

# GOD'S WORD

## SESSION 3



SMALL GROUP SERIES

# FOUNDATIONS

THE SALVATION ARMY - USA EAST

**“WE MUST ALLOW THE WORD OF GOD TO CONFRONT US, TO DISTURB OUR SECURITY, TO UNDERMINE OUR COMPLACENCY AND TO OVERTHROW OUR PATTERNS OF THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOR.”**

**~ JOHN R.W. STOTT**

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*"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life." 1 John 1:1*

*This introduction to 1 John goes on to echo the sentiment that God has been, is fully here in the present, and will be forevermore. How can we discover the truth of this promise? It is found in His Word, the Bible. In this session, you will examine how the Bible we read today ended up in its current form and how we can study it today to grow deeper in our faith.*

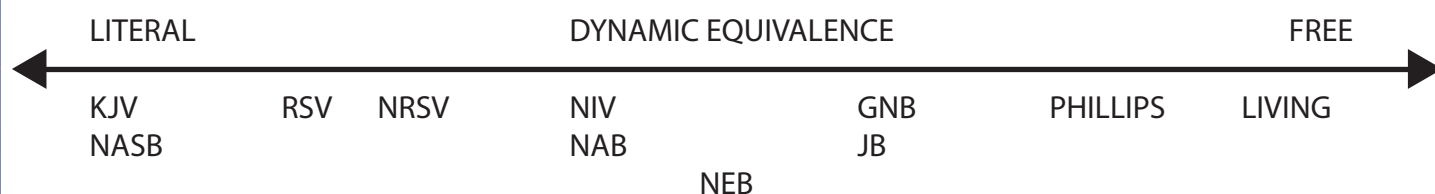
## Opening Questions

1. What translation of the Bible do you use most regularly? Is there a reason why you chose that specific one?
2. Is there a certain way that you read or study the Bible? If so, share. If not, is it something you have thought about previously?

## Watch the DVD

Please watch the video about God's Word, and take time to fill in the blanks and discuss the broad events in His story.

God's Word – Bible translations



What Bible would you recommend to a new believer?

What about a biblical scholar?

2 Timothy 3:15-17

*<sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

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## History of the Bible

1. At the time of Christ, the Old Testament, which was not known as such was in use as the Tenak (Hebrew) and the Septuagint (Greek for version of seventy, based upon the number of scholars who translated it.)
2. The Septuagint included the books of the Old Testament as well as the books that are contained in the \_\_\_\_\_.

### What is the New Testament Apocrypha?

These are books similar to those in the New Testament but almost universally rejected by Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants—include several gospels and lives of apostles. Some were written by early Jewish Christians (see the Gospel according to the Hebrews). Others of these were produced by Gnostic authors or members of other groups later defined as heterodoxy.

### Necessity for Organization

1. The first five centuries of Christianity's spread saw a heavy emphasis on missionary zeal; focused on high individual responsibility but a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. As a result \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ began to emerge.

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <u>Arianism:</u>     | Christ was born of Creation, ranks below God but is above all other created beings which would imply polytheism with God having a subordinate god as well.   |
| <u>Nestorianism:</u> | The incarnate Christ has two natures that are separate and divided which would mean the full humanity of Christ and the full Deity of Christ are not united. |
| <u>Adoptionism:</u>  | Christ was a mere man chosen by God because of his moral perfection, which denies prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament.                    |

### A New Testament Canon: Why Now?

1. The eyewitnesses of Jesus were gone; oral traditions were becoming corrupt and conflicting, while believers wanted an authoritative message. (John 15:27)
2. The real word of the Lord was wanted to be read in worship, so what was considered the real word?
3. Heretics were formulating false scriptures to promote their own special viewpoints. Apocryphal works (of questionable authorship or authenticity) began to appear in increasing numbers.

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4. The persecution of Christians called for a decision on the content of the New Testament, i.e. what books were worth dying for?
5. To declare an end to revelation. As The Salvation Army's first doctrine states:

*We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.*

## Tests for Canonicity

Three main tests were made for books to be included:

1. The books conformed to the rule of faith handed down in the church. In other words did the books measure up to the moral and doctrinal standards that were set by the apostles in their writings?
2. Apostolicity – was the book written by an apostle or someone very close to the apostles?
3. Was the book being used in the churches?

The final form of the New Testament was accepted at the \_\_\_\_\_ in 397 A.D.; and reaffirmed in \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. at the Council of Chalcedon.

## Statements of Faith and Creeds

The \_\_\_\_\_ was established in the 8th Century and is still used as a test of orthodoxy.

### Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
 I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.  
 He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.  
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
 He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.  
 He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
 He will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
 the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
 the forgiveness of sins,  
 the resurrection of the body,  
 and life everlasting. Amen.  
 (Book of Common Prayer, p. 96)

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## Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, what is seen and what is not seen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages.  
Light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not created, equal to the Father in essence;  
Who for the sake of us men and for the sake of our salvation came down from heaven  
and became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered and was buried.  
He rose on the third day.  
He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father in the heights.  
He will also come in glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom has no passing away or end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds, whom we worship and glorify with  
the Father and the Son, who speaks in the prophets.  
We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We hope for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen.  
(Book of Common Prayer, pp. 358-359)

## Activity

In small groups, discuss the following statement and to come up with a group response to answer the concerns raised in the following scenario:

Jackie is a high school student who was raised in the church and professes faith. She has befriended a non-Christian in order to be able to witness to her, but was in turn asked a question that has shaken her own faith. "How can you believe in truth as written in the Bible, when the Bible has so many errors in it? If the Bible were totally true then it would not be imperfect. Just looking at the harmony of the gospels reveals discrepancies; in other places words are changed, the scribes copying the texts made mistakes with spellings, additions and deletions, so how can you believe everything in it?" Issue: Inerrancy and infallibility.

Give the participants 5 minutes to discuss this situation and then if time permits have one or two groups share their findings.

Note: The Bible does contain minor errors (e.g. scribal miscopying letters, adding and deleting letters and words), but still, all of the text leads to undeniable truth. The Bible is therefore infallible, containing truth in an imperfect earthen vessel. Individuals in the group may take exception to this stance on inerrancy and, depending on their understanding of the definition of this word, agreement may still be sought.

## Inductive Bible Study Method

### STOP – GO

#### 1. Stop

- a. Be Still and Know that I am God – Pray
- b. Ask the Holy Spirit's guidance and illumination of the text



Prepare to:

- c. Read the text in Submission to the Spirit
- d. Slow down to listen to the text without distractions

- 2. Think** Read the text
- a. Thoughtfully – as if for the first time
  - b. Repeatedly - read several times, looking for new ideas and fresh perspectives
  - c. Patiently – section by section, a book per month
  - d. Imaginatively – as a drama
  - e. Purposefully – what does the text tell us about God and His nature?
  - f. Acquisitively – read to retain it
  - g. Telescopically – where does the text fit in the overall structure of the chapter/book?

- 3. Observe** Observe from the text as much as you can
- a. When, where and why? Who wrote the passage, when was it written, to whom and why?  
What is the cultural background of the author and the original audience?  
Where do you find this?
  - b. Content – who are involved in the text? What is happening? How is the message communicated?
  - c. \*What do you see?  
\*What things are emphasized?  
\*What are the repeated terms?  
\*Why are they repeated?  
\*Are there any related thoughts being alike or unlike (using but, therefore, contrasts)?  
\*What are some of the interesting terms used and their meaning?  
\*Context – Where is the text located in the whole? Try not to take one text out of the context of which it was written.
  - d. Genre – Explain genre. A Biblical genre is a classification of Bible literature according to literary genre. The genre of a particular Bible passage is ordinarily identified by analysis of its general writing style, tone, form, structure, literary technique, content, design, and related linguistic factors; texts that exhibit a common set of literary features (very often in keeping with the writing styles of the times in which they were written) are together considered to be belonging to a genre. In Biblical studies, genres are usually associated with whole books of the Bible, because each of its books comprises a complete textual unit; however, a book may be internally composed of a variety of styles, forms, and so forth, and thus bear the characteristics of more than one genre (for example, chapter 1 of the Book of Revelation is prophetic/visionary; chapters 2 and 3 are similar to the epistle genre; etc.).

- 4. Plan**
- a. Is there an example for me to follow?
  - b. Is there a sin to avoid?
  - c. Is there a promise to claim?
  - d. Is there a prayer to repeat?

d. Is there a command to obey?

f. Is there a condition to meet?

g. Is there a challenge to face?

## 5. Go

Pray in Gratitude for the message you have received from the text as when the truth is applied it will help you. Grow in your relationship with Christ as well as to Get on better with others, living the way Christ would have us live.

## 6. Obey

In Obedience I will \_\_\_\_\_. What will you do and how will you accomplish this? State measurable objectives so that you can hold yourself accountable. Better still, tell a friend who can be your accountability partner as you strive to Obey what you have learned.