **exegesis:** “the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning.”<sup>2</sup>

– *Article XVIII*
  
  - **fallenness:** a reference to man’s condition as a result of sin’s corruption. Sin has corrupted everything about us, including our desires, motivations, and actions.
 

– *Article IX*
  
  - **finitude:** a reference to man’s limitations as a creature who lacks God’s knowledge, power, and other attributes. Even prior to sin’s corruption, man was designed to live in dependence on his Creator.
 

– *Article IX*

<sup>1</sup> A small portion of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic.

<sup>2</sup> This definition taken from Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 23.



- **grammatico-historical exegesis:** study of Scripture that takes into account its wording/grammar and historical context.
  - *Article XVIII*
- **hyperbole:** a literary device in which an exaggeration is used for a particular purpose or effect. Nearly all forms of literature use hyperbole. For example, to say, “I love chocolate chip cookies so much that I could eat a thousand of them,” is not an inaccurate statement, but rather an attempt to state how much one loves chocolate chip cookies.
  - *Article XIII*
- **inerrant:** without error. To say that Scripture is inerrant is to say that it has no errors.<sup>3</sup>
  - *Articles X, XI, XII, XIII, XV, XVI, XIX*
- **infallible:** incapable of erring or failing. To say that Scripture is infallible is to say that Scripture is incapable of erring.<sup>4</sup>
  - *Articles XI, XII*
- **internal consistency of Scripture:** the idea that no part of Scripture contradicts or disagrees with any other part of Scripture.
  - *Article XIV*
- **manuscript:** a writing. Written copies of the biblical text are referred to as manuscripts.
  - *Article X*
- **modern technical precision:** to say that a passage or a verse lacks modern technical precision is to say that it does not intend to be exact in its description. For instance, Scripture may say that an army had 600,000 men, not because the biblical author was unaware that the actual number of men was either more or less than this number, but rather because he was attempting to give an approximate count. We do something similar when we say that there were 5,000 people at the game, knowing that the actual number may have been slightly higher or lower.
  - *Article XIII*
- **omniscient:** all-knowing. When we say God is omniscient, we are affirming that He knows everything.
  - *Article IX*

<sup>3</sup>This definition of inerrant is adapted from John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010), 167–169.

<sup>4</sup>This definition of infallible is adapted from Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 168–169.

- **progressive revelation:** to say that God's revelation was progressive is to say that God made known more of himself and his ways over time. Later revelation builds off of earlier revelation.
  - *Article V*
- **revelation:** that which God chooses to make known to us. (See the previous session for more on the two different types of revelation: (1) general communication and (2) special communication.)
  - *Articles III, IV, V*
- **Scholastic Protestantism:** an attempt by Protestants beginning in the early-to-mid seventeenth century to take the teachings of the Reformation and put them into a more organized, or systematic, form. The Protestant Scholastics gathered the teachings of the Reformation and evaluated how those teachings answered common theological questions.<sup>5</sup>
  - *Article XVI*
- **tradition:** in the context of Scripture's authority, tradition refers to the way the church, or certain segments of the church, has understood and articulated the teaching of Scripture.
  - *Article I*



## APPLYING THIS SESSION

Read the passages listed below with your group and write out at least five truths about Scripture's authority based on these verses. (Example: Every part of Scripture is inspired by God—and not just the words of Jesus—according to 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- Matthew 5:18
- 2 Peter 1:20–21
- Revelation 22:18–19

As a follow-up question, ask your group how the issue of Scripture's truthfulness affects our view of God and His character. (To demonstrate the link between our view of God and His Word, use the example of calling your friend a liar while still claiming to like and admire him. It is inconsistent to say that we honor God if, at the same time, we claim that His Word is not true.)

