



Small Group Leader Curriculum





Small Group Curriculum – part 1

JANUARY 30

WHY THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS?1

FEBRUARY 6

THE LOGIC OF GOD.....4

FEBRUARY 13

JUST YOUR INTERPRETATION?.....7

FEBRUARY 20

CHRISTIANS AND CULTURE..... 11

January 30 – Why Theology and Apologetics?

OPEN

What are some topics that really interest you? What kind of things do you find yourself researching on the internet, or reading stories, or watching videos about? Science, History, Government and Politics, Art, Popular Culture, How-To's, Health?



How does the statement, “All truth is God’s truth,” apply specifically to the topics you’re interested in?

How excited are you about truly digging into studying the Bible, apologetics and theology? What makes you excited to study more? What holds you back?

WHY APOLOGETICS?

Read the three primary (handout) passages, and then ask, “What is apologetics and why is it important according to these passages? (You may also reference the definition of apologetics on the Sunday handout.)

► **1 Peter 3:15** *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

- Note: “to give an answer” is sometimes translated “to give a defense,” or “reason.” The word behind these translations in Greek sounds like ‘apologeh-Oh.’ This word was often used in the Greek world as a defense in a courtroom, or possibly defending your proposed belief in a philosophical or scholarly context.
- This is where we get the Christian study of “Apologetics.”

- ▶ **2 Corinthians 10:5** *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*
- ▶ **2 Timothy 2:15** *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.*

Read John 6:44 *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*

This verse tells us no one comes to God (basically, no one will be convinced of God's Truth) unless God spiritually draws him. If there is no hope of someone being convinced of the truth unless God's Spirit does the work, then why do you think the bible tells us to be ready to give a defense, or to positively reason with people?

- ▶ **NOTE:** Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue and the Greeks on Mars Hill, for instance, in order to convince them of God's Truth.
- ▶ **Note:** Ultimately God does draw people by His Spirit, and this is a necessary pre-requisite. However, God also uses the means of good reasons for the Truth, to change people's minds as he empowers those reasons with His Spirit.

How might the need for God's Spirit AND strong reasoning impact the way we share truth with others?

WHY THEOLOGY?

Have you ever heard someone say, "Doctrine doesn't matter?" In what ways might this statement be true or false?

Do you think the study of all the truths of God's Word is for EVERY Christian? Why? and How should this change your habits in Bible study?

What worldviews are prevalent today? In other words, where do people in the world often think we came from? What is their foundation for what is morally good or evil? What do they think about God or the true purpose of human existence?

What worldviews are negatively impacting Christians and causing them to deviate from the biblical worldview?

Would you be able to have conversations with people, in order to lovingly demonstrate and defend the Christian worldview to Christians and non-Christians? Would you be brave enough to 'stand tall' and do so? Why or why not?

THE CALL:

1. Ask Questions!! What are some questions about the Bible that you can seek biblical answers to? What are some questions about the world, life, culture, and ultimate things that you can seek biblical answers to? Write these questions down and commit to seeking them for yourself and talking about them with a Christian friend.
2. There were three resources given on the Sunday morning handout. Will you commit to reading or listening to something from these ministries in the next week? (They are all on YouTube, as well as to be found at the websites listed, if that's easier.)

February 6 - The Logic of God

OPEN

- In your experience, do you think people really care whether or not God exists? Why or why not?
 - If you knew for sure that God didn't exist or did exist; how would that impact your life choices? How would you live, feel, think, choose, act... differently?
 - READ 1 Peter 3:15, then ask: Why do YOU believe in God? Can you give a reason to someone, explaining why you believe in God?
- NOTE: Remember, for a listening world, 'just because' or 'I have a feeling,' or 'I was brought up in church,' are not good enough answers. They shouldn't be enough for a growing Christian, either. We should seek to love God deeply with our minds, and strengthen our faith with sound evidence to support and enrich our faith.



WHY DOES GOD MATTER?

- Read the Abraham Kuyper Quote from the Sunday handout, and explain: "Everything in the world belongs to God, including every aspect of our private and public lives." Ask: "How does this intensify our pursuit of the God that matters this much in every way?"
- Read some or all of the following Scriptures and ask, "Why does deep and meaningful belief in God truly matter?" with respect to the following passages:
- Psalm 14:1-3
 - Romans 11:36
 - Revelation 4:11
 - Psalm 119:7-10

- Isaiah 44:6-20 (This Isaiah passage that mocks the meaninglessness of idolatry may be a good passage to work through a paragraph at a time, stopping to ask, “Why are idols meaningless, but the True God truly important?”)
- Work through the arguments for God given in the sermon and/or on the Sunday handout.... Consider having your group pair off or break into smaller 3-5 person groups in order to briefly role-play these arguments. Have one or more person in each group play the role of the person that doesn't really think God exists. Have the others role play giving reasons why the God of Christianity truly exists.

