

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of June 9th-15th

Getting Started

1. Wayne Grudem defines the doctrine of the authority of Scripture this way: “The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” If you are a Christian, can you remember when you first began to believe that this is true? Which came first for you...your regard for the Bible as the word of God or your conversion to Christ? Take some time to share with the others in your group. Of course, it is quite possible that those two realities aren’t so easily separated in your experience so feel free to indicate that as well.

Digging Deeper

2. One of the earliest and most revered watchwords in the history of the Evangelical Free Church of America is the phrase: “Where stands it written?” Can you think of a particular teaching of the Christian church that if it weren’t in the Bible, you’d not believe it? Or is there a doctrine of the Christian faith that (upon further careful study of the Bible) you’ve come to embrace or on which you’ve changed your position? Please share with the group.

Open Your Bible to the Book of Proverbs...

3. This week's sermon urges us to be eager to receive the written word of God. One of the key places in the Bible that we see language like this is in the Book of Proverbs. Take a look at Proverbs 1:3; 2:1; 10:8; and 24:32. In a book designed to facilitate the impartation of wisdom, it makes sense that the theme of *receiving* instruction would be of primary importance. What is the effect of these passages enjoining the reader to *receive* these realities (as over against simply *recognizing* that they're true)? Name something (it may be a doctrinal truth or a moral one) that you know to be true and yet you've been slow to incorporate it into your life. Why do you suppose that to be the case?

4. Another fascinating cluster of Old Testament texts that focus on receiving God's word are found in the prophet Jeremiah. Consider Jeremiah 17:23; 32:33; and 35:13. What's the flavor of these texts? Using the vivid language of Jeremiah especially in 17:23 and 32:33, what (metaphorical) parts of our bodies are involved in receiving / refusing the word of God (there are four mentioned in these two verses)? Can you think of examples in your own walk with the Lord where these verses hit close to home? Explain.

5. John's Gospel is yet another book of Scripture that picks up this theme of receiving God's word (especially God's Son). Discuss John 1:11-12 together. Verse 12 is particularly illuminating as John uses the words "receive" and "believe" as synonyms. This is to say that to truly believe in Jesus *is* to receive him and vice versa. While we are certainly responsible to receive the word of God (both written and incarnate) into our lives, John the Baptist makes it clear in John 3:27 that: "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven." What does this mean? Do you find language about the sovereignty of God in salvation like this more threatening or thrilling? How come?

6. While it's clear that *receiving* the word of God is a significant theme in Scripture, so is the theme of *refusing* the word of God. Turn back to the book of Exodus. Scan through Exodus 4:23; 7:14; 8:2; 9:2; 10:3-4; and 13:15. What's happening here? Who is refusing to heed God's word? What is the result for him and for his people? Take a careful look at 10:3. What does the Lord (speaking through Moses and Aaron) tell us is at the root of this refusal to yield to God's word? Does this sound familiar to you? Can you think of any cases in your own life where pride has kept you from receiving God's word? What has been the result for you or those close to you? Please share with the group.

7. Once again, we turn to the prophet Jeremiah. Take a look at these references in particular: Jeremiah 5:3 (twice); 8:5; 9:6; and 11:10. In each text, how is *refusal* framed? How does this help to shed light on the nature of what's actually happening when we refuse the word of God? Do you see any personal applications for your walk with the Lord? What are they?

8. In John 5:39-40, Jesus highlights the frightening prospect of being enamored with the *written* word of God and yet not actually coming to a greater knowledge of the *incarnate* word of God - Christ himself. Is this a temptation for us today? Notice what Paul says is refused in 2 Thessalonians 2:10. Did you know that refusing to *love* (not just know) the truth is an evidence of unbelief? Finally, consider Hebrews 12:25. How does the author argue from the lesser to the greater as he considers the offense of refusing the law of God as opposed to refusing the gospel of God? What does this mean for us in our own lives, families, church, and mission to be and make disciples in our community?