<sup>5</sup>This definition is adapted from John Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2015), 175, 774. For the dating, see Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 2: The Reformation to the Present Day* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 175–176.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What evidence have you heard people cite to argue that the Bible contains errors?
2. Why is it inconsistent to say that God is true but Scripture contains errors?
3. Respond to the following statement: "I believe the basic ideas of Scripture are true, but not necessarily every word."
4. Does the fact that Scripture contains many literary styles undermine the claim that it is God's Word? Explain your answer.
5. Given that we don't have access to the original manuscripts of the Bible, how can we have confidence in the truthfulness of our English translations of the Bible?
6. The Bible refers to the rising of the sun (Psalm 113:3), but science teaches us that, technically speaking, this is not an accurate description of what happens. Why isn't this evidence of an error in God's Word?
7. How should we approach alleged errors in Scripture? What's the danger of trying to force a solution that might not be accurate?
8. Is the concept of Scripture's inerrancy new? Defend your answer.
9. What would you say to another believer who is contradicting Scripture and yet claims to be led by the Holy Spirit?
10. What are some practical ways you can grow in your confidence in God's Word?

# SESSION 5: Is the Bible Clear? Can We Understand It?



## OVERVIEW

Some Christians neglect reading the Bible because they find it confusing or intimidating, but this session teaches that every Christian is able to understand God's Word. The Bible is a unified story with one central theme—the gospel of Jesus Christ. God is redeeming His people for His kingdom. With this overarching story in mind, we study each individual passage by identifying its context, including its literary, cultural, and historical setting. However, studying the Bible is not simply about applying a method. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to overcome our sin and to expose any errors in our preconceived notions. Humble, hard work is required as we read God's Word in the context of the church and with the aim of God's glory. The end result, by God's grace, is conformity to Christ.



## NOTES FOR LEADING

The fact that the Bible is clear does not mean that each member of the group—or, for that matter, any Christian—will find every passage easy to understand. Acknowledge that there are many difficult passages, while at the same time pointing out that understanding the overarching story of Scripture gives us a framework for approaching those difficult passages. Remind them that dependence on the Spirit does not cancel out the need for diligent study (2 Timothy 2:15) or the need to read the Bible in community. Encourage your group to study the Bible in the context of the church and to be open to the wisdom and Spirit-given insight of their church leaders and other Christians. It may be helpful to mention that you are still trying to grow in your own understanding of Scripture and that this is a lifelong pursuit.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- The Bible is a unified story that is clearly understandable to all who devote themselves to study it in dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible's central theme is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- The Bible reveals who God is and how God redeems His people for His kingdom.
- The main character of the Bible is God.
- A kingdom includes people who are ruled by a king, a place where the king has dominion, and a purpose for the king and his kingdom. God's kingdom is His bringing His people to His place for His purpose. (See the chart titled "Tracing the Story of Scripture" on pp. 80–81 of the Secret Church 17 Study Guide.)
- All Christians are able to understand the Word (Psalm 119:130), while only some are gifted to teach the Word (Ephesians 4:11–14).
- We should always consider the context of any Scripture passage we study. This means identifying the local context (the surrounding sentences, paragraphs, and chapters) and the place of the passage in Scripture as a whole. We should also be aware of the type of literature we are reading (law, poetry, Gospels, etc.), as well as the historical setting of the passage.
- Scripture should be studied diligently, humbly, in community, and with the aim of glorifying God.
- Due to our sin, we need God's Spirit to regenerate us (John 3:5–8) and give us wisdom (Colossians 1:9–10) in order to understand and embrace the truth of Scripture.
- When we disagree about Scripture, the weakness is with us, not with Scripture.



