

Small Group Guide: Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone



Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to illuminate His Word and help you understand the authority and sufficiency of Scripture in your lives.

Introduction Discussion (10 minutes)

Warm-up Question: Before studying this topic, what was your understanding of how we know which books belong in the Bible? What questions have you had about biblical authority?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Sola Scriptura means Scripture is the only infallible rule of faith** - not that church authority doesn't exist, but that all authority must submit to Scripture.
2. **The 66-book canon reflects what Jesus and the Jews affirmed** - the 39 Old Testament books were the scrolls laid up in the temple that Jesus held people accountable to.

3. **Protestant unity is found in Christ and the gospel**, not institutional conformity - this is different from how non-Protestant churches define unity.
 4. **Scripture is of divine origin** (God-breathed) and therefore fundamentally different from church tradition or teaching.
 5. **Oral tradition proved corruptible** - which is why Paul had to write corrective letters to churches he had personally taught.
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Doctrine (15 minutes)

1. **The Westminster Confession states that everything necessary for salvation and faith is "either expressly set down in scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture."**
 - What's the difference between something being explicitly taught versus implicitly taught in Scripture?
 - Why is this distinction important? (Example given: The Trinity)
2. **How does the sermon's explanation of Sola Scriptura differ from what you may have heard before?** What misconceptions were clarified for you?

The Canon Question (15 minutes)

3. **The sermon argues that Jesus affirmed the 39-book Old Testament canon by:**
 - Holding the Pharisees accountable to "what is written"
 - Affirming the authority of "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44)
 - Recognizing the Pharisees' authority who held to this canon

How does this argument address the question: "How do you know what Scripture is without the church telling you?"

4. **Does it surprise you that the canon wasn't universally settled until much later in church history, and that even a Roman Catholic cardinal agreed with Luther's 66-book canon?** What does this tell us about the development of church tradition?

Scripture's Authority in Practice (15 minutes)

5. **Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that Scripture makes us "thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

- What does it mean practically that Scripture is sufficient?
- What role do sermons, books, teachings, and traditions play if Scripture is sufficient?

6. **The sermon points out that Paul had to write corrective letters because oral tradition became corrupted even while apostles were still alive.**

- What does this teach us about the reliability of tradition versus written Scripture?
- How should this shape how we evaluate teachings we hear today?

Unity and Division (15 minutes)

7. **The accusation is often made that Protestantism's emphasis on Scripture alone has led to 45,000 denominations and massive division.**

- How did the sermon address this charge?
- What's the difference between institutional unity and gospel unity?

8. **Read John Chrysostom's quote: "If any agree with the scriptures, he is a Christian. If any fight against them, he is far from this rule."**

- How does this early church father's view align with Protestant understanding?
- How can we maintain unity with believers from different denominational backgrounds while still holding to important doctrines?

Personal Application (10 minutes)

Reflect individually, then share with the group:

1. **Scripture Reading:** Do you approach the Bible believing it is sufficient to equip you for life and godliness? What would change in your daily Bible reading if you truly believed this?
2. **Testing Teaching:** Like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), do you test what you hear in sermons, podcasts, and books against Scripture? What's one practice you could implement to do this more consistently?

3. **Authority in Your Life:** Are there areas where you've elevated tradition, personal preference, or popular teaching above what Scripture clearly says? What needs to change?
 4. **Unity in Christ:** How can you better demonstrate unity with believers from other Protestant traditions while maintaining doctrinal convictions?
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Practical Next Steps

Choose one or more to implement this week:

- **Daily Practice:** When you read Scripture this week, pause to thank God that His Word is sufficient and authoritative for your life.
 - **Study Project:** Pick a doctrine you believe (like the Trinity, salvation by grace, etc.) and trace it through Scripture to see how it's taught explicitly or implicitly.
 - **Discernment Exercise:** When you hear a sermon or teaching this week, write down the main points and then search Scripture to verify them (like the Bereans did).
 - **Unity Action:** Reach out to a believer from a different Protestant tradition and have a conversation about what you share in common through the gospel.
 - **Teaching Moment:** Share with someone this week why you trust the 66 books of the Bible as God's complete Word.
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Closing Discussion (5 minutes)

Final Question: How does understanding Sola Scriptura give you confidence in your faith and in sharing the gospel with others?

