



Part 1: What Is That In Your Hand?

APPETIZER: When God Gets Involved

When God decides to partner with us, he takes the ordinary and invests it with his power.
(Exodus 4:2; 1 Corinthians 1:14-16)

*Anabaptists were not the only ones reading the Bible with enthusiasm and fascination, but they were distinguished by an unusual passion for it. The Bible was read aloud, studied, memorized, recited, discussed, and applied by individuals, in the home, in church meetings, and in informal discussion groups.
~ Stuart Murray, Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*

DINE IN: The Origin & Value of The Bible

Matthew 19:4-5 (cf. Genesis 2:24); 2 Timothy 3:16

- **A LIBRARY:** 66 Books/Scrolls/Writings (39 Old, 27 New)
- **TIME FRAME:** Over a 1,500 year span (From about 1500 BCE to 100 CE)
- **AUTHORS:** Over 40 Authors, as compared to...
 - Qu'ran = delivered by an angel to one man.
 - Book of Mormon = delivered by an angel to one man.
- **LANGUAGES:** Writing in 3 Languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek
- **GENRES:** History, Poetry, Law, Parable, Biography, Prophecy, Official Church Correspondence, Personal Correspondence, Apocalyptic
- **TWO TESTAMENTS:** Before & After Jesus
- **EARLY FRAGMENTS:** We have more than 50 extant papyri fragments of New Testament books dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries.
- **COMPLETE MANUSCRIPTS:** Our oldest vellum manuscripts are almost complete copies of the New Testament and Old Testament together in codex form. They are known as the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian Manuscripts, dating between 300-450 CE. (All three were discovered after the translation of the King James Bible.)
- **FINAL CANON:** In the fourth century, under Constantine, the church drew a solid line around which books were in and which were out, based on the criteria of three questions:
 - Were they close in proximity (time & relationship) to Jesus? (Apostolicity)
 - Did they have widespread acceptance by the earliest Christians? (Catholicity)
 - Do they teach what has been passed down? (Orthodoxy)

THE LOGIC OF INSPIRATION...

1. A place to start – evidence suggests that the New Testament is basically historical. (I'm setting the bar low here so that even if you're a skeptic you can join the journey.)
 - a. Unparalleled teaching that revolutionized the world.
 - b. Unbroken line of oral tradition leading to written records.
 - c. Written within decades of actual events.
 - d. Historically unlikely movement (Jewish followers of a crucified Messiah) continues after leader's death.
 - e. Amazing accuracy of Jerusalem Temple destruction prophecy.
- And if the New Testament is basically historical, we can know that...
2. Jesus treated the Old Testament as a trustworthy record. (**Matthew 12:40-41**)
 3. Jesus saw the Old Testament as the words of God. (**Matt 19:4-5; Gen 2:24**)
 4. Jesus promised his Holy Spirit would teach and remind the apostles (leaders of the early church and authors of the New Testament). (**John 14:25-26; 1 Cor 2:13; 7:40**)
 5. Paul saw the Old Testament as inspired by God. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)
 6. Peter saw the Old Testament writers as moved by the Holy Spirit. (**2 Peter 1:20-21**)
 7. Peter saw Paul's writings as Scripture. (**2 Peter 3:15-16**)
 8. Paul viewed Luke's Gospel as Scripture. (**1 Timothy 5:18; Luke 10:7**)
 9. Jesus believed his words (message) would endure. (**Mark 13:31**)
 10. It is logically consistent to believe God, who revealed himself in time and space through Jesus, would preserve a record of his revelation.

WHAT IS THAT IN YOUR HANDS?

- A historical link to Jesus.
- An inspired gift from God.
- The ultimate demonstration of God's commitment to partner with people.

HOW DO WE GET THE MOST OUT OF IT?

1. Get a Bible.
 - Paper is better than screen.
 - Team translation is better than individual.
 - Study notes are better than none.
 - What you will use is better than what you won't.
2. Read it alone and together.
 - Study, Pray, Meditate
 - Bring it to Church and take notes.
3. Discuss what you are learning with others.
 - Home Church, Huddles, friends, family, seekers, and skeptics.

TAKE OUT: So What Now?

1. Get a Bible.
2. Develop a routine for reading, and for bringing with you.
3. Use sermon notes for further Bible study during the week.
4. Take your notes and Bible with you to Home Church.
5. Ask for help!

For Further Research...

- Listen/Watch our teaching series "The Scripture Scandals".
- Read Ferris Jabr, *The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper Vs. Screens* (from Scientific American online)

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. After reviewing Sunday's message, talk about what stood out to you – whether lessons learned or lingering questions. Take your time with this, since there is lots to cover.
2. Did you bring a Bible with you? Do you usually bring your own Bible to Home Church? How would you characterize your interaction with the Bible week by week?
 - A) Fully engaged.
 - B) Somewhat connected.
 - C) Take it or leave it – mostly leave it.
 - D) I don't learn best by reading, so I don't bother.
 - E) I just come for the refreshments.
 - F) Other.

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

3. Read **2 Timothy 3:10-17**. Don't feel obligated to cover every question. If something doesn't make sense, move on. There's lots of other good stuff ahead!
 - a. What verse or idea stands out to you the most?
 - b. What evidence is there in this passage of the early church's commitment to face-to-face, shoulder-to-shoulder, in person discipleship?
 - c. Like Timothy, some of us have learned the Bible from childhood. Others of us are new to it all. What are some advantages and disadvantages to both?
 - d. The Scriptures make us wise for salvation, but don't actually save us. Talk about the relationship between the Bible and the Word of God, our Saviour, Jesus. How does our use of Scripture honour Jesus as our Lord?
 - e. Scripture is meant to "equip" us for "every good work". Talk about your own use of Scripture.

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. Take five minutes to quietly meditate on **verse 17**. Let God speak to you about your use of Scripture. Envision what your life can be as you engage with the text and apply it to your life regularly. Allow God to kindle a desire within you for more learning and living his message.
5. Use your 2/4/6/8 Huddle Questions. It is especially important to identify and respond to anything God has been saying to you now, through this week's teaching.

Quotes

Welcome to a new three week series about the Bible – What it is, where it comes from, and how to use it.

The Holy Scripture is the highest and best of books, abounding in comfort under all afflictions and trials.

~ Martin Luther (1483 –1546), Table Talk

The Bible is to us what the star was to the wise men.

~ Thomas Adams

I first thought that quote said *star wars* – so I included it.

~ Bruxy Cavey

All that I am I owe to Jesus Christ, revealed to me in His divine Book.

~ David Livingstone (1813 – 18730)

The Holy Scriptures are our letters from home.

— Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)

I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from The Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book.

— Abraham Lincoln

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Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

~ The Apostle Paul

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

~ The Apostle Paul

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. 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.

~ The Apostle Peter

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

~ Jesus

Happy New Year!
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