## **APPLYING THIS SESSION**

Read 1 Samuel 17 and ask your group how the story of David and Goliath fits into God's overarching plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Note David's place in the storyline as well as the way in which David points forward to Jesus, the perfect and eternal king of God's people. Encourage your group to use the chart titled "Tracing the Story of Scripture" on pp. 80–81 of the Secret Church 17 Study Guide.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the most confusing part about the Bible for you?
2. How would you respond to a fellow believer who said, "I'm not smart enough to understand the Bible"?
3. Who is the main character of the Bible? What are some ways you have heard the Bible taught that make other people (or ideas or things) the main characters?
4. Why shouldn't we approach a text by asking, "What does this passage mean to me?"
5. All Christians are able to understand the Bible. Does this mean that every Christian is qualified to be a pastor? Why or why not?
6. Using the example of Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that you be not judged," explain how the local context and the overall context of Scripture help us understand this verse.
7. How does it help your understanding of a passage to know what type of literature it is? How might a psalm be understood differently than an Old Testament law?
8. What role should the church play in our interpretation of Scripture? What is dangerous about studying Scripture only as an isolated individual?
9. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our interpretation of Scripture?
10. What are some practical steps you can take in order to grow in your understanding of Scripture?

# SESSION 6: Is the Bible Sufficient? Is It the Only Book We Need?



## OVERVIEW

The Bible is not only divine, true, and clear, but it is also sufficient. In this session we see that God's Word is sufficient to save us from our sins, to sanctify us, and to satisfy our souls. God's Word does not address everything we are curious about, but that doesn't mean we should (or need to) add to it. By the power of the Spirit, God's Word provides believers with all they need in order to know and follow Christ.



## NOTES FOR LEADING

Our failure to believe in Scripture's sufficiency often shows up in subtle ways. Provide your group with some practical examples of how this truth plays out. For example, we often chase after joy and security in the things of this world because we do not trust that God is good and that He knows what is best for our lives. (Give some examples of how this has played out in your own life and allow the group to share as they are willing.) Or, when it comes to controversial ethical issues, we are often influenced more by the media and our friends than by God's Word. Ask the group to share which people or other sources of authority they trust. Encourage your group to rely on the sufficiency of God's Word over and above human opinions.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- The Bible contains all we need in order to know and walk with God.
- The Bible is sufficient for our salvation, our sanctification, and our satisfaction.
- **Sanctification:** God's work of making believers more like Christ by the power of His Spirit. Sanctification involves a continual turning from sin and growth in righteous living. God has already declared us to be righteous in Christ (by virtue of our justification), but our sanctification will not be complete until Christ returns and we are fully conformed to His image in our resurrected bodies.

- The Bible's purpose is not to answer all the questions we may have or to provide specific direction for every situation we face, but rather to conform us into the image of Christ and to bring us into step with the Spirit of Christ.
- We must not (and do not need to) add anything to Scripture or elevate anything to the authority of Scripture.
- The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Church's official teaching carries the same authoritative status as Scripture. (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent – see p.106–107 of the Secret Church 17 Study Guide).
- **Higher Criticism:** the study of biblical writings to determine their literary history and the purpose and meaning of the authors (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Some scholars who use this method operate with an anti-supernatural bias, as they do not accept Scripture's supernatural claims. They claim to base their research solely on human reason and that which is objectively verifiable.
- Both Roman Catholic theology and higher criticism minimize the voice of God through their respective views of Scripture.



## APPLYING THIS SESSION

Ask your group how Scripture's sufficiency should affect the way the church evangelizes. How should it affect the way Christians pursue spiritual growth? Be specific with your answers.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's the difference between believing that the Bible is true and believing that it is sufficient?
2. What are some practical ways the sufficiency of Scripture ought to affect our spiritual growth?
3. Does the fact that Scripture is sufficient mean that it will help you know what job to take? Explain your answer.
4. What is the purpose of the Bible?



5. Can you think of some examples of when your beliefs or actions have been corrected by Scripture?
6. What are some signs that a church does not view Scripture as sufficient for making disciples?
7. What's wrong with a pastor adding a few prohibitions to Scripture in order to make sure the members do not fall into sin?
8. What's wrong with giving our own religious traditions the same level of authority as Scripture? Can you list some ways that we do this, maybe even without realizing it?
9. If the Bible is sufficient for our satisfaction, then does this mean that we will always *feel* encouraged after reading it? Explain your answer.
10. Discuss some ways the sufficiency of Scripture should affect our missions strategies.

