

Does the Bible Tell the Truth?

radiate

Settling In: *About 10-20 minutes*

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make sure that new people know that they are not required to participate if they are not comfortable

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Opener: *About 10 minutes*

- 1) Does the Bible tell the truth about God?
 - a) What have you heard about whether the Bible is true?
 - b) Examples of ideas your members may have heard about the Bible:
 - i) The writers made up stories to gain authority.
 - ii) It's a bunch of faerie stories to scare children & control adults.
 - iii) The Bible was changed in transmission.

- 2) Game: Chinese Whispers / The Telephone Game.

Explanation: Have every one sit in a circle, but not so close as to be over heard when they whisper. Whisper a complicated sentence to the person on your left. Continue around the circle until last person has heard the sentence. The last person that announces to the group what he or she thought they heard.

- How would you overcome the distortion in Chinese whispers?
- You would compare the latest version to the earliest version you can find.

Mini-teach: *About 10 minutes*

The Reliability of the Bible.

- 1) The Bible's accurate transmission.
 - a) We have very early versions and scraps of extremely early versions to spot check accuracy.
 - b) No Chinese whispers here.
 - c) What motive could have compelled the writers to lie?
 - i) Psychology cannot explain why this group of disillusioned fishermen, who clearly did not wish to be identified as followers of Jesus, would invent a lie to get a myth about Jesus started.
 - ii) Many people who witnessed the actual events were still alive.
 - iii) Of the wealth of writings during this period, why are there no credible testimonies to the contrary?
- 2) It's historical, cultural, and archeological accuracy.
 - a) The best-known archaeologist of the twentieth century, William F. Albright, said there had been no discoveries in archaeology that contradicted the Bible.
 - b) There does however, remain some unanswered historical questions,

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about certain aspects of the Bible story.

- c) Considering the incredible track record of the Bible in proving its accuracy, it seems ridiculous not to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt.
 - d) Critics often seem motivated by a commitment to not believe the Bible, simply because they do not wish to accept its truth.
- 3) It's proven benefit in the lives of billions of people.
- a) The Bible continues to be the world's best-selling book, by a very large margin.
 - b) Vast numbers of people have testified that the Bible has changed their lives.

Discussion 1: *About 15 minutes*

What does the Bible claim about itself?

In a larger group, you could break everyone up into 2-3 groups and assign different passages to the respective groups and after about 15 minutes call for a report from the group. And then have another 15 minutes of interaction about the results.

- 1) "The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever." (Psa. 119:160, NRSV)
 - a) "Your word" refers to the Bible.
 - b) What does this is verse say about the nature of the Bible?
 - c) On what basis are we encouraged to place trust in the Bible?
- 2) "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." (2Tim. 3:16-17, NRSV)
 - a) "Scripture" also refers to the Bible.
 - b) According to this verse, what is the Bible useful for?
 - c) What words does the writer use to describe how the Bible can change our lives?
 - d) Describe the kind of life that the Bible prepares us to live.
- 3) "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2Pet. 1:20-21, NRSV)
 - a) According to this verse, in what sense is the Bible inspired?
 - b) How did God work through people to produce the Bible?
 - c) Is the meaning of the Bible open to the reader's interpretation?

- Stick to what the Bible text says...try to encourage members not to focus on whether or not they agree with the text, the goal is to accurately hear what it is saying.
- The Bible claims to be true.
- The Bible claims to be eternally relevant.

- The Bible claims to be inspired by God.
- The Bible claims to be useful in training in righteousness.
- The Bible claims to be useful in preparing people to do good work.

- The Bible claims that it is not just stories made up by mere men.
- The Bible claims that God inspired its writers by the Holy Spirit to write what they did.
- The Bible claims that it is more than just the interpretation of prophecies of holy men and women, but its words are the inspired words of God.

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Discussion 2: About 15 minutes

What did Jesus think of the Bible?

- 1) "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." (Matt. 5:18, NRSV)
 - a) What did Jesus believe about the validity of the Bible?
 - b) According to Jesus, are we free to pick and choose what we want to believe in the Bible? Why or why not?
 - 2) "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf." (John 5:39, NRSV)
 - a) According to Jesus, what is the point of the Bible?
 - b) Does the Bible give eternal life? Explain.
 - 3) "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17, NRSV)
 - a) "Sanctify" means to make holy. What words or images come to mind when we say the word "holy"?
 - b) How does God use the Bible to make us holy?
 - 4) On many occasions, Jesus pointed to contemporary events that fulfilled the predictions of the Old Testament scriptures: "...to fulfil the scripture..." Mk 12:10; Lu 4:21; Lu 22:37; Jn 7:38; Jn 13:18; Jn 17:12; et al.
 - a) If you have time, assign different members each of the scriptures to look up and read out loud.
 - b) What did Jesus believe about the predictions of the Bible?
 - c) Can you think of any predictions of the Bible that have been fulfilled?
- Jesus guaranteed the truth of the Bible.
 - Jesus said that the promises of the Bible would all be fulfilled.
 - Jesus said that our ultimate focus should not be on the Bible.
 - Jesus said that the entire Bible points to him.
 - Sanctify means to make holy; to be shaped the way God wants us to be.
 - The God uses the Bible to sanctify us.
 - The Bible is the map; the Holy Spirit is the power.
 - Jesus had great confidence that the predictions of the Bible would be fulfilled.
 - Jesus showed how his life, ministry, death, and resurrection fulfilled many passages in the Bible.

Closer:

- If Jesus had such a high opinion of the Bible, what use should we make of it?
- The Bible is the source book for home group. It should also be the source book for our day-to-day lives.
- Close in prayer asking God to help you to be devoted to read and obey the scriptures.
- Consider making up a Bible reading plan for your home group members.
- http://backtothebible.org/devotions/bible_guides.htm has a variety of methods to choose from.

Addendum:

A discussion on the Bible may raise some common (or uncommon!) questions about whether the Bible is relevant or trustworthy. Some may ask about apparent contradictions within the Bible, while others may ask about its relevance in society 20 centuries later.

Depending on the level of interest in the group you may address these questions in the group or in 1:1 meetings with interested members. Remember that your attitude is at least as important as your information: you can represent your beliefs and still keep a friendly and open attitude. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe's *When Critics Ask*, published by Baker Books is an excellent resource for this kind of discussion.

