

## Small Group Study: What does it mean to believe the Bible?

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**Opening Prayer:** Father God, we thank you for everlasting Word to us and we ask you to take control of our hearts and our minds and allow Your Word to transform us by your love, making us more like you every day and giving us the strength to overcome all opposition. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Memory - Meditation Verse: "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." Hebrews 4:12

### Opening Discussion:

- How do you feel about reading the Bible?

Ask people to share openly about their own personal feelings, both blessings and struggles, regarding reading the Bible.

- What challenges do you face regarding the teaching in the Bible?

Use this question to help encourage everyone on toward spending time in God's word. Some may find it difficult to find the time (they need to commit to it as a life priority). Others may find it difficult to understand or relate to (they need to ask for help from the Holy Spirit). Some may just have problems with what the Bible teaches (they need to believe this is from God and accept it even when it is hard).

### Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

<sup>13</sup> And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. <sup>14</sup> For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews <sup>15</sup> who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone <sup>16</sup> in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

<sup>17</sup> But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. <sup>18</sup> For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. <sup>19</sup> For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? <sup>20</sup> Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

- In verse 13 what do you observe from Paul about the Bible?

The Bible is from God, it is God's word to man, and it has power to work and transform those who believe in God's Word.

- How do you receive the Word of God? (What does that mean?)

As was mentioned earlier, to receive God's word I must believe it is from God, I must have the power of God's Spirit in me to accept His word, and I must commit to not only hear the word but to obey the word.

- Paul says the Bible is accepted not as human word but the Word of God. How would you explain that to someone else?

Ask people to share how they might explain that the Bible is the Word of God. Know that some may have trouble explaining this. Some may also have trouble believing it is from God as opposed to writings from man as is commonly taught and accepted by those in the world.

- What does it mean that the Word of God is "at work in you who believe"?

Romans 12:2 says we are to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" which to me means that as I believe, accept, and obey the word of God, God, the Holy Spirit, will empower me to change.

- After reading this entire passage, what was the result of accepting the Word of God for the people?

They imitated God. They suffered like Jesus. They became very close in love with one another, becoming the hope, joy, and crown of the body of Jesus Christ.

- What does this teach us about persecution for receiving the Word of God and being changed by God?

It tells me that when I receive the Word of God and when I am transformed by His power, the world will hate me and I can expect persecution. This is the narrow way Jesus spoke about. Becoming a believer that is transformed into the likeness of God is never welcome by evil and the world so I should make a decision, am I for Christ or am I for the world?

- Why does Satan and those who do his work want to keep us from speaking the Word of God?

Because Satan is the enemy of Jesus Christ! Even though he is defeated, the battle rages on. Satan is most threatened by those who are transformed by the power of the Word of Truth. He cannot separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:31-39) or harm us so he will do everything he can to silence us from speaking the truth in love to others and bringing them into victory as well.

- What promise is left to those who do believe, as Paul indicates in verse 20? How should that encourage you to proclaim the Word of God?

We are the glory and joy of the church. We can be spurred on to encourage others in walking in the truth (Hebrews 10:25) and to encourage one another to share that truth with others. (Romans 10:14-15)

#### **Closing Discussion:**

- Can anyone share a story of inspiration about how a believer stood strong under opposition to his/her faith?

Ask people to share.

Let me recommend a book called "Jesus Freaks". It is a compilation of short stories of great men and women of faith. It was put together by a mission group called Voice of the Martyrs and a Christian Rock band in the 90s called DC Talk who recorded a song called Jesus Freak. Although many of the stories are sad and some may be difficult to read, it really shows us how much power we receive from God's Word and His Spirit to stand strong under opposition.

- Share with the group how God's Word has proven itself to you to be from God and not from human hands.

Ask people to share.

*Close by praying for one another to receive  
God's Word in trust and obedience.*