

1 SCRIPTURE UNDER SCRUTINY

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE WE DOING?



Read Romans 1:18-2:1. Who are the people described in chapter 1? What is said about their behaviour and Character?

Who decides what is right and wrong according to Paul?

Can anyone plead ignorance?

In chapter 2 verse 1, who is Paul addressing? Why should we not be judgemental?

Read Romans 3:9-18. What conclusion does Paul reach?



Is this true of the world? For example do people worship created things instead of the creator (1:25)? Is everyone a liar (3:13)?

Is Paul right when he says that everyone is under sin?



How does this apply to me?

What follows about my standing with God?

How can sinful people be acceptable to the holy God?

DICTIONARY

Sin = rebellion against God

Righteous = right with God

Gentile = anyone who isn't a Jew

2 SCRIPTURE UNDER SCRUTINY

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOD DOING?



Read Romans 1:18, 28. What is God already doing in response to our sinfulness?



Read Romans 2:1-16. What will God do in the future?

How will God judge?

What will happen to the unrighteous? To the righteous?



Why do you think God judges? Why is he angry about sinfulness?

Do you agree that people should be held responsible and accountable for the consequences of their actions?

What do you think the world would be like if people were not held accountable in any way?

In a sinful world, can justice be maintained without judgment?



Do I want God to treat me with justice?

How can anyone be saved?

DICTIONARY

Wrath = anger

The law = the rules God gave to the people of Israel

3 SCRIPTURE UNDER SCRUTINY

WHAT CAN RELIGION DO?



What do you think is the purpose of religion?

Read Romans 2:17-29. What does God require of those who have the law?

Did the Jews meet those requirements?

Who is the condemned lawbreaker in verse 27?

Does circumcision make a person righteous before God?

Read Romans 3:19-20. Will anyone be declared righteous by observing the law?

What does the law achieve?



Can religious rituals get you closer to God or solve the problem of sin?



What am I trusting in to get me to God? Am I trusting in laws or rituals to make me righteous? If so, what are the implications?

Is it possible for anyone to be righteous?

DICTIONARY

Circumcision = a genital operation performed on Jewish boys as a sign that they were God's people. It was commanded in the law.

4 SCRIPTURE UNDER SCRUTINY

GOD'S GIFT



Read Romans 3:9-10,20. According to Paul, who will be declared righteous in God's sight?



Read Romans 3:21-31. Write out in your own words how, according to verses 21-26, someone can be right with God.

How can Jesus' death pay for our sin?

Is the gift deserved?

How can the cross demonstrate God's justice (v.25)?

How can God be both merciful and just at the same time?

Does a Christian have any grounds for boasting, or for being judgmental (vv.27-28)?



Is anyone too sinful for God to forgive?



Am I too sinful to be acceptable to God on my own merit?

Am I too sinful to be acceptable to God on the basis of Jesus' death?

What would it mean for me to put my faith in Jesus' death?

DICTIONARY

Justified = to be declared right

Grace = unmerited favour

faith = trust, dependence

Forbearance = mercy to sinners

The law and the prophets = two major sections of the Old Testament

5 SCRIPTURE UNDER SCRUTINY

PEACE WITH GOD



What is the most striking example of reconciliation you've had with another person in your life?

What do you think it would be like to be at peace with God?



Read Romans 5:1-11. List the benefits of being a Christian mentioned in the passage; in the past, present and future.

Past

Present

Future

By what means does one gain access to God (v.2)?

How has God demonstrated his love?

What are Christians saved from?

What guarantee is there for this?



What right do you think Christians have to be sure that they are going to heaven?

Why do you think Christians are expected to suffer (v.3)?



In your search for God, have you got to the stage where you can say that you are at peace with God? Would you like to be reconciled to God?

Dear God,
I know that I have lived as your enemy. Thankyou that you love me anyway and sent Jesus to die on my behalf. Please forgive me and change me so that I may live with Jesus as my Lord.
Amen.

1 NEW LIFE NEW FATHER



Read Luke 11:1-13. Who should we approach in prayer? Who is he?

What should we ask for in prayer?



THE KINGDOM

In Jewish thought, the kingdom was the kingdom of Israel. Its highpoint was under King David and King Solomon. God promised that their kingdom would be a mighty one and that their descendants would always be on the throne. However, after their descendants had turned away from God, the Jews were conquered and taken into captivity in Babylon. After 70 years they were allowed to return, but they remained under enemy control, first under the Persians, then under the Greeks and finally under the Romans. All this time however, they looked forward to the time when God would fulfil his promise and put David's descendant on the throne in Israel and establish a mighty kingdom. That's what it means for a Jew to say, "Your kingdom come."

