

Series Intro & Know What You Believe about the Bible (Bibliology)

Session Outline

1. Sermon Series Intro
 - a. A study of doctrines – a set of beliefs of an organization (i.e., the Church)
 - b. Agreements
 - i. Agreement with doctrines not required to attend Grace or be in group
 - ii. Agreement is required for church leadership
2. Session Topic - Bibliology (the study of the Bible)
 - a. First topic because Bible is the sacred text of Christianity
 - b. The source that informs all the other doctrines
3. Meet your Bible (basic information about the Bible)
4. Four tenets of the doctrine of the Bible:
 - a. Inspiration – the Bible is the inspired Word of God.
 - i. God inspired people to write the words of the Bible
 - ii. Why inspiration matters
 - b. Inerrancy – there is nothing in the Bible contrary to fact
 - i. Qualifiers
 1. Minor uncertainties
 2. Self-disclosures
 - ii. Why Inerrancy matters
 - c. Infallibility - The Bible is trustworthy as a guide to salvation and faith life; it will accomplish its purpose.
 - i. Qualifiers
 1. Human ignorance
 2. Human prejudice
 - ii. Why infallibility matters
 - d. Integrity – The Bible has not been corrupted or degraded
 - i. Qualifiers
 1. Scholarship
 2. Hermeneutics
 - ii. Why Integrity matters

Intro to the Series

Relational Time/Check In – This time should take about 15 minutes, or about 1 minute per participant. If you have fewer people, more time can be given per person. Allow everyone to share the “big items” going on in their lives since you last met.

Say We are beginning our new focus together, called Know What You Believe. Over these next several weeks together, we are going to explore core doctrines of Christianity. “Doctrines” are the set of beliefs of an organization, in our case the church. So, what we will be looking at together and discussing are the essential beliefs Know What You Believe – The Bible (Bibliology)

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of Christianity.

Ask Do you think it is important that we undertake this journey about doctrines? Why or why not?

Say Grace Fellowship believes it is important to have our groups go through these core beliefs together as early as possible in their group life so that we can all be on the same page about these matters. To be clear, the church doesn't require that you agree with its position on these to be a part of a small group, or to worship at the church. However, agreement on these core doctrines is required to serve in positions of leadership at the church. So let's not get ahead of ourselves with premature expectations, and just affirm that our group is going to be a safe place to share our thoughts, feelings, and understanding of these doctrines, even as we learn what the church believes and what the Bible teaches about these doctrines.

One final note before we get started: We may have a range of exposure to these doctrines, even within our group. Some of you might be very familiar with the doctrines and/or have strongly held convictions about them, while others are being newly introduced to the teachings. For those of us who may be in the former category, please strive to be encouraging and feel free to contribute your understanding and resisting any inclination to argue or even defend the doctrine within the group. We are going to agree to let the Scriptures speak objectively and authoritatively, even as we discuss and explore in the environment of grace.

Session 1: The Bible (Bibliology)

Hold up your Bible. Ask What is this? (prepare for both silly and serious responses)

Say It has been suggested that there are 99 essential doctrines of the Christian faith. We are not going to investigate 99 doctrines in the course of this series. Our focus is going to be much narrower, the "most essential of the essential," so we can have understanding and agreement on the major "pillars" of the Christian faith. And now, we begin with a discussion of the Bible. There are plenty of other areas that make sense on where we might otherwise begin.

Ask What could be some of those other vital areas of Christianity make sense for us to start with? (Answers may include God, Jesus, Trinity, man, sin, heaven, hell, end times, and others).

After collecting responses, **Say** These are all good responses, and we will even cover some of them in the course of our survey through this series. However, the reason why we are starting with the Bible is that, as the sacred text of Christianity, it contains within its pages the content upon which we construct the doctrines of all the subjects that have been mentioned (and many more that haven't been mentioned!)

Ask Going around our group, on a scale from 0-10, how would you self-evaluate your familiarity with the Bible, and why do you give yourself that score? (0 – never opened it and ignorant about its content, 10 – I study it regularly and am well-versed in it). Also, *why* are you familiar or unfamiliar with it? (*Answers will vary*)

Whether you have a group of Bible experts, a group of Bible neophytes, or a range of familiarity in your group, we
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are going to all start at the same place and make this journey through the core doctrines together. Those who are more experienced can aid those who are less familiar.

Say Let's begin by taking a look some basic Bible Facts (point to the call out box on the participant guide). Take a couple minutes to look them over.

Ask What stands out to you? Why? (Collect Responses, discuss)

Meet Your Bible

- The word Bible means "Book"
- 2 Main Sections: Old Testament & New Testament
- Comprised of 66 Books (39 in OT, 27 in NT)
 - 1, 189 Chapters
 - 41,173 Verses
 - Approx. 775,000 words (varies with translations)
- Written over span of 1,600 years
- Penned by 40 different writers from 20 different occupations or life stations, located in a range covering more than 2,000 miles
- Originally written in 3 different languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic)
- Includes the genres of historical narrative, biography, autobiography, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic, epistles (letters), and Gospel (proclamation biographical narrative)

Say These basic facts likely bring up several different questions, which we can gather and either try to answer or point to a resource that will help you answer them (*more about this in the note to follow*). However, in our remaining time together, we're going to look at four aspects of the Bible that help us understand why we use this as our reliable resource that guides us in our relationship with God (which, in turn, helps us know and understand the doctrines we will be exploring in our upcoming times together).

