



INTERACTIVE FAITH

AN ONLINE BIBLE STUDY SERIES

“I’d like to read my Bible, but . . .”

This is an outline that will follow the online Bible class presentation. The entire presentation for each session will be posted online after the session concludes. You may use this as a guide and as a place to take notes.

Introduction

“Polls indicate that more Americans than ever before identify themselves as church-goers while, simultaneously, the rate of biblical illiteracy has never been higher. In the mainline Christian churches the situation is almost dismal.”

“God’s Word is our great heritage, and shall be ours forever!”

The Lutheran motto of *Sola Scriptura!* (*By Scripture alone!*)

Why don’t people read their Bibles as much as they should?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Even if we **know we should**; and even if we **want to** read and study our Bibles there are . . .

Other obstacles:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Purpose of this course

- To help you grow . . .
 - 📖 *Romans 15:4* “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.”
 - 📖 *Philippians 3:10* “I want to know Christ.”
- In your _____

📖 *Romans 10:17 "Faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."*

- In your _____

📖 *Colossians 3:16-17 "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom . . . and whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

- In your _____

DISCUSSION

1. Explore with honesty some of the obstacles that you have experience when it comes to regularly reading and studying the Bible on your own.
2. What practical steps could you take to make it easier to set aside regular time for reading the Bible.
3. Martin Luther was an extremely busy and productive man, writing and preaching hundreds of sermons, producing theological works, translating the New Testament, and teaching. In spite of that busy schedule, he set aside hours each day for prayer and study of the Scriptures. When someone asked him how he could find time to do that, he said that he would not be able to do nearly as much work if he *didn't* devote time to Bible study. What do you think he meant by that?

Part 1: Why do we need the Bible?

There are only two ways to know anything about God

- The **Natural Knowledge** of God; it tell us
 - _____
 - _____
- The **Revealed Knowledge** of God; it tells us
 - _____

We can know some things about God by looking at the world around us

 *Hebrews 3:4 "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."*

 *Psalms 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."*

 *Psalms 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, "There is no god."*

- God is _____

 *Romans 1:20 "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*

- God is _____

 *Acts 14:17 "He has shown his kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food and fills your heart with joy."*

- God is _____

 *Psalms 104:24 "How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures."*

- God is _____

We can know some things about God through our conscience

- Definition of **conscience**: _____

- **Conscience** tells us

 *Romans 2:14-15 "When Gentiles, who do not have the [written] law, do by nature the things required by law . . . they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them."*

 *Romans 1:32 "They [unbelievers] know God's righteous decrees that those who do such things deserve death."*

- _____
- _____

The natural knowledge of God can NOT tell us

📖 (Paul’s experience in Athens in Acts 17) *Acts 17: “Men of Athens! I see that you are in every way very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim to you.”*

- _____

📖 *Romans 8:32 “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not graciously give us all things?”*

- _____

📖 *1 Timothy 3:15 “From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

📖 *Acts 16:29-32 “The jailer asked . . . ‘What must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved—you and your whole household.’ Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him.”*

- _____

Without the Bible, how do people shape their ideas about God?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

DISCUSSION

1. Give concrete examples from human history or culture that human beings have an inborn, natural knowledge of God.
2. How does the teaching of evolution ignore the evidence that there is a god?
3. Sometimes people say that it is not fair that those who have not heard the message about Jesus are condemned eternally. In Romans 1:18-32, how does the Apostle Paul make it clear that unbelievers are “without excuse?”
4. If people base their knowledge about God only on what they know from nature, from conscience, or from their own ideas, what is the inevitable result?
5. What is the one thing that makes Christianity different from every other religion or religious system?

The Revealed Knowledge of God: God telling us about himself in the Scriptures

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 John 7:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

📖 Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD, that is my name. I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."

📖 Isaiah 45:21 "There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and Savior; there is none but me."

- God is the _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 Matthew 28:19 "...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

📖 2 Corinthians 13:14 "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God [the Father], and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit give you peace."

📖 Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one."

- He is _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 Psalm 145:7 "The LORD our God is righteous in all his ways."

📖 Leviticus 19:2 "I, the LORD your God, am holy."

📖 Isaiah 6:3 "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts."

- He is _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 Genesis 33:11 "I am God Almighty."

📖 Matthew 19:28 "With God, all things are possible."

📖 Jeremiah 32:27 "I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?"

- He is _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 Psalm 147:5 "Great is our LORD and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit."

📖 John 21:17 "[Peter said to Jesus] Lord, you know all things."

