**Holy habits - Biblical Teaching: Week 8**

Last week we looked at the difficulties some people have when reading the Bible, and thought about how we should respond to these difficulties. We finished by saying that we must rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us as we read the Bible. Jesus told us to do exactly that: *When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth … He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you. All that my Father has is mine; that is why I said that the Spirit will take what I give him and tell it to you (John 16: 13a, 14-15).* Obviously, as both St Paul and St John said (1 Thessalonians 5: 19-22, 2 Timothy 4: 3, and 1 John 4: 1-6), we must test that it is the Holy Spirit speaking to us, rather than our own inner and even subconscious prejudices or the teachings of false prophets, but God will never let us down if we approach His Word with honest and open hearts and minds, and sincerely pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us into all the truth.

Tim Crome reminded us in the morning service yesterday that people’s attitudes to the Bible vary according to their church tradition, their life and religious experience, and their use of the intelligence God has given them. This is based on a picture of how we can rest firmly and securely on the four-legged stool of the Bible, tradition, experience and reason. The closer we are to God, the less there is a discrepancy between the four legs of the stool. If we were one with God, these four approaches would be in total harmony. If there is a mismatch between these four approaches, it is because our human frailties are intervening. The solution is the same as before: we must sincerely pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us into all the truth.

We call the Bible the Word of God. St John reminds us that Jesus is the Word of Life: *In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people … The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son (John 1: 1-4, 14).* Jesus is the Word made flesh. He promises us that He will always be with us (Matthew 28: 20b), and He explains exactly how this will be: *If you love me, you will obey my commandments. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God (John 14: 15-17a).* So, when we read the Bible, let us simply take Jesus at his Word, and trust in God the Holy Spirit to interpret the Word of God to our hearts and lives, and guide us into all the truth.

*Produced by Glenn Evans on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  All quotations from the Good News Translation unless otherwise stated. You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*