

Values in Action

1. Bible Admirers or Bible Readers?

As evangelical Christians we usually know the 'right answer' when it comes to the Bible. "Read it every day to grow in your faith - it's God's word." However, many of us have a complicated relationship with Scripture and what we believe in theory doesn't always outwork in everyday life.

Discuss:

1. What percentage of evangelical Christians in the UK do you think read the Bible for themselves once a week or more?

(A = 26% according to 2006 Church Survey)

- a. Does that surprise you? Why?
- b. What do you think are probably the consequences of that on:
 - Individual Christians?
 - The Body of Christ in this country?

Rather than just feeling guilty (or smug) depending on your own habits, let's consider how we might engage more helpfully with the Bible ourselves.

2. **Give everyone a list of all the books of the Bible (enclosed).** (A big, 'Group Copy' to write on might also help.)
 - a. Get everyone to mark on their list which books they:
 - know best/read most often/enjoy
 - know least about/have never read/dislike

- b. Encourage everyone to share their preferences and why.

(N.b. You might like to get them to give a short 'sales pitch' for their favourite - e.g. "Why everyone should read Leviticus" and/or give their answer to "If one book had to go from the Canon which would you vote out and why?")

- c. If the books you wanted to vote out WERE removed, what would be the consequences for our understanding of God and the Gospel?

Most of us know that the Spiritual discipline of reading our Bibles regularly is a good one, but too often just don't do it. Rather than beating ourselves up, let's discuss how we might inspire and encourage each other. (Guilt doesn't work anyway!)

(N.b. If time is tight you might like to do either 4 or 5.)

3. What things have you found to be helpful in reading the Bible for yourself? What would your top tips be?
4. One at a time: *(You might like to give people a minute to think about the first question.)*
 - a. In what ways would you like your faith to grow? i.e. What would you like to know about God, Christian faith and living?
 - b. What suggestions do other people in the group have for Biblical books they might read to help them to explore those things?
5. Looking back at the list: What book would you like to read/understand better?

(N.b. You could get people to pick a Bible book they don't know well, make it a 'target for the term' and once a week/fortnight have someone briefly share/report back what they've learnt from their devotional reading of that book.)

Praying for God's help is always a good idea, but we need to take some responsibility too. Apparently it takes doing something 30 times to form a new habit. Without getting legalistic, that means that in only 4-6 weeks you could have a whole new way of engaging with God through Scripture.

6. What are you going to try to change in your Bible reading this week to get the ball rolling?

(Encourage people to be realistic. If they have a long commute, young children etc it will look different to someone with a lot of free time.)