When Jesus came as that king, he didn't establish a physical, political kingdom. His kingdom, established through his death on the cross, was a spiritual kingdom. We are members of his kingdom if Jesus is our Lord and he rules wherever people acknowledge him as king in their hearts. That's part of what Christians mean when they say, "Your kingdom come."

Christians also wait for his return, when he will establish the eternal kingdom in which everyone will acknowledge him as king. That's also what Christians mean when they say, "Your kingdom come."



What's the point of the story about the midnight friend?

What's the point about human fathers (vv.11-13).

What do these teach us about our father? Why can we approach him with confidence?

Who has the spirit (**see 1 Corinthians 12:3 & Romans 8:9**)?

If God wants the very best for us, what sort of things does this include (**see the Lord's Prayer in particular**)?



Who is our God: Jesus, the father or the Spirit?



THE TRINITY

There is only one God, yet there are three persons, each of whom is God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each are separate persons, who relate to each other as persons, but each is fully divine.

why does Jesus pray to the Father? What does this show us about God?



What will it mean for me to have a heavenly father?

FURTHER STUDY

John 16:17-28, Ephesians 3:14-19, 1 John 4:13-16

2 NEW LIFE NEW HOPE



Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-26. What is of first importance in the Christian faith?

What does the resurrection of Christ refer to?

Why does Paul say if Jesus is not raised our faith is useless?



Is Paul right to say: “If only for this life we have hope, we are to be pitied more than all men” (v. 19)?



What happens at the end:

- a. To Jesus?
- b. To us?
- c. To death?



How is Jesus’ resurrection relevant to us (vv. 20-22)?



Summarise: What is our hope? How can we be sure this is true?



How does this help us find life? How does it help us in difficulty?

3 NEW LIFE NEW LIFE



In what ways is becoming a Christian like being born again?

Section 1: read Titus 3:3-7



What did God do? Why?

What is the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit?

Can you be a Christian without having the Spirit?

What two things happen to a person who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit?



Summarise: Who is the Holy Spirit? What does he do?

Section 2: read Galatians 5:16-26



What does walking by the Spirit involve?



How is the Spirit in conflict with the sinful nature? What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Should I expect it to be easy?



What are the acts of the sinful nature? What is the fruit of the Spirit?



What will it mean for me to walk by the Spirit?

4 NEW LIFE NEW FAMILY



Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Why does the author call his readers brothers?

What two things does he say we already have in Christ:

- a. vv. 19-21? What does this mean? (note: see below)

- b. vv. 22? What does this mean? (note: see below)



THE MOST HOLY PLACE

In the Old Testament, we read about a sacrificial system given by God to his people, the Israelites. Inside the temple was a special place, the Most Holy Place, which was separated from the rest of the temple by a curtain. Only the High Priest could enter and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. When he did, he sprinkled blood on the altar to wash away the sins of the people.



In the light of this, what five things should we do:

- a. v. 22?
- b. v. 23?
- c. v. 24?
- d. v. 25a?
- e. v. 25b?



Why is it important for Christians to keep meeting together?

What things hinder us from meeting together?

What things will spur others on to love and good deeds?



What can I do that will encourage others?

DICTIONARY

Encouragement = Whatever I can say or do that will build up others in the Christian faith

5 NEW LIFE NEW GUIDE



Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What does it mean to say the Scriptures are God-breathed?

What does all Scripture refer to (**see 1 Timothy 5:18, 2 Peter 3:15-16**)?



WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT?

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus came from God bringing a message from God. In fact, he was the message. His teaching, life and especially his death and resurrection is all God’s message to us.

He told his disciples to preach that message to the world and promised them that he would send the Holy Spirit to ensure that the message they preached was that same message: “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

The New Testament is the written record of the message that they preached, written down by the apostles and their associates, so that all ages can know the message.



If the Scriptures are God-breathed, what follows for what we should believe? How we should live?



What four things are the Scriptures useful for? Can you think of an example of how the Bible has been useful to you in each of these four areas?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.



What are the Scriptures able to do according to verse 17?



Do we need any other guide or information?

What should I do if I can’t find the answer to my problem in the Bible?



What place does Bible study have in my life?

