

Reunited

BIBLE STUDY CHALLENGE

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by
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The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches
WAKE FOREST, NORTH CAROLINA

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How to Use This Study

The *Reunited Bible Study Challenge* can be used by both groups and individuals. While the guidelines given below are geared toward group studies, they are easily adaptable to individual studies.

This Bible study is designed to facilitate discussion about the Bible and what it says about how the modern church and family should reach the future generations with the gospel.

Time Commitment: The *Reunited Bible Study Challenge* is an 8-week study. Each weekly Bible study is designed for a 1 to 1-1/2 hour Bible study meeting.

Requirements: For the first meeting, the Bible study group should have one copy of the film *Divided* available.

For all subsequent weeks, the Bible study group should have copies of the Bible and the book *A Weed in the Church* in order to do the assigned readings and referencing.

There are two sections to each weekly Bible study:

1. The Pre-Study – Before You Meet

The pre-study consists of three parts:

Assigned Reading

To maximize discussion and learning, Bible study members should come to each Bible study having

read the assigned readings in the Bible and in *A Weed in the Church*. Both of these will orient Bible study members to the topic of the current week as well as prepare them for discussion.

Memory Verse

The memory verse is designed to highlight a key aspect of each week of the Bible study. When committed to memory, it provides a Scripture passage for each Bible study member that helps define and defend some portion of each week's topic. All Bible study members should commit this verse to memory.

The Bible study group leader should test one or more of the Bible study members on their memory verse comprehension at the beginning of each weekly group meeting.

Thoughts from Your Reading

Bible study members should write down any thoughts/questions that they have from the readings from either the Bible or *A Weed in the Church*. At the beginning of each study, the group leader may open up discussion on any of these thoughts/questions.

2. The Actual Study

The actual study occurs when Bible study members gather together to go through the material in this book. The study consists of four parts:

Opening Thoughts

The *Opening Thoughts* section orients the Bible study group to the topic of the week. The Bible study leader (or some member of the Bible study group) should read this section aloud to the group.

Investigating the Word

This is the heart of the Bible study – delving into God's Word. This section is intended to facilitate discussion and is to be lead by the group leader. Each of the verses should be read aloud by one of the group members. The group leader should then read the questions and promote discussion.

At certain points, the Bible study group will be asked to read additional Bible verses or parts of *A Weed in the Church*. The group leader should, at these times, assign one or more group members to do the reading.

Each Bible study group member should use the space under each discussion question to write down thoughts and answers to each question.

Some Bible study groups will discuss the Bible passages and questions more or less quickly. If a Bible study group finishes the Bible passages and questions quickly, there are one or more additional passages provided each week for further discussion. A group leader may also use these additional passages as homework assignments or for further research/thoughts.

Application

This section contains one or more brief thoughts and applications that the group leader should read to the Bible study group before the close of the Bible study.

SUGGESTED STUDY TIME ALLOTMENT

RECOMMENDED: FOR 1-1/2 HOUR STUDY

- 1. OPEN IN PRAYER 5 MINUTES
- 2. RECITE MEMORY VERSE 5 MINUTES
- 3. DISCUSS QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS FROM THE READINGS 10 MINUTES
- 4. READ/DISCUSS THE *OPENING THOUGHTS* 10 MINUTES
- 5. INVESTIGATE THE WORD 45 MINUTES
- 6. READ/DISCUSS APPLICATIONS 10 MINUTES
- 7. CLOSE IN PRAYER 5 MINUTES

FOR 1 HOUR STUDY

- 1. OPEN IN PRAYER 5 MINUTES
- 2. RECITE MEMORY VERSE 5 MINUTES
- 3. DISCUSS QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS FROM THE READINGS 5 MINUTES
- 4. READ/DISCUSS THE *OPENING THOUGHTS* 5 MINUTES
- 5. INVESTIGATE THE WORD 30 MINUTES
- 6. READ/DISCUSS APPLICATIONS 5 MINUTES
- 7. CLOSE IN PRAYER 5 MINUTES

HELPFUL NOTES

Please note that there are two printings of the book *A Weed in the Church*. All page numbers in this Bible study refer to the second printing of *A Weed in the Church*.

The goal of this Bible study is not to divide the church but to proclaim the sufficiency of Scripture for youth ministry.

On the Use of the Old Testament

You will notice that a few of the passages of Scripture in this Bible study are from the Old Testament. We want to acknowledge that there may be people reading this who believe that the Old Testament has no bearing on the church today. Whether you embrace this perspective or not, we want to submit that the arguments for age integration do not rest solely on the Old Testament. In fact, we do not need the Old Testament to prove that the normative pattern of early church life was age integrated. The New Testament is clear on the matter of age integration and youth discipleship, and it is consistent with Old Testament patterns and principles.