📖 Luke 12:7 "Indeed, there very hairs of your head are numbered [by God]."

📖 Hebrews 4:13 "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight."

- He is _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 Psalm 139:8 "If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths you are there."

📖 Jeremiah 23:23-24 "Can anyone hide in secret places that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?"

- He is _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 John 8:58 Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am."

📖 Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

📖 1 Timothy 1:17 "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible . . . be honor and glory for ever and ever!"

- He is _____

Read the following passages; what one characteristic of God do they all describe?

📖 Ephesians 1:7 "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us."

📖 Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God."

📖 Psalm 51:1 "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out all my transgressions."

- He is _____
- Note the significance of the name **YAHWEH יהוה**

The Bible is the account of God's gracious promises made and kept. How is God's promise seen in each of the following times in history?

- Creation: _____
- Eden after the fall: _____
- The chosen people and the prophets: _____
- The Savior's birth, life, death, and resurrection: _____
- The New Testament church: _____
- The church today: _____
- Future in eternity: _____

DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it necessary for God to reveal these characteristics of his in the Scriptures?
2. Discuss each one of these characteristics and why it is important for your faith to know this about the true God.
3. If the entire Bible is an account not just of history but of *His Story*, what benefit is there for you to know that story thoroughly?
4. Give examples of times when your knowledge of Scripture (without having a Bible in front of you) proved to be beneficial. Or, taking a risk, give examples of times when you wished you knew your Bible better.
5. Why is the Old Testament just as important as the New Testament?
6. As you read the Scriptures, God’s faithfulness to his promises stands out. What does that mean for you personally? For your family? For the church?

Things to remember:

- **The focus and heart of the Scriptures:** _____
- **The central theme of the Scriptures:** _____
- **The purpose of the Scriptures:**
 - To _____ of my sin
 - To _____ me from unbelief to faith in Christ
 - To give me _____ in my relationship with God
 - To give me _____ for the present and the future
 - To shape my _____ toward God and others
 - To _____ when my faith is attacked
 - To _____ to serve

The importance of being “biblically literate Christians”

- For ourselves:

- For our children and future generations

- In our interaction with others
 - 📖 *1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*

 - 📖 *2 Thessalonians 2 :10-12;15 "They [unbelievers] perish because they refused to love the truth and be saved . . . God sends them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie . . . So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you."*

DISCUSSION:

1. There is a knock at your door. Two nicely dressed young men with Bibles in their hands ask if you have a few minutes to speak with them. Your inclination is to close the door. What else might you do? How will being confident in your knowledge of the Bible help you to view this as an opportunity rather than something to avoid?
2. We live in a culture in which biblical values and truths are under constant attack. Christians can easily be influenced by the culture around us in such matters as homosexuality, abortion, marriage, and sexual behaviors. How will a thorough knowledge of Scripture help you when the culture war arrives at your doorstep?

To think about at home: Read a chapter or two of one of the New Testament epistles. Find descriptions about who God is and what he reveals about himself and his characteristics.

Part 2: Basic Assumptions needed to understand the Scriptures correctly

- We believe that the Bible **inspired** by God
 -  2 Peter 1:21 *“Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*
 -  2 Timothy 3:16 *“All Scripture is God-breathed.”*
 -  2 Samuel 23:2 *“The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his Word was on my tongue.”*
 -  1 Corinthians 2:12-13 *“This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit.”*

Definition of “inspiration”: _____

- **“Plenary verbal inspiration”**
 - “Plenary” means _____
 - “Verbal” emphasizes _____
 - Inspiration is not: a: _____
 - Inspiration is not” b: _____
- The **process** of inspiration: How did God inspire the human writers
 - By a: _____
 - By b: _____
 - By c: _____
 - **Not by** _____

- We believe that the Bible is **inerrant**
 - Definition: _____
 - In what areas? _____
- We believe that the Bible is **infallible**
 - Definition: _____

DISCUSSION

1. Why is the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures such an important doctrine?
2. The reality is that those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible are a minority among Christians. Why should we not let that discourage us? How might we interact with Christians who do not share that conviction?
3. What should be our response when science seems “prove” that the Bible is incorrect?
4. What should be our approach when the Bible seems to contradict itself?