6 NEW LIFE NEW TASK



Read Colossians 4:2-6. Who wrote this letter (**see 1:1-2**)? To whom? Who are the us in verse 3?

What two things does Paul ask them to pray for him?



Should we take what he says to the Colossian Christians to apply to us? If so, who should we be praying for and what should we pray for them?

We are not necessarily evangelists in the way Paul was. To what extent do these prayers apply to ourselves? What should we pray for ourselves?



THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

The Mystery of Christ to which Paul refers to is the fact that the gospel brings people from all nations, not only Jews, into God's family. It's a mystery in the sense that until the gospel came with Jesus, no-one realised that non-Jews would be accepted in. Now that Christ has come, the mystery has been revealed. So it's like a secret which we can now know (**see Ephesians 3:2-6**).



Why is it important for non-Christians to hear the message? What should our attitude be about others joining the family of God?

Why is it important for us to be devoted to prayer about these things?



In addition to prayer, what three things does Paul tell the Colossian Christians to do? Does this apply to us?



How can we be wise in the way we act toward outsiders? What difference does this make?

What will it mean for us to make the most of every opportunity? What opportunities do we have to share the message of Christ?

What will it mean for our conversation to be full of grace? What will it mean for our conversation to be seasoned with salt? How will this help us to know how to answer people? What kind of things do you think we are likely to have to answer?

Pray for our non-Christian friends, for the work of evangelists and for our own opportunities.

1 CHRISTIAN ETHICS

TOLERANCE



Is there any such thing as absolute truth? Is there one true religion? Is there such thing as right and wrong?



Read Matthew 7:1-6. What is Jesus' command? What will happen if we disobey him?



Where have you seen judgmentalism? Do you agree that it is bad? Why?



How does Jesus illustrate the problem with judgementalism?

What should the person in Jesus' example do? Is Jesus advocating unconditional acceptance? What is the alternative he proposes?

How does verse 6 illustrate Jesus alternative to unconditional acceptance?



Summarise Jesus' teaching on judgmentalism and discernment in this passage. How would it relate to the way you should treat (a) someone with different skin colour to you (b) a paedophile (c) someone who believes the earth is flat?



KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

We are too limited and bound by our own perspective to know things absolutely. This means that there is a danger of dismissing the beliefs or behaviour of others without good reasons. Nevertheless, if we are careful, we can still know things truly and partially. This is the basis for non-judgmentally working out what is true and what is not.



Read 1Corinthians 15:1-8. What is of first importance to the Christian faith? Is it possible for these things to be false?

Read 1Corinthians 15:12-19. What does it mean if Jesus didn't actually rise from the dead?



The Koran teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross. Can both Christianity and Islam be true?

Can you really say: "Christianity is true for you but it's not true for me?"

What does it mean to judge whether a belief is true or not? Can this be a good thing to do?

2 CHRISTIAN ETHICS

ABORTION



What does it mean to be human? Are humans more valuable than animals? How are they different?



Read Genesis 9:1-7. Noah has just stepped off the ark after the flood. What does God give to humanity?



How are humans different to other animals? Is this based on our being conscious, healthy, intelligent or viable?

Does this mean animals have no value?

Do you think humans have a privileged place in the world? Do you think it is true to say that we are made in the image of God?

Does humanity's special position include having the right to choose to take another human life? Why?

What then do you think is the biblical view of abortion?



DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Choice: People have the right to choose, but they should also be held accountable when they choose to do wrong actions. If unborn foetuses are human, then the mother's right to choose to have an abortion is roughly equivalent to a husband's right to choose to murder his wife.
Foetus: There is a problem with claiming that a foetus is not human. We have to establish a clear point after which it becomes human. Further, if humans are valuable because they are made in the image of God, and not because they are independent or rational, then a human foetus is still human.

Rape: There are some issues where deciding whether abortion is justified is very hard, for example when the mother's life is in danger or the mother is a victim of rape. However, these situations are far from normal and should not be used to form a general response to this issue.



What is my attitude to the value of human life? Why?



How would considering humans as made in the image of God affect the way I treat myself and other people?

What should be our response to God? Does anyone make that response consistently? What do you think God thinks of this (**see Romans 1:21-23**)?



Do I respond to God as someone made in his image? What does God think of this?

3 CHRISTIAN ETHICS

SEX



What is your impression of how society views sex? Do you think this is good or bad? What is your impression of how Christianity views sex? Do you think this is good or bad?



