

45-Minute Small Group Bible Study

THE BIBLE

The Christian Faith, pages 1–3

Purpose: To understand the Bible as the Holy Spirit-inspired, authoritative, truthful, Christ-centered, and life-giving Word of God, and to grow in confidence in hearing, studying, and living from that Word.

Main Truth: The Bible is the written Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and given through human authors. It truthfully reveals God to us, centers on Jesus Christ and his saving Gospel, and is the living Word through which God creates, strengthens, guides, and transforms faith.

1. Opening Prayer — 2 minutes

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your written Word. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts as we study the Scriptures. Teach us to hear your Word not simply as human words or religious information, but as your truthful and life-giving voice. Above all, lead us through the Scriptures to your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Give us faith to trust your promises, and shape our lives according to your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion — 4 minutes

Begin with one or two questions:

1. If someone asked you, “Why do Christians trust the Bible?”, what would you say?
2. What is the difference between saying that the Bible is a helpful religious book and saying that it is the Word of God?
3. What are some reasons people—even Christians—sometimes find the Bible difficult to understand?

Transition: Our doctrinal statement makes several interconnected claims about Scripture. As we work through them, we will read the biblical passages alongside each claim and ask how the Scriptures themselves deepen our understanding of what the Bible is and what God does through it.

3. Read the Doctrinal Statement — 3 minutes

Have one person read the entire doctrinal statement for “The Bible” on page 1.

Ask everyone to listen for answers to four questions:

- Where does Scripture come from?
- How should Scripture be understood?
- What is Scripture ultimately about?
- What does God do through Scripture?

Then work through those themes together with the biblical passages.

4. The Bible Is God's Word Given Through Human Authors — 7 minutes

Return to the opening sentences of the doctrinal statement:

The Bible is the written Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. God breathed into the prophets, apostles, and evangelists the thoughts and words they were to write, expressed in their own personal styles and within their historical settings.

Read: 2 Peter 1:19–21

Peter says that prophecy did not originate in a human writer's own interpretation or will. Rather, men spoke from God while being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Discuss:

1. According to Peter, what is the ultimate source of the prophetic Word?
2. At the same time, who actually spoke and wrote?
3. How does this support the statement that Scripture is genuinely God's Word while also being written through real human authors?

Read: John 14:26

Jesus promises the apostles that the Holy Spirit will teach them and remind them of what Jesus had said.

Discuss:

4. Why is this promise especially important for our confidence in the apostolic witness to Jesus?
5. How does the Spirit's work help explain why the New Testament is more than the apostles' imperfect memories about Jesus?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:15–17

Paul describes the Scriptures as "God breathed."

Discuss:

6. What does "God breathed" add to our understanding of inspiration?
7. Notice that Paul says all Scripture is God breathed. Why does that matter?

Key Insight: Biblical inspiration does not mean that God mechanically dictated every sentence while eliminating the personalities of the writers. God spoke through prophets and apostles as real human authors while the Holy Spirit ensured that what they wrote was God's Word.

5. God's Word Is Truthful and Authoritative — 5 minutes

Return to the next sentence:

The Bible is God's fully authoritative and truthful Word for us in all its words.

Read: John 17:17

Jesus prays to the Father: "Your word is truth."

Discuss:

1. Notice that Jesus does not merely say that God's Word contains truth. What is the stronger claim he makes?
2. If God's Word is truth, what authority should it have when Scripture challenges our own assumptions, desires, or cultural beliefs?

Read: Matthew 4:4

Jesus says that human beings do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Discuss:

3. Why does Jesus compare God's Word to something as necessary as food?
4. What does the phrase "every word" suggest about how seriously Jesus takes God's revealed Word?
5. What happens spiritually when Christians try to live without regularly receiving God's Word?

Key Insight: Scripture is authoritative because its ultimate speaker is God. We do not stand over Scripture deciding which portions will be authoritative for us. We receive the Word as truth from the God who speaks it.

6. God Speaks Through Historically Situated Human Words — 4 minutes

Return to these lines of the statement:

The Scriptures can be understood only within their grammatical and historical context.

Think again about 2 Peter 1:21: real men spoke from God as the Holy Spirit carried them along.

Discuss:

1. If God chose to speak through real prophets, apostles, and evangelists living at particular times and places, why should we care about grammar, history, literary context, and the original audience?
2. What dangers arise when we pull a Bible verse completely out of its context?
3. How is careful attention to the human author's words actually an expression of respect for divine inspiration?

Leader note: Inspiration does not make history and grammar irrelevant. It makes them important. God chose to communicate his Word through meaningful human language in real historical settings.

7. The Many Scriptures Have One Unified Message — 5 minutes

Return to the statement:

Because the Spirit inspired all the authors over a period of 1,500 years, there is a unity in their message, so that one part of Scripture helps interpret other parts.

Read: Romans 1:1-4

Paul says that the Gospel concerning God's Son had already been promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

Discuss:

1. What connection does Paul make between the Old Testament Scriptures and the Gospel of Jesus?
2. How does this show continuity rather than two unrelated biblical messages?

Read: Isaiah 40:8

God's Word endures forever.

