



*But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true.  
Psalm 119:151*

## Study #1 Reforming Word

*I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip of Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it.*

*I did nothing: the Word did it all.*

Martin Luther

The Reformation, first and foremost was driven by the Bible. There is just no way the truths that would shake the world could have been known without the Scripture being read and available in ways it hadn't been for centuries. The Bible carried an authority that made it both thrilling and dangerous at the same time. Thrilling for the hearer who could understand the Gospel in their own language, dangerous as the Bible's claim of ultimate authority stood above all others. The battle of the Reformation was a battle over the supreme and unique authority of the Bible over all other authorities.

## Some questions for your group

### Brainstorm:

In our world of competing authorities, what ones do you think are dominant in our culture at the moment?

### Background:

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, people did believe the Bible had 'infallible' authority, but they also were taught that the Catholic *magisterium* (church teaching and Pope) was similarly infallible. What sort of problems could you see this causing...

- a) where the Bible is not readily available?
- b) when the Bible is becoming more available?

In our 21<sup>st</sup> century secular culture, most people certainly don't see the Bible as having supreme authority, indeed it's just seems to be a strange way of talking. What alternate 'authorities' do we see being used to discredit or overshadow the Bible's significance

- a) in the world around us?
- b) within the church?

If it is true that God's Word is indeed the *supreme* authority, what *authority* would be required to endorse such a truth?

## The Word on the Word

### Read Psalm 19

Take a look through Psalm 19 to see what we can learn about the Bible's 'self authenticating' authority.

### Read vv.1-6

Creation is still often worshipped and revered in religions and ideologies. But what is the truth being shown in the wordless creation speech of these verses?

### Read vv.7-11

King David now moves to the words of Scripture, highlighting both its character and impact.

- How would you argue for the authority of God's Word from these verses?
- What is the promise and result of trusting such authority?
- Why is the Word superior to other authorities?

### Read vv.12-14

From Genesis 3 humanity has wanted the authority to rule and thrive apart from God and His Word.

- What do these verses suggest about our capacity when compared to God's in the previous verses?

David cries out for God's Word to inform and shape his, for as God is error free, so is His Word.

- If this is true, and if the wonders of the Word in vv.7-11 are true, what should be our response to the amazing availability of the Bible we now have?
- If we're not seeking to take advantage of God's Word as we could, what might that suggest about what we really believe (or want) to be authoritative in our lives?

## Jesus on the Word

### Read Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus legitimately could have appealed to his own authority which was being questioned in these verses.

- What sort of power and authority could Jesus have appealed to (and expressed) in order to overcome Satan?
- What does this show us then of Jesus' view of Scripture?
- Even though the Scriptures are all about Jesus, he submits to their authority for our sake (which would cost him his life). How does this challenge our view of the supremacy of Scripture?

## **Reformers on the Word**

### **Luther on Scripture**

*People generally think: 'If I had an opportunity to hear God speak in person, I would run my feet bloody'. But you now have the Word of God in church...and this is God's Word as surely as if God himself were speaking to you.*

### **Zwingli on Scripture**

*The Word of God is certain and can never fail. It is clear, and will never leave us in darkness. It teaches its own truth. It arises and irradiates the soul of man with full salvation and grace. It gives the soul sure comfort in God. It humbles it, so that it loses and indeed condemns itself and lays hold of God.*

- What were these men convinced of?

## **Your ongoing reformation?**

People paid with their lives to get the Scriptures into people's hands.

- In what ways would we love to see this supreme and life giving Word have greater impact in our lives?
- What are ways in which we can support its ongoing impact in our world?