Read Genesis 1:28, 2:18-25. What is the purpose of sex and marriage?



Do you think of marriage as a blessing or a curse? Why?

Why do you think sex unites people?

Do you think of children as a blessing or a curse? Why?



Read 1Corinthians 6:9-11. What things are taught as wrong here? (note: sexual immorality is translating a Greek word that means 'sex outside of marriage')



DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Divorce: Although God says that divorce and remarriage are wrong, he allows for separation (without remarriage) in the case of abuse and permits divorce in the case of adultery.
Homosexuality: The Bible teaches that homosexuality is immoral, but does not condone homophobia. It is irrelevant whether there is a "gay gene" or not, in the same way that it would not make murder permissible if scientists discovered a "murder gene".
Masturbation: The Bible nowhere says that masturbation is wrong. It does however teach that entertaining sexual fantasies about anyone other than your husband/wife is a form of adultery.



Do you think any sexual behaviour is permissible between consenting adults? Why do you think God considers some sexual behaviour inappropriate?



What will happen to those who do what is wrong? Why do you think God punishes?



Do you agree that people should be held accountable for their actions?



What happened to those people at Corinth who did these things? (note: see box below) How did this happen?



...BUT YOU WERE WASHED, YOU WERE JUSTIFIED, YOU WERE SANCTIFIED...

The New Testament says that all people have fallen short of serving the creator God. However God offers to forgive us and renew us in his image as we were created to be. When Jesus died, he took our rightful punishment on himself to grant us forgiveness. Furthermore, having risen physically from the dead, he sends his Spirit to all who trust in him to transform us and give us the power to live God's way.



Have I failed God in sex or any of these other areas? If so, what are the consequences for me?

Do I want to be washed, justified and sanctified? Am I willing to ask God to forgive me because of Jesus and change me by his Spirit?

4 CHRISTIAN ETHICS GOVERNMENT



What do you think about politicians? Do you think people should always obey the law?



Read Romans 13:1-7. Why should Christians obey the government? What will happen if they do? What will happen if they don't?



Can you think of examples where the government has rightly brought punishment on the wrongdoer or done good to those who do what is right?

Do you agree it is generally right to obey the government?



Read Acts 5:26-29. When should Christians not obey the government? What could be other examples of this?



DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Submission to governing authorities can be hard to put into practise. There are many laws which don't require us to disobey God, yet seem to be stupid, unfair or wrong. Examples of this may be copyright laws, tax laws or censorship laws. In these cases, a Christian ought to submit patiently despite their disagreement. However, while civil disobedience is not an option for Christians, there are other ways to change the law. Sometimes lobbying and media (eg art or journalism) can influence governments for the better, although this needs to be done carefully.



Does this make Christians boring?

What may happen when Christians disobey the government (**see Acts 12:1-4**)?

Why do you think Christians are willing to die for their beliefs? Do you think this is admirable or stupid?



Read Mark 8:34-38. What will happen when Jesus returns to people who are not Christians? What does this mean for evil governments? What does this mean for normal people?

What will happen when Jesus returns to Christians? How would this knowledge help Christians in times of hardship and oppression now? How would this help them submit to governments that they disagree with?



Is there anything I would die for?

According to what we have seen, what does my future hold?

5 CHRISTIAN ETHICS

THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE



What things motivate you to do what is right? Why do you do things you don't want to do? What things have you tried to help you live a better life?



Read Colossians 3:1-4. What has happened to Christians in the past? What is their situation in the present? What will happen to them in the future? What should they therefore do now (see below)?



...YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED...SINCE YOU DIED...

The Bible sometimes speaks of salvation as dying with Christ and rising with Christ. Christ took the punishment for us when he died, so it is as if we died with him. Furthermore, God accepted Christ's sacrifice for us. He showed this by raising Christ physically from death. Therefore it is as if we rose with him.



Read Colossians 3:5-11. What should a Christian no longer do? What do each of these things mean? What two motivations are given?



Do you agree these things are wrong?



What things here do I do?



Why do people continue to do sinful things after they become Christians?



Read Colossians 3:12-14. What things should a Christian do? What do each of these things mean? What two motivations are given?



Which things in this paragraph do I struggle to do?



Do you think all of these things are desirable?

What are your impressions of the things you have learnt about Christian ethics? How does it compare with your views of morality? What questions do you still have?



Am I at a point where I should stop living life my way and start living it God's way? Should I pray that I can die with Christ and be raised with Christ?