Discuss:

3. What does the enduring character of God's Word tell us about reading ancient Scripture today?
4. How does the fact that the same God speaks throughout Scripture help one part of Scripture illuminate another?

Key Insight: The Bible contains many authors, literary forms, historical periods, and circumstances, yet behind them stands one divine Author. That gives Scripture an underlying unity.

8. Jesus Christ Is the Center of Scripture — 6 minutes

Now turn to the second paragraph of the doctrinal statement:

In its unfolding narrative from Genesis to Revelation, Holy Scripture clearly teaches the central message that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

Read: John 5:39

Jesus tells his hearers that the Scriptures testify about him.

Discuss:

1. What does Jesus say the Scriptures ultimately point toward?
2. What danger is there in knowing Bible facts while missing Christ?

Read: Luke 24:27, 44-45

After his resurrection, Jesus begins with Moses and the Prophets and explains what the Scriptures say concerning himself. He later speaks of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms and opens the disciples' minds to understand them.

Discuss:

3. How does Jesus teach us to read the Old Testament?
4. Does Christ-centered interpretation mean forcing Jesus artificially into every individual verse? What might it mean instead to see the entire biblical story moving toward him?
5. Why did the disciples need Jesus to "open their minds" to understand the Scriptures?

Return to Romans 1:1-4

The Gospel was promised beforehand in the Scriptures, and that Gospel is "about his Son."

Discuss:

6. How does this give us a simple way of describing the center of the entire biblical story?

Key Insight: The Bible is not primarily a collection of moral lessons about biblical heroes. Its unfolding story moves from creation and fall, through promise and Israel, toward fulfillment in Jesus Christ and finally the restoration of all things in him.

9. Scripture Alone Guides Our Faith and Life in Christ — 4 minutes

Return to the statement:

Scripture alone is the source of God's revelation to guide our faith and life in Christ.

Read: Psalm 119:105

God's Word is described as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

Discuss:

1. What does the image of a lamp suggest about the purpose of Scripture?
2. Does a lamp normally illuminate the entire road miles ahead, or does it give enough light to walk faithfully where we are?
3. How can this image help us distinguish biblical guidance from our desire for God to answer every question we might have?

Return briefly to 2 Timothy 3:15–17

Paul says Scripture makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ and equips God's people for every good work.

Discuss:

4. What two dimensions do you see here—faith and life?
5. Why is Scripture sufficient for what God intends it to accomplish even though it does not answer every possible question about life?

10. The Word Does Not Merely Inform Us—God Works Through It — 5 minutes

Return to the final sentence:

The Bible does not merely inform us. Jesus, the incarnate Word, reveals himself through the written Word and transforms us.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Paul says that the Thessalonians received the apostolic message not as the word of men but as God's Word, which is at work in those who believe.

Discuss:

1. What is the difference between Scripture giving us information and Scripture actually being “at work” in us?
2. What does this say about what is happening when we hear biblical preaching or read Scripture in faith?

Read: 1 Peter 1:23

Peter connects the new birth with the living and enduring Word of God.

Discuss:

3. According to Peter, what does God actually accomplish through his Word?
4. How does this challenge the idea that the Bible merely gives us principles for improving ourselves?

Read: Acts 20:32

Paul speaks of “the word of his grace,” which has power to build believers up.

Discuss:

5. Why is the phrase “word of his grace” especially important?
6. How does the Gospel Word continue to strengthen Christians after they have come to faith?

Return to Matthew 4:4

We live by the Word that comes from God.

Key Insight: The Bible does more than describe God from a distance. Through his Word, God addresses us. The Law exposes our sin, the Gospel gives us Christ, the Spirit creates and strengthens faith, and believers are built up in the life God gives.

11. Bringing It Together — 2 minutes

Review prompt: Have the leader read each bold phrase aloud and pause for the group to complete the thought from what they have learned. Then read the summary statement that follows together.

The Bible comes from: God the Holy Spirit speaking through human authors.

The Bible is: God’s truthful and authoritative written Word.

The Bible should be read: Carefully in its grammatical, historical, and biblical context.

The Bible centers on: Jesus Christ and the Gospel of salvation in him.

The Bible does: Creates, nourishes, guides, strengthens, and transforms faith through the work of the Holy Spirit.

12. Application Questions — 3 minutes

Choose two:

1. Which truth from this study most strengthens your confidence in Scripture?
2. Are you more tempted to treat the Bible merely as information to learn, rules to obey, or God’s living Word through which Christ comes to you? Why?
3. What could help you develop a more regular habit of hearing, reading, and pondering Scripture?
4. When you read a difficult passage, how might the principles from this study change the way you approach it?

5. How can you intentionally ask, “How does this passage fit into the larger biblical story that centers in Christ?”

13. Closing Prayer — 2 minutes

Gracious Father, thank you for your written Word. Thank you for speaking through the prophets and apostles by your Holy Spirit and for preserving their testimony for us. Forgive us when we neglect your Word, place our own wisdom above it, or read it without looking to Christ. Give us minds that carefully understand the Scriptures, hearts that trust your promises, and lives shaped by your truth. Through your Word, continually reveal Jesus to us, strengthen our faith, guide our steps, and build us up in your grace until we see our Savior face to face. In his name we pray. Amen.