

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

***Place Priority on Scripture***

**Acts 2:42; Romans 15: 4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21**

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

On the previous worship day, ask every participant who has a Bible (including preschoolers and children) to bring a Bible for this coming session that is special to them.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

1) Bring an atlas or regional map.

2) Bring two plumb lines (one for the adult application time and the other for the teen application time. A 2-meter string with a teardrop fishing weight or some other small weight tied to one end will work just as well for your purposes.

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3) Also bring a bag of lemon drops and/or mints.

**Worship Time Leader:**

**Music Sources:**

“Wonderful Words of Life” (#261, BH, 1991 and other hymnals).

“Why Do I Sing About Jesus” (#541, BH, 1991)

“How Firm a Foundation” (#338, BH, 1991).

“I Will Sing of the Mercies of Your Love” (#168, MMP)

“The B-I-B-L-E”

“Thy Word”

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)**Place Priority on Scripture*****Focal Text***

Acts 2:42; Romans 15: 4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

***Background Text***

Acts 2:42-47; Romans 15:4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

***Main Idea***

The New Testament places priority on Scripture as the basis and guide for belief and practice.

***Question to Explore***

How does our church decide what to believe and how to carry out those beliefs in the world?

***Teaching Aim***

To lead the group to identify reasons Scripture needs to be the basis for a church's belief and practice.

**Gathering together:**

Ask all the people to sit and join in singing the hymn "Wonderful Words of Life" (#261, BH, 1991 and other hymnals).

Ask one of the children or an older preschooler to lead a prayer thanking God for the Bible.

[The following poem is set to music in Hymn # 139 of the Baptist Hymnal, 1975 edition, but would, perhaps, be more effective if recited with care and feeling. Someone should be chosen who reads well and effectively].

Read:

Holy Bible, Book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine:  
Mine to tell me whence I came;  
Mine to teach me what I am.

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O thou holy book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine.  
Words, John Burton, Sr., 1803 (Shortened version)

## **First thoughts:**

**Leader: Read the following story as shared by one of the writers of this week's material – or think of a personal example of someone in your life's experience who was profoundly changed by reading the Bible.**

A classmate of mine from college days worked as a nightclub performer after he was discharged from the armed forces. One evening he was very despondent, so he returned to his hotel room and started packing his few things and planned to leave town. As he packed, he came across a New Testament that had been given him when he entered the army. He had never paid much attention to it before, but kept it just in case. He picked it up, flipped a few pages with his thumb, and began reading a few lines randomly. But he became transfixed by a certain passage, and as he read he felt strangely drawn into the words of the text. As he read he became aware that he needed what the Scriptures were saying, and fell to his knees and prayed a simple prayer, asking for forgiveness of his sins and for the Lord Jesus to come into his heart. Without guidance from another human, he was saved and his life was turned around. He enrolled at the university I attended and we became friends. He gave his testimony on various occasions on campus, using his unique talent of mimicking the music of several band instruments. He ended each performance with a personal testimony calling attention to the fact that it was the Word of God that changed his life and encouraging students to take the Bible seriously.

Ask an adult to lead in prayer.

## **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## **Teacher Preparation**

### **Place Priority on Scripture**

#### ***Focal Text***

Acts 2:42; Romans 15: 4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

#### ***Background Text***

Acts 2:42-47; Romans 15:4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

#### ***Main Idea***

The New Testament places priority on Scripture as the basis and guide for belief and practice.

#### ***Question to Explore***

How does our church decide what to believe and how to carry out those beliefs in the world?

#### ***Teaching Aim***

To lead the group to identify reasons Scripture needs to be the basis for a church's belief and practice.

### **Introduction to your personal study:**

In my kitchen window is a vivid example of the power of light. My 9-year-old daughter is conducting an experiment called “Light for Life.” This budding scientist placed two dishes with a small layer of cotton, some radish seeds, and a little water on each. She then covered each dish with a box, but cut a hole in the side of one of the boxes. A few days later the seeds under the box with no hole had sprouted and grown straight up looking for light. But the sprouts under the box with the hole had grown toward the light. As we begin this unit “Growing Together” I’m reminded of the need for us to grow together toward the light of Christ’s Word. Let’s consider how the Bible can direct our growth.

## Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

### The Bible in New Testament Churches

The second chapter of Acts describes the birth of a new community. As individuals experienced a life-changing confrontation with God and His forgiveness, their new life in Christ prompted them to seek out others who shared their experiences. As a community of faith, they dedicated themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship of the church, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

### Apostles’ Teaching (Acts 2:42)

**Acts 2:42.** Jesus spent a large amount of His time during His earthly ministry with a small group of student-followers whom He had called to follow Him. In Luke 6:12-16, Jesus chooses twelve of these student-followers whom He designates as “apostles.” After spending the night in prayer, Jesus specifically designated these twelve to join Him in announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God (See Luke 9:1-6; Matthew 10:1-23). Each of these twelve was part of Jesus’ daily life, walking and talking with Him and sharing His earthly ministry. Additionally they were historical eyewitnesses of His life, death, and resurrection. Their teaching was His story – the wonder that God became a man and gave His life for you and me.

The apostles also had the benefit of Jesus’ explanation of the Scriptures. Jesus had explained to His disciples how He fulfilled Old Testament Scripture, beginning with Moses and all the prophets (See Luke 24:27).

On the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus arose from the dead, the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jews had gathered from “every nation under heaven,” (Acts 2:5), to fulfill their duty to gather in sacred assembly for the Pentecost or Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15-21). Those gathered marvelled as they each heard these Galileans speaking in his or her own native language. As Peter addressed the crowd he quoted from the prophet Joel and King David the prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of Christ and in the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-28).

**Romans 15:4.** The apostle Paul wrote a tremendous letter to “...all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” This letter is both personal and theological. Paul shared of his deep longing to visit Rome (Romans 1:8-15, 15:24,32), and reviewed and

clarified the message of Christ (Romans 1:16, 15:15-16). Using love as the key, Paul set out clear guidelines on how to live the Christian life.

Specifically, Paul notes that everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. He emphasized that the Scriptures are vital to believers in their walk with God. The inspired Word records the lives of men and women of God who lived in faith despite their circumstances. Our lives too, will call for such endurance. The encouragement of the Word of God can help us who are strong to bear with the failings of the weak and not just please ourselves (Romans 15:1).

**2 Timothy 3:14-17.** This is the second letter Paul has written to his former traveling companion, Timothy. Paul, now imprisoned, writes candidly and passionately to Timothy who is serving as a young minister to the church at Ephesus (See 2 Timothy 1:8, Acts 16:1-4, 1 Timothy 1:3). What would you say to a beloved child knowing your own death is imminent (2 Timothy 4:6)?

Understanding that Timothy would be faced with persecution, particularly with false teaching, Paul urges Timothy to cling to the truth he has known all his life. Reliable teachers taught this truth to him – truth consistent with Holy Scriptures, truth consistent with the message of salvation in Christ.

Paul emphasizes that all Scripture is given by God. Just as He breathed life into Adam, just as He breathed His Spirit into the believers at Pentecost, He breathed His Word for you and for me. Not only is all Scripture God-breathed, but it is useful for teaching truth, truth in light of God's supreme revelation in Jesus Christ. It is useful too, for rebuking, for showing where we have strayed from the truth. It is useful for correction, to aid us in getting back on the path of right living when we have strayed. And it is useful for training in righteousness, equipping each believer for every good work.

In another letter to Timothy's church at Ephesus, Paul wrote that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

**2 Peter 1:19-21.** Simon Peter also wrote to encourage the believers. He wrote as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to those who "through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Peter 1:1).

Peter emphasizes the importance of remembering the truth, which we have received. Even though we may be firmly established in the truth, we need to be reminded again. One of the gifts of Scripture is its endurance beyond the lives of the eyewitnesses (1:14-15).

Peter's authority comes as an eyewitness of the Lord, of His majesty and glory from God the Father (Matthew 17:5). Peter and the other apostolic writers didn't use cleverly invented stories. Rather they shared the truth as they had experienced it, both the daily ministry with Christ, and God's proclamation of Jesus as His beloved Son.



Peter, a witness to that proclamation, now admonishes us to pay attention to the word of the prophets as well. He paints a picture of the prophecies as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts. For the ancient prophecies were true and reliable when spoken from God through the prophets, and found their glorious culmination in Christ's actual coming.

The Holy Spirit set the stage and choreographed the unfolding revelation of God's love and glory throughout time. Above all, Peter cautions, we must be clear that no Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. No prophecy had its origin in the will of an individual; rather the prophets spoke from God, as they were inspired through the Holy Spirit. This caution is applicable too to our interpretation of Scripture. We must depend on the Holy Spirit in our study to help us accurately handle the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). God uses the gift of His written Word to show us His will and to clarify His way for us today, just as He did when the Holy Spirit originally inspired the writers to speak from God to their own day and time.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible study:**

What place does Scripture have in my life?—In the life of our church? Clearly Scripture was important to the early church. The rich traditions of prophecy grew even more precious through their fulfillment in Christ. Scripture, then and now, is the proper foundation for belief and practice. We may be tempted to rely on human tradition, individual opinion, institutional or denominational standards, or other changing sources of authority. Yet God's Word is the plumb line, a true unchanging measure.