# SESSION 7: Is the Bible Good? Is It Worth Giving Our Lives For?



## OVERVIEW

It is important for believers not only to affirm the truthfulness of God's Word, but also to embrace its goodness. The goodness of God's Word has implications for the way we study it, for our need to memorize it, for how we use it in the home, for its role in preaching, for its role in our decision-making, and for its overall purpose—to conform us to the image of Christ and to bring us in step with the Spirit of Christ. Ultimately, the goodness of God's Word should lead us to take its message to our neighbors and to the ends of the earth.



## NOTES FOR LEADING

This session focuses on some practical effects that should flow from the belief that the Bible is good. This belief should produce affections for and obedience to the God of the Bible. Encourage your group to put this session, along with the other sessions, into practice through memorizing the Bible, through approaching it the right way, through making it a priority in the home, through their decision-making processes, etc. Give a specific example of seeing the fruit of God's Word in your own life, in your own home, or in your own church.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- What We Know . . .
  - Good is good. (1 Chronicles 16:34)
  - The Bible is God's Word. (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - The Bible is good. (Psalm 119:129)
- We must study the Bible prayerfully, humbly, carefully, joyfully, confidently, diligently, completely, expectantly, and personally.
- We should not only read the Bible, but also memorize it.
- We should have a verbal (speaking the Word) and visible (living

according to the Word) commitment to the Word of God in our homes.

- The Word forms the church and serves as the authority in the church. The preaching and ministry of the church should be centered on the Word of God.
- The purpose of God's Word is to conform us to the image of Christ and to bring us in step with the Spirit of Christ.
- God's will is not lost, but rather it is revealed in his Word. Always obey the Bible, but when it does not explicitly address your question, follow these steps:
  - Pray with humility.
  - Gather information.
  - Consider options.
  - Seek godly counsel.
  - Act accordingly.
- All people need the message of the gospel in order to have the opportunity to be saved. Over 6,000 people groups and at least 2.8 billion people do not have access to the gospel.
- It is the responsibility and privilege of everyone who has God's Word to make it known to everyone in the world.



## APPLYING THIS SESSION

Discuss the following scenario with your group: John is a recent high school graduate who wants to serve the Lord, but he does not know which college to attend. He has asked God to give him peace in the decision-making process, but John is still unsure about which school to choose. How would you counsel John based on what you've learned in this session? What steps should he take?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think some Christians find it difficult to consistently spend time reading and meditating on God's Word?

2. In your own words, what does it mean to read the Bible humbly?
3. Does the fact that God's Word brings us joy mean that we will always *feel* like reading it? How would you counsel another believer who feels cold or apathetic toward God's Word?
4. What three verses (or passages) would you like to memorize? Develop a plan to memorize these verses in the upcoming weeks.
5. What are some of the effects the Word of God should have in the home?
6. What does it mean that the church is formed by God's Word?
7. What are some signs that a church does not view God's Word as its authority?
8. What should be the goal of reading God's Word?
9. What counsel would you give someone who was looking for God's will in terms of choosing a job?
10. What kind of priority should we put on getting God's Word to areas where the church is persecuted or non-existent? Why do you think so few churches are concerned with getting the message of the gospel to the unreached?

# SESSION 8: Critical Conclusions & Final Exhortations



## OVERVIEW

This final session draws five critical conclusions and offers some final exhortations based on the truths covered in previous sessions of this study. The fact that the Bible is divine, true, clear, sufficient, and good should have a transforming effect on our beliefs and our actions. We should obey God's Word confidently and proclaim it urgently.



