**Week 1: Why Do We Study the Bible?**

**Introduction to Ephesians & the Importance of Bible Study**

**I. Opening Discussion (5-10 min)**

**Ask the class:**

1. **Why do you read the Bible?**
2. **What are some challenges to studying Scripture?**
3. **How has reading the Bible impacted your life?**

Encourage people to share briefly, setting the tone for open discussion.

**II. Why Do We Read the Bible? (10 min)**

(Use these points to guide the discussion or as a short teaching segment.)

1. **The Bible is God’s Word** – It is divinely inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
2. **It reveals who God is** – The Bible shows us His character and His plan.
3. **It gives wisdom for life** – God’s Word provides direction (Psalm 119:105).
4. **It strengthens our faith** – Faith grows through hearing and studying the Word (Romans 10:17).
5. **It helps us live as Christians** – The Bible equips us for every good work.

**III. Why Study the Bible Deeply? (10 min)**

**Transition to deeper study:**

* The Bible is not just for information, but **transformation** (Romans 12:2).
* Context matters: Misinterpretation can lead to confusion.
* Ephesians is a **letter written to help believers understand their identity in Christ** and how to live accordingly.

**IV. Connection to Ephesians (10-15 min)**

* **Ephesians 1:17** – Paul prays that believers will have **"the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"** to know God better.
* **Ephesians 3:3-6** – Paul explains that God has revealed His mystery to believers.
* **Ephesians 4:1** – "Live a life worthy of the calling you have received." How can we do that without knowing Scripture?

**V. Application & Takeaways (5-10 min)**

* What is one habit or change you can make to engage more with the Bible?
* How can we encourage one another to stay in God’s Word?

***In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.***. --- Augustine of Hippo

***This is my Bible. I am what it says I am. I have what it says I have. I can do what it says I can do.  
Today I will be taught the Word of God. I boldly confess: my mind is alert, my heart is receptive, and I will never be the same!***. --― Jerry Jones

**Closing Prayer:** Ask God to give everyone a hunger for His Word and wisdom as you begin this journey through Ephesians.

**Re: predestination or free will**

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing."

   --- *Macbeth* (Act 5, Scene 5)

Oedipus Rex - you can't escape fate. Everything is predestined.

"Your future is whatever you make it. So make it a good one!"

   -- Doc Brown (Back to the Future III)

(Thank goodness you don't get everything you want. That you can't make your future what you want.)

**Are we free or is there a plan we follow?**

**--- YES (The Bible)**

Acts 27 - Paul in boat in storm

**What is the difference between the bible being literal and authoritative?**

* **Literal -** John 10:9 "I am the door". Exodus 3:8 " a land flowing with milk and honey".  Song of Songs 1:15 "Your eyes are doves."  Mark 1:5  "And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him ..."
* **Authoritative**- Saying the Bible is authoritative means it has God-given authority over faith, morality, and life.  Whether a passage is literal or symbolic, its teachings are binding and true.
* **Literal relates to how we interpret the Bible (word-for-word vs. figurative).**
* **Authoritative relates to how we submit to the Bible (recognizing it as the final standard for truth and obedience).**

**A person can believe in biblical authority while also understanding that some parts of the Bible use metaphors, poetry, and cultural expressions rather than always being strictly literal.**

**Biblical authority** refers to the belief that the Bible has the right and power to guide, direct, and command the lives of Christians. It is rooted in the conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, serving as the ultimate standard for faith, doctrine, and practice. Here are some key aspects of Biblical authority:

**1. Source of Authority**

* The Bible is considered authoritative because it is **God-breathed** (2 Timothy 3:16). It is viewed as the direct revelation of God’s will and character.
* It is believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, making it reliable and trustworthy (2 Peter 1:20–21).

**2. Nature of Biblical Authority**

* **Divine Authority:** Since God is the ultimate authority, His Word carries His authority. Obedience to the Bible is viewed as obedience to God.
* **Comprehensive Authority:** The Bible addresses all areas of life—spiritual, moral, relational, and ethical.
* **Sufficient Authority:** The Scriptures are considered sufficient for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

**3. How It Is Exercised**

* **Doctrine and Theology:** The Bible defines Christian beliefs, such as salvation, the nature of God, and the work of Christ.
* **Moral Guidance:** It sets moral standards, providing principles for living a godly life (e.g., the Ten Commandments, Sermon on the Mount).
* **Church Practices:** It governs worship, leadership, and church discipline (e.g., 1 Timothy 3; Acts 2:42).
* **Personal Decisions:** Believers turn to Scripture for guidance in personal and ethical decisions (e.g., Proverbs 3:5–6).

**4. Types of Biblical Authority**

* **Normative Authority:** Scripture is the norm or standard by which truth is measured.
* **Moral Authority:** The Bible dictates how believers should live, defining what is right and wrong.
* **Spiritual Authority:** It reveals the way to salvation and sanctification through faith in Christ.