One of the hermeneutical premises of this study is that the New Testament supports the use of the Old Testament in the church today. For example, Paul the apostle often employed the Old Testament to make practical arguments of theology for the New Testament church, such as in Romans 3:10-18, where he used eight Old Testament texts ¹ to prove the sinfulness of man. Paul even uses Old Testament case law to argue that elders “who rule well” should “be counted worthy of double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17-18) and those who “sow spiritual things” ought to “reap...material things” (1 Cor. 9:9-11). On the road to Emmaus, Jesus expounded the Old Testament to show that it spoke of Himself. ² The New Testament is filled with quotations from the Old Testament. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul draws upon Old Testament Israel as an example for God’s people today: “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” (1 Cor. 10:6). In 2 Corinthians 8:15, he uses a quote concerning the gathering of the manna in the Old Testament to teach in the New. Further, he says, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Paul displays the goodness of God

toward His people in 2 Corinthians 9:9 by quoting Psalm 112:9. The New Testament affirms the Old by demonstrating that the Old speaks of Christ and is fulfilled by Christ³, that the Old gives us a law to obey⁴, and that the Old provides examples of faith by which we ought to be encouraged to “look unto Jesus.”⁵ All of these things display the “general equity” of the Old Testament, declaring that it is useful for the New Testament Church.

One of the most important New Testament texts on the use and authority of the Old Testament in the church is 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The phrase “all Scripture” has primary contextual reference to the Old Testament Scripture. Therefore, Paul is stating that every single verse in the Old Testament is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” We should also consider 1 Peter 3:5-6, where the holy women of the Old Testament are held forth as an example of how Christian women should live.

It is therefore the critical assumption of this book that we should use the same methods of handling the Old Testament as we see Jesus and the writers of the New Testament using. There are millions of people in churches today who have a dark view of the Old Testament and, therefore, are unwilling to interpret it in the same way the New Testament writers did. Some people actually dislike parts of the Old Testament, and they are not afraid to tell you that the inspired Word of God in the Law and Prophets is offensive to them. They may falsely declare that the Old Testament is about rules, and the New Testament is about relationships. They may even say that the God of the Old Testament is harsh, and the New Testament Jesus is gentle. They seem to be unaware that every word of the Old Testament is a word of Christ and was written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We have known many people who look at the Old Testament as something like an old, garrulous woman who babbles on and on (things they do not appreciate) and all of a sudden says something brilliant and useful (things they do appreciate). These people have several favorite inspiring verses, often from the Psalms or Proverbs, but relegate all others to an antiquated era. They have, in fact, become autonomous, authoritative, moral arbiters of the faith, embracing what they like and relegating everything else to an outmoded era.

We deny the proposition that something from the Old Testament has to be repeated in the New Testament in order for it to be accepted. Upon what authority is this binding principle based? Richard Barcellos asks:

Where does the New Testament tell us that the absence of Old Testament commands is the death knell of such commands? Would this not mean that only those verses of the book of Proverbs repeated in the New Testament are relevant for Christians?⁶

He exposes the fact that this is a “hermeneutical presupposition.” Peter Masters, the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle⁷ in London, explains the error in this way, “This wayward test takes away at a stroke most of the Bible.”⁸

The sufficiency of Scripture must be distinguished from other ways of thinking about Scripture.

THE FIRST MEETING

Charting the Course

Opening Thoughts (Read Aloud)

If All We Had Was Scripture

What would church and family life be like if we only considered the Scripture? We hope this Bible study will help lead you to some of the answers to this question.

This Bible study seeks to promote the urgent necessity of our dedication to the sufficiency of Scripture. The Word of God is wholly sufficient and authoritative to govern all areas of faith and practice, yet the age-old battle over this doctrine continues unabated in our day. Today's church is patterning itself after the traditions of man, and the house of God has become a house of inventions and a mirror of the world. The church is not to be man's playground. We must build our lives around Scripture alone, ceasing to learn the ways of the Gentiles and casting ourselves on every single word of Scripture, because our God is sufficient.

Is Newer Truer?

The modern pattern of age-segregated discipleship is a rather new phenomenon. There have been various expressions of this throughout history, but nothing in history parallels the systematic and comprehensive form it has taken in modern society. J. I. Packer, commenting on the lust for newness,

reflects the spirit of our age: “The newer is the truer, only what is recent is decent, every shift of ground is a step forward, and every latest word must be hailed as the last word on its subject.”⁹

Of course, Packer does not believe that newer is truer, and neither do we. We believe that we need to return to the ancient landmarks.

