

CoreGroup Guide | Debunked - Part 4

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Welcome

Whether you've been reading the Bible your whole life, or just started recently, you may have noticed some pretty wild things in there – A talking donkey, a parting of the sea, a person turned into a pillar of salt, visions from God that read more like nightmares, even Jesus himself telling us to pluck out our eyeballs if need be. Oh my! The Bible has many layers and meanings and we do ourselves and others a disservice if we only take these sacred scriptures at face value. “The Bible says it, so I believe it, that settles it....” But is that really what we think?

Opening Prayer

God, throughout this series we have tackled Christian clichés that feel meaningful, but aren't always quite true. Sometimes it feels like we're frantically grasping at anything out there to find some sense of solid ground, some hope, some understanding of what *truth* really is. Give us courage, Lord, to think critically about scripture. Help us approach this conversation with compassion, curiosity, and an openness to the many ways you continue to reveal yourself through words written so long ago. It's in your name we pray. Amen.

Ice Breaker

Memoir, Mystery, Romance, Fantasy, Poetry, etc. What's your favorite genre of literature?

The Head

The book of 2 Timothy is a short letter, often thought to be written by the apostle Paul to his dear friend and protege, Timothy. More recently, some scholars have questioned the timing and true authorship of the text, but regardless, for thousands of years readers of this letter have found words of encouragement, endurance, and a call for faithful leadership in dark and difficult times.

2 Timothy: 3:15-17

¹⁵Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, ¹⁷so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.

- What does it mean that scripture is “inspired” by God?
- According to verse 3:16, what are four uses for scripture? What would you add to the list?
- Which of these ways we use scripture resonates the most with you right now?
- Why was it so important for the people in the early church to know that God can speak to people through scripture?
- How is this similar or different for us today?

The Heart

In her book *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, beloved author Rachel Held Evans wrote, “If you want to do violence in this world, you will always find the weapons. If you want to heal, you will always find the balm.” Perhaps the question we need to be asking is not “What does the Bible say?” but rather “What am I looking for in the Bible?” This question lives in the heart.

- What do we gain by taking scripture at face value? What do we lose?
- How does the meaning of scripture change when read through a lens of love or justice?
- What are some of the other “lenses” through which we interpret scripture?
- What happens if you don’t like what God has to say to you through scripture?

The Hands

For hundreds of years, Methodists have affirmed that scripture is the central component of Christian belief. However, early leaders, including John Wesley himself, emphasized the need for three other pillars of practicing our faith: Tradition, Experience, and Reason.

- How do your traditions, experiences, and/or critical thinking skills also impact your understanding of scripture? Share an example with the group.
- This idea that, “the Bible says it, I believe it, so that settles it” floats around Christian circles more than we realize, but as a group, how might you reframe, rephrase, or rewrite this statement in a way that is more accurate?
- Over the past four weeks we discussed four Christian cliches in need of some debunking. But there are more out there! What is one takeaway you learned from this series that you could apply to other common phrases that may not be entirely true?

Closing Prayer

The Bible is full of closing prayers. Choose one of the scriptures below and read it out loud together as a group to close your time together today.

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his face upon you and grant you peace. Amen.

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Psalms 121:5-8

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time and forevermore. Amen.