The first aspect we'll look at is **inspiration**, or more fully, ***the Bible is the Inspired Word of God***.

Inspiration

Read Definition: Biblical Inspiration teaches that ***the Bible was written by God through people***, with each penman writing from their own perspective, historical context, language and grammar.

Say While we have many Scriptures supporting the assertion that the Bible was inspired by God, these two verses both affirm the inspiration and illustrate the implications of it (***Have volunteers read these verses out loud***):

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Nobody has seen God on their own, unless God showed himself to them (John 1:18)

Ask:

- **What stands out to you in these verses?** (*answers will vary*)

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- **What do you see as the relationship between these two verses?** *(That if nobody has seen God, unless God has revealed himself to them, and the Bible is inspired by God to accomplish the purposes listed, then it is reasonable and logical to conclude that God indeed authored the Scriptures.)*

Read & Discuss *(help explain these terms as needed)*

Why Inspiration Matters

- The Bible's inspiration means the Bible is ***holy***...it is uniquely set apart among books and is uniquely in alignment with God's supernatural power and glory.
- The Bible's inspiration means the Bible is ***universal***...its message spans all cultures and all time.
- The Bible's inspiration means the Bible is ***normative***...its message is for all believers, everywhere.
- The Bible's inspiration means the Bible is ***authoritative***...it reveals truth on theology, doctrine, and morality. It has authority over personal feelings and emotions, over intellectual conclusions, opinions, human reason, and personal experiences.

Ask

- **Which of these assertions are most impacting to you? Why?** *(answers will vary)*

Say The second aspect we're going to explore is ***inerrancy***, or more fully, ***the Bible is the inerrant Word of God***.

Inerrant

Read Definition: Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. *(You could give a couple examples, e.g., that God made humans male and female; that we should obey our earthly authorities, etc. This helps us understand that the Bible's claims are reliable and supportable, worthy of our belief).*

Say To be clear about this, there are a couple qualifiers to this aspect.

- ***Minor uncertainties*** - there are only a few places in the original manuscripts where minor details are not in agreement or are unclear (an example of this is the length of the reign of King Saul listed in 1 Sam. 13:1). These minor instances do not affect any conclusions of ethics or doctrine.
- ***Self-disclosure***. In a few instances, the Bible points to extra-biblical writings. (e.g., John 20:30 and 21:25 state that Jesus said many more things, all of which were true and we would consider today to be inspired, inerrant and the word of God; Paul wrote another letter to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9) and a letter to the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16) which were *possibly* considered to have been inspired, inerrant and the word of God; The Bible says some of God's revealed truths were never recorded (2 John 1:12 Revelation 10:4; 2 Corinthians 12:3,4). These self-disclosures never contradict what has been included in the Scriptures.

Why Inerrancy Matters

- The Bible's inerrancy means the Bible is reliable to **communicate God's truth** and **to build your faith**.

Ask

- **Where is it hard for you to believe the Bible is inerrant (if anywhere)?** *(answers will vary)*
- **How does it help your faith to know that the Bible is inerrant?** *(answers will vary)*

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Say The third aspect of the Bible that we're going to introduce is the Bible's *infallibility*, or stated more fully, ***the Bible is the infallible Word of God.***

Infallible (or Sufficient, if you prefer)

Read Definition: The Bible is trustworthy as a guide to salvation and faith life; it will accomplish its purpose.

Say Again, there are a couple qualifiers to this concept:

- human ignorance – lack of knowledge about what the Bible states or reveals about God.
- human prejudice – disbelief.

Ask

- **Why do you think human ignorance and prejudice are limitations to the infallibility of God's Word?** (*If you are ignorant of God's truth, you cannot recognize it as God's truth when you witness it. Likewise, even if you know it, but are prejudiced against it, you won't believe it/receive it as God's truth.*)

Why Infallibility Matters

- The Bible's infallibility means **the Bible is effective to accomplish its purpose.**

Ask

- **What do you understand to be the Bible's purpose(s)?** (*answers may include, among many possibilities: revealing God, communicating the Gospel, instruction for life, revealing God's redemptive plan*)

Say The final aspect of the doctrine of the Bible is *integrity*, or stated fully, ***the Bible's integrity as the Word of God.***

Integrity (or Reliability, if you prefer)

Read Definition: The Bible has not been corrupted or degraded.

Say Again, the qualifiers on this aspect are related to human limitations, not limitations of the Bible itself:

- Scholarship - A lack of scholarship can affect the integrity (Joseph Smith, JW World Translation)
- Hermeneutics - interpretation of the Scriptures. Again, prejudices or biases can affect the integrity. (Modern attacks on sexual/identity ethics, other doctrines of God).

Why Integrity Matters

- The Bible's integrity means **the Bible has the unique ability to enlighten the reader to the truth and revelation of God.**

Review

Say To review, the four aspects of the doctrine of the Bible are:

Inspiration

Inerrancy

Infallibility

Integrity

Tied together, we believe that the Bible is *inspired* by God, *inerrant* in its original transmission to its writers, *infallible* in its *integrity*, able to establish its purposes to reveal God and communicate the Gospel to people unto salvation. Because of this, we trust the Bible to communicate the core doctrines that we will be exploring in the weeks to come.

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Ask Why does this matter to you and our world today? If you can trust the Bible to answer your spiritual questions, what are some of the questions you'd like to see if it answers?

Transition to closing, include times for prayer, coordination of plans to socialize, serve, or care for your group needs. Remember to communicate your next scheduled time to reconnect and continue your time in *Know What You Believe*.