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- Thanking God for His inspired, sufficient, and authoritative Word
- Asking for wisdom to rightly understand and apply Scripture
- Requesting help to test all teaching against God's Word
- Praying for unity among believers around the gospel of Christ

5-Day Devotional: The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture



Day 1: The Foundation of Truth

Reading: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Deuteronomy 17:18-20

Devotional:

God has always intended His Word to be our guide and foundation. From the moment Moses instructed Israel's future kings to copy and meditate on the Law, Scripture has been established as the standard of truth. Just as those ancient kings were called to let God's Word shape their hearts and decisions, we too are invited to be transformed by Scripture. Paul reminds us that Scripture equips us completely for every good work—not partially, but thoroughly. Today, consider how you approach God's Word. Do you see it as sufficient for your spiritual needs, or do you seek fulfillment elsewhere? Commit to reading Scripture not as a religious duty, but as the life-giving truth that shapes your character and guides your steps toward Christlikeness.

Day 2: Testing All Things

Reading: Acts 17:10-12; Galatians 1:6-9

Devotional:

The Bereans received commendation because they tested Paul's teaching against Scripture. This wasn't disrespect—it was spiritual maturity. Paul himself warned the Galatians to reject any gospel contrary to what was written, even if an angel proclaimed it. This reveals a profound truth: no human authority, tradition, or experience stands above Scripture. God has given you both His Word and the ability to understand it through the Holy Spirit. You don't need to fear examining teachings in light of Scripture; rather, this is your responsibility as a believer. Today, reflect on what influences shape your theology. Are you anchored in Scripture, or swayed by popular opinion? Develop the habit of comparing everything you hear with what God has revealed in His Word.

Day 3: Unity in Essentials

Reading: John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Devotional:

Jesus prayed for unity among His followers, and that unity centers on Him—not on institutional uniformity. The early church faced divisions, yet Paul called believers back to their common foundation: the gospel of Christ. True Christian unity isn't found in identical practices or organizational structures, but in shared devotion to Jesus and the essential truths of salvation. We can fellowship across denominational lines when the gospel remains central. Division comes not from different worship styles or secondary doctrines, but from abandoning the core truths of Scripture. Today, examine your heart toward other believers. Do you prioritize the gospel above your preferences? Seek opportunities to build bridges with Christians who may worship differently but share your love for Christ and commitment to biblical truth.

Day 4: The Living Word

Reading: Luke 24:44-47; Matthew 22:29-32

Devotional:

Jesus consistently pointed people to Scripture as the ultimate authority. When confronting error, He asked, "Have you not read?" When explaining His mission, He opened the Scriptures. Jesus demonstrated that God's written Word is powerful, clear, and sufficient to reveal truth. He held people accountable to what was written, affirming that Scripture was accessible and understandable. The same Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture dwells in you, illuminating God's truth. You don't need an intermediary to understand God's plan of salvation or His will for your life. Scripture itself is living and active, speaking directly to your heart. Today, approach your Bible with confidence that God speaks through it. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your understanding, and trust that what you need for faith and godliness is found within its pages.

Day 5: Written for Our Instruction

Reading: Romans 15:4; John 20:30-31

Devotional:

John wrote his Gospel with clear purpose: that you might believe Jesus is the Christ and have life in His name. The apostles carefully recorded what was necessary for faith, guided by the Holy Spirit's reminder of Jesus' words. Scripture wasn't randomly compiled—it was intentionally written to give you everything needed for salvation and spiritual growth. What was written is sufficient; what was omitted was unnecessary. This should give you tremendous confidence. You aren't missing secret knowledge or hidden traditions required for salvation. Everything God wants you to know about Him, about salvation, and about living faithfully is contained in Scripture. Today, thank God for the gift of His written Word. Commit to treasuring it, studying it, and allowing it to transform your life, trusting that it truly is sufficient for all you need.