

Leader's Guide for
UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE
WITH FATHER STEPHEN DOYLE, O.F.M.

God's Word: An Invitation

In this opening talk, Father Doyle reveals how the Bible is a divine invitation—an invitation to find our identity in God, to enter into friendship with God, to become God's people. The Old Testament accounts of Abraham and of Moses serve to illustrate how God invites and what it means to accept that invitation and become God's "chosen people." God directs us to "hearken to my voice" and "hold fast to my covenant." Only then shall we become "a holy people...a priestly people."

Reflection: What story or incident from the Bible speaks to you personally of God's invitation to faith?

God's People Respond: Law and Worship

Father Doyle acknowledges the contemporary Christian's difficulty in dealing with the Old Testament emphasis on the bloody sacrifice of animals and on the countless, detailed laws drawn up to guide the Hebrews. He explains that for the Jews of that time sacrifice was seen as a way of giving oneself, not as an insurance policy in the way that most pagans regarded sacrifice. As for the lengthy code of laws, Father Doyle points out that ideally the Law was considered the structure which supported and protected the Covenant—the relationship between God and the Chosen People. However, all too often the Law was robbed of its spirit and became the mere observance of externals. So Christ in his coming set aside the Old Law and became himself the Law and our eternal sacrifice.

Reflection: How do you understand the place of sacrifice in your own life?

Leaders of God's People: Priests, Kings and Prophets

In this talk, Father Doyle explores the roles of the Old Testament kings, priests and prophets. The king's primary responsibility was to maintain order and to gather God's people. The priests were seen as persons set apart from the community to listen to God's word and to communicate it to the people. They also celebrated the bond between God and the people. Prophets were called upon to awaken the people to what was right, to guide them in God's way. Prophets frequently attacked hypocrisy, especially in places of power; they gave the people hope. Jesus was the fulfillment of the roles of king, priest and prophet.

Reflection: What did Father Doyle mean when he said we are all called to be prophets? Can you think of a 20th- or 21st-century Christian whose life and words are "prophetic" in the scriptural sense?

God's Word in God's Church

This talk shows how, throughout the centuries, the Bible has served as a mirror for the Church in which it can check out its faithfulness to God's message. Father Doyle describes how the early Christians gave birth to the Bible...cherishing the Old Testament writings and creating the New Testament. The talk includes a quick summary of how the New Testament came to be, and it touches on the role of biblical scholarship. Father Doyle explains why the Church downplayed the centrality of the Scriptures during and after the Reformation, and he shows how Vatican II restored them to their central place as the Word of God guiding the Church today.

Reflection: What teachings and incidents in Scripture constitute your personal "mirror" in which you can check out how you as an individual measure up as a Christian?

God's Word in Human Words

Here Father Doyle explains what we mean when we call God's word "inspired." He also describes the times and the culture of the people who make up the world of the Bible. We are introduced to the different forms of writing in the Scriptures—a kind of sacred library. Finally, we learn to approach each book of the Bible on its own terms, keeping in mind its form, what the author intended and for whom he was writing.

Reflection: How would you explain the Catholic understanding of the "truth" of the Bible to someone who believes that everything in the Bible is *literally* true?

God's Word: Light in Our Darkness

This talk encourages us to look to the Scriptures for sustenance in our daily lives. To help us do this, Father Doyle gives some suggestions for ways to read the Bible (never straight through from beginning to end). He suggests that at first we consider passages that already have meaning for us personally. We might even try dramatizing for ourselves the emotion of a passage or read it aloud, trying to capture that emotion. In conclusion, Father Doyle lists numerous popular Scripture resources that can help us better understand and pray the Bible.

Reflection: How often do you take time to sit down and read the Scripture? In view of your answer to the previous question, how important is God's word in your life? Should it be more important?

NOTE: This guide can be printed and cut down in size to be stored with the DVD version of this video program. Simply cut ¼ inch from each side of the page for a guide that, when folded, can be placed inside of the DVD case or attached to the DVD or VHS case.

For use with: *Understanding the Bible With Father Stephen Doyle, O.F.M.* on VHS (7158V) and DVD (D7158)

St. Anthony Messenger Press
28 W. Liberty St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498
800-488-0488
www.AmericanCatholic.org