- We believe that the Bible is **practical**
 - Definition: _____
- We believe that the Bible is **relevant**
 - Definition: _____
 - _____
- We believe the Bible is **powerful**
 - To do what? _____
- We believe that the Bible is **understandable**
- We know that we are **sinners** and that part of us will resist what God says
- We know that we are **believers** who will want to read, hear, learn, and know his Word

DISCUSSION

1. How would you answer someone who says that the things taught in the Bible were only the reflection of thoughts and ideas of a different time and culture but are not applicable to today's modern world?
2. We say that the Bible is *practical*. Does that mean that we will find specific answers to all of our questions, situations, and decisions? Explain.
3. We believe in the power of God's Word to change hearts. What does that say to us when we are confronted with deep and vexing problems in our society such as drugs, violence, abortion, or the disregard for the biblical definition of marriage?

Part 3: Rules for interpreting the Scriptures

- Know the **context**

Definition of *context*: _____

DISCUSSION

1. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 3:21-24; then read James 2:14-24. How does the *context* of what is being discussed help you to understand the description of faith in these two sections correctly?
2. If a book is a book of poetry, what kind of language is much more likely to be used than in a book of history?
3. What would you say to those who say that the creation account should be understood figuratively?

- Take the words at **face value**: *literal unless clearly figurative*
- Prefer the **simple meaning** to the complicated
- **“Let Scripture interpret Scripture”**
- Distinguish between **Law and Gospel**

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| ○ Law: _____ | Gospel: _____ |

EXERCISE

Law or Gospel?

Ephesians 1 and the doctrine of election (predestination)

Ephesians 1:3-14 ³“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.

1. Is this a LAW teaching or a GOSPEL teaching? Point to the repeated words that tell you it is one or the other.
2. When would you want to read this section of Scripture?
3. Once you have determined whether this is law or gospel, what questions should never be a part of the discussion about this doctrine?

- Ask these **guiding questions**:
 - What does this portion of the Bible tell me about **God**?
 - What does it tell me about **me**?
 - What does it tell me about **my actions toward God**?
 - What does it tell me about **my actions toward others**?
 - What does it tell me about **this world**?
 - What does it tell me about **the future**?

EXCERCISE

As you read the following section of Scripture, ask and answer the “guiding questions” listed above:

Selected portions of Ephesians 2, 4, 5, and 6:

As for you, you were dead in your transgression and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the rule of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of [God’s] wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. . . So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking . . . Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work . . . Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth . . . Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. . . But among you there must not be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed. . . Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . children obey your parents in the Lord. . . Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.

Part 4: The Roman world in apostolic time: “The Word of the Lord grew.”

- Preceding empires, each built on the last
-
- Religion in the Roman empire
-
- “When the time had fully come . . .”
- - Factors in the Roman world that God used to spread the gospel:
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

DISCUSSION

1. From just a handful of believers gathered on a hill in Galilee when Jesus ascended, the Christian church grew and spread rapidly. In spite of early persecution, only 300 years later Christianity was declared to be the official religion of the Roman empire.
 - a. How did this happen?
 - b. How does this give us comfort and courage today?
2. What are the similarities between the Roman world and the world we live in today? How is that a comfort and an encouragement to us?
3. How does our commitment to, understanding of, and dependence on the Word relate to the mission that God has given his church today (and until Jesus returns)?
4. Give examples to what happens to Christian churches when the Word is no longer the foundation and source of all teaching.

Conclusion: Time to get to work!

- Set aside time every day when you will not be disturbed or distracted
- Can be alone or with spouse/family
- Have a plan
 - Book by book beginning with Genesis (not recommended)
 - Chronological (not recommended)
 - Classic (one Old Testament, one Psalm, one New Testament)
 - One Old Testament/one New Testament
 - Rotate:
 - Gospel
 - Old Testament history
 - Pauline Epistle
 - Old Testament poetry
 - General Epistle
 - Old Testament Prophet

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-reading-plan/> or Google “Read my Bible in a Year”

- **Recognize the need** and importance
- Gather the **tools**
 - Get a study Bible: *Lutheran Study Bible (ESV)*, *Concordia Study Bible (NIV)*
 - Use a Bible that you can write in
 - Have more than one translation on hand
 - People’s Bible or other commentary
 - Topical Bible
 - Concordance
- Do your homework: **background information on book and author**
- **Pray** before, while, and after you read
- Read with **thought**, not just to get through
- Keep in mind and apply the **principles of interpretation**
- Always be asking and answering the **guiding questions**
- **Make notes** and underline key passages
- **Search the Scriptures** on related topics
- Attend **Bible class(es)** at your church
- **Don’t get discouraged**
- **Expect God’s blessing** on your time with his Word

Let the Word of Christ dwell among you richly!