## NOTES FOR LEADING

Use this brief final session to encourage your group to respond to what they have heard throughout this study. Urge them to be specific in their applications of these truths. For example, suggest that each member of the group come up with a specific plan to read (at least) a significant portion of the Bible in the coming year and encourage them to find a mature Christian friend who will keep them accountable. Also, remind your group that they can go back and review previous sessions in this study if they still have questions.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- Critical Conclusions
  - The Bible is divine. (Humans did not create it.)
  - The Bible is true. (We can trust it.)
  - The Bible is clear. (We can understand it.)
  - The Bible is sufficient. (It is the only Book we need.)
  - The Bible is good. (It is worth giving our lives for.)
- Final Exhortations
  - Let's revere this Word humbly.
  - Let's receive this Word continually.

- Let's believe this Word completely (with regard to our own lives, the lost, and the poor).
- Let's obey this Word confidently.
- Let's proclaim this Word urgently.



## APPLYING THIS SESSION

Ask each member of your group to make a list of people with whom they would like to share the truths of this study. Encourage them to think of newer believers who need their faith strengthened or of unbelievers who might be willing to read through a book of the Bible in a one-on-one setting (suggest the Gospel of Mark or the Gospel of John as a good introduction to Christ and His Word). Remind your group that a belief in Scripture's authority ought to be evident in the way we approach Scripture and in the way we obey it.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did this study correct any misunderstandings you had about the Bible? Explain your answer.
2. How might the truths in this study affect the way you approach God's Word?
3. Respond to the following question: "How do you know the Bible isn't just a human invention?"
4. What are some practical ways you can be more consistent in studying God's Word?
5. What are some ways you have neglected to apply the Word to your life? How will you respond based on this study?
6. How should our belief in the truthfulness and authority of Scripture affect the way we relate to unbelievers? What about the poor?
7. What are some marks of a church that is committed to the Bible as its authority?
8. What role should the Bible play in our personal evangelism and disciple-making? Be specific with your answers.

9. What questions do you still have about the authority of the Bible? Go to a church leader or another mature Christian and discuss these questions with them.
10. Based on this study, why are Bible translations and biblical resources so critical to the task of missions?

# Recommended Reading

If you are interested in reading more about this year's topic, the list of recommended resources below is a good place to start. Note, however, that neither David Platt nor Radical necessarily agrees with everything contained in these resources. We urge you to filter everything you read through the truth of God's Word.

**Gregory Beale**, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*

**D.A. Carson**, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*

**Millard Erickson**, *Christian Theology*

**Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe**, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*

**Norman Geisler and William Nix**, *A General Introduction to the Bible*

**Norman Geisler and William Roach**, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation*

**Wayne Grudem**, *Systematic Theology*

**Carl F. H. Henry**, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (6 volumes)

**John Piper**, *A Peculiar Glory*

**Robert Plummer**, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*

**R.C. Sproul**, *Can I Trust the Bible?*

**Samuel Waldron**, *The Canon of Scripture*

**E.J. Young**, *Thy Word is Truth*









## SCRIPTURE AND AUTHORITY IN AN AGE OF SKEPTICISM

Churches around the world look to Scripture as the foundation for their faith. Yet many followers of Christ never think to ask why this is the case, leaving them vulnerable to skeptics who claim that Scripture is merely an outdated human invention full of errors. This book we call the Bible is viewed by many in our culture as intolerant, chauvinistic, and ultimately dangerous.

In the face of such criticisms, and to strengthen our own faith, followers of Christ need to be able to answer questions such as . . .

- Is the Bible divine?
- Is the Bible true?
- Is the Bible clear?
- Is the Bible sufficient?
- Is the Bible good?

In this Secret Church study David Platt addresses these critical questions, questions that have implications for our lives, for our families, for our churches, and for our mission to the world. The church desperately needs to recover confidence in Scripture's authority in the midst of a skeptical age.

For more gospel-centered resources from David Platt,  
visit [radical.net](http://radical.net)

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