WHAT IF THERE WERE NO GOD? Read the following questions all-at-once, then stop with the last question asking for a response to all the questions in terms of the last one, namely, “Does our pursuit of God and our communication of God to others reflect his true importance?”

- What foundation for right and wrong can we find, if there is no God?
- What explanation can we find for the evil that man perpetrates on others, if there is no God?
- Why should we believe that there is any meaning to our lives, if there were no God?
- Why should we believe that there is such a thing as truth or justice, if there was no God? Do you know anyone who NEVER gets angry or wants to see justice done?
- If God is the source of morality, justice, truth, and transcendent meaning, then are you pursuing God with enough vigor in your life? Are you encouraging others to do the same by your example and your words?

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU MORE CONFIDENT TO STAND TALL FOR THE GOD THAT MATTERS?

- ▶ Are you confident to "Stand Tall" and demonstrate to your world and sphere of influence that God not only exists but He truly matters more than anything else?
 - What would make you more confident to Stand Tall and start conversations about God? Is the knowledge of these arguments enough to begin to share with the world around you?
 - What is your sphere of influence? Who do you know that either does not believe in God, or who does not really believe that He matters? If you had the courage or the knowledge, who would you talk to and what would you say?
 - Which do you need more, the courage to stand tall to proclaim God, or the knowledge to be confident to give an answer? What are your next steps to grow in courage or knowledge?

God's strength is made perfect in weakness.... If God exists, then He is able to use you!

THE CALL

Consider choosing one of the books in the resource list on the Sunday Handout to read, and perhaps find someone else to read it with you and get together to talk about it.

February 13 - Just Your Interpretation?

OPEN

Have you ever told someone what the Bible has to say on a topic, and they responded to you, “Well, that’s just your interpretation?” What do you think they meant by that? How did you, or would you, respond?



IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- ▶ What does this passage say about the truth status of the Bible?
- ▶ What does this passage say about whether we need any other source of authoritative truth?
 - **Note:** v 17 says: “*the man of God may be COMPLETE, equipped for EVERY good work.*” In other words, the Bible alone makes the Christian complete. He does not need any other source of God’s revelation, Pope, Prophet, etc, in order to be fully equipped by God to live the Christian life and to interpret and rightly understand the world around us, by means of its truth. This is the doctrine of “Sola Scriptura,” or that “scripture alone” is our source of authority. This does not mean the bible tells us how to change our oil, but it tells us everything we need to know about God in order to understand why that works, why it’s important or not, and how we should think about these scientific and other details of life.

Read the “FACTS” from the Sunday Handout.

- ▶ Should these facts be enough to give us good reason to believe the Bible? Why is this enough? What other questions might you or others have about the Bible? Where could you find good answers to those questions?

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

1. You're talking to a Christian friend, "Sam," at a coffee shop. You're talking about a debated issue, and you say, "I believe the Bible clearly tells us that's wrong." Sam responds, well, the Bible was written by fallible human authors that all wrote different opinions." -- How would you respond?
 - a. Note: Our passage here says that all Scripture is "God breathed." In other words, while the human authors are fallible, God is the ultimate author and ensures that His own Divine meaning was inscripturated for us, even through fallible authors. (See also 2 Peter 1:19-21)
2. You're talking about the Bible's emphasis on the sacredness of sex, as something that is only to be practiced between one man and one woman in a committed marriage. Your acquaintance, "Ash," interrupts by saying, "You have to take into account the fact that the Bible was written in a primitive, agrarian, and patriarchal culture. Our culture has advanced way beyond those primitive ideas on sexuality." -- How would you respond?
 - a. Note: While many cultures are represented over a 1500 year period in the Bible, there are consistent teachings throughout. You need very good reason to assert that something the Bible says is for one time period or culture only. Isaiah and Jesus, for instance, both insist that the Word of God will never pass away, and that not one jot or tittle of the Law is to pass away until all is accomplished. (Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:17-19)

IS THE BIBLE EASY TO UNDERSTAND?

Read 2 Peter 3:16

- ▶ Are some things in the Bible hard to understand? Like what? Can you give an example?
- ▶ Why do you think people twist things the bible says? (Consider Jeremiah 17:9)
- ▶ Why do you think God made His Word sometimes difficult to understand?