Progressive Sanctification

However, there is hope for the future for all who turn to God and God alone. Our hope is in His power to heal and change His people according to His Word. God has organized His people so that their sanctification can move forward regardless of what everyone else is doing. This is facilitated by how He has made local churches free to obey the Lord, regardless of what other churches might be doing. “Every congregation, however little or great it may be, should see for itself that it acts properly and well and waits for no one.”¹⁰ “We must conform ourselves to the image of God and never allow pride to get in the way...At all costs, we must be clay, which is moldable by the Lord, willing to change to conform to the best understanding we have of Christ.”¹¹

As we consider the discipleship of the next generation, our prayer is like the one Alexander Whyte prayed:

“Hear us, then, for our children, O our Father... In season and out of season; we shall not go up into our bed; we shall not give sleep to our eyes nor slumber to our eyelids till we and all our seed are right with Thee.”¹²

Prioritization of Church and Family Life

As we do the good work of prioritization in our lives, we always have to face the issue of relative importance. This means that we make sure that the really big things in life are first in priority and the small things fall lower on the scale of importance.

One of the propositions of this Bible study is that church and family life stand tall among the most important priorities of life. The film *Divided* and the book *A Weed in the Church* state that your family and the family of God are of enormous importance. Not only does the church and family serve great eschatological purposes for the glory of God, but they also work together in a symbiotic relationship where each one is divinely designed (specifically) to bless the other.

As you open this Bible study and begin your journey through it, our prayer is that God would open up His Word to you and that you would trust in Him alone for your youth discipleship methodology. The Bible teaches that there are only two ways – God’s ways and man’s. Sir Francis Bacon said: “A man’s nature, runs either to herbs or weeds, therefore let him seasonably water the one, and destroy the

other.”¹³ May it be that all who engage in the studies across these two would be found uprooting the weeds and fertilizing the herbs.

Watch *Divided*

Please watch *Divided* as a group. Use the following space to take notes during the showing:

Outline of *Divided*

Key Points

People Who Are Interviewed or Speak During *Divided*

Your Thoughts and Questions

WEEK 1

The Sufficiency of the Word of God

Before You Meet

Reading from the Bible: Genesis 3:1; Deuteronomy 4:2; 11:18-21; Isaiah 8:19-20; Matthew 28:18-20; John 1:1; 17:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 22:18-19

Reading from *A Weed in the Church*: Chapter 5

Memory Verse

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. —2 Tim. 3:16-17

Thoughts from Your Reading

OPENING THOUGHTS

There are several words that describe the Word of God, some of which include *inspiration* (it was written by God), *infallibility* (it is without error), and *sufficiency* (it speaks with authority to every area of life). This first week's study will guide us through several key Scripture passages that deal with the last of the above-mentioned words: the sufficiency of Scripture. Before we begin studying the doctrine that Scripture is sufficient, it is valuable to realize the importance of this concept. The sufficiency of Scripture sets up a standard or a guide by which we should test all ideas, concepts, words, and actions of man. In a nutshell, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture contends that God gave man parameters for living. It argues that in some form or fashion, Scripture has something to say about every area of life. God did not leave man to figure things out all by himself. Instead, God, in His mercy, gave the Bible - His Word - to lead mankind. There are many people in the church today who believe that Scripture is inerrant, but do not live as if it is sufficient.

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is integral to the main focus of this study – the discipleship of youth. God's Word, the Bible, does speak to the area of youth discipleship, and it is therefore vital that we search its pages and conform to the leading of Holy Scripture in both the content of, as well as the methodology for, youth discipleship. This session is dedicated to the proposition that Scripture is sufficient for church and family life.

Notes and Discussion on the Opening Thoughts

Investigating the Word

— **Passage #1: 2 Timothy 3:16-17** (READ ALOUD) —

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. —2 Tim. 3:16-17

Discussion Questions

1. “All Scripture” refers to everything in Scripture and specifically to the Old Testament, since at the time of the writing of Second Timothy, the primary Scriptures in use were the Old Testament. (See page 79 in *A Weed in the Church*.) Based on this passage, what is “all Scripture” useful for?

2. Who is identified as the Author of every Word of Scripture? How should this impact how carefully we read, study, and practically apply Scripture?

3. How may a “man of God...be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”? **On Your Own:** In what ways do you apply this passage to your life?

— **Passage #2: Revelation 22:18-19** (READ ALOUD) —

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

—Rev. 22:18-19

Discussion Questions

1. In this passage, God describes two main punishments. What are these punishments, and what are the reasons given that God would use them?

2. According to the apostle John, what value does God place upon His Word?

3. Read Deuteronomy 4:2. (Deuteronomy 4:2 is discussed in more detail later.) Both Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19 indicate that God takes His Word seriously. What are ways in which the modern church adds to or takes away from the Word of God? **On Your Own:** What are ways in which you add to or take away from the Word of God either through not following the Word of God or by adding traditions or rules to your life (that are not commanded in the Word of God) in order to seek to gain the favor of God?