How does our church decide what to do? Let us commit to seeking God's guidance through His Spirit, and be willing to measure our decisions against the truth of Scripture.

### **For Personal Reflection:**

- 1. What have I learned from this study?**
- 2. What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
- 3. What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### **Place Priority on Scripture**

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

Acts 2:42; Romans 15:4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

#### **Background Text**

Acts 2:42-47; Romans 15:4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

#### **Main Idea**

The New Testament places priority on Scripture as the basis and guide for belief and practice.

#### **Question to Explore**

How does our church decide what to believe and how to carry out those beliefs in the world?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the group to identify reasons Scripture needs to be the basis for a church's belief and practice.

### **Connect with Life:**

Ask some questions from the following list. If everyone in your group is very familiar with the Bible, use the alternate list in the box below.

(Reward right answers with a mint or lemon drop).

- 1) What is the name of the first Book in the Bible in the format that we have it today?
- 2) What is the last Book?
- 3) If you open most Bibles to the middle, which Book will you find?
- 4) Who can name the two main parts of the Bible?
- 5) Can you name the Book in the Bible that records at least 150 songs?
- 6) Which Book records the story of the creation of mankind, the flooding of the world, and the beginnings of the Jewish nation?
- 7) Jesus' followers (disciples) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the first four Books of the New Testament. Who knows what we call those four books as a group?

**Alternate list for a group who are all thoroughly familiar with the Bible.**

- 1) Would someone name the Books of the Old Testament?
- 2) Can anyone name the Books of the New Testament?
- 3) Who knows how many Books make up our Bible as we have it today.
- 4) How many different types of books in the Old Testament can you name? (Law, History, Poetry, Wisdom literature, Prophets).
- 5) Why is the Book of Ezekiel sometimes referred to as "apocalyptic" literature?
- 6) Why is a group of books called the "Apocrypha" part of some Bibles and not others?

Hand out study sheets or blank sheets of paper to each youth and adult.

**Guide the Study:**

1. Say: Let's imagine you are going on a long trip, a cross-country trip. How would you plan your route? After receiving various responses display an open atlas or regional map.

Ask: What if you were given a map, freshly generated with all the most important landmarks and detours clearly marked? Allow time for responses.

Ask: How important would the source of the map be to you? What would you want to know about the mapmaker? After receiving a few responses, say: In our journey of faith, God has given us a wonderfully detailed map in His Word. Let's explore how that map can guide us in our faith and practice.

2. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 2:42-47.

Introduce the unit on Growing Together by using comments from the “**Teacher Preparation**”. Emphasize that the new community that grew dedicated themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Say: Today we will begin by exploring the apostles’ teaching.

Share background information regarding the apostles from the “**Teacher Preparation**”. Emphasize that Jesus taught them daily. They both observed His ministry and ministered as directed by Him. Mention that Jesus explained both His words and the Scripture to them.

Have someone read Acts 2:14-28.

Say: This is an example of an apostle preaching from Scripture. Here Peter explains how these prophecies are being fulfilled.

3. Ask a volunteer to read Romans 15:4. Share the background information on the book of Romans from the “**Teacher Preparation**”. Note that we can spend all our lives studying the Bible and learn something new each time. Emphasize our need to study the whole Bible.

4. Have someone read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

Share the background information from the Study Guide on 2 Timothy. Discuss the wisdom of discerning the source of any teaching.

Share: The following three questions can help you evaluate the soundness of a lesson:

1) What do I know about this teacher?

2) Is this new and attractive teaching consistent with the truth I know?

3) How does this teaching stand up to Scripture?

Explain that the answers to these three questions can help an individual to determine whether or not to accept a teaching or interpretation as truth.

Say: God gave us His Holy Spirit to help us in sound interpretation. Note that Paul states that all Scripture is God-breathed.

Say: The Holy Spirit is eager to help us understand the very words He inspired in the first place.

5. Review the four uses Paul gives for Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16. Explore how God seeks to equip His people for the work He has prepared for them.

State: What a thought, that each of us is uniquely gifted, gifted for the work God has already prepared for us to do!

Ask for volunteers to share how God has uniquely gifted members of the group or church body.

