



FAITH *Questions*

SESSION 6: WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE BIBLE?



Session Activities

Aim: To explore the way we treat the bible, and encourage participants to have a more invitational approach when talking about the bible.

Leaders note: It is worth noting that this is a potentially contentious topic, and that is part of the point of engaging with it and encouraging others to do the same. If we cannot disagree well within our churches about the way we treat the bible, then the conversations with those outside our churches and with those who vehemently disagree is going to be far less harmonious.

INTRODUCING

The aim of this opening activity is to get the participants to think about how their approach to the bible has changed over time, and how they interact with it has developed.

It would be helpful if you are aware of how long the people in your group have been Christians. It is not a problem if you don't. Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen, and have them divide the paper into four sections. Have them label the sections as follows:

Pre-Christian

Christian

Christian +5 years

Now

Once they have done this, ask them to spend a few minutes thinking back at these different stages, and noting down the view they had of the bible at that point in their life, or the way they used the bible in their pattern of worship and prayer at that point. If they have been a Christian less than 5 years, have them amend that one to being the halfway point between when they became a Christian and now.

Some may find this a difficult activity, as they may not feel their approach or view has changed over this time. Others may find it challenging as the bible may not have featured heavily in their devotional life. The aim of this activity is not to be overly challenging about these areas, but simply to start participants thinking about these areas.

Ask the group to share the shift or lack of change that their piece of paper shows with one other person. Rather than getting the group to feedback centrally exactly what their journey has been with the bible, simply get each pair to share whether there has been movement or not in their view, and treatment of, the bible in their faith journey.

EXPLORING

As the participants watch the video, ask them to pick out any ideas they feel themselves reacting to, either positively or negatively. At the end, ask them to highlight anything in the video they highlighted in this way. If you think it might be helpful, it might be good to spend a little time with the group reflecting on why they reacted in the way they did.

EXPANDING

Split your group into threes or fours. Before they move onto the bulk of this activity, ask them if they can define what they would want to see coming out of a conversation about the Bible with someone. Share these ideas centrally so that you can all see the assumed aims you are working with.

Using the 'Potential Conversations' sheet, ask the participants to answer the following questions:

1. What do they think the intentions of the person they are imagining engaging with are?
2. What is their emotional reaction to the comment? How might that affect the rest of the conversation?

There are three basic ways that we can react to these sort of conversations:

Defensively: We feel like we or our worldview are under threat so we put up the barriers and try to fend off the person we are speaking to.

Offensively: We feel attacked rather than merely threatened, and so we look for ways to take apart the worldview of the person we are speaking to.

Openly: We feel like the person we are speaking to is honestly enquiring and wants to know and understand.

It is important to note here that there are times when each of these is appropriate. If someone is not actually interested in our answers and merely wants conflict, then reacting defensively seems appropriate. If we have had the same conversation repeatedly with someone who is trying to dismantle our belief, then pointing out inconsistencies and challenges with their way of viewing the world is appropriate. However, reacting openly will most often be the most helpful and constructive way to engage.

Looking back at the Potential Conversations sheet, have each group pick one idea out and think about what a Defensive, Offensive, and Open reaction would look like. Feed back centrally once the group have spent some time on each one.

PRAYING

Have a central piece of paper, preferably A3 or larger, in the middle of the group or room that you are meeting in.

There are two areas in particular to focus our prayers on with this session:

1. Past conversations about the Bible:
2. Future conversations about the Bible

With this in mind, draw a line down the middle of the piece of paper. On one side write 'Past' and the other 'Future'. Ask the group to spend some time reflecting first about past conversations they have had about the bible. Bearing in mind the focus of this session, what do they need to pray about those past conversations so that they might see God at work through them? Are there conversations they have had where they have done more harm than good by reacting emotionally? Are there conversations where they need to confront someone who has been poking at their faith for a reaction? Ask them to write down one or two words on that side of the paper to mark these.

Once they have done this, ask them to think about their hopes for the way they approach these conversations in the future. How do they want their response to questions and conversations around this to be shaped? Ask them to write a word expressing this hope on the future side of the sheet.

Draw these prayers together.