— **Passage #3: Romans 15:4** (READ ALOUD) —

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. —Rom. 15:4

Discussion Questions

1. Those “things...written before” refer to that which was written in the Old Testament Scriptures. What does this teach about the importance of the Old Testament?
2. Does Paul in this New Testament passage treat the Old Testament as if it is not important? Why should Christians today not treat the Old Testament as if it is not important?
3. What does Paul teach us about how we should use the Old Testament?

— **Passage #4: Deuteronomy 11:18-21** (READ ALOUD) —

Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. —Deut. 11:18-21

Discussion Questions

1. How does this passage address the issue of ministry to youth? How is the description of ministry to youth in this passage different from modern youth ministry or Sunday school?
2. What blessing is spoken about for those who obey God's command given in Deuteronomy 11:18-21?
3. Does the Bible speak in any way about how youth are to be ministered to? With the answer to this first question in mind, what should be the starting point for building youth ministry?

Additional Passages

— Passage #5: John 1:1 (READ ALOUD) —

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
—John 1:1*

Discussion Questions

1. Read John 1:14. Who is the Word? (See page 86 in *A Weed in the Church*.)
2. How does this passage teach us about the sufficiency of Christ? (See pages 86-87 in *A Weed in the Church*.)
3. Why can the authority of the Scriptures not be separated from the authority of Christ?

— **Passage #6: Deuteronomy 4:2** (READ ALOUD) —

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. —Deut. 4:2

Discussion Questions

1. Deuteronomy 4:1 deals with the Law of God, saying, “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you.” What is the “word” that Deuteronomy 4:2 is referring to when it says, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it”?
2. Read Matthew 15:4-6. How did the scribes and Pharisees disobey Deuteronomy 4:2?
3. Deuteronomy 4:2 makes a distinction between man’s laws and God’s Law by commanding not to add to nor take away from God’s Law. When we add to or take away from God’s Law, we are saying that we are in a position to judge it. Which is more important in the Bible: man’s law or God’s? Why is God’s Law important, and why should man value it above any other law?

— **Passage #7: John 17:17** (READ ALOUD) —

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. —John 17:17

Discussion Questions

1. What is Christ petitioning His Father to do? Read Ephesians 5:26-27. What does the word *sanctify* mean?
2. What does Christ ask His Father to use as the means of sanctifying His people?
3. Read John 18:38. Have you ever heard the question in John 18:38 or had it asked of you? How did you respond? What is the answer to this question? Some people argue that, while there is truth, we cannot understand it. Read Psalm 119:130. Is the truth of God able to be understood (at least in part)?

— **Passage #9: Genesis 3:1** (READ ALOUD) —

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” —Gen. 3:1

Discussion Questions

1. How does the serpent question the authority of God?
2. Today, there are many philosophies that wage war with God, such as the use of reason as the only standard for determining if God exists; or the need to prove God through science; or the use of pragmatic arguments for doing something other than what the Bible commands. How are these different philosophies warring against the authority of God in the same manner in which Satan warred against God in Genesis 3:1?
3. Before Satan tempted Eve, Adam and Eve trusted God unconditionally - without the need for proofs or the need to test if God was truthful. Satan presented a new form of thinking, which was to doubt God. What does mankind's pre-fall state versus his post-fall state teach about how we ought to trust God and His Word today against all man-made philosophies?

— **Passage #10: Matthew 28:18-20** (READ ALOUD) —

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.
—Matt. 28:18-20

Discussion Questions

1. What did Jesus want the nations instructed in? What were “all [the] things that [Christ had] commanded [the disciples]”?
2. Is the Word of God sufficient to instruct the nations? How?
3. How well does the modern church line up with the Great Commission? **On Your Own:** Discuss how you as an individual and how your family live out the Great Commission. Do you primarily use the Word of God or other resources and reasoning? How do you need to reform your evangelism methods to conform to Christ’s teaching?

APPLICATION

William Tyndale was a Bible translator who lived near the end of the 1400s and at the beginning of the 1500s. John Foxe, author of the famous Book of Martyrs, recorded the following story about William Tyndale:

*Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drove him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, 'We were better to be without God's laws than the pope's.' Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, 'I defy the pope, and all his laws;' and added, 'If God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than he did.'*¹⁴

There was a time when the Word of God was not widely available. Today, it is prevalent, but, in the eyes of many people, it lacks authority and sufficiency. The Word of God is authoritative because it is the Word of the living God, and as seen from the above passages, it is sufficient for all of life, including the evangelization of the lost. We should, as Christians, rely more upon God's wisdom than man's and cling to the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God.

For Further Study

1. The *Sufficiency of Scripture* Audio Set — available for free download online at ncfic.org under the *Resources* tab
2. The *Sufficiency of Scripture Study Guide* — available at ncfic.org