- ▶ How can we avoid twisting the Scriptures? What resources can we use? In what ways should we be careful about how we use resources to interpret the bible?
- ▶ In the sermon, Kevin talked about 1 Samuel 8 and how Israel seeking a King is comparable to how Christians regularly are looking for another authority outside Scripture to tell us what Scripture should mean. Those authorities can become, in many ways, a greater authority than the Scripture, because those authorities tell us how to interpret Scripture. The Mormon Prophet, the Pope, the Watchtower Society, uncritically believing anything a favorite preacher says about the bible, and “Culturally sensitive” interpretation of the bible can often change what the bible actually says. --- How can we both use needed resources, while not allowing them to become a greater authority than the bible itself?

HOW DO WE RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF GOD?

Read 2 Timothy 2:15

- ▶ Do you think that this passage suggests that YOU are a ‘worker’ that is called to rightly divide the word of God? If you don’t do the work of interpretation, then might you allow another to become a greater king than the Bible over you?
- ▶ What principle of interpretation or ‘rightly dividing’ Scripture, did Kevin suggest might be the most important?
 - Note: Kevin suggested reading the bible in its *whole context and storyline*, as well as the *near context*, should be our first step to rightly understanding Scripture. This is because it keeps us from reading a sentence without understanding why that sentence was said (from the context previous to and after the verse). Beyond the near context, the understanding of how the passage fits in the covenants and flow of the storyline of the bible are so

important, because Scripture divides itself by the covenants as it unfolds the story of redemption in Christ.

- ▶ How important do you think it is to rightly divide the Word? What will happen if Christians worldwide, or even we who are in this room, fail at becoming skilled in this task?
- ▶ What aspects of reading the bible do you need to get better at? Reading in near context? Reading the bible passage in light of the whole storyline of Scripture? Reading the bible with an eye toward systematic theology and what Scripture says about a topic in other places?

THE CALL

- ▶ Will you commit to studying the bible in a new way, or deeper way this week?
- ▶ What questions do you have that the bible might answer? How might you find the bible's answers to those questions?
- ▶ Perhaps choose a difficult passage you want to understand better. Consider using some of the listed resources on the Sunday handout. Talk with Christian friends about your questions. Ask what they think, and ask them to give good reasons from the bible for their answers. Then, consider sharing what you're learning with your small group leader, other friends, or church leaders.

February 20 - Christians and Culture

This small group curriculum is simple in format, but should be rich in discussion!

There are two resources provided:

1. A list of questions relating to Christians and Culture
2. A list of Scriptures relating to Christ and Culture (this is the same list that is on the Sunday morning Handout).



The idea is simply to ask a question and then have the group members discuss the questions, being challenged to back-up any positions they take with (carefully interpreted) Scripture. It may also be profitable to look at each given Scripture and ask how that Scripture bears on a better, more nuanced understanding of how to answer each question, biblically. Of course, feel free to introduce more biblical passages into the discussion! Those given are simply a starting place for discussion.

QUESTIONS

1. **Movies and Media:** Should some or all Christians watch secular movies (or listen to secular music, or watch secular YouTube channels)? What about R-rated movies? Why or why not?
 - a. Is there a way to watch movies “Christianly” as opposed to “Un-Christianly?”
 - b. Are there other factors than mere morality that should concern Christians while watching movies?
2. **Activism and Politics:** Should Christians be engaged in social activism and politics?
 - a. Should Christians vote?
 - b. Are there ways to be involved in politics that are more Christian and less Christian?

3. Should Christians produce art, music, etc.? Should it be geared toward Christians only? Should it be only worship music, per se, or only have a direct Christian message?
 - a. What does it mean for art, podcasts, music, movies, or books to be “Christian?”
4. The plan of salvation alone is not enough for the Gospel. God and His Gospel seek to own every nook and cranny of our private as well as public lives.
 - a. How do we Christians keep the Gospel central and primary, while also applying the whole counsel of Scripture to every aspect of life and culture? How have Christians succeeded through the years? How have Christians failed through the years?

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 29:7 *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world,[\[c\]](#) but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:9 *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*

Matthew 5:13-14 *“You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world....”*

Mark 7:15 (see also 7:20-23) *There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.*

James 1:27 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world*

Genesis 1:28 *“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

Matthew 6:10 *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

CLOSING QUESTION

How will you engage the world around you with the Gospel and the whole counsel of Scripture differently after our discussion today?

