

## **Discussion Questions: Sola Scriptura The Cornerstone of the Reformation – 2 Timothy 3:14-17**

**Drawn from the October 29, 2023 sermon by Dr. Edward Cummings**

Opener: If someone were to ask you “why do you believe the Bible?” Would you communicate most passionately about the Bible’s historicity and accuracy, a personal story of how God’s word changed you, or something else?

### **I. Sola Scriptura as used by the Reformers**

“Sola Scriptura” emphasizes “the Bible alone” as the source of authority for Christians. Based on this principle, the sixteenth-century Reformers saw the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice on religious matters.

Luther stated: “Therefore, Scripture is its own light. It is good that Scripture interprets itself.” John Calvin noted in his “Institutes of the Christian Religion” that “those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture,” and that “Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning.” Likewise, article 6 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1571) read, “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

These beliefs raised the value of Scripture in the life of Christians, fueled the translation of the Bible into German, French, English, and other languages, and prompted Bible teaching in the common languages of the day, rather than in Latin.

**This study will look at the motivations we have for knowing and loving God’s Word.**

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 NIV

*<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <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.*

## II. The Inspiration of the Holy Spirit

How do we know that the Bible came from God? As we can see from 2 Timothy 3:16, it speaks of Scripture being God-breathed, or inspired. Peter explains what this means in a section of his second letter which we will now explore. Peter affirms that Jesus' life was not something that was made up and that Scripture confirmed all that he did. This Scripture was written by people who were "carried along" (literally moved or brought forward) by the Holy Spirit.

Read 2 Peter 1:16-21 NIV

*<sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

*<sup>19</sup> We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

1. If a skeptic asked you to prove that the Scriptures are God's Word, on what would you base your answer? Is there anything in this passage that helps you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. One of the reasons it's said that Scripture is inspired is because God spoke to his prophets through the Holy Spirit. How do verses 18-19 confirm this?

## III. The Purposes of Scripture

### A. Scripture is useful for teaching

When Jesus and the disciples quoted the Bible, they were always referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, since the New Testament had not been written at that point. As time went on, people like the apostle Paul wrote letters "with the wisdom that God gave him" (2 Peter 3:15). If we look at the context of 2 Peter 3:16, these letters were considered to be on par with "the other Scriptures"- and along with the gospels, they

formed the foundation of the New Testament. Paul says in his letter to the Romans: *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”*. (Romans 15:4). Many of us know from experience that God’s Word brings hope and encouragement to our lives. As we saw earlier in this study, Paul told Timothy to put focus on the Bible. He wrote: *“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”* (1 Timothy 4:13)

Jesus referred to Old Testament Scripture on many occasions to help his disciples understand his mission. John 2:22 says *“After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”*

Read Luke 24:44-48

*<sup>44</sup> Then Jesus said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. <sup>47</sup> It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of all these things.*

3. Luke 24:44 points out the value of the entire Old Testament – the law of Moses, prophets, and psalms – in pointing to Christ. Why is it important that Jesus’ mission was anticipated far beforehand?

4. The Old Testament has around two thousand specific prophecies which foretell God’s future plans. How does the fact that many of these were fulfilled in Jesus’ lifetime affect your confidence in God’s Word?

5. In 24:45 Jesus opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures. Elsewhere he says that the Holy Spirit *“will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”* (John 14:26). Why do we need our minds opened in order to understand Scripture?

## **B. Scripture is useful for rebuking and correcting**

In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is called “the author and perfecter” of our faith. He set the standard, and provided the lens with which to interpret the Old Covenant in light of the New Covenant he was bringing. Jesus based his teaching on and respected the Law and the Prophets. He said he came “to fulfill them” and he helps us with the task of discerning how to apply the Jewish Law to our lives (For example: The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5 interprets principles and commands found the Old Testament).

Read Hebrews 4:12

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

6. What does it mean that God’s word is living and active? How have Bible passages you have studied affected you or spoken to your life?

7. What role does the Holy Spirit play in convincing us what is true?

## **C. Scripture is useful for training in righteousness**

...So that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work

The word “equip” - Artios – means to make complete.

In ancient times, the word equip was often used in a medical context. A broken bone was equipped by putting it back into proper alignment so it could return to its original intended function. Galatians 6:1 talks about restoring a person caught in sin with a spirit of gentleness. Using the image of the broken bone, a person would be accepted where they are and then gently led over time into their intended purpose.

In Matthew 4:21, the disciples were equipping and preparing their nets – They had to undo the damage before returning them to action.

Another nuance of the word equip was in terms of artistry or craftsmanship – to work with the hands to produce something beautiful. Paul spoke of this in 1 Thessalonians 3:10 He spoke of supplying what was lacking in people’s faith.

8. Using these definitions of equip - How has God's word gently corrected you and helped to positively align your life?
  
9. Psalm 119:16 says "I will not neglect your Word." Does this motivate you or discourage you? Looking at the months ahead, how might you make time in the Bible more of a priority?

**Group Prayer Time:** In this lesson we've briefly explored how Scripture helps train us in righteousness. Part of that training comes from the good examples in the Bible of those who lived by faith and did what God desired for them. Think of the definition of righteousness: "Action that promotes the peace and well-being of human beings in their relationships to one another. It involves doing good, uprightness, and loyalty." Are there any of your current relationships where you have an opportunity to demonstrate righteousness? Are you releasing your time, talents, and treasures to God? Are you putting aside your worries and pursuing his kingdom? Share with one another any area you could use prayer for as you seek to apply God's Word to your life today.

**For Personal Reflection on your own:**

- A. What is your "plan" right now for taking in God's word on a regular basis? (For some ideas, there is a Bible reading plan on the church website next to these discussion questions and you can also start using the Bible app plans SCC posts each week)
  
- B. Besides the Bible where do you turn for sources of instruction? What are some things you've internalized that may contradict the Bible? How is this affecting you?
  
- C. In what ways do you struggle to look at God's Word as the final authority for your life? In what ways have you fully embraced it?

**Next week, November 5, pastor Jeff will cover "Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)" and there will be discussion questions available in "Downloads" on the SCC website.**