6. Read 2 Peter 1:19-21 aloud.

Share the background of 2 Peter from the “**Teacher Preparation**”. Note that Peter wrote as a servant and apostle of Jesus.

Explore Peter’s emphasis on remembering the truth. Ask someone in advance to share how he or she first learned the truth of the gospel or share you how you came to know Jesus.

7. Discuss how even a professional or Olympic athlete practices the fundamentals of his or her sport continually. Say: In the same way, we need to make Bible reading, prayer and worship a daily focus if we are to grow in our faith.

Discuss Peter’s illustration of prophesy as a light which dawns and rises and becomes full light. Ask for someone to share an example of a truth of Scripture that has become clearer with continued study.

8. Discuss the place of God’s Holy Spirit in Scripture study and interpretation.

Have a volunteer read 2 Timothy 2:15.

Discuss this command to be diligent in Bible study. Explore ways to ensure believers are accurately handling the word of truth and various Bible Study methods helpful to individuals in the group. Be prepared to suggest some devotional helps. Some examples are: read through the Bible or New Testament in a year; read a chapter of Proverbs every day for a month; read a different Gospel each of the four weeks of Advent. If no one else does so, share the Holy Spirit’s fervent desire to help us come to know His Word.

9. Ask: How does our church decide what to do? Explain that the Bible must be our basis for belief and practice.

## **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

10. Ask a volunteer to read Amos 7:7-9. Ask a volunteer to hold up a plumb line. (If you don’t have one, use a long piece of string with a weight tied on one end.) If time allows, check whether a couple of walls or doors are plumb. Say: God measures His people to see if they are out of line. Just as a plumb line shows whether a wall is

straight, we need to evaluate our church's belief and practice by God's Word (Amos 7:7-9). Pray asking for God's guidance in our Bible study and for the Holy Spirit's discernment as we encounter other teachings and decide matters of belief and practice. Pray that just like the new believers in Acts 2, we will be devoted to God's Word.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.**

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

*You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.*

### Place Priority on Scripture

Acts 2:42; Romans 15: 4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.**

### Keeping It Vertical

A plumb line is a piece of metal or hard plastic shaped more-or-less like a teardrop with the sharp end pointing down. The larger top is attached to a long string. It is used by carpenters and other builders to ensure that a wall or post is standing vertical. When the string is hung from the top of the wall, gravity makes sure that the plumb line hangs perfectly downward toward the earth – well, almost perfectly – good enough for a wall or fence! Even in today's world of specialty digital levels and lasers, a plumb line can be found in every carpenter's bag.

Ask a volunteer to read Amos 7:7-9. Now, one of you hold up a plumb line. (If you don't have one, use a long piece of string with a weight tied on one end.) If time allows, check whether a couple of walls or doors are plumb. Say: God measures His people to see if they are out of line. Just as a plumb line shows whether a wall is straight, we need to evaluate our church's belief and practice by God's Word (Amos 7:7-9).

Pray asking for God's guidance in our Bible study and for the Holy Spirit's discernment as we encounter other teachings and decide matters of belief and practice. Pray that just like the new believers in Acts 2, we will be devoted to God's Word.

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)**Place Priority on Scripture**

Acts 2:42; Romans 15: 4; 1 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 1:19-21

**Beginning the Service:**

Regroup the congregation for worship by singing “Why Do I Sing About Jesus” (#541, BH, 1991) or “How Firm a Foundation” (#338, BH, 1991).

Ask a youth or adult to pray for God’s guidance as you worship together.

Sing the old chorus “The B-I-B-L-E” together.

**Offering:**

Ask one or two older preschoolers to gather the offering for today. Make sure that the appropriate adult retrieves the offering from the children.

Sing the praise hymn “I Will Sing of the Mercies of Your Love” (#168, MMP)

**Praying for the World:**

Bibles are unavailable among many hundreds of the world’s people groups. Millions of people today speak languages in which there is no translation of the Bible or even the New Testament. Many governments have forbidden their citizens to own a Bible or even read one. A majority of people alive today could not tell you even one Bible story. Ask: Does anyone here know a person who knows little or nothing of the teachings of the Bible? Ask: How can we help get God’s Word to people who do not even have access to the Bible?

Request an adult to pray that God will show our church how to get Bibles to persons in places where it is difficult. Pray, too, for those who are teaching people to read, understand, and use the Bible.

**Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond**



to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

## **The Map that Is Never Wrong**

**Acts 2:42; Romans 15:1-6; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:10-21**

### **Introduction:**

At a recent visit to a medical clinic, a patient was examined by a woman doctor from Nigeria. The patient noticed what looked like a well-worn Bible in an open desk drawer. She asked the doctor if it were a Bible, and she said "yes," and that she read her Bible daily. The patient concluded that the doctor was a person of the book, the Christian book—The Christian Bible. Jews are known as people of the book, the Hebrew Bible, The Christian Old Testament. Muslims are people of the book, the Qur'an (Koran), because it shapes their beliefs and practices.

### **I. We are what we read**

Who people are and how they act can be traced in some degree to what they read. Many people are frightened by the Harry Potter books, which many young people read avidly. Some believe that youths should not read them because they are about magic. Most of the action in the books takes place at Hogwarts, a school for young wizards. It is claimed that such reading has an evil influence on the minds of youth.

On the other hand, there are those who find these books to be interesting, even fascinating, and as harmless as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, or the Chronicles of Narnia—they accept them as fantasies. They claim the books are read and forgotten, having no dire effect on the mind of children. In fact, they claim that such books serve a positive purpose by engaging young people in the habit of reading.

Scripture has made a profound impact on the writer's life. Soon after a refreshing spiritual experience while in the military he began memorizing Scripture. That was many years ago, and he still recall verses that he memorized at that time. But even more significant, it was the memorization of Scripture that kept him involved in spiritual growth and development.

### **II. The place Scripture had in the early church.**

Scripture had a prominent place in the life of New Testament churches, as the texts suggest. These citations are from documents written to churches beginning on the day of Pentecost until near the end of the New Testament record. The references encouraged believers to look to Scripture for guidance.

A brief look at each passage confirms this belief. These are instances of Scripture proving the validity of Scripture. However, they were letters to churches and individuals before they became the Scriptures of the church. The Scripture to which they allude were the different books of the Hebrew Bible, called the Old Testament by most Christians.

1. Acts 2:42 suggest that the church born at Pentecost paid close attention to the teachings of the apostles, which included the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In this community of faith there was also daily fellowship meals, attention to the “fellowship,” and to prayers.

2. The impact of Scripture in the early churches is evident from the Apostle Paul’s letters to some of the New Testament churches.

a) Romans 15:4. In the context of God-centred discussions, Paul added some words of counsel about taking care of one another in the fellowship of believers (Romans 15:1-6). He taught that those who are strong should bear with the failings of the weak. His teaching is based on the Scripture available to them, that is, the Old Testament. Paul claims that whatever was written in the past was written for our help in our growth and development in Jesus.

As a group of self-centered men and women who experienced transformation through faith in Jesus Christ gave themselves to the study of the Scriptures of the Old Testament they became a “fellowship,” a “koinonia” of disciples of Jesus Christ. They “learned” what God intended them to know about the new life in Christ. That same change and growth should be experienced today in our church.

b) 2 Timothy 3:14-17 deals with the authority of the Scriptures for life in the Christian community. Paul claims that Timothy had known the Scriptures from infancy. He credited Timothy’s mother and grandmother with having instilled the Scriptures in his life since infancy (15a). Paul also claims that knowing the Scriptures made Timothy wise for salvation (15b).

But the strongest statement found in the New Testament as to the nature and power of the Scriptures is made in verses 16 and 17. Here, claims are made for Scripture that should challenge churches to give the highest priority to the use of Scripture. Paul could make these claims because Scripture (the Old Testament) is inspired by God and is useful for all the things churches feel are important to do: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Billy Graham is correct when he claims with frequency, “The Bible says....”

c. 2 Peter 1:19-21 affirms another reason Scripture should have priority in the life of a church: a portion of the Scripture has been made more certain by the experiences of the apostles. Peter was confident that for that reason it would be well for believers to look to the prophets because they are “. . . like a lamp

shining in a murky place” (NEB). He offers a word of caution, however, when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy: it is not a private matter and necessitates the thinking of good minds working together in the process.

### **Call to Commitment:**

What does a church need as a road map, a guiding light, in the teaching and training of all of its members, from the very youngest to the most aged? It has been the belief and practice of conservative Christians throughout their history that the Scriptures should be the only rule for faith and practice. Churches have been built around the teaching and preaching of the Scriptures. The good doctor from Africa knew this, and her well-worn Bible gave testimony to her confidence that having it on her desk and in her heart was necessary to maintain a life of faith.

Leader: Ask everyone to bow his/her heads. Ask them to personally recommit to reading the Bible each day.

### **Concluding the Service:**

Sing together the praise hymn “Thy Word” (words from Psalms 119:105 ff. and found in many praise chorus lists).

A time of fellowship or a meal may follow the service.