**5. Challenges to Biblical Authority**

* **Cultural Relativism:** Modern society often challenges the Bible’s relevance, arguing that its teachings are outdated or culturally bound.
* **Interpretation Disputes:** Differences in understanding Scripture can lead to debates about its meaning and application.
* **Rejection of Absolutes:** Many resist the idea of absolute truths or divine commands, favoring personal autonomy.

**6. Practical Implications for Believers**

* **Submission:** Believers are called to submit to the Bible’s teachings as God’s revealed will.
* **Study and Application:** Christians are encouraged to study Scripture diligently (2 Timothy 2:15) and live according to its principles.
* **Proclamation:** The Bible’s authority motivates believers to share its message with others.

**7. Key Verses Supporting Biblical Authority**

* **Psalm 119:105:** "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
* **Matthew 4:4:** "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."
* **Hebrews 4:12:** "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword..."
* **John 17:17:** "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

**Summary**

Biblical authority means that the Bible, as God’s Word, has the right to govern and direct the lives of individuals, churches, and society. It challenges believers to live in alignment with its teachings, trusting its reliability, and submitting to its divine instruction.

2 timothy 3:4 “…lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God…”

What is an Op-Ed (opinion piece)?

Romans 10:17 (NIV) says:

*"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ."*

This verse emphasizes that faith is built by hearing and understanding the Word of God, highlighting the importance of preaching and teaching the gospel.

2 Kings 22:8-13

**8**Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord.” He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. **9**Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: “Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the Lord and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple.” **10**Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

**11**When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. **12**He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant: **13**“Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord’s anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

**Hebrews 4:12 (NIV):**

*"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*

This verse emphasizes the power of God's Word—it is not just words on a page but something dynamic, able to transform hearts and discern our innermost thoughts.

**Proverbs 3:3 (NIV) *"Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart."***

**Proverbs 7:2-3 (NIV) *"Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart."***

**Deuteronomy 6:6 (NIV) *"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts."***

**Psalm 119:105 (KJV):***"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

**Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV):***"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*

This verse emphasizes the fallen nature of humanity, warning that our hearts can lead us astray and that only God truly understands and can transform them.

**Warnings About the Deceitfulness of the Heart:**

* **Proverbs 28:26 (NIV)**  
  *"Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe."*
* **Mark 7:21-23 (NIV)**  
  *"For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person."*
* **Ecclesiastes 9:3 (NIV)**  
  *"This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead."*

**Warnings About Trusting in Your Own Understanding:**

* **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)**  
  *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."*
* **Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)**  
  *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*
* **1 Corinthians 3:18-19 (NIV)**  
  *"Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become 'fools' so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight."*

These verses emphasize the importance of relying on God's wisdom rather than our own flawed understanding.

**Ephesians Introduction**

The book of **Ephesians** is a letter in the New Testament traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul. It is addressed to the church in **Ephesus**, a significant city in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey), though some early manuscripts omit the phrase "in Ephesus," leading scholars to believe it may have been a circular letter intended for multiple churches in the region. Below is a summary of the background:

**1. Authorship**

* The letter identifies Paul as the author (Ephesians 1:1).
* While some modern scholars question Pauline authorship due to differences in style and vocabulary compared to his other letters, the early church universally accepted it as Pauline.
* Paul likely wrote it during his imprisonment in Rome (circa A.D. 60–62).

**2. Audience**

* Ephesus was a thriving city known for its commerce, culture, and the Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World).
* The church in Ephesus had a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers, and Paul spent about three years there during his missionary journeys (Acts 19:1–41; Acts 20:31).
* The letter addresses a general Christian audience, focusing on themes relevant to all believers.

**3. Themes and Purpose**

* **Unity in Christ:** Ephesians emphasizes that through Jesus, God has united Jews and Gentiles into one body, breaking down walls of hostility (Ephesians 2:14–16).
* **The Church as Christ’s Body:** The letter highlights the church's role as Christ's body, with Christ as its head, emphasizing unity and purpose.
* **Spiritual Blessings and Salvation:** It underscores God’s grace, predestination, and the spiritual blessings believers receive in Christ (Ephesians 1:3–14).
* **Christian Living:** Ephesians provides practical instructions on how Christians should live, including guidance on marriage, family, work relationships, and spiritual warfare (Ephesians 4–6).

**4. Key Verses**

* **Ephesians 2:8–9:** “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
* **Ephesians 4:4–6:** “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

**5. Structure**

* **Chapters 1–3:** Theological Foundation  
  Explores God’s redemptive plan, the unity of believers, and the spiritual riches available in Christ.
* **Chapters 4–6:** Practical Application  
  Discusses how to live out faith in unity, purity, and preparedness for spiritual battles.

**6. Relevance Today**

* Ephesians provides timeless lessons on identity in Christ, the importance of unity in the church, and practical guidance for daily Christian living.
* The emphasis on spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10–18) remains a crucial encouragement for believers facing challenges.