Wrestling with Doubt *Finding Faith* by Adam Hamilton

Session 2 The Good Book? Wrestling With the Bible **participant’s Copy**

**Joys and Concerns**

**Session Goals**

Through conversation, activities, and reflections, participants will:

* Identify beliefs about the Bible.

* Identify questions and doubts related to the Bible, and
* explore the meaning of 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

**Biblical foundation**

2 Timothy 3:15-17

**Opening Prayer**

**Video Study and Discussion**

* Did anything specific stand out as you watched the video?
* What is one thing you learned that you did not know before?

Keep the video in mind as well as the book and Bible passages throughout the rest of your discussion.,.

We will review both backgrounds of the bible formation and terms associated with the Bible.

**Bible Study and Discussion: 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17**.

*Every Scripture*

Keep in mind these key points as you read the scripture focusing on the phrase “every scripture.”

• The scripture Paul knew was what we know as the Old Testament.

• Much of the New Testament had not yet been written.

• These scriptures were not bound together in a book but were recorded on scrolls.

2, What is your understanding of the phrase, ‘*Every Scripture?*

**TANAK**

The above name is the name of the Jewish Bible. The name comes from an acronym for the three groupings of scripture it contains.

◊ T: TO RAH-The Five Books of Moses

◊ N: NEVI'IM-The Prophets

◊ K: KETUVIM-The Writings

These are the scriptures that would have been familiar to Paul. The books in the TANAK are arranged in a different order from the order in our Old Testament.

Canonization is the process of determining which documents are considered holy and authoritative. This process took place over several centuries, **not all at once.**

***The canonization of the Hebrew Bible is outlined below.***

**T: TORAH-The Five Books of Moses**

1. The first five books of the Bible-Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;
2. Books of Instruction and the Law.
3. Likely canonized during or shortly after the Babylonian exile (sixth century BC).
4. Ezra read from the Torah or Instruction Scroll after the Israelites returned to Judah after the Exile.
5. Nehemiah 8:1 report: "When the seventh month came and the people of Israel were settled in their towns, all the people gathered together in the area in front of the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Instruction scroll from Moses, according to which the Lord had instructed Isarel.” This reading is dated in the 400 BC.

**N:NEVI’M-The Prophets**

1. Former Prophets-Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samt1el, 1 a11d 2 Kings
2. Latter Prophets-The books named after prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets
3. Major Prophets-Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel '
4. Minor Prophets: -A group of twelve prophets, referred to as "minor" because these books are shorter in length, not because their messages are less i1nportant.
5. Likely canonized sometime during the Second Temple period prior to the time of Jesus.
6. Luke 4:16-17a says, "Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah.

**K: KETUVIM-The Writings**

* 1. A variety of genres including poetry, wisdom literature, prophets, and history
  2. Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles
  3. Contains the latest writings to be canonized, with evidence of debate about some books well past the time of Jesus.
  4. Luke 24:44 says, "Jesus said to them, .'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled."'

1. What did you learn about the Hebrew Bible that you didn’t know before?

**THE REMAINDER OF OUR STUDY OF CHAPTER 2 WILL FOCUS ON EACH SECTION OF THE TEXT**

*“WORDS OF PEOPLE OR THE Word OF GOD*

Key points:

* The Greek work Paul used for "inspired by God" is the compound word *theopneustos.*
* Theo means God.
* *Pneustos* comes from pneumo, which means spirit, breath, wind.
* This suggests that Paul is saying scripture is "God-breathed,"" God-winded," and "God-spirited."
* God gave life to humankind with divine breath

**Read Genesis 2:7.**

**Read John 20:22**.

*Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit*

1. What does it mean to you that scripture is "inspired by God"?

**4.**How does the idea that the Bible was written by fallible human beings influence your understanding of and attitude toward scripture?

**Hamilton states** *‘ It is precisely this combination of fallible human authors and God's inspiration or influence of these authors that makes reading the Bible exciting. I read anticipating (and praying) that God will speak to me. Christians believe the Holy Spirit was at work in and through the human authors and uses their words to speak to us today.* (p. 36)

* 1. Do you agree with this Hamilton’s statement or not?’

**Read 2 Timothy 3: I 6-17:**

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6. What is the purpose of the scripture?

**Book Study and Discussion**

**PERPLEXING AND VEXING PARTS OF SCRIPTURE**

“*Violence Attributed to God in Scripture* ‘

Hamilton suggests three approaches to addressing the question of violence in the Bible:

* + God is sovereign and therefore can do what God wants to do.
  + 'These documents were likely written hundreds of years after the events took place and may not accurately reflect what happened.
  + In biblical times, kings of all nations believed their gods were calling them to fight the wars they fought.

1. What questions, challenges, and doubts does the subject of violence in the Bible raise for you?
2. How do you approach these questions, challenges, and doubts?

"*The Bible and Women, Slavery, LGBTQ+ Exclusion, and Circumcision."*

Hamilton states: *I've suggested that understanding the biblical authors' humanity and their assumptions, and historical and cultural context, helps us address most of these issues. It invites us to ask critical questions of the biblical text and to interpret the minor notes of the Bible in the light of Jesus, the great commandments he taught, and the major themes* of scripture. (p. 55)

1. Where there any Hamilton's remarks about these issues that you agree or disagree with?
2. What questions, challenges, and doubts does the Bible raise for you concerning women, slavery, and LGBTQ+ exclusion?
3. What passages of scripture do you turn to as you work through these questions, challenges, and doubts?
4. What passages of scripture inform and guide the way you treat other people?.

**Summary:** It is a natural thing to have questions about the Bible and to find it challenging such as daily applying some of the scriptures to our daily lives. We are encouraged to continue to read the Bible and talk about our questions and doubts with trusted Christian friends and their ministers.

Remember that:

**God is bigger than our doubts and wants us to voice our questions and doubts in prayer.**

**Closing Prayer**