

Week 2 - Sola Scriptura

By Scripture Alone

Learning Objectives

- Scripture has authority and is our standard of truth.
- The truth found in Scripture should impact how we live!

Pray for your time together as a group.

Defining “Authority”

? What have been some of the most influential “inputs” (people, books/authors, music, etc.) into your life up to this point? How have they shaped your worldview?

Optional Transition: We’re going to start our discussion tonight of the doctrine Sola Scriptura—that the Bible has ultimate authority—with Hope’s Statement of Faith regarding the Bible.

Read Out Loud: Hope Community Church’s Statement of Faith regarding the Bible: We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

Leader’s Note: The phrase “original manuscripts” might be new or confusing to your group members. This phrase refers to the fact that the Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek centuries ago. Those original manuscripts (which were eventually lost to time) were then copied multiple times. Today, we translate the Bible to English from those copies of originals, yet the accuracy of our current English translation is incredibly high. Any variance in text that happened over time is marked in our English Bibles via footnotes.

Also, your group members might have differing views on Hope’s SOF. Our study doesn’t have a goal of convincing them that this is true. If you desire to have that conversation with them, please ensure that it doesn’t derail the rest of your group. If you feel like you need additional help in navigating this topic, please reach out to smallgroups@hopecc.com.

Optional Transition: With this as our basis, let’s spend some time talking about authority.

? What do you think it means for something or someone to have authority?

Possible Answers: They make decisions and others have to follow. Controlling. Merriam-Webster defines authority as power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior; freedom granted by one in authority; or persons in command.

? How does something/someone acquire authority? What examples come to mind?

Possible Answer: It can either be inherent or granted by someone.

Scripture has authority in and of itself--whether or not we acknowledge it. I was given a promotion, so someone else granted me authority over other staff at my work. I became a parent--it can fall into both categories (inherent and granted).

? Optional: Who or what has authority in your life? What does it look for you to follow their leading?

Possible Answers: My parents--being respectful when they offer guidance, my spouse--being on the same team around decision-making, my supervisor--pursuing their (God-honoring) goals.

Leader's Note: Not everyone will have healthy examples of authority in their lives. If needed, feel free to spend some time here discussing the difference between positive and negative uses of authority. If someone needs additional counseling or care, you can direct them to Hope's support ministry, Restoring Hope (restoringhope@hopecc.com).

Optional Transition: Scripture has authority because it's the word of God. Let's take a look at a passage that explains this further.

The Authority Of Scripture

Read Out Loud: 2 Peter 1:16-21 (NIV)

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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."¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ 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.

? Where did Peter say that the apostles got their stories (vs. 16-18), and how does that impact their message's validity?

Possible Answers: From personal experience, firsthand! They "spoke from God" by the Holy Spirit. Since it's from God rather than their own interpretation, it is true and accurate.

? In Matthew 28:18 (NIV), Jesus makes a radical proclamation, saying that "...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Where do we see God's view of authority in Scripture? How does that compare and contrast with what you've encountered?

Possible Answers: Throughout Scripture we can see God declaring that it is His message being told to the people. Jesus is called the Word of God (John), and His words and teachings are equal with God's in authority.

Leader's Note: You'll find a list of passages at the end of the study that speak more to God's authority/the authority of Scripture. Feel free to refer to some of those if needed to spark discussion.

? In what ways have you seen the authority of Scripture abused? What can we do to avoid this ourselves?

Possible Answers: Refrain from cherry-picking passages (In Matthew 4:1-11 we can see that even Satan can try to twist Scripture to support his points! Jesus rebuts him with correctly used Scripture!), make sure we're keeping the historical (and other) context in mind, and checking our hearts for why and how we're using passages.

Leader's Note: Please be careful here. We don't want to get derailed in a "bashing session" or overly negative, just to touch on how it can be easy for someone to distort the truths found in Scripture.

? Optional: Do you have the temptation to take Scripture passages out of context to support your views? How do you balance that with truth?

? What does it look like to have a Gospel-shaped response in our interactions with Christians who have a different understanding of Scripture than we do?

Possible Answers: When talking with other Christians about Scripture, it's crucial to keep God at the forefront. It's easy to want to be right and fight to win, rather than listening with an open heart for truth that God might show you that's outside of your current experience. It's not wrong to assert what you think is right, but if it doesn't make or break things theologically or pull people into sin, sometimes it's best to agree that God uses different people to see different things in His Word and not make it a battlefield with our brothers and sisters!

Shaking Things Up

There were a few translations of the Bible in German during Luther's time, but "The Martin Luther Bible...captured the German people." He worked from the original Greek and Hebrew, and enlisted the help of a language scholar, Philip Melancthon. The German religious authorities strongly disliked the Bible being in the vernacular! People were hungry for the Word of God, but the leaders at that time wanted the power of biblical interpretation to remain in the church hierarchy's hands. An archbishop said that "laymen and women could not understand the Bible," and another leader even said it was "an evil thing to print the Bible in German." Luther disagreed, and spent less than 11 weeks translating the New Testament. "...with its publication in 1522, Luther realized his dream that the people 'might seize and taste the clear, pure Word of God itself and hold to it.'" He would go on to later translate the Old Testament as well.

Sources:

(www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/pre-reformation.html),

(www.bible-researcher.com/luther02.html),

(www.christian-history.org/martin-luther-bible/),

The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation (Michael Reeves)

Optional Transition: Believing that Scripture has authority is only one side of the equation—letting it actually impact how you live your life is the other! Let's now look at some passages about Scripture in action.

Scripture in Action

Read Out Loud: Isaiah 55:10-11 (NIV)

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it

Read Out Loud: 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17 (NIV)

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ...
¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.



What actions of Scripture stand out to you from these passages?



The passage from Isaiah utilizes the images of rain and snow to convey the impact of God's Word.

How does God's Word bring life to "dry ground"?

Possible Answers: It sustains and refreshes believers. It, with the work of the Holy Spirit, stirs "dry" hearts to be receptive to the truth of the Gospel. It makes hearts fruitful.



In what ways have you found Scripture to be "useful" in your life (2 Tim. 3:16)?

Possible Answers: It has helped me find peace in the midst of conflict and challenging times. It has helped me explain why I believe what I do. It led me to a real relationship with Christ!



Scripture can elicit a wide range of emotions--comfort, hope, difficulty, frustration, and so many more.

What is your predominant feeling about Scripture as a whole? Why do you think that's your heart's response?

Leader's Note: This is a good time for people to express their feelings. The study is about the authority of God's Word, but let people be honest here. People may be in different places with their emotions related to this. Share your own feelings and encourage vulnerability, but be aware that this could be a place where people derail and start talking denominations and other issues. Use your judgment about whether this will be fruitful for your group or not!

? Optional: Do you have any personal examples of times when you've been explicitly convicted or comforted by Scripture? What happened?

? How does the Holy Spirit guide our understanding of Scripture?

Possible Answers: See John 14:26, 1 John 2:27, and Colossians 3:16.

James 1:22-24 (NIV)

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

? Optional: What is your favorite way to interact with

Scripture? How do you prioritize engaging with Scripture in your walk with Christ?

Possible Answers: Memorization, reading it out loud, journaling/writing it out, listening to it (audiobook).

? How do we live in such a way that Scripture is the lens through which we're evaluating all aspects of our lives?

Possible Answers: First of all, you must know Scripture so that you can evaluate whether you are matching up to it. Studying the Bible is key, and taking time to really learn and remember. After you know, you need to self-evaluate. Ask yourself, "How does this choice line up with or contradict what I learned in the Bible?" Life is complex, and there are not always direct one-to-one answers to our questions, but continuing study and self-evaluation and asking God for wisdom will give you insight into whether you are living a God-centered, biblically-sound life.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Is Scripture, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ revealed in it, the ultimate authority in your life? What barriers stand in the way of this being a reality for you this week?

? How is God leading you to dive more deeply into His Word? How can we support each other in engaging with Scripture as a small group?