

A String of Pearls

Sourcesheet 3: The Bible

The inclusion of the Bible in Christian worship is a vital aspect of that worship. The exact role of the Bible can vary but, in all cases, it is an essential link between the gathering and the source of faith - God. There are many views of the Bible; whatever you may believe about the Bible it is worth spending some time looking at what the Bible says about itself. For example:

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Romans 15: 4-6)

Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3: 14-17)

Reflecting its focus on the Bible, the first part of the Communion service is often referred to as the liturgy of the Word. In this part we concentrate upon the Bible – the word of God and the words of the preacher, the sermon.

The Sermon is usually a response to the readings in the context of the church community. It may be an exhortation, an exposition of a Bible passage or a theological exploration but it is always linked to the readings as part of the proclamation of the word of God.

Sometimes the sermon is thought of as a very formal part of the service, in some services there is a less formal 'talk'. In others there is a (perhaps more formal) homily. Sermons can be made up of teaching, exhortation or Biblical interpretation or a mixture of all three. A skilful preacher can make these entertaining too!

The basic intention of the liturgy of the word is to create a way in which the church can hear the words of Jesus (the word of God) and suggest ways of putting them into practice – just as suggested in the parable of the two house builders ...

'Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.'

(Matthew 7: 24-27)

Whilst the major response to the Word of God is the sermon, other things can be responsive. The intercessor may choose to mention the readings in the prayers and the peace can be linked to them too.

Besides these collective responses we are also called to engage personally with the readings hence the liturgical responses:

This is the word of the Lord. <i>All</i> Thanks be to God.	This is the Gospel of the Lord. <i>All</i> Praise to you, O Christ.
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These responses are not just formal bits to say, they are a serious recognition of what has been read and reinforce the importance of hearing God's word. If you find yourself getting distracted during a reading you may think twice about joining in the response. The pew Bibles are there to help, of course.

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Talksheet 3 —The Bible

Psalm 119:97-108

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WELCOME – Breaking the ice (Aim for 10 mins)

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his
pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,

To start the session read Psalm 100 together.
After a moments' stillness read it again and
think especially of the line— 'Know that
the Lord is God'.

How do you know that the Lord is God?

**Is there a special testimony, event or Bible
verse that affirms this for you??**

WORD – Applying the truth (Aim for 45 mins)

In Confessions Augustine writes about how certain books of the Bible guided him at a time when he was struggling with sin.

“These books served to remind me to return to my own self. Under your guidance I entered into the depths of my own soul, and this I was able to do because your aid befriended me (psalm 29:11)...

I realised I was far away from you. It was as though I were in a land where all is different from your own and I heard your voice calling from on high saying “I am the food of full-grown men. Grow and you shall feed on me.” (R.S. Pine -Coffin, trans., Penguin, 1961, pp. 146-47).

Whether we are in the midst of sin, relational difficulties or a major life transition, the Word of God is one resource God has given us for guidance.

Psalm 119 is an extended reflection on God's law and commandments and the teachings in his Word. It is a source of inspiration to us to spend time studying Scripture. **Read Psalm 119:97-108.**

1. What different words and phrases are used to describe God's word?
2. Which of these do you identify with from your own experience of studying Scripture?
3. How has studying God's Word benefited the writer of this psalm?
4. Notice verse 98. You may or may not feel that you have "enemies," but how does God's Word make you better able to face those who stand against God?
5. What do you think the writer is trying to communicate through the comparisons of his understanding to that of his teachers and of the elders (vv.99-100)?
6. How has God's Word shaped and formed you?
7. Verse 103 describes God's Word as having a sweet taste. What does this metaphor mean to you?
8. How does Scripture light our pathways?
Give an example of a situation in which you have experienced this.
9. How does God's Word give us life in the midst of our suffering (v. 107)?
10. The author responds to these reflections on Scripture by offering God his praise. How do you feel about God after studying this passage?
11. In church on Sunday we read the bible each week, how is this spiritual practice similar to or different from the ways of the world?
12. How can we use this spiritual practice of bible reading in our ordinary everyday Monday to Saturday lives?

WITNESS – Reaching out to others

(Aim for 20 – 30 minutes)

Giving Thanks to God

Thank God for a time when God's word has spoken to you

Praying for one another

Ask everyone to share something they would like prayer for.

Then go